

**OFFICIAL REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS****Wednesday, 21 January 1987****The Council met at half-past Two o'clock****PRESENT**HIS EXCELLENCY THE ACTING GOVERNOR (*PRESIDENT*)

SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, K.B.E., C.M.G., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE THE CHIEF SECRETARY

MR. DAVID ROBERT FORD, L.V.O., O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY

MR. PIERS JACOBS, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

MR. MICHAEL DAVID THOMAS, C.M.G., Q.C.

THE HONOURABLE CHEN SHOU-LUM, C.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE PETER C. WONG, C.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ERIC PETER HO, C.B.E., J.P.

SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

DR. THE HONOURABLE HO KAM-FAI, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALLEN LEE PENG-FEI, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE HU FA-KUANG, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE DONALD LIAO POON-HUAI, C.B.E., J.P.

SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

THE HONOURABLE CHAN KAM-CHUEN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE JOHN JOSEPH SWAINE, O.B.E., Q.C., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE STEPHEN CHEONG KAM-CHUEN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHEUNG YAN-LUNG, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS. SELINA CHOW LIANG SHUK-YEE, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MARIA TAM WAI-CHU, O.B.E., J.P.

DR. THE HONOURABLE HENRIETTA IP MAN-HING, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHAN YING-LUN, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS. PAULINE NG CHOW MAY-LIN, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE PETER POON WING-CHEUNG, M.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE YEUNG PO-KWAN, C.P.M., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE KIM CHAM YAU-SUM, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE JOHN WALTER CHAMBERS, O.B.E., J.P.

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE

THE HONOURABLE JACKIE CHAN CHAI-KEUNG

THE HONOURABLE CHENG HON-KWAN

THE HONOURABLE HILTON CHEONG-LEEN, C.B.E., J.P.

DR. THE HONOURABLE CHIU HIN-KWONG

THE HONOURABLE CHUNG PUI-LAM

THE HONOURABLE HO SAI-CHU, M.B.E., J.P.  
THE HONOURABLE HUI YIN-FAT  
THE HONOURABLE RICHARD LAI SUNG-LUNG  
DR. THE HONOURABLE CONRAD LAM KUI-SHING  
THE HONOURABLE MARTIN LEE CHU-MING, Q.C., J.P.  
THE HONOURABLE LEE YU-TAI  
THE HONOURABLE DAVID LI KWOK-PO, J.P.  
THE HONOURABLE LIU LIT-FOR, J.P.  
THE HONOURABLE NGAI SHIU-KIT, O.B.E., J.P.  
THE HONOURABLE PANG CHUN-HOI, M.B.E.  
THE HONOURABLE POON CHI-FAI  
PROF. THE HONOURABLE POON CHUNG-KWONG  
THE HONOURABLE HELMUT SOHMEN  
THE HONOURABLE SZETO WAH  
THE HONOURABLE TAI CHIN-WAH  
THE HONOURABLE MRS. ROSANNA TAM WONG YICK-MING  
THE HONOURABLE TAM YIU-CHUNG  
DR. THE HONOURABLE DANIEL TSE, O.B.E., J.P.  
THE HONOURABLE ANDREW WONG WANG-FAT  
THE HONOURABLE LAU WONG-FAT, M.B.E., J.P.  
THE HONOURABLE HARNAM SINGH GREWAL, E.D., J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT  
THE HONOURABLE GRAHAM BARNES, J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS  
THE HONOURABLE RONALD GEORGE BLACKER BRIDGE, O.B.E., J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER  
THE HONOURABLE DAVID GREGORY JEAFFRESON, C.B.E., J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR SECURITY

**ABSENT**

THE HONOURABLE LYDIA DUNN, C.B.E., J.P.  
THE HONOURABLE WONG PO-YAN, O.B.E., J.P.  
THE HONOURABLE MRS. RITA FAN HSU LAI-TAI, J.P.  
THE HONOURABLE THOMAS CLYDESDALE

**IN ATTENDANCE**

THE CLERK TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
MR. LAW KAM-SANG

**Papers**

The following papers were laid pursuant to Standing Order 14(2):

<i>Subject</i>	<i>L.N. No.</i>
Subsidiary Legislation:	
Inland Revenue Ordinance	
Inland Revenue (Interest Tax)(Exemption)(Amendment) Notice 1987 .....	5/87
Tax Reserve Certificates (Fourth Series) Rules	
Tax Reserve Certificates (Rate of Interest) Notice 1987 .....	6/87
Dutiable Commodities Ordinance	
Dutiable Commodities (Amendment) Regulations 1987 .....	7/87
Dutiable Commodities Ordinance	
Dutiable Commodities (Marketing and Colouring of Hydro- carbon Oils)(Amendment) Regulations 1987 .....	8/87
Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance	
Smokeless Tobacco Products (Prohibition) Regulations 1987.....	9/87
Education Ordinance	
Grant Schools Provident Fund (Amendment) Rules 1987 .....	10/87
Education Ordinance	
Subsidised Schools Provident Fund (Amendment) Rules 1987.....	11/87
Merchant Shipping Act 1979 (Hong Kong) Order 1980	
Merchant Shipping (Liability of Shipowners and Others) (Calculation of Tonnage) (Hong Kong) Order 1987 .....	12/87
Merchant Shipping Act 1979 (Hong Kong) Order 1980	
Merchant Shipping (Liability of Shipowners and Others) (Rate of Interest) (Hong Kong) Order 1987 .....	13/87
Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Cartridge-operated Fixing Tools) Regulations	
Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Cartridge-operated Fixing Tools)(Amendment of Schedule) Notice 1987 .....	14/87
Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation By-Laws	
Kowloon-Canton Railway (Restricted Area) Notice 1987 .....	15/87

**Oral answers to questions****Private developments allocated for welfare services**

1. MRS. TAM asked: *Will Government inform this Council whether there has been any delay in putting in use private development premises which are allocated to welfare agencies for the provisions of welfare services? If so, what are the usual periods of delays and what are their causes? Has Government considered taking appropriate actions to improve the situation?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Sir, delays have occurred in two cases involving space in private developments allocated for welfare services, and the Director of Audit referred to these cases in his report for 1985-86. In both cases, the delay was about two years. This unsatisfactory situation was due partly to inadequate communication and co-ordination between the departments concerned and partly to the lack of agreed procedures on the handling of such projects, which are a relatively new arrangement.

To prevent similar delays occurring in future, a set of procedures for the administration of projects of this type was introduced in March 1985. Since then co-ordination and communication between departments involved in processing these projects has considerably improved and the procedures are now being revised with a view to making further improvements. In addition, planning of this type of project by the Social Welfare Department will begin five years ahead of the expected availability of the premises instead of two years as previously. This should allow adequate time for the selection of suitable operating agencies and for the subsequent negotiations over layout plans and the financing of the projects.

MRS. TAM: *Sir, concerning the set of procedures mentioned in the answer, may I ask the Secretary whether it will also be released to voluntary agencies for reference, particularly to those agencies which have plans to develop services in this kind of premises. If not, why not?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Sir, I am not sure whether the procedures to which I referred which are intended for the government departments involved would be very helpful to the agencies, but I will suggest to the Director of Social Welfare that a set of guidelines for the agencies should be prepared and issued.

**Selective training for athletes**

2. MR. LIU (in Cantonese): *In view of the fact that Hong Kong athletes have recently won honours in a number of international competitions, will Government consider formulating a programme of selective training for athletes with a good potential?*

SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION: Sir, the selective training of athletes who have demonstrated outstanding potential or ability in their chosen sport is provided through the long-term training and development programmes of the various governing bodies of sport. Funds are provided by Government on the advice of the Council for Recreation and Sport to finance these programmes. In 1986-87, a total of \$10 million has been provided by Government for this purpose.

In addition, the Council for Recreation and Sport is currently involved in setting up a Sports Aid Foundation Fund. The object of the foundation is to provide direct assistance to young athletes who have the potential to attain local and international standards of excellence in their chosen sports. Such assistance would be given to eligible athletes in the form of financial subsidies to cover any loss of earning incurred during absence from employment and other necessary expenses (for example, purchase of specialised equipment) incurred during the training or competition period.

MR. LIU (in Cantonese): *Sir, I am glad to learn that the Council for Recreation and Sport is considering the setting up of the Sports Aid Foundation in order to promote training for athletes with good potential. Will the Government tell the Legislative Council what other sports associations will take part in providing these training courses and also where does the fund come from?*

SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION: Sir, in addition to Government's effort, the Jubilee Sports Centre at Sha Tin provides excellent training facilities and expert coaching in various sports for the purpose of helping athletes to achieve international standards of performance. The Amateur Sports Foundation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong have also introduced an incentive scheme by providing cash awards for the sports associations whose teams have achieved outstanding results in the Asian and Commonwealth Games. The provisional committee of the foundation has set itself the task of raising an initial working capital of \$10,000,000 of which a single donation of \$5,000,000 has already been promised by the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club. This will be invested to produce a recurrent source of funding.

MR. CHEONG-LEEN: *Sir, can a firm assurance be given that the Sports Aid Foundation will get off the ground as soon as possible, even within the coming few months, because discussion on this project has been taking place for at least two and a half years already?*

SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION: Sir, as I mentioned in my reply to the first supplementary, I think an encouraging start has already been made by the single donation of \$5,000,000 from the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club. This should enable the foundation to make a start.

**Clearance of street sleepers**

3. MRS. NG asked (in Cantonese): *In view of the fact that street sleepers have caused environmental nuisances and that joint departmental clearance operations initiated by district boards often result in street sleepers moving from one district to another, will Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *what is the existing delineation of responsibilities of the two policy branches in tackling the street sleeper problem, namely, the Health and Welfare Branch and the City and New Territories Administration;*
- (b) *whether it would consider measures for achieving better co-ordination of such clearance and rehousing operations on a district/region/territory-wide level; and*
- (c) *whether there are any government programmes and activities to mark 1987 as the United Nation's International Year of Shelter for the Homeless?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Sir, as Mrs. NG has pointed out there are two distinct aspects to the problem of street sleepers in Hong Kong; first the welfare of these unfortunate people and second the environmental problems that they cause. On the one hand, counselling, rehousing and other welfare services for those who are genuinely homeless are provided by the Social Welfare Department, and my branch has policy responsibility for this aspect; on the other hand government departments conduct regular clearance operations which are co-ordinated by the local district offices, to deter street-sleeping and curb nuisances.

During the past six months, 48 clearance operations have been conducted in a number of districts. I will discuss with the Secretary for District Administration and the departments concerned how better co-ordination could be achieved.

During 1987 the Social Welfare Department will step up its efforts to help street-sleepers, particularly those who are elderly, disabled, suspected to be on drugs or mentally ill, with a view to persuading them to accept welfare or medical services or rehousing. The department is also planning to develop some day relief centres (possibly with some temporary shelter places), to be operated by voluntary agencies, to provide bases for assisting and counselling street sleepers. In addition a grant from a trust fund under the control of the Secretary for District Administration Incorporated will enable the Missionaries of Charity to double the amount of accommodation they provide in the Sham Shui Po Camp, and the Street Sleepers Shelter Society will shortly be opening a new shelter in Wan Chai. The Social Welfare Department is also planning to encourage community efforts in the districts to mark the occasion of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

MRS. NG (in Cantonese): *Sir, will the Government consider improving the environmental facilities in all the districts so that we can counter the problem of street sleepers?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Sir, from time to time district boards do suggest environmental improvements of this type and I understand that they do have some funds of their own to implement them, but, having said that, I can assure this Council that any proposals which would help will be very carefully considered.

DR. CHIU: *Sir, will the Secretary inform this Council what is the estimated number of street sleepers in Hong Kong, and what percentage of these street sleepers are mentally ill and require medical treatment?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Sir, according to a survey conducted by the Social Welfare Department at the end of last year, 1 333 people were found to be sleeping in the street. Of these, 11 per cent, 144 cases, appeared to suffer from some mental illness or incapacity. It is not possible to say exactly how many of these require medical treatment because it is very often difficult to persuade them to see a doctor, but the total number, as I said, of those who appeared to be mentally ill is about 11 per cent.

MR. MARTIN LEE: *Sir, will street sleepers gain priority to get public housing?*

SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION: They will not gain any priority in getting public housing, Sir. They will have to wait and queue up in the normal way.

MR. CHEONG-LEEN: *Sir, as we are already in the first month of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, can the Administration circulate to Members a list of intended projects with which they plan to participate in to commemorate this year.*

SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION: Sir, as the Secretary for Health and Welfare has said in the last paragraph of his reply, as a start for the Government to participate in this year to provide housing for street sleepers, I have recently approved an allocation of fund of some \$250,000 to enable the Missionaries of Charity to double the amount of accommodation they are providing at Sham Shui Po Camp.

DR. CHIU: *Sir, as there are around 144 cases of the street sleepers who appear to be mentally ill, is there any definite plan for the Government to enable these persons to receive medical care and treatment?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Sir, a proposal is being considered to provide in the Mental Health Ordinance a power to enable a police officer who finds a person who appears to him to be suffering from mental disorder and to be in immediate need of care and control, to remove this person to a place of safety. This in practice would be the accident and emergency department of a

general hospital. And then this person may be detained under this proposed provision for a period not exceeding 48 hours for the purpose of enabling him to be examined by a doctor to make necessary arrangements for his treatment and care. I should stress that this is at this stage a proposal which is still subject to consideration by the Executive Council.

DR. LAM (in Cantonese): *Sir, will the Government inform this Council whether, from the statistics in the past three years, we have an increase in the number of street sleepers or a decrease?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: There was an increase over the previous year. The figure I quoted for the end of 1986 was 1 333. A similar survey at the end of 1985 showed the figure was 1 152. That represents an increase of about 15 per cent over the year.

### **Cancellation of bus and ferry services**

4. MR. LEE YU-TAI asked: *Will the Government inform this Council which routes have been cancelled in the last two years by the bus and ferry companies due to financial losses and whether the Government is satisfied with alternative arrangements for commuters who used to make use of these routes?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT: Sir, over the last two years, 16 franchised bus routes have been cancelled for financial reasons. Of these, nine were operated by CMB, four by KMB and three jointly by the two companies. In addition, three of HYF's franchised cross-harbour ferry services have been cancelled and, as was announced last week, the Executive Council has given approval for the cancellation of a further three such services.

For the sake of brevity I would propose to avoid reading out the complete list of cancellations. However, I have set out full details in a list which is the written version of this reply. (Appendix)

In brief then, five bus routes on Hong Kong Island were cancelled in response to reduced demand and insufficient residual patronage following the opening of the MTR Island Line. Two bus routes serving areas of low patronage were cancelled in favour of strengthened green minibus services which were considered the more appropriate way of meeting the relatively small demand. Eight bus routes were cancelled as a result of rationalisation exercises, and three Sha Tin Racecourse recreational bus routes were cancelled because of low patronage following improvements to the KCRC service.

As far as franchised ferry services are concerned, three cross-harbour routes, one for vehicles and two for passengers, have been cancelled in furtherance of a rationalisation plan to maintain the viability of essential services to the outlying islands, and the Executive Council has agreed to the cancellation of a further three cross-harbour passenger ferry services over the next few months.



I would stress, Sir, that no cancellations are made lightly or before the Transport Department is fully convinced that satisfactory alternatives do exist, or will be created, to serve any passengers displaced. Furthermore, routes are only cancelled following and not in anticipation of reductions in passenger demand for the service concerned. And before any such decision is taken, it is our normal practice to consult the district boards concerned.

Nevertheless, Sir, where loss-making services are highly socially desirable and no reasonable alternative public transport is (nor can be made) available, then we will ensure as far as possible that such routes will continue to be maintained.

## APPENDIX

### *Five bus route cancellations following a drop in demand after the opening of the MTR Island Line*

	Route cancelled	Date of cancellation	Fares at time of cancellation	Fares for alternative transport services
10M	(North Point Admiralty Station)	Ferry- 8.6.85 MTR	\$1.00	Route 10 (\$0.80) Route 10A (\$1.00) Route 10B (\$1.30) MTR (\$2.50) Tram (\$0.60)
20M	(Shau Kei Admiralty Station)	Wan- 17.6.85 MTR	\$1.30	Route 20 (\$1.30) Route 720 (\$1.80) MTR (\$2.50) Tram (\$0.60)
21M	(Tai Koo Shing-Central (Jackson Road))	MTR Station 4.2.85	\$1.30	Route 21 (\$1.30) Route 721 (\$1.80) Tram (\$0.60) MTR (\$2.50)
22M	(Quarry Bay-Admiralty Station)	MTR 8.6.85	\$1.30	Route 22 (\$1.30) Route 722 (\$1.80) MTR (\$2.50) Tram (\$0.60)
83A	(Chai Wan Street)-Sai Wan Ferry)	(San Ha Wan Ho 7.7.85	\$0.80	Route 83 (\$0.80) Route 82A (\$0.80)

### *Two bus route cancellations in favour of strengthened green minibus services*

	Route cancelled	Date of cancellation	Fares at time of cancellation	Fares for alternative transport services
17	(So Kun Po-Central)	7.10.85	\$1.30	GMB Route 28A (\$3.00)
5M	(Tsim Sha Tsui East)	MTR- 16.2.85	\$0.80	GMB Route 1 (\$1.00)

*Eight bus route cancellations as a result of rationalisation*

	Route cancelled	Date of cancellation	Fares at time of cancellation	Fares for alternative transport services
44	(Wah Fu-Central (Rumsey St))	18.11.85	\$1.60	Route 4 (\$1.60)
62	(North Point Ferry- Chung Hom Kok)	18.5.86	\$3.00	Route 64 (\$3.00) Route 65 (\$3.00)
74	(Wah Fu-Repulse Bay)	28.7.85	\$2.70	Route 73 (\$2.50)
11M	(Diamond Hill MTR- San Po Kong)	29.6.86	\$0.70	Route 29 (\$0.80)
25	(Star Ferry-Air-Cargo Terminal)	8.7.85	\$1.00	Route 5D (\$1.00)
200	(Airport-Macau Ferry via Causeway Bay)	6.11.86	\$5.00	Route A2 \$5.00 Route A3 \$5.00
201	(Airport-Tsim Sha Tsui)	6.11.86	\$3.00	Route A1 \$3.00
98	(Ocean Park (Tai Wan)-North Point Ferry)	28.7.85	\$2.70	Route 99 (\$2.70) and Route 10A (\$1.00)

*Three bus route cancellations to Sha Tin Racecourse*

	Route cancelled	Date of cancellation	Fares at time of cancellation	Fares for alternative transport services
881	(Sha Tin Race Course- Kennedy Town)	15.12.85	\$12 (\$4 on leaving Cross Harbour Tunnel)	From Sha Tin Racecourse to Kowloon Station by KCR (\$4.5) interchanging for cross tunnel buses(\$2.5)
882	(Sha Tin Racecourse- Chai Wan (West))	15.12.85	—ditto—	—ditto—
884	(Sha Tin Race Course- Aberdeen)	15.12.85	—ditto—	From Sha Tin Racecourse to Kowloon Station by KCR (\$4.5) interchanging for cross tunnel bus Route 170 (\$4.0)

*Six cross-harbour ferry route cancellations*

	Route cancelled	Date of cancellation	Fares at time of cancellation	Fares for alternative transport services
	North Point to Tsuen Wan Central Passenger Ferry Service (the section between North Point and Central was cancelled)	9.8.85	\$5.00 per head for both adult and child. No half fare for student. It was a hoverferry service.	Taking MTR from North Point Station to Tsuen Wan Station at \$5.00 per adult and \$1.5 per child or student.

Route cancelled	Date of cancellation	Fares at time of cancellation	Fares for alternative transport services
North Point to Kwun Tong Vehicular Ferry Service	16.12.85	\$5.00 per private car/taxi; \$9.00 per light bus; \$13.00 per small goods vehicle	\$5.00 per private car taxi; \$9.00 per light bus; \$13.00 per small goods vehicle on the two alternative vehicular ferry services from North Point to Kowloon City and from Sai Wan Ho to Kwun Tong.
Chai Wan to Kwun Tong Passenger Ferry Service	1.4.86	\$1.70 per adult; \$0.90 per child or student.	Bus Route No. 83 or 82A (\$0.80 per adult) interchanging for Sai Wan Ho to Kwun Tong ferry Service (\$1.70 per adult)
Sai Wan Ho to Kowloon City Ferry Service	Feb./March 1987 (Estimated)	\$2.50 per adult or child. No half fare for children.	\$2.80 per adult or child or cross harbour tunnel bus Route 106.
Central to Kwun Tong Ferry Service (peak hour only service)	Feb./March 1987 (Estimated)	\$2.50 per adult; \$1.30 per child or student.	\$2.80 per adult or child on existing cross harbour tunnel bus Route 101 and the new Route 141 between Kwun Tong and Macau Ferry Pier; \$4.50 per adult or \$1.50 per child on MTR.
Jordan Road to Wan Chai Ferry Service	April/May 1987 (Estimated)	\$1.70 per adult; \$0.90 per child or student.	\$2.80 per adult or child on various cross harbour tunnel bus routes running between Yau Ma Tei area and Wan Chai; \$1.70 per adult on Jordan Road to Central Ferry Service interchanging for bus or tram (\$0.60 per adult) to Wan Chai.

MR. LEE YU-TAI: *Sir, to what extent have the views of district boards been taken into account in arriving at the decisions?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT: Sir, the district boards are consulted as a matter of course. The five-year forward plans of the franchised bus companies, and indeed of the ferry companies, contain proposals for cancellations of certain routes due to low demand caused by a variety of factors or changed circumstances. District boards' traffic and transport committees are always consulted on such proposals and Transport Department always seeks to ensure before authorising such cancellations that reasonable alternative services are available or are provided as part of a comprehensive rationalisation package. Cancellation of franchised ferry services also requires the formal approval of the Executive

Council, in addition to the usual prior consultation with district boards' traffic and transport committees and Transport Advisory Committee. In short, Sir, the views of the district boards' traffic and transport committees are indeed taken into account.

MR. LI: *Sir, in the past two years has Government ever rejected requests for cancellation of loss-making routes made by the transport operators and did the transport companies ever use a rejection as excuse for fare revision later on?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT: Sir, as far as I am aware, the answer is no.

MR. SOHMEN: *Sir, my question is similar to Mr. LI's. Could the Secretary of Transport indicate what form the persuasion takes that is applied to convince the operators to maintain loss-making routes?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT: Sir, the discussions with the transport operators are conducted in the context of the five-year development plans. These cover each specified route and the extent of the losses that are incurred. It is inevitable, however, that there will be some which are loss-making and others which do make a profit; and there is a certain amount of cross subsidy involved.

### **One way permit holders**

5. MRS. CHOW asked: *Will Government inform this Council how many one way visa holders from China have been allowed to stay in Hong Kong in the last three years, whether this trend is likely to continue, and how this inflow has been taken into account in the planning of our public services?*

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: Sir, the numbers of one way permit holders from China who have been allowed to stay are:

- (a) 27 755 in 1984
- (b) 27 202 in 1985
- (c) 27 111 in 1986

Sir, to answer the second part of my hon. Friend's question, the numbers accord with the level of admissions agreed with China and are likely to remain at this level in the foreseeable future.

To answer the third part of my hon. Friends's question, legal immigrants are covered by our population censuses and the numbers of one way permit holders likely to arrive from China each year are included in our population projections. These projections, Sir, provide a framework by age and sex for use in the planning of our public services.

MRS. CHOW: *Sir, has this rather steady and gradual increase in our population posed immediate problems to any areas of public services such as education and housing where previous planning may not have taken into account the increase and how is such short-term congestion in demand resolved?*

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: An extremely unfair question, Sir, if I might say so for the poor Secretary for Security! But certainly in the case of education, the population bulge among the young has now risen almost through the system and I should have thought there would be no problem looking after the children that are coming over from China at the present time. In any case, as I say, the immigration from China at this level has been going on now for many, many years and I am sure that all our planners must be taking very careful note of it and planning accordingly.

MR. LEE YU-TAI: *Sir, may I refer to the middle paragraph of the answer and ask for a more specific qualification of the phrase 'the foreseeable future' in term of years.*

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: Sir, the answer is that our level of admissions agreed with China is not finite so it will go on indefinitely until either side wishes it to cease.

MR. NGAI (in Cantonese): *Sir, according to the figures given by the Secretary for Security, in the three years there have been 82 000 people allowed to stay in Hong Kong. I would like to know how many of them are skilled workers and how many are non-skilled workers like housewives. What is the percentage of the two please?*

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: A very rough profile, Sir, of the sort of people who are coming over is that there are more females than males, except in the year 1984, of the immigrants under the age of 15, there were slightly more males than females. In the year 1985, of those under the age of 25, there were slightly more males than females. Roughly 4 to 5 per cent of them are engaged in professional, administrative, or executive type of work. Roughly 70 per cent were farmers, hunters, fishermen, students, or economically inactive persons. Again to broaden the picture, about 40 per cent had secondary education and 3 per cent had university education or other post-secondary education.

MRS. CHOW: *Sir, since the Secretary for Security regarded my question to him as slightly unfair, may I have your permission to redirect that question to the Secretaries concerned, that is, Secretary for Education and Manpower and perhaps Secretary for District Administration, on my question about short-term congestion in demands in housing and education created by this steady increase in the population?*

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I think that might be the subject of a separate question on another occasion so that the policy branch secretaries concerned can do the necessary research and give you a full reply.

### **Unlawful gambling establishment**

6. MR. LAI asked (in Cantonese): *In a recent court decision, a restaurant which charged a fee of more than \$20 for the hire of a set of mahjong tiles was held to be an unlawful gambling establishment. Will Government inform this Council whether it considers friendly associations and other private clubs which charge their members more than \$20 for mahjong rental also to be unlawful gambling establishments and if so, will people who play mahjong in such places be prosecuted for unlawful gambling and will any publicity be launched to warn the general public of this possibility of prosecution?*

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Sir, under our existing law (Gambling Ordinance Cap. 148), all gambling is unlawful with limited exceptions. Government's policy on gambling has always been to restrict opportunities for gambling but to allow controlled outlets for gambling activities which are socially acceptable. Heavy penalties are imposed for operating establishments in which unlawful gambling takes place.

Section 3(4) of the Ordinance limits the extent to which a private club or association, in conducting games of mahjong by way of trade or business, may charge their members for the hire of mahjong tiles. This limit is presently fixed at \$20 per day. Thus, friendly associations and private clubs, even if registered, which charge their members more than \$20 per day for the hire of the mahjong tiles will be deemed to be gambling establishments and people who play mahjong there are liable to be prosecuted. I would, however, emphasise that the police direct their efforts principally at those establishments which exist primarily or solely for the purpose of gambling.

Sir, these provisions have been in force in their present form for almost 10 years and the operators and managers of friendly associations and private clubs can reasonably be expected to be familiar with the law, but I will, however, ask the Secretary for Administrative Services and Information to look into the question of publicity to inform the general public of these provisions, in the course of the general review of the Gambling Ordinance which is already under way.

MR. LAI (in Cantonese): *Sir, Could the Government inform this Council, first, if a person contravenes section 6 of the Gambling Ordinance and is convicted, will his conviction affect his application for a certificate of no conviction in future? Secondly, is there any legislation at present stipulating that friendly associations*

*or restaurants should inform customers of mahjong hiring charges? If not, then what kind of protection will those people who go to the friendly associations for mahjong games get?*

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Sir, as to the first, it would follow that if a person was convicted he would not get a certificate of no conviction. As to the second, the protection of members of the public is ordinarily to be found in knowing the law—a proposition which is always endorsed by lawyers! And it's for that reason that I said I would refer to the Secretary for Administrative Services and Information the question of whether some general publicity for members of the public would be valuable in the context of his review.

MR. MARTIN LEE: *Sir, what factors were taken into account in fixing the limit of mahjong hiring charges at \$20 per day and when was this limit fixed?*

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Sir, the limit was fixed in 1977. I do not know what those at that time thought were the relevant factors. Undoubtedly it was fixed in the context of policy at that time and if it is desired to re-examine that limit, no doubt that too can form part of the review presently being carried out.

MR. JACKIE CHAN (in Cantonese): *Sir, the normal mahjong games would necessitate four people participating in it. However, according to my understanding, sometimes three persons or even two persons can play a mahjong game at friendly associations. The reason is that the friendly associations do supply personnel to make up a mahjong table for these people and so these are just like the registered mahjong schools, so, what are you going to do to phase out such establishment which are actually mahjong schools?*

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Sir, if you think that the question arises out of my answer, which you evidently do, may I draw your attention to Standing Order No. 18(1)(h) which gives some protection to Attorneys General put on the spot since it provides that questions shall not be asked for the purpose of obtaining the solution of an abstract legal question. *(laughter)*

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT: Is your question pertinent to the original question, Mr. LAI?

MR. LAI: *Yes, Sir. According to section 3(4)(d) of the Gambling Ordinance, the rental of each mahjong set is only \$20. Is it an established policy then for Government to prosecute those who infringe the law. Friendly associations and the Ordinance have after all existed for more than 10 years. Why is it that we only started to enforce the Ordinance in 1986? Is it because the Government thinks this cannot be tolerated any more? Secondly, under what circumstances would an illegal gambling establishment be closed and under what circumstances would it be fined?*

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Sir, I know of no recent change of policy. My learned friend has simply raised a question arising from a recent appeal in which the Chief Justice laid down as a matter of law what is meant by the phrase 'by way of trade or business' which is found in the very sub-section to which Mr. LAI refers. There were, for example, in 1986, 123 convictions under section 5 and many under section 6, although I am not able to say specifically how many there were. So I know of no recent change of policy. So far as the second part of the question is concerned, I believe the answer is yes.

### **Extensions to the light rail transit system**

7. MR. TAI asked: *Will Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *whether the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation has accepted the recommendation of a consultant company in its Light Rail Extension Interim Report to abandon the Tuen Mun—Tsuen Wan route development plan; and*
- (b) *whether the KCRC would seriously consider the actual transport needs of the local people in respect of the above extension before arriving at such a decision?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT: Sir, the Light Rail Transit Extensions Study, commissioned and financed by the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation, is being carried out in two stages. The purpose of stage 1 is to examine each alternative route in sufficient detail to enable them to be ranked and shortlisted so that those which warrant further more detailed evaluation in stage 2 of the study can be identified. The stage 1 study has identified and examined four possible links connecting the LRT with the urban area and eastern New Territories. They are the Tuen Mun to Tsuen Wan link, and links from Yuen Long to Tsuen Wan, Tai Wo (that is Tai Po North) and Sheung Shui respectively.

Having considered the consultants' initial assessment of the financial and technical feasibility of the four alternative alignments and pattern of travel demand in and from the north-western New Territories, the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation has asked the consultants to examine the Yuen Long to Tsuen Wan and Yuen Long to Tai Wo options in greater detail.

Sir, in exercising its powers under the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation Ordinance, the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation is obliged to have regard to the reasonable requirements of the public transport system of Hong Kong and to operate on prudent commercial principles. The search for a viable LRT extension to Tsuen Wan is being conducted in the light of these considerations, and it is expected that the corporation will decide what the preferred route is in March this year before making any recommendations to Government.



MR. TAI: *Sir, could the Government inform this Council whether in exercising its power to choose the particular link with the urban area, it would consider the long-term development, distribution of population and the transport need in northwest New Territories apart with financial considerations such as capital cost? And, secondly, upon a route being identified and recommended to the Government, does the Government have any definite plan to implement?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT: Sir, I think I have already answered the first part of Mr. TAI's question in my main reply. As to the second part, the Government has a completely open mind on the matter and when the KCRC recommendations are to hand, Government before taking a firm independent decision will certainly give very full consideration to the overall development strategy, the transport needs of the community and the economics of each of the options. And, indeed, it will take into account the findings of the Second Comprehensive Transport Study which is presently underway and certainly the views of the district boards concerned and the TAC will be sought before a final decision is taken.

### **Trafficking and abuse of mandrax**

8. DR. CHIU asked: *Will Government inform this Council whether there is any increase in the quantity of methaqualone (mandrax) seized in 1986 as compared with the previous three years and, if so, what measures will be taken to curb the illegal importation, trafficking and abuse of such psychotropic drugs?*

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: Sir, 24 422 mandrax tablets were seized in 1983. 10 649 mandrax tablets and 152 grams of methaqualone powder (which is the powder used to make mandrax tablets) were seized in 1984. In 1985, 15 666 tablets were seized. The seizures in 1986 amounted to 259 168 tablets and 33.4 kilograms of powder. The increase in 1986 was mainly due to two seizures of large amounts.

Sir, to curb the smuggling and trafficking of mandrax, the Customs and Excise Department and the police are taking the necessary law enforcement measures. The quantities of mandrax seized in recent years particularly 1986, are a manifestation of the efforts of both organisations to reduce the illicit supply in Hong Kong.

The Working Party on the Control of Psychotropic and Non-opiate Narcotic Substances established by the Action Committee Against Narcotics has been watching closely the increase in the abuse of mandrax since 1983. The Government has implemented the following recommendations from the working group as endorsed by Action Committee Against Narcotics:

—Firstly, the sending of returns to ACAN of the import, export, manufacture, stock holding and consumption trends of such non-opiate drugs of abuse;

- Secondly, the provision of drug identification charts and kits containing samples of mandrax to police and customs officers;
- Thirdly, amendments to the report form of the Central Registry of Drug Abuse to include mandrax as one of the drugs that could be abused by persons reported to the registry; and
- Fourthly, appropriate training for social workers.

Again, in December 1986 ACAN endorsed the working party's further recommendations of which the following have now been approved by the government departments concerned and are being implemented:

- First, a large scale school survey on psychotropic drug abuse including mandrax covering some 100 000 students in 120 schools is being planned for this year;
- Second, the erection of conspicuous notices at the border crossing points warning travellers to China that it is illegal for them to bring such psychotropic drugs into Hong Kong without a doctor's prescription; and
- Third, measures to strengthen publicity and preventive education through television announcements, posters and school talks.

To sum up, in practice the Government has accepted all the recommendations of the working group relevant to mandrax and has implemented them or is in the process of doing so and I must stress, the Action Committee Against Narcotics and the Government view with great concern the problem of the abuse of mandrax and will continue to look hard at other possible ways of dealing with it.

DR. CHIU: *Sir, in view of the alarming 16-fold increase of seizure of methaqualone, will the Government inform this Council whether Hong Kong is the main market for this popular illegal psychotropic drug? If yes, how many prosecutions concerning illegal trafficking of such drugs were instituted in 1986, and what were the penalties in general?*

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: Sir, to answer the first part of my hon. Friend's question, we have no evidence at all that Hong Kong is a particularly large market for this type of drug. It may well be that a lot of these pills and powders that were seized were, in fact, in transit through Hong Kong rather than destined for consumption here. Nevertheless, there is plenty of evidence that trafficking in this drug for local consumption is going on. To answer the second part of my hon. Friend's question, 55 persons were prosecuted for mandrax-related offences in 1984, 69 in 1985 and 192 up to the end of September in 1986.

DR. CHIU: *I think the last part of my question has not been answered. I asked: What were the penalties in general?*

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: I haven't, of course, got all the sentences for all these cases, but a couple of examples of sentences in 1986: there was one case involving 33.6 kilograms of methaqualone powder and the sentence was one of five years' imprisonment. Another case, trafficking in 46 000 mandrax tablets, the offender was sent to gaol for four years.

MR. CHEONG-LEEN: *Sir, as apparently the abuse of soft drugs among young people is still on the increase, can the police be asked to step up their inspection in places where young people frequent and where these soft drugs are reported to be peddled, such as discos and nightclubs?*

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: Sir, the police are only too well aware of the sort of places where this trafficking activity is going on and I will certainly pass on to them my hon. Friend's message that they should step up their activities there.

MR. YEUNG: *Sir, will the Secretary for Security elaborate on how those 120 schools are chosen and what are the Government's expectations of this large-scale school survey?*

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY: I'm afraid, Sir, I have not got the details on how the schools were chosen but, in theory, they should have been chosen on a totally random basis. But certainly I can give my hon. Friend the answer in writing. (See Annex I) What we hope to get out of this survey, of course, is a more accurate picture of what exactly is going on as regards the consumption of these psychotropic drugs, including mandrax, by young people, and then we will know how to direct our all-important message to them, which is 'don't start.'

### **Salaries tax**

9. MR. SZETO asked (in Cantonese): *Since the financial position of the Government has already improved, will the Government inform this Council whether it will consider the following issues on salaries tax in the forthcoming Budget—*

- (a) to raise the personal allowance by taking into account the rate of inflation;*
- (b) to allow married couples to be taxed as separate individuals if both husband and wife have incomes; and*
- (c) to enlarge the limit of each progressive tax band for the purpose of calculating salaries tax on the net chargeable income?*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Sir, in the preparation of the Government's annual Budget, we, of course, consider all aspects of taxation, including the issues raised in my hon. Friend's question. But in so doing we take into account not only the position of individual taxpayers but also the overall structure of our taxation system and our budgetary situation. I can say no more until I deliver my Budget in this Council.

MR. SZETO WAH (in Cantonese): *Sir, could the Financial Secretary inform this Council whether according to the trend of the financial situation in the past 10 months, we will have a larger surplus than estimated at the end of the financial year?*

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT: I would say that does not relate to the original question, Mr. SZETO.

MRS. TAM (in Cantonese): *Sir, if it is Government's intention to cut direct tax, personal salaries tax or profits tax, which of the two will be considered first?*

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT: The Financial Secretary has given a comprehensive reply to almost every question that you could think of with regard to this subject. He is giving full consideration to every matter connected with taxation in his preparation of his Budget Speech, and he has said that.

MRS. NG (in Cantonese): *Can I ask how many couples are paying more in tax than the income derived from one of the couple? Is it the Government's intention to promote family life education by adopting such a taxation system by encouraging one of the married couple to stay home to take care of the children instead of going out to work?*

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT: I think this too falls beyond the limit of the original question.

MR. MARTIN LEE: *Sir, without trying to get the Financial Secretary to reveal his Budget prematurely, may I ask this: If married couples had been taxed individually last year, what effect would that have been on the revenue based on last year's figures?*

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT: I think I must also rule that question out of order, Mr. LEE, since it's not strictly related to the original question. We'll pass on to the next question.

### **Video game centres**

10. MR. CHUNG asked: *Will Government inform this Council whether the numbers of:*

- (a) offences by operators of video game centres for breach of licensing conditions; and*
- (b) other offences involving violence which occurred in video game centres*

*have shown an increasing trend during the previous 12 months and, if so, what are the reasons for such a trend and what measures will the Government take to resolve this problem?*

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, in 1986, a total of 3 330 summonses were issued in respect of breaches of licence conditions, mainly for operating unapproved games and machines and for admitting underaged persons to adult centres. This represents a drop of nearly 1 000 summonses compared to the 1985 figure of 4 362.

As to the second part of the question, I am advised by the Commissioner of Police that amusement game centres are not more prone to crime than other places where the public congregate. In 1986, 143 cases of violent crimes were reported to have occurred in the some 680 amusement game centres throughout the Territory. The three most common offences which occurred in amusement game centres were serious assaults, robberies and criminal damage to property. I'm not able to provide a comparison, Sir, with the previous year since statistics on crimes which occurred in amusement game centres were not kept separately in 1985.

MR. CHUNG: *Sir, could the Chief Secretary inform this Council whether any licence has been revoked for the reason that the operators have failed to control the game centre properly or have allowed undesirable elements to congregate in the centres?*

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, in 1986 the Licensing Authority on two occasions refused to renew licences. One case involved a children's centre when 24 charges were brought against the operator, all resulting in convictions—21 for additional machines and three for admitting over-age persons. In the other case, involving an adult centre, there was a record of 21 offences operating unapproved machines. I'm grateful, Sir, to Mr. CHUNG for raising this question because we are not entirely satisfied with the existing arrangements for the licensing and control of amusement game centres which are presently provided in the Miscellaneous Licensing Order which dates back from 1933, and that Ordinance was not specifically enacted for the control of such establishments and we do not regard the present situation as being very satisfactory. Therefore, an Amusement Game Centre Bill is being prepared and will be put before this Council for consideration within this present Legislative Council session. It's proposed in the Bill that the Licensing Authority should be empowered to suspend a licence for a period in addition to penalties being imposed by the court, and it will generally tighten up on the licensing of such centres.

## **Written answers to questions**

### **Housing strategy review**

11. DR. LAM asked: *With regard to the housing strategy review which is being conducted by the Housing Branch, will Government inform this Council of the objective of the review and how public consultation will be conducted?*

SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION: Sir, the purpose of the review is to examine the demand for, and supply of, public and private housing up to the year 2001; and to devise a strategy to satisfy the identified housing demands in the most effective manner.

It is intended to have wide public consultation, including district boards and other interested bodies.

### **Review of the provision and control of child care centres**

12. MR. HUI asked: *With regard to the review on child care centres conducted by Social Welfare Department, will Government inform this Council of the progress made thus far?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Sir, child care centres, as defined under the Child Care Centres Ordinance, include any premises where more than five children under the age of six years are received for the purposes of care and supervision during part of the day or for a longer period. They include creches for children under two years old, and nurseries for children aged from two to six years. Several aspects of these services are at present being reviewed by the Social Welfare Department.

There are at present 19 day creches. A recent study of these facilities revealed that a high percentage of those enrolled or wait-listed did not appear to meet the income and social need criteria. The Social Welfare Department has also examined the policy on the provision of day creches, the expansion of which has been suspended since 1979 on the advice of the Social Welfare Advisory Committee. The committee will be consulted again on the future development of this service.

The Social Welfare Department has recently also conducted a review on the control of child care centres. The review has recommended certain changes to improve the inspection arrangements, and more detailed guidance is being issued to staff on their enforcement of the Child Care Centre Ordinance and Regulations.

In addition, the planning and provision of child care centres are being discussed in the context of the Five Year Plan Review for Social Welfare Development now in progress.

### **Noise nuisance at Richland Gardens**

13. MR. POON asked: *With regard to the aircraft servicing and maintenance centre located near Richland Gardens in Kowloon Bay, considerable noise is being emitted in the course of repairing and testing aircraft and when aircraft are towed*

*into and out of the centre, thus seriously affecting the residents of the gardens. Will the Government inform this Council:*

- (a) whether, prior to the construction of Richland Gardens, consideration had been given to the close proximity of the site to the servicing and maintenance centre, which would make it unsuitable for residential use;*
- (b) whether there are any remedial measures to reduce the impact of noise pollution on residents in Richland Gardens, for example, restriction on the working hours of the aircraft servicing and maintenance centre, and checks on the noise level to ensure that it does not exceed that prescribed by the authorities?*

SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS: Sir, the land occupied by Richland Gardens Private Sector Participation Scheme was rezoned from 'Industrial' to 'Residential' by the Lands Development Policy Committee in October 1981. At that time, the demand for urban residential land exceeded the demand for industrial land, and sites for residential development on the scale of Richland Gardens were scarce and urgently needed.

Before the development began, both the Government and the developer were aware of the need to take account of the noise generated from the airport in the design. For the majority of the 22 blocks noise from the airport, mainly from aircraft taking off and landing is within acceptable limits. It is similar to noise levels experienced by other residential areas close to the airport, and does not take place during the night.

However, there is a noise problem for some of the blocks closest to the airport, in particular for those flats facing directly the HAECO premises and the air cargo complex, as a result of aircraft maintenance and cargo handling, at night.

Aircraft maintenance throughout the 24 hours of the day is essential to the efficient operation of the airport. A similar situation applies to cargo handling. However, I understand that the developer has had discussions with HAECO and other organisations to see how noise levels can be reduced, and that there has already been some improvement in the situation.

The whole question of airport noise is under review, and the Civil Aviation Department has let a consultancy to examine this problem, including consideration of remedial measures to reduce the noise levels affecting Richland Gardens. The Environmental Protection Department will provide considerable input to this study. The consultants are expected to report before the end of this year.

### **Rehousing of boat dwellers and fire prevention measures**

14. MR. LIU asked: *As it appears that the extent of overcrowding of dwelling boats in the Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter may be one of the factors which caused a*

*recent fire to spread rapidly and created great difficulties for the firemen in attempting to put out the blaze, will Government inform this Council:*

- (a) whether the Government has any immediate plan to rehouse the boat dwellers in order to improve the overcrowded conditions in the Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter; and*
- (b) since it is likely that most dwelling boats are poorly-equipped with fire prevention equipment, will Government consider assisting the boat dwellers to step up fire prevention measures so as to reduce the potential loss of lives and properties in case a similar fire breaks out in future?*

SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION: Sir, Government recognises the problems caused by overcrowding of dwelling boats in typhoon shelters. In addition to the fire risks created by this phenomenon, the boats occupy valuable typhoon shelter space and they also generate environmental and hygiene problems. In order to contain the size of the problem, all typhoon shelters were gazetted as Prescribed Areas in 1985-86. All the existing dwelling boats in the typhoon shelters were licensed and no new dwelling boats were allowed to enter them. The Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter was gazetted in November 1985.

The number of dwelling boats in the Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter has decreased since 1985 due to sinking of boats and also through the rehousing of occupants by the normal housing offers made by the Housing Department. The recent fire in the shelter rendered homeless 242 families (1 153 persons) who are now being rehoused. A further 364 families (1 752 persons) will be rehoused in phased clearances in the next 18 months. There will then be 360 families (1 970 persons) remaining in the shelter and it is anticipated that they will also be rehoused by the mid-1990s.

When the Shipping and Port Control (Dwelling Vessels) Regulations were drafted, consideration was given to require the provision of fire fighting equipment on dwelling boats. In recognition of the financial situation of boat dwellers, it was decided that fire fighting appliances would not be required by law. However, most dwelling boats have onboard some form of fire-fighting equipment such as fire buckets, blankets and so on which are able to extinguish small domestic fires. The fire boats of the Fire Services Department patrol daily the fairways and fire access. Fire prevention broadcasts and fire exercises are also conducted on a regular basis and pamphlets on fire safety measures are placed in Marine Department's licensing offices for year round distribution. Additionally, Marine Department is liaising with boat dwellers and fishermen representatives to advice them to acquire fire fighting equipment for their dwelling vessels.



## Statement

### Extended Housing Redevelopment Programme

SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION: Sir, on 18 December 1985, the Secretary for Housing submitted to this Council a comprehensive report on the extended redevelopment programme. Over a year has since elapsed and I should like to summarise the progress that has been made since that time for this Council's information. Action has been taken concurrently on a number of fronts and I will first report on the legal action and investigation aspects of the matter.

My colleague, the Attorney General, also spoke in this Council on 18 December 1985 on the possibility of initiating legal proceedings against those contractors involved if there is sufficient evidence to establish a case that those contractors may be held responsible in law for the defects. The Housing Department has continued to assist the Legal Department in its investigations. As a result of these inquiries, legal proceedings have been commenced against one contractor and the anticipated hearing date is early 1988. These investigations are continuing.

The Commissioner, Independent Commission Against Corruption has informed me that their investigation is expected to be completed by April this year. About 150 people, either locally or overseas, have been interviewed and a report covering the greater part of the investigation has been forwarded to the Legal Department for appraisal.

Turning to the rehousing of the tenants in 26 category I and II blocks, Housing Department staff have spared no effort to encourage tenants to move to new homes as soon as possible. This has included visits in the evenings to discuss with tenants their particular requirements to ensure that they may be offered the most suitable accommodation; a first call on all available vacancies including a wide range of flats in new urban estates, and making available flats in existing estates at a similar rent to that which they are currently paying if desired. Tenants are also given priority in purchasing Home Ownership Scheme flats.

As a result of this intensive activity, the clearance of the three category I blocks scheduled to be completed by the end of this year is proceeding ahead of programme. Of the 1 283 families residing in these blocks in November 1985, 944 have either already moved or have accepted new accommodation, leaving 339 families of 26.4 per cent yet to choose their new home. Good progress also is being made on the clearance of the 23 category II blocks where final clearance is scheduled for July 1989. Of the 14 029 families involved, 5 878 have already moved or have signed up to do so, representing 42 per cent of the total in 30 per cent of the programmed time. It is also worth noting that so far 2 312 families have taken the opportunity to purchase new HOS flats.

Very good progress is also being made on the clearance of commercial tenants which again is ahead of schedule.

During the remaining life of these blocks, and prior to their demolition, their condition will continue to be strictly monitored by teams of specialists. This is an ongoing and systematic operation which is intensified during typhoon conditions. The system functioned very satisfactorily during 1986.

Until all blocks are finally cleared, any necessary maintenance and repair work will be carried out.

With regard to the redevelopment programme, the completion of the two new replacement blocks at Kwai Fong Estate, which will provide 905 flats has been advanced to May and July this year, and construction work is already progressing on five more supplementary sites. These sites at Kwai Chung, Shun Tin, Chuk Yuen, Sham Shui Po, and Shek Lei will, on completion at the end of next year, produce a further 5 000 flats. In the meantime, and with the co-operation of Secretary for Lands and Works, further additional urban sites are being actively sought.

Finally, I can report that the Housing Department, assisted by specially appointed consultants and a new in-house team, is currently completing plans for a comprehensive modernisation programme of the authority's older housing stock. This will include proposals for the redevelopment of the sites vacated by the demolition of the 26 blocks, and will provide the blue print for the extended redevelopment programme for the future.

## **Government Business**

### **Motions**

#### **MAGISTRATES ORDINANCE**

THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT moved the following motion: That

- (a) the Third Schedule to the Magistrates Ordinance be amended in paragraph 3 by adding, after item (8), the following—

(L.N. 161/86.)           ‘(9) Any offence against the Road Traffic (Village Vehicles) Regulations 1986.’;

- (b) the amendment in paragraph (a) of this resolution shall come into operation on 2 February 1987.

He said: Sir, I move the resolution in my name under section 18E of the Magistrates Ordinance (Chapter 227).

The purpose of this resolution is to amend the Third Schedule to the Ordinance so that for any offence against the Road Traffic (Village Vehicles)

Regulations 1986, which were made by the Governor in Council on 8 July 1986, the defendant may plead guilty by letter addressed to the magistrate rather than do so by having to appear in court. The amendment in this resolution will come into effect on 2 February 1987, the same effective date as that for the Road Traffic (Village Vehicles) Regulations 1986.

Sir, I beg to move.

*Question put and agreed to.*

## **INTERPRETATION AND GENERAL CLAUSES ORDINANCE**

THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY moved the following motion: That the Societies Ordinance be amended—

- (a) in section 19 by deleting ‘\$5,000’ and substituting the following—  
‘\$100,000’;
- (b) in section 20(1) by deleting ‘\$1,000’ and ‘\$5,000’ and substituting respectively the following—  
‘\$10,000’ and ‘\$50,000’;
- (c) in section 20(2) by deleting ‘\$2,000’ and ‘\$5,000’ and substituting respectively the following—  
‘\$50,000’ and ‘\$100,000’;
- (d) in section 21 by deleting ‘\$5,000’ and ‘\$10,000’ and substituting respectively the following—  
‘\$50,000’ and ‘\$100,000’;
- (e) in section 22 by deleting ‘\$20,000’ and substituting the following—  
‘\$50,000’;
- (f) in section 24 by deleting ‘\$3,000’ and substituting the following—  
‘\$15,000’;
- (g) in section 25 by deleting ‘\$3,000’ and substituting respectively the following—  
‘\$15,000’;
- (h) in section 29(2) by deleting ‘\$1,000’ substituting the following—  
‘\$5,000’;

- (i) in section 40(3) by deleting '\$2,000' and substituting the following—  
'\$10,000'; and
- (j) in section 41(2) by deleting '\$1,000' and substituting the following—  
'\$5,000'.

He said: Sir, I move that the draft resolution of the Legislative Council for the increase of fines in the Societies Ordinance be adopted.

The draft resolution proposes to increase the maximum fines for a number of offences in the Societies Ordinance.

The objects of the draft resolution are three-fold:

first, to restore the real levels of the fines in these provisions;

second, to remove an apparent imbalance in the level of fines which resulted when some of the fines under the Ordinance were increased in 1982; and

third, most important of all, to emphasise the Government's drive to tackle triads firmly.

The Societies Ordinance was enacted in 1949. A number of amendments were made in 1982 to deal with the problem of triad infiltration into martial arts associations and some fines were increased. But other fines have remained unchanged, most since 1957 or 1961 or 1964. Clearly such fines have lost their impact with the passage of time.

In April 1986, the Fight Crime Committee issued for public consultation, a 'Discussion Document on Options for Changes in the Law and in the Administration of the Law to Counter the Triad Problem'. One of the options in the document was to revise the fines available under the Societies Ordinance. District boards and district fight crime committees strongly supported this option. Eight members spoke in favour of it during the adjournment debate in this Council in July 1986.

In order to bring the fines up-to-date with respect to inflation, a five-fold increase is necessary. This level of increase is proposed for those sections which do not deal with triad related or other serious offences (that is sections 24, 25, 29(2), 40(3) and 41(2)).

Although they are not directly related to triad membership, two of the offences (that is sections 20(1) and 21) involve membership of unlawful societies in general and allowing premises to be used by such societies. These offences are considered serious and adequate penalties need to be available. Sir, 10-fold increase, which is in line with the increasing purchasing power of individuals since 1960, is proposed.

Three of the sections (that is 19, 20(2) and 22) are frequently used in triad cases. One is the offence of being an office bearer of an unlawful society,

invariably a triad society. The second is of being a triad member. The third involves inciting someone to become a member of an unlawful society, and again the offender is invariably a triad member. Offences against these sections must be firmly dealt with. It is proposed that the fines under these sections should be increased more significantly than the others, from \$5,000 (set in 1961) to \$100,000 for section 19, from \$2,000 (set in 1964) to \$50,000 for a first offence and from \$5,000 to \$100,000 for subsequent offences under section 20(2) and from \$20,000 (set in 1982) to \$50,000 in section 22.

Sir, I beg to move that the draft resolution be adopted.

*Question put and agreed to.*

### **First Reading of Bill**

#### **RATING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987**

*Bill read the First time and ordered to be set down for Second Reading pursuant to Standing Order 41(3).*

### **Second Reading of Bills**

#### **RATING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987**

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY moved the Second Reading of: 'A Bill to amend the Rating Ordinance'.

He said: Sir, I rise to move the Second Reading of the Rating (Amendment) Bill 1987.

The purpose of this Bill is to repeal the provisions in the Rating Ordinance regarding the rates relief scheme with effect from 1 April 1987 and to make other minor amendments to the Ordinance.

The current rates relief scheme limits the amount of rates increase for a property in any year to a percentage of the rates payable in the preceding year, so that, if the rates of any property are increased substantially on a general revaluation, the increase is phased in over a period of time. At present, the limit is 20 per cent over the amount paid in the immediately preceding year. The limit is imposed until the rate-payer is paying the full increased rates resulting from the revised rateable value of his property. During the current financial year, approximately 390 400 rated tenements, that is 47.2 per cent of the total, have been subject to rates relief. In 1987-88 this would reduce to 65 500 or 7.3 per cent of the total if the present rates relief scheme were to be continued.

The rates relief scheme has always been regarded as a temporary concession. And it was envisaged that the changes caused by a revaluation should be fully implemented before the next revaluation takes effect. Otherwise, some ratepayers will continue indefinitely paying rates based on compounded increases on the amount payable in 1983—that is before the last general revaluation in 1984—and not on the current rateable value. To some extent this defeats the object of carrying out the revaluation in the first place. The abolition of the rates relief scheme before the next general revaluation is designed to ensure that the last general revaluation and any consequential re-distribution of the rates burden will be fully implemented before the next revaluation takes effect. It is therefore proposed to abolish the rates relief scheme with effect from 1 April 1987.

The Rating and Valuation Department is currently conducting a further revaluation of tenements intended to take effect from 1 April 1988. Current projections are that overall increases will be around 10 per cent with fairly similar increases for most types of property. There will be some cases, of course, where the increases will be higher.

The abolition of the rates relief scheme will have some impact on public housing tenants, but the burden will not be great. The actual average monthly increase in rates resulting from the proposed abolition of the scheme will be only \$1.97 for Housing Authority tenants currently obtaining rates relief, and any such increases will only be reflected in the biennial rent reviews made after 1 April 1987. In the meantime, the increases will be absorbed by the Housing Authority.

The overwhelming majority (over 94 per cent) of private domestic units will be unaffected by the abolition of the rates relief scheme. For the 37 900 units that are affected, the average additional monthly rates will be only \$22.64.

Sir, clause 7 of the Rating (Amendment) Bill 1987 seeks to give effect to the proposal to abolish the rates relief scheme by repealing section 19 of the Rating Ordinance, which provides for the scheme. Clause 1(2) provides that the relevant amendment, if enacted, should come into effect on 1 April 1987.

The other amendments which are proposed are designed mainly to clarify certain points. The details are set forth in the Explanatory Memorandum of the Bill. Members will observe that the amendments deal with such matters as the handling of rate-payers' grievances, the principles upon which rateable values are to be ascertained, the combined rating of certain tenements, refunds of rates, and so on. The amendments are of a technical or procedural nature and are designed to improve the administration of the Ordinance.

Sir, I move that the debate on this motion be adjourned.

*Motion made. That the debate on the Second Reading of the Bill be adjourned.*

*Question put and agreed to.*

**MAGISTRATES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986****Resumption of debate on Second Reading (14 January 1987)**

MR. MARTIN LEE: Sir, section 27 of the Magistrate Ordinance has been repeatedly interpreted by the Supreme Court of Hong Kong as enjoining a magistrate to amend a defective complaint, information or summons without giving any discretion whatsoever to the trial magistrate, who may feel disinclined to make the amendment because it is unfair to the defence.

Some 15 years ago when I was a junior appearing before a fair-minded magistrate, I faced a similar difficulty. The magistrate was extremely reluctant to amend a defective summons but felt obliged to do so because of the mandatory language used in section 27. He amended the summons; but suggested to me to take the matter up with the Bar Committee in order that the Attorney General might be persuaded to amend section 27 so as to give the magistrate a discretion in the matter—a discretion which is given to judges in the High Court and the district court.

I duly took the matter up with the Bar Committee; and the Bar Committee duly took it up with the then Attorney General. Nothing happened.

A few years later, the Bar Committee and the Council of the Law Society made a joint representation on 4 November 1977 to the then Attorney General seeking an amendment to section 27, and enclosing a copy of the proposed draft amendments.

A draft Bill was subsequently sent to both professional bodies on 18 January 1979 to give effect to the suggestion. The then Bar Committee's acceptance of the Bill was conveyed in a letter dated 1 May 1979. Subsequently, the then Attorney General suggested further alterations to the draft Bill and a fresh draft was then prepared, a copy of which was sent to the Bar Committee on 28 November 1980.

By this time I was chairman of the Hong Kong Bar Association. I was not happy with the proposed Bill and I gave my views to the then senior assistant law draftsman in charge of the matter by letter dated 18th May 1981. I received a prompt reply dated 22 May 1981 from the then acting deputy law draftsman saying that the person in charge of the matter was then on leave.

I did not know when he returned from leave; but the matter was completely forgotten until I asked my question in this Council towards the end of 1985.

My present purpose is not to enquire as to why there has been such a gross delay before the present Bill is finally before this Council. I am sure the delay was not deliberate on the part of the Attorney General or his predecessors, although the prosecution in magistrates' courts have had a distinct advantage so long as section 27 remains unchanged. Sir, I believe that it is better late than never.

As for the magistrate who had given me the inspiration so many years ago, I regret to say that his distinguished career came to a very abrupt end. About eight years ago, he did something very strange one day. He admitted every defendant coming up before him to bail in the sum of \$1, including a number of defendants charged with rather serious offences. He was immediately removed from the bench. Sir, I only hope that his behaviour had not been brought about by his repeated frustration in having to amend defective complaints, information and summonses because of section 27.

Sir, in supporting the Bill, I cannot but comment that it has taken three Attorneys General and more than 12 years to produce it—enough time to produce at least four baby elephants.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Sir, I have today caused enquiries to be made to ascertain whether the senior assistant law draftsman who went on leave in 1981 has returned. If he has, I shall tell him as Mr. Martin LEE believes that it is better late than never.

Sir, amongst the host of issues with which Attorneys General have to deal, some, like an elephant, stand out more than others. The amendment of section 27 was clearly a less visible and less threatening animal. Whatever the reasons for the passage of time in this case, Members may find it reassuring to discover that even the laziest river eventually finds the sea.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill read the Second time.

*Bill committed to a Committee of the whole Council pursuant to Standing Order 43(1).*

## **JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986**

### **Resumption of debate on Second Reading (7 January 1987)**

MR. HU: Sir, the Jubilee Sports Centre has entered its fifth year of operation. The Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club has concluded that it should disengage itself from the centre so as to limit its involvement in non-racing activities. At the same time, financial autonomy for the centre will allow better use of its facilities and resources, and greater freedom in fund raising activities such as sponsorships. With the generous endowment to \$350 million from the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club to allow the centre to function autonomously, the Jubilee Sports Centre will soon enter a new phase. The Bill before us provides the necessary legal framework for this to happen.

The Bill will establish a trust fund, which will be vested in a Committee of Trustees to be appointed by the Jubilee Sports Centre Board. The Committee of



Trustees will have the unenviable task of ensuring that the trust fund would last for 20 years on the one hand, and providing sufficient money to the board to support its programme on the other. As such the relationship between the Committee of Trustees and the board must be so that while the Committee of Trustees is allowed to exercise its trusteeship to safeguard the fund, it should also be responsive to the needs of the board. Difficulties may arise if the power to apply the fund is vested solely in the Committee of Trustees without reference to the wish of the board. The Legislative Council ad hoc group set up to examine this Bill proposes an amendment to provide that the Committee of Trustees will apply the fund in such manner and to such extent as the board may advise, for the object of meeting the expenses of the sports centre, for a period of not less than 20 years. Mr. Hilton CHEONG-LEEN will move an amendment to the new section 17F at the Committee stage.

The ad hoc group notes that with the creation of the Committee of Trustees responsible for the trust fund, the board nevertheless retains the responsibility for dealing with moneys and other assets, including donations, not designated for the trust fund. This will allow flexibility in dealing with other donations and sponsorships received by the sports centre from various sources and in various forms.

The Ordinance will now provide for two different sets of financial statements and reports to be tabled at this Council by the board and the Committee of Trustees respectively. Administratively it would be desirable for them to be tabled in this Council simultaneously. The provisions in the principal Ordinance and the Bill allow this to be done.

Arising from the removal of the need for consultation with the Jockey Club in respect of appointment of members to the board by the Governor, the Bill proposes to do away with the maximum number of board members in the principal Ordinance. Instead, it provides for a minimum membership of two, that is the Financial Secretary or his representative and not less than one member appointed by the Governor. In reality it is very unlikely that the future board will have just the minimum number of board members, but the ad hoc group feels that a minimum of two members will open up the theoretical possibility of having a board absolutely controlled by the chairman. As a matter of principle, it is proposed that the board should consist of the Financial Secretary or his representative and not less than two other members, instead of one, appointed by the Governor. Mr. Andrew WONG will move an amendment to the new section 12(1) at the Committee stage.

Sir, one of the main purposes of establishing the Jubilee Sports Centre is to provide expert coaching in a wide number of sports, together with facilities necessary for practice, with a view to raising the standard of performance of sports in Hong Kong and stimulating increased participation in sports and recreation generally. The centre has now completed the first two stages of development, that is, first stage being from 1977 to 1983 with emphasis on the

construction of the centre, and second stage being from 1983 up to now when the board guided the centre to perform its designated work with all recurrent cost being borne by the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club. With the efforts of all parties concerned, the working relations with various governing sports bodies have been steadily improved.

The centre is now entering its third stage of development when the centre will be able to make its policy without too much concern on budgetary constraints. The Government must ensure that the centre will play an important part in the overall government policy for sports and recreation. The centre must work closely with the Council for Recreation and Sports, Urban Council and Regional Council so that all four bodies will collectively give the most beneficial and efficient service to the governing sports bodies and other interested parties in the field of sports and recreation. There should be more discussion and communication with the governing sports bodies whose views will be respected and implemented whenever possible.

The centre has already established an excellent reputation as the best training centre in Asia and every effort must be made for our own athletes to receive training in our superb centre where charges are either free or heavily subsidised.

There have been a few outstanding issues, including depreciation, not yet fully resolved between Government and the Jockey Club. The generous endowment fund from the club will resolve all these problems and will place the centre in a favourable position to map out its future strategies. It is gratifying to note that the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club would be willing to consider the centre's requests for further assistance on a case by case basis if such should be necessary. I request that the Government should give similar undertaking as an assurance to the public of its determination to implement a healthy long-term policy on sports and recreation.

Sir, I support the Bill.

SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION: Sir, first of all, I would like to thank Mr. HU for supporting the Bill. I can assure Mr. HU that Government would also be prepared to consider certain request for assistance on an individual basis provided each case could be justified to the satisfaction of the Finance Committee.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill read the Second time.

*Bill committed to a Committee of the whole Council pursuant to Standing Order 43(1).*

**PROBATION OF OFFENDERS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986****Resumption of debate on Second Reading (14 January 1987)**

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill read the Second time.

*Bill committed to a Committee of the whole Council pursuant to Standing Order 43(1).*

**ROADS (WORKS, USE AND COMPENSATION)(AMENDMENT) BILL 1986****Resumption of debate on Second Reading (14 January 1987)**

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill read the Second time.

*Bill committed to a Committee of the whole Council pursuant to Standing Order 43(1).*

**Committee stage of Bills**

Council went into Committee.

**MAGISTRATES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986**

Clauses 1 and 2 were agreed to.

**JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986**

Clauses 1, 2 and 4 were agreed to.

Clause 3

MR. ANDREW WONG: Sir, I move that clause 3 be amended as set out in the paper circulated to Members on 15 January 1987.

*Proposed amendment***Clause 3**

That clause 3 be amended, in the new section 12(1), by deleting ‘one other member’ and substituting the following—

‘two other members’.

The amendment was agreed to.

Clause 3, as amended, was agreed to.

**Clause 5**

MR. CHEONG-LEEN: Sir, I move that clause 5 be amended as set out in the paper already circulated to Members.

*Proposed amendment***Clause 5**

That clause 5 be amended by deleting the new section 17F and substituting the following—

‘Application and object of the fund.      **17F.** The Committee of Trustees shall apply the fund in such manner and to such extent as the Board may advise for the object of meeting the expenses of the sports centre for a period of not less than 20 years from the commencement of this Part.’.

The amendment was agreed to.

Clause 5, as amended, was agreed to.

**PROBATION OF OFFENDERS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986**

Clauses 1 to 4 were agreed to.

**ROADS (WORKS, USE AND COMPENSATION)(AMENDMENT) BILL 1986**

Clauses 1 to 3 were agreed to.

Council then resumed.

**Third Reading of Bills**

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL reported that the

MAGISTRATES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986

PROBATION OF OFFENDERS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986

ROADS (WORKS, USE AND COMPENSATION)(AMENDMENT) BILL 1986

had passed through Committee without amendment and the

JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986

had passed through Committee with amendments, and moved the Third Reading of the Bills.

*Questions put on the Bills and agreed to.*

Bills read the Third time and passed.

3.58 pm

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT: I think before we commence the debate on the adjournment of the Education Commission No. 2 Report, we will have a short break.

4.23 pm

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT: Council will resume.

**Adjournment**

4.23 pm

*Motion made. That this Council do now adjourn—*THE ATTORNEY GENERAL.

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT: As 12 Members have given notice of their intention to speak, I propose to exercise my discretion under Standing Orders 9(7) and 9(8) to allow Members such time as is necessary to complete their speeches, and such time as is then necessary for the Official Member to reply to those speeches, before putting the question on the adjournment.

**Education Commission Report No. 2(1)**

MR. CHEN: Sir, Education Commission Report No. 2 published in September last year covers a very wide range of important subjects which include pre-primary education, language in education, open education, financing of education, teacher preparation and the development of sixth form education. The Education Commission had held lengthy discussions on these subjects, conducted extensive consultation with relevant institutions and finally came up with the recommendations now contained in the report. Because of the importance of these subjects and the far-reaching consequences of the commission's recommendations, Members of this Council had, following the publication of the report, formed a special ad hoc group to study it in detail.

Since its formation, the ad hoc group has met four times. In view of the complexities of the issues involved particularly with regard to sixth form education, it has been decided that two debates should be held on the report. One of them will be devoted solely to sixth form education and the related issues, this debate will be held on 18 February 1987. Sir, today's debate is devoted to subjects other than sixth-form education. Members will be speaking on them except Mr. SZETO Wah who will have to speak on sixth form education as well since he will not be able to attend the next debate.

Members of the ad hoc group generally support the broad principles behind the recommendations made by the Education Commission with regard to the subjects to be discussed at today's debate. Ad hoc group Members will be giving their own comments and suggestions on individual subjects and I would not go into them in detail. One point which Members do share a common view is that although there are certain areas covered by the report which require further deliberation, there are many recommendations which are now ready for implementation. For these recommendations, Members' view is that they should be carried out as soon as possible with no delay.

Sir, this concludes my short introduction to the debate and I will now leave the time to my colleagues to voice their opinion on the areas other than sixth form education covered by the Education Commission Report No. 2. But before returning to my seat, I would like to say a word or two on the subject of bilingual secondary education.

Sir, we all recognise the mother-tongue teaching has definite and significant advantages for the majority of students, especially for those of the lower secondary levels. However, in the context of Hong Kong, its implementation requires very careful consideration and planning. One of the factors that one has to bear in mind is that bilingualism is essential for Hong Kong to retain its position as a leading international centre of finance, trade and industry. Another factor to consider is the likely implications for our existing tertiary education system.

From the point of view of higher education and learning, English language proficiency is an important consideration if English were to continue to be the medium of instruction in tertiary institutions as is generally the case at present. Despite the good efforts made to encourage secondary schools which use Chinese as the instruction medium to strengthen the teaching of English to avert any consequential drop in the standard of English, I still have some doubt that a fall in the standard of the English language as a result of loss of exposure is inevitable and this may carry forward to the post-secondary level. A lower English standard may therefore have far-reaching implications for the policies of our tertiary institutions. For instance, they may have to consider strengthening the teaching of English generally or introducing course-related remedial English classes to upgrade students' English proficiency to enable them to benefit from their courses.

DR. HO: Sir, in this debate, I wish to address on two areas of interest.

*I. Pre-primary services*

At present, there exist a vast number of kindergarten teachers who need to be trained as soon as possible and at different levels. However, at the same time, there are a number of unco-ordinated kindergarten courses of varying durations and depths in content on offer by the tertiary educational institutions. These courses are not recognised by the Government for employment purposes. To rationalise this anomalous situation of supply and demand, I therefore suggest that the kindergarten inspectorate of Education Department be empowered to co-ordinate and to advise the technical institutes, polytechnics, the extramural studies department of the universities, post-secondary colleges and voluntary organisations of good standing in the development and running of training programmes in early childhood education. Participants having successfully completed the requisite requirements of these programmes will become qualified kindergarten teachers. As an incentive for undertaking professional training, a government-sanctioned salary scale must be introduced for qualified pre-school teachers.

Concurrently with the provision of basic training courses for beginner-teachers, workshops and seminars on specialised topics and refresher courses should be organised for experienced teachers, supervisors and administrators, in order to keep them abreast of modern and important developments in the field.

While endorsing a government financial assistance scheme to improve the quality of pre-school education, I have serious doubts about the effectiveness of the recommended 'split contribution factor' approach, which is arbitrary and cumbersome in administration. An enormous amount of time and energy of the kindergarten operators and the kindergarten inspectors will be expended on following the elaborate implementation procedures. In addition, I propose that in deciding on the level of financial subsidies to be given to the non-profit making kindergartens, other programme criteria such as improved facilities, space-pupil ratio, and teaching equipment should also be considered alongside the employment of qualified teachers.

## *II. Open education*

The need for a co-ordinated, systematic development of open education is imminent. However, whether the recommended consortium model is the most appropriate mechanism to organise a comprehensive programme of adult education is open to debate.

The grave criticisms levelled at the consortium are, among others, its rigid excessive control over its participating institutions; the ambiguous relationship and the likely conflict it would probably create between the participating institution and its parent organisation; and its wide-ranging executive power. There are also fears that in a couple of years of operation, the consortium would inevitably develop into a mammoth entity, with a full-fledged administrative and clerical staff, a gigantic team of audio-visual technicians and programmers, a troop of academic staff at all levels and a body of counselling personnel. Furthermore, the consortium would achieve an identity and reputation of its own. Given these favourable conditions, the public, I would predict, would demand that the consortium be upgraded to become a university operated on distance learning methods. This very open university concept has been firmly rejected by the Education Commission.

In the present context of Hong Kong, a myriad of adult education courses are being provided for years by quasi-public institutions of tertiary education, non-profit making organisations, professional bodies and commercial schools. These courses cover a full range of subjects and are operated at various levels. Each institution has its own objectives, characteristics, resources, manpower and specific clientele. It would be unrealistic and presumptuous to expect the consortium to take over these courses and at the same time be able to maintain a harmonious relationship with the existing institutions in the field of adult education.

As I see it, a more practical approach is to establish an Open Education Council with its main functions as follows:

- (i) to co-ordinate and to advise on the priorities in the development of a comprehensive adult education programme, operated by various methods including those of distance learning; linkage between various levels of programmes must be fostered in order to facilitate the adult learners to achieve an orderly progression in their academic pursuits;
- (ii) to advise on the principles of subvention applicable to selected courses and to eligible educational institutions; and
- (iii) to make recommendations on the training of adult education teachers, development of training materials and other facilities for the provision of adult education.

The major distinction between the proposed council and the consortium is the absence of executive function. Adult education programmes and courses can continue to be organised and run by the existing institutions in accordance with



the master plan formulated by the council. The quality of the educational courses can be safeguarded by the supervisory and validation mechanisms already in use by the sponsoring institutions and/or by the Hong Kong Council for Academic Award to be set up. In order to give the proposed council the power necessary to carry out its responsibilities, legislation might have to be enacted. I suggest that the planning committee, as proposed in paragraph VIII.5.63 of the report, should be formed in the nearest future and be asked to study my proposal together with those emerged during the consultation period.

MRS. CHOW: when the 1981 White paper on Pre-primary Services was published, I was impressed by Government's determination to start paying some attention to that area of educational service which had long been regarded by parents as an essential part of their children's development. I was particularly impressed with the way the paper tackled the very important issue of teachers training for the pre-primary sector. Among the measures proposed, I regarded the suggestion to create a new training institute for kindergarten teachers and child care centre staff as a most imaginative and sincere initiative on Government's part to upgrade the standard of this universally demanded service. The speed with which the implementation of this proposal was planned was also welcomed by many supporters.

Now, five and a half years later, I am disappointed to see a backtracking. Instead of setting up the institute as originally planned in September 1984, Government's working party, which was established in 1982 to implement this task, decided against it. The rationale given was that the originally intended combined training function of the institute for both kindergarten teachers and child care centre staff was no longer applicable because of an increase in requirement of the former and a decrease of the latter. How such a discrepancy could have arisen in the planning figures in the space of one year is puzzling. In any case it is difficult to see why, given the rather urgent need to train a large number of kindergarten teachers quickly and continuously, the original scheme was not flexibly adapted for this purpose. Instead, we have now a split system of training undertaken partly by the advisory inspectorate and partly by the Grantham College of Education. This not only gives rise to inconsistencies, it also puts a strain on the inspectorate, which has to compromise its supervising and inspecting functions. Curriculum inspections for many kindergartens is as infrequent as once every two or even three years.

In the meantime 12-week in-service courses for qualified assistant kindergarten teachers are conducted hurriedly to meet the 960 annual target at Grantham. Apart from twice weekly four-hour sessions, plans are underway for evening courses between 5 to 7 pm for four evening a week. Training is on the teachers' own initiative. For day courses teachers are only released when their work load is taken over by colleagues or substitute teachers. One can understand the reluctance of operators to incur extra expenses in engaging substitute teachers. For evening courses, teachers are expected to do it on their own time.

One can imagine their state of mind and receptiveness to training after a whole day's work with small children.

In stepping up present efforts to achieve numbers in qualified assistant kindergarten teachers, attention has been diverted from training qualified kindergarten teachers. More worrying is the lack of mention for training of head teachers or principals of kindergartens, who require the sharpening of leadership and administrative skill for their positions. With present emphasis for numbers, is quality and the right balance of levels of training being neglected or sacrificed? I believe the concept of the institute for training for pre-primary services deserves a closer and more immediate look. It not only provides the opportunity to house all levels of training under one roof, but also offers the exclusive environment for research studies on pre-primary education. It also relieves the advisory inspectorate from training responsibility so that it can concentrate on inspection and supervision. It also means kindergarten inspectors can take on administration as well as curriculum inspection, which will undoubtedly help to eliminate different and sometimes conflicting requirements presently pronounced by primary school inspectors who oversee administration and kindergarten inspectors who oversee curriculum in kindergarten.

Now may I turn for a moment to the split contribution fee assistance approach proposed in the report.

The basis of this approach maintains the existing principle of eligibility. As it is clearly pointed out and I quote, 'financial assistance should continue to be directed toward parents rather than operators, and means-tested, but needs to be extended to more parents!'

Although I agree with the basic thinking that kindergarten education should not be fully aided for some time to come, I do hold the view that it is Government's responsibility to ensure that teachers in kindergartens meet with certain basic qualification, and are paid accordingly. As more qualified teachers come on stream, there will be inevitable pressure to pay them according to the normative scale set out in the report. I therefore support the call for direct subsidy to cover teaching staff salaries instead of the split contribution approach. Apart from the advantage of having a more clear-cut and simple method of subvention, it signifies Government's commitment to an acceptable standard of teaching personnel in kindergartens.

Finally, a \$500 monthly allowance for the head teacher is disproportionate to the responsibility and administrative work load currently undertaken by most kindergarten principals, and must be reviewed as soon as possible.

Sir, before I close, I wish to voice my strong support for all the points made by my colleague the hon. S. L. CHEN regarding the importance of retaining the standard and value of English in Hong Kong.

MRS. NG: Sir, education must be tuned to life and responsive to the changing needs of the community. A review of the development of education in Hong

Kong over the past 20 years will see successive changes to the system in an ever quest for improvement and enhancement—not only more children receive longer, free education, but also they are given a wider choice for further and better quality education. On many other occasions and in this Council, I have said much on the quantity and options of education. At the last debate on the Education Commission Report No. 1, I have also spoken on pre-primary education and specifically on the drawbacks of the JSEA. Certainly, I firmly believe in the need for more and higher level of education and I am in full support of the setting up of a third university, a second and third polytechnic, and an open university. It is encouraging to see all these being actively pursued by the Government and leaders of our community. Today, therefore, I am turning my focus on the quality of education and, in particular, the quality of teachers and teachers' preparation. For without a committed and qualified force of the teaching profession, efforts in expanding channels in education would be completely spoiled.

To meet the demands of a commercial and financial centre, education has become diversified. Technical and commercial studies mushroom and are offered in both secondary schools and technical institutes. This is a development in the right direction and should be able to supply the right personnel to a highly commercialised economy. The quality of the teachers however, has a lot to improve. Although there are graduate teachers, non-graduate teachers from HKTTC remain the main source of supply for teaching commercial subjects up to Form V and even Form VI. It is therefore deemed necessary that we should ensure that the quality of commercial subject teachers be comparable to graduate teachers teaching general subjects. The report recommendation to enable all graduate teachers to become trained is much welcomed. I proposed that there should be similar training opportunities for the non-graduate teachers who are teaching commercial subjects up to Form V level or above. This would not only ensure teaching in a proper methodology but also offer career prospect in this field. Perhaps the Education Commission should give further thoughts in the proper training of teachers in these subjects.

Other than in-service part-time courses of initial training being offered by the colleges of education and HKTTC, I also welcome the refresher courses and further training for teachers offered in some of these colleges. These courses, in the form of short-term block-release courses, allow a high enrolment and hence more teachers to benefit. I hope efforts in this aspect could sustain as it is important that teachers should be kept abreast of current development not only in the subject they teach but also in the field of education itself.

Indeed in the wake of diversification in education and development of technical institutes, I would stress that the effectiveness of such efforts should be kept in view. The authority concerned should conduct regular review of the courses being offered in the technical institutes and see that they are geared to the need and demand of society and should be of practical and realistic use.

Lastly, when I first mentioned that education must be responsive to changes, however, I should add that the system must be simple to administer and to understand. This I refer to the JSEA, SSPA and primary-one admission system and so on that were introduced a few years ago and planned to be enhanced or abolished. The frequent changes and increased sophistication in the various system designed has indeed caused much confusion and I would just like to make a passing remark that the public and the parents in particular would certainly appreciate a contrived but simple and consistent system for them to follow.

MR. CHUNG (in Cantonese): Sir, I support the recommendation in the Education Commission Report No. 2 that the Government should assist in improving the standard of kindergartens and child care centres with a view to formulating a unified pre-school education system.

With the standardisation of kindergartens and child care centres, parents will be able to carry on their employment which would in turn promote indirectly the productivity as well as the economic activities and growth of our community. However, we should examine seriously the ways to attain this goal.

The major recommendation in the report regarding government assistance to parents is by way of payment through an improved fee assistance scheme. Although the proposed 'split contribution factor' approach is slightly too complicated, it should be a fair and feasible measure before a better arrangement is available.

To formulate an overall policy on pre-school education, a set of regulations governing the standard facilities, staffing, salary scale, qualification of teaching staff, teacher/student ratio, curriculum, fee level, supervisory measures and registration of kindergartens and child care centre should be drawn up. To facilitate the enforcement of the regulations, the Education Ordinance should be suitably amended or, alternatively, a new code of practice for pre-school education institutions and kindergartens should be introduced. The Government should then assess carefully the standard of teaching in these institutions in accordance with the established standards. On the other hand, the level of subvention should be determined based on the financial position of individual institutions and the number of parents applying for fee assistance.

Discipline and instruction are essential ingredients in the provision of preschool education. However, the professional qualification and remuneration of kindergarten teachers are equally important. Therefore, apart from implementing a comprehensive in-service training programme for kindergarten teachers, the Government should also draw up a plan to provide pre-appointment training to cater for our long-term needs. As regards the 12-week part-time teachers' training programme proposed in the report, most people feel that it should preferably be extended to a duration of six months. The report also proposed that full-time pre-appointment kindergarten teachers' training

should be deferred. However, I believe the Government should expedite the training programme by providing evening courses for full-time kindergarten teachers and introducing a one-year pre-appointment kindergarten teachers' training course at the colleges of education so that young people who intend to become kindergarten teachers may receive the necessary training geared for developing and improving pre-school education.

I would now talk about open education. Despite the fact that there are already a number of tertiary open education courses in Hong Kong, the demand for such courses is ever-increasing. Hence, even if we are not yet prepared to establish a new autonomous institution to deal with open education, I would support the report's recommendation that a consortium be jointly set up by the existing post-secondary colleges and institutes. Under such an arrangement, the participating colleges and institutes could provide on a temporary basis the venue and facilities for teaching as required by the timetable of the respective courses.

Our society is moving towards a high degree of professionalism in terms of social, industrial, commercial and economic developments. Nonetheless, according to estimated figures, only one out of about 12 secondary school graduates has the chance to receive university education. Thousands of youths are thus forced to go aboard to continue their studies every year. This indicates an urgent need in Hong Kong for an open education programme covering the provision of external degree courses on professional and executive management.

The entire open education programme at tertiary level should lead to different qualifications such as certificate, diploma, degree, master degree and advanced diploma in order to cater for the varied requirements of students. Most important of all, the qualifications which these programmes offer should be recognised equally as far as possible to formal university qualifications. Furthermore, those who have acquired such qualifications should be given exactly the same treatment by employers when they are offered an appointment.

In terms of required facilities and allocation of resources, the average annual subsidy for a sixth form place and a post-secondary place is around \$13,000 and \$50,000 respectively. Given this, priority should be given in the development of higher education in Hong Kong to the open university which brings up talents on a voluntary and self-financed basis.

MR. HUI: Sir, I am pleasantly surprised that already most of my colleagues who have already spoken, chose to speak on pre-primary education although I have been given to understand that my major assignment today was to speak on the same subject. I want to say that I support their suggestions wholeheartedly and that this area of education system deserves a lot more attention than hitherto given by Government.

Now, Sir, it is my turn to express, on behalf of the social services functional constituency, our dissatisfaction towards the Education Commission's findings

on Hong Kong's pre-school education and services. This section of the commission report reflects a half-hearted attitude which probably stems from the writers' negligence of the positive, preventive value of early education programmes as well as their lack of understanding of the problems confronting our kindergartens and child care centres.

The Education Commission's unconvinced attitude is somewhat surprising, considering that kindergarten education has almost become a requisite to enter primary one in Hong Kong. Furthermore, parents of some 415 077 children aged between two and six tend to see eye to eye with the educators in seeking pre-school services for their children. The demand is likely to grow in the foreseeable future, with more working mothers joining the labour force—the figure shot up from 806 000 in 1980 to 985 400 in 1985. The social benefits of pre-primary education conducive to the social, intellectual, physical and emotional development of children cannot be emphasised enough for Hong Kong where family ties are loosening and families are becoming isolated. While we urge that an implementation plan for the proposed longitudinal study on the long-term effects of pre-primary education be drawn up, we must reiterate the importance of forward planning to replace the spontaneous responses to public outcries and remedial measures taken only when things go wrong within our education system.

Sir, to begin with, we see it as Government's responsibility to become more interventionist in its pre-school education policy. It is not enough for Government to provide only fee assistance to parents; non-profit-making kindergarten and child care centre operators need to get more subsidy to cover administrative cost and salary, the latter being the major part of the running expenses. In view of higher staffing standards adopted by most child care centres, increased subvention from Government not only helps raise the quality of pre-school services, but would also enable operators to divert extra resources to providing new services catering to growing needs. Meanwhile, Government would work out the standard fee level which should not go beyond the means of the average family which is having a difficult time trying to cope with increasing fees. Needy families should continue to receive financial support through an improved fee assistance scheme with relaxed income criteria.

Admittedly, our proposal requires the Government to foot a much bigger bill for kindergartens and child care centres. It all boils down to Government's sincerity and willingness to improve the lot of the pre-school population. If Government is truly committed to this task, then it should consider adopting the visiting panel's recommendation made in 1982 that, I hope, 'in the long run, kindergartens should become part of the fully aided sector', like primary and secondary schools.

Apart from additional financial support, Government needs to give more serious thoughts to enforcing unified staffing standards for kindergartens and child care centres. For years, voluntary agencies operating child care centres

have been insisting that all kindergarten teachers and child care workers should have the minimum Form V qualification essential to the proper delivery of decent service to children during their formative years. To our disappointment, the Education Commission took an equivocal non-committal stand on this issue. Thus, we strongly recommend that the proposed staffing structure be revised, gradually phasing out the assistance kindergarten teacher posts presently filled by only Form III graduates; and that only Form V graduates be employed after 1988. While agreeing in general with the proposed staff ratios for kindergarten and child care centres, we suggest that regulations be drawn up to ensure that operators actually adopt and implement the proposed salary scales for qualified staff. In view of their long years of working experience in the field, kindergarten teachers and child care centre staff should participate in the proposed working group, together with parents and representatives from Education Department, Social Welfare Department and training institutes to map out development plans for pre-primary education and services.

Sir, staff training is another area in which we would like to see more Government involvement, in view of the urgent need for adequately trained kindergarten teachers. We therefore suggest that Government should not just accelerate existing part-time teachers courses, but should award equal priority to full-time pre-service training which is most important for preparing kindergarten teachers and child care centre workers for their jobs. For this reason, the long promised training institute, as has been mentioned by Mrs. CHOW, for pre-school education should be set up without further delay. At the same time, efforts should be made to improve the content and expand the qualified kindergarten teacher course to provide in-service training for all existing staff. To speed up the expansion of training facilities, recognition should be made of the specialised courses on pre-school education provided by various training institutions, as mentioned also earlier by Dr. HO. Furthermore, among the many issues related to teachers preparation that merit closer examination is the need for co-ordinated training; there should be basic unified content with specialised elective subjects for the different training courses available. Like a common curriculum, reciprocal recognition of equivalent qualifications and training obtained in similar programmes is one important step towards unification of pre-primary school education and services.

Sir, talking about unification, we learn with relief that at long last, kindergartens and child care centres are considered to have the same roles to play as far as education for children belonging to the same age group is concerned. We believe that unification should be the long-term goal to bring forth efficient supervision and the maintenance of standards for all pre-primary services. However, the Education Commission did not go further than acknowledging the importance of unification. As a matter of fact, its attention in the main was directed towards kindergartens, while ignoring the functions of some 136 child care centres which are looking after at least more than 14 200 children aged between two and six. The crux of the matter lies with the lack of consultation

between the Social Welfare Department and the Education Department which, since the early 1970s, have no common understanding of the aims of pre-school education and the methods to be employed. We hereby recommend that the two departments should get together to deliberate on the overall policy objectives, design a concrete plan for the unification exercise, and work out their respective responsibilities during the merging process.

In so doing, the departments ought to state clearly the relationship between kindergartens and child care centres during the transitional period. This involves close study of a whole series of questions still left unanswered—like will provisions be made for establishing an inspectorate to cater for the large number of kindergartens and child care centres? Should kindergarten teachers attend the well-established in-service training courses for child care workers instead of vice versa? What are the career prospects for kindergarten and child care centre staff after unification? What plans are there for pre-school curriculum planning?

To sum up, Sir, we are not altogether happy with the quiet indifference displayed by the Education Commission towards an issue as vital as pre-school education and services. Until and unless the subject is looked at in the proper perspective, our pre-school services will continue to be provided by untrained staff at standard below par; kindergartens and child care centres will continue to operate as two different types of institutions, each with its own goals and set of rules under the existing *laissez-faire* policy; parents will continue to carry a heavy school fee burden but not getting in return the appropriate kind of education and care for their children; while children will continue to come under oppressive learning systems. Sir, as things now stand, the day when Hong Kong finally gets the proper kind of pre-school education suitable to the growth and needs of our children is still a long way away!

MR. LEE YU-TAI (in Cantonese): Sir, why do we have a 'silent majority' in Hong Kong? How come most Hong Kong people keep quiet on social issues? It is because the Government used to enforce advisory politics in the past, merely seeking advice from certain appointed advisory bodies with a limited membership. Consequently, the lack of participation by members of the public had given rise to public indifference and silence. Take the Education Commission Report No. 1 for instance. The Government had decided to accept all the recommendations in the report before its publication. Hence, even if the public had views to express, they would not be able to alter the decisions made. Therefore, it was difficult to arouse their interest in the discussion of the report. But the handling of Report No. 2 was entirely different. It was first published on September 16 last year, followed by a 3-month public consultation period before reconsiderations were made by the Government. I support the way in which the Education Commission handled its Report No. 2, that is 'to consult before deciding'. I hope the Government will follow such procedure in future



before deciding on any major policy so as to develop the 'advisory form of Government' into an 'Open Government'. Furthermore, the Government should strengthen its communication with the masses and organisations at the grassroots level, taking initiative to approach district boards, area committees, civic bodies and resident associations, so as to educate and transform the 'silent majority' into an 'outspoken and caring majority' and to ensure that government policies are in line with the aspirations of the public.

Chapter VIII of the report sets out in detail the proposals on open education. Basically, I agree that all the proposals could form the base for the initial stage of development. I would also like to raise a few points for Members' consideration. First, the Chinese translation for 'open education' should be '開放教育' rather than '公開教育' because the ideal of 'open education' is to provide opportunities for further studies to students freely, with no restrictions on admission requirements and no limit on the number of places. To translate the term 'open education' as '公開教育' is neither fish nor fowl. The report proposes that the two universities, the two polytechnics and the Hong Kong Baptist College should join together to form a consortium to promote open education. I am in favour of this idea because a consortium will be more saving in resources than the setting up of another independent institution, and it is easier to run too. However, tertiary institutions all have their own 'academic pride' and may not co-operate easily with one another. Therefore, the central administrative organ of the consortium must be reinforced to exercise an effective leadership. If the operation of open education could run smoothly and develop rapidly, we should not excluded the possibility of establishing an independent institution. As open education mainly caters for adult students, the consortium may consider to charge higher course fees, or even consider to retrieve the direct costs while only using public fund to finance the essential administrative costs and expenditure on capital projects. Most adult students are working and so they are willing to pay a reasonable price for further studies in their spare time. To adults who are looking for education opportunities, money does not count all that much. A bursary or loan scheme can be set up to assist individual students with financial problems. But there is no need to allocate an enormous sum to finance all the courses. Many overseas institutions are far more advanced than those of Hong Kong in the promotion of open education. We should therefore adopt a liberal attitude toward overseas institutions which intend to offer distance learning courses in Hong Kong. This will help to alleviate the shortage of tertiary education places in Hong Kong. Public examinations exert immense pressure on local students because after graduating from secondary school, students will be seriously confronted with the threat of elimination in further studies. Mere passes serve no useful purpose; students must attain outstanding results before they can be admitted to universities. Moreover, if matriculants fail to gain entry to university immediately, they would not have a second chance, thus enhancing the evil effects of elimination in public examinations. Therefore, I suggest that the consortium on open education should be established as soon as possible, with the first batch of

students scheduled for admission one or two years before 1990, so as to fit in with the development of the cable television and provide second opportunities for tertiary education.

It is undeniable that the language standard of local students is deteriorating. I do not think that the situation can be thoroughly improved even by providing additional teachers of Chinese in secondary schools and by recruiting expatriate English teachers. Hong Kong is a pragmatic society and its education system is biased toward mathematics and science subjects. The secondary school curriculum, deliberately or unintentionally, places greater emphasis on science subjects. Hence language teaching and cultural education have been overlooked. Imbalance has resulted from an education system which is over-orientated toward utilitarianism. Some critics have alleged that the education system in Hong Kong could only produce 'money-making machines'. Judging from some recent 'causes celebres' like the Carrion and OTB. cases, the deterioration of professional ethics among certain professionals could be attributed to the over-emphasis on utilitarianism inherent in Hong Kong's education system, thus giving rise to misconceived social values. I propose to conduct a comprehensive review of the post-Form 3 curriculum and as far as possible, no distinction into arts and science classes should be made before Form 5, so that secondary school students can receive a balanced education and that existing discrepancies could be rectified. Although our third university has now been named the 'University of Technology', I still wish that its curriculum will take into account the all-round development of a student's character.

The improvement of education depends on the quality of teachers. The report recommends that a fourth college of education should be set up. I think the colleges of education (that is, the existing Northcote College, Grantham College, Sir Robert Black College and the proposed fourth College), together with the HK Technical Teachers' College, should be combined into a federal type of teacher training institution, so as to strengthen efficiency in management. At the same time, this institution should become a statutory body independent of any government department. After restructuring, this body could be free to expand on its own and to consider the awarding of degrees for some of the courses. In addition, it can promote refresher courses or short-term further studies for serving teachers after office hours. The Education Department should also encourage teachers to take up further studies, perhaps even by reducing the number of teaching periods for secondary and primary school teachers. This would further improve teaching efficiency.

By restructuring the colleges of education into an independent institution, the recruitment of teaching staff will not be subject to civil service establishment restrictions and so it would be easier to recruit scholars to improve academic standards.

Sir, I have stated my views and proposals as above. I now await response from the official side.

MR. LI: Sir, I am privileged to be a member of the Council of the University of Hong Kong, the chairman of the Appointments Board of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the former chairman of the Advisory Committee on Graduate Employment of the Hong Kong Polytechnic. I declare my interest in and commitment to education in Hong Kong.

As our future prosperity depends largely on the quality of our human resources, education is of vital importance to Hong Kong. Therefore, the Government's attempts to review the existing educational system and plan for the future development of education through the Education Commission deserve our praise. As the Education Commission Report No. 2 is the blueprint for the future education system, its recommendations warrant the closest scrutiny of all who are interested in our educational system.

Members of the Education Commission, which is chaired by the hon. Dr. Q. W. LEE, are to be commended for their efforts in striving to develop a framework for education as it should be, by endeavouring to improve the current system of education.

Their report contains some constructive recommendations. For example, the call for open education has been welcomed by all who are eager to learn but who cannot attend classes. This proposal deserves serious consideration as it could provide learning opportunities for many sectors of our community, including the handicapped.

However, I find that the Education Commission does not appear to have exhaustively examined the overall framework of education in Hong Kong. Their recommendations have addressed individual issues but it is not apparent that they have considered how these issues inter-relate. Although the report covers education in reasonable detail, it contains its share of misconceptions and errors of emphasis. In particular, the commission has failed to deal with some of the basic problems of the existing educational system.

For example, in addressing pre-primary education in Hong Kong, the emphasis of chapter V in the Education commission report, 'pre-primary services' tends, in my view, to be misplaced. Training of kindergarten teachers is far more important than the very expensive ideas to train local English teachers, especially as they will return to their schools and be under pressure from school principals, colleagues, and pupils to maintain the former methods and to ignore their new found skills. If pre-primary and primary teaching is improved, then all education that follows can be corrected accordingly.

Regardless of some reasonable suggestions in chapter V dealing with preprimary education, the commission fails to recognise the fact that Hong Kong kindergartens are already too highly structured. The last thing we need is a more structured approach.

With regard to the commission's aim to train more kindergarten teachers, the proposed methods are dubious. For example, the suggestion of using lecturers

from other disciplines 'who take an interest in kindergarten education' to lecture and train kindergarten teachers is naive. Would you employ a physicist to teach French? Clearly these areas of child development require specialist lecturers.

We desperately need such specialists in the Education Department, which should be providing a strong curriculum guidance for kindergartens. Instead, we have an obvious shortage of expertise in the department, and hence poor curriculum guidance for kindergartens. Although the Hong Kong Council of Early Childhood Education and Services has been actively adopting a sound and balanced approach to kindergarten education, the teaching in our kindergartens, on the whole, is far from satisfactory. Hong Kong may have to look further afield, to overseas experts, for example, by using the Pre-school Playgroup Association to run courses and to give guidance to trainee teachers.

To the bitter disappointment of those who advocate a more balanced approach to kindergarten education, the Education Department still pays only lip service to 'activity and play' methods. So it is, that for our tiny tots, the great pressure begins in kindergarten. I believe kindergartens should not only be a training ground for primary one but also allow for teaching our little ones social adjustment and manipulative skills. However, the commission has, regrettably, failed to address the issue of pressure so wrongly applied on kindergartens, and how this situation should be rectified.

Many voices have been raised in a collective cry to right the wrongs in our kindergartens, and in other areas of our educational system. For instance, on the whole, training for teachers in Hong Kong is too general and the time allocated for teaching practice in schools is too short. How much can we expect our trainee teachers to learn from their six weeks pre-service practice? The colleges of education must give teachers more training in the field of child development.

As to the problem of the shortage of good in-service training courses for teachers, only if substantially-improved, in-service training courses are introduced would it be possible for Hong Kong to up-grade methods of teaching and to keep up teachers' own standards.

I am not convinced that the commission's proposals for special degrees for heads of primary and special schools are viable or indeed necessary. In fact, I think they could be counter-productive because the proposed Bachelor of Arts degree would be viewed as a 'second class' degree by the academic community at large, and by the teachers concerned. Again, this proposal fails to address the area of real weakness, which is not the academic prowess or promise of heads of primary schools.

In the short run, it would be more appropriate if the universities accepted a teaching qualification plus some years of experience as equal to a first degree for the purpose of entering further degree courses. In time, heads of primary schools could then be chosen from this group.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of the report is its total lack of candour with regard to the forces really at work in the Hong Kong school system. The fact is that the secondary school system is shaped by the A-Level Examination syllabus which is determined by the requirements of the universities. The secondary school system determines the primary school system which in turn determines the kindergarten system. Thus the requirements of a few thousand university students determine the whole of our educational system catering for a million young children of very varied needs and aspirations. The system is a classic case of the tail wagging the dog but the report has simply ignored the real problem, leaving us without a practical solution.

Sir, we have here a report which resembles the curate's egg. In my view, the commission must now speed up their process of assessment and in future adopt a far more analytical, courageous and penetrating approach to the real problem in order to come to grips with the numerous thorny issues which beset our existing educational system. Only through a far, far more comprehensive, honest and realistic analysis of the educational system will the commission fulfil its duties, and will we emerge from the mistakes of the past to a system worthy of our talented and long-suffering young people.

MR. LIU (in Cantonese): Sir, I fully welcome and support the comprehensive and wide-ranging recommendations in the Education Commission Report No. 2. In particular, the commission should be commended for all the efforts it has taken to consult relevant organisations and members of the public in its deliberations on the various related issues in the past 18 months.

Before commenting on specific points in the report, I would like to raise a general question. Since the recommendations in the report are wide-ranging and their financial implications yet to be determined, it seems a wise decision now to start drawing up a set of priorities and a timetable for the implementation of the various recommendations so that the more urgent items could be accorded with priority in the allocation of resources whilst the others will be duly attended to in the overall process of implementation. Moreover, by taking this approach, the Government could utilise with flexibility the resources of the Education Department which is responsible for carrying out most of the recommendations in the report.

As a member of the commercial and industrial sectors, I would like to comment in detail on several items in the report and in particular on medium of instruction and open education.

In regard to the medium of instruction, I fully support the recommendation in the report that equal emphasis should be placed on the use of English and Chinese in schools. Whilst encouraging the use of Chinese as the medium of teaching in secondary schools through a positive subvention policy, the Government should also attach the same importance to the use of English, so that the standard of both languages could be maintained after the implementation of the

new policy. In this connection, I am happy to learn that in a survey recently conducted by the Education Department on the use of Chinese as the medium of instruction in schools after 1988, the response from most secondary schools is encouraging. Only a few schools indicated that they would continue to teach all subjects in English whilst the majority revealed that they were prepared to use Chinese as the medium of teaching for selected subjects. I fully understand that it is very difficult for the school authorities to make a decision on this issue and that the views of the parents must also be taken into account. In view of this, the schools should proceed with a prudent and progressive approach. However, there are recent indications that the situation is indeed encouraging and an impressive progress will soon be made in the use of Chinese as the medium of teaching.

As regards ways of improving the standard of English, it appears that the Education Department has not put forward any effective long-term plans so far apart from announcing that it intended to recruit native English teachers from the United Kingdom to teach in local secondary schools. In view of the fact that it has been suggested in recent years by various quarters that the standard of English in Hong Kong has shown a falling trend, this problem should receive special attention. As an international city, Hong Kong depends upon English as a medium of communication in all its academic, scientific and cultural exchanges as well as its financial and trading activities with the rest of the world. Having had an edge over other places in this respect all along, Hong Kong will suffer a serious setback from this favourable position as a result of a decline in our standard of English. Therefore, I sincerely hope that our community will take a serious view of this matter to ensure a balanced development and improvement in the standard of both English and Chinese.

As for open education, I fully endorse the recommendation in the report that, as a first step, a consortium comprising the five local post-secondary and tertiary education institutions funded by the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee should be set up to promote and develop open education programmes. In fact, an expansion of open education at all levels has been long-awaited. There is a lot of young people in Hong Kong who, for various reasons, were denied the opportunity to receive university education. It is just fair and reasonable to offer a second chance to this group of young people by providing them with sub-degree and degree courses. However, I propose that the courses provided by the consortium should cover as wide a range of subjects as possible. On the other hand, consideration should also be given to developing open education at various levels. For example, the courses should cover subjects which meet the demand for vocational and professional training. Although the Vocational Training Council has been most successful in providing training courses for mechanics and technicians, there is still a need to improve the quality of our labour force in order to achieve greater efficiency and higher productivity. The provision of these courses is necessary if we are to maintain and foster the development of our trade and industry as well as to affirm and enhance our long-term competitiveness with other countries.

The monitoring of the quality of open education at different levels is equally important. I know very well that the work of the consortium is by no means easy. Therefore, the consortium should recruit highly competent and experienced staff at the initial stage of its development. If no suitable candidates are available locally, an overseas recruitment exercise should be conducted.

As a final point, I suggest the Government to consider adopting as a pilot project a scheme which is widely implemented in the United States by establishing several 'community colleges' which provide a wide variety of learning opportunities for adults and youths both in the daytime and in the evening. The establishment of these colleges will probably meet the education needs of young people living in new towns less well-served by public transport.

PROF. POON: Sir, much has been written and said about the language requirements of the people of Hong Kong. I therefore cannot help but repeat a few points on the matter which I feel are important.

Hong Kong is a city of international trade and a place where the east and west meet. As we approach 1997, there is a clear need, on the one hand, to ensure that the use of English does not deteriorate so as to impair the status of Hong Kong as an international trading centre, and on the other to ensure that the languages used in Hong Kong find a common ground of compatibility with those in China. These factors combine to create circumstances which require special consideration of the issue of languages in Hong Kong.

The mother tongue of an overwhelming majority of the people of Hong Kong is Cantonese. From the point of view of pedagogy therefore, pundits in the field of education have concluded, and rightly so, that the medium of instruction up to a certain level in the primary and secondary schools should be Chinese. This will of course, among other things, circumvent the drawbacks of learning through the pocket dictionary for the thousands of school going children in Hong Kong.

A couple of difficulties in the use of Cantonese as the medium of instruction, quite apart from its efficiency in both teaching and learning, is that the oral and the written languages do not match, and its continued and exclusive use would create communication problems with China when Hong Kong becomes a Special Administrative Region. In the long run therefore, the medium of instruction up to an identified level in secondary schools should be Putonghua. Unlike Cantonese, the oral and the written language in Putonghua are evenly matched, and this should help in improving proficiencies in the Chinese language. A change from Cantonese to Putonghua as the medium of instruction would not be as difficult as a change from Cantonese to English or English to Cantonese because there is only one kind of written Chinese.

From this point of view, I welcome the recommendation for the provision of additional Chinese teachers in the Education Commission Report No. 2. My only regret is that the commission has not made adequate recommendations

relating to the use of Putonghua in schools in that report. A very brief statement on the matter is contained on page 20 of the report. More needs to be done in this area and I suggest, Sir, that the Government should consider the strengthening of the teaching of Putonghua in schools seriously with a view to replacing the medium of instruction from Cantonese to Putonghua gradually, at the appropriate time.

In passing, I would like to remind the Council that the present languages situation reflects a lack of confidence, and weakness, in the use of both English and Cantonese. The rather common use of a special local dialogue, called 'Hongkonglish' or 'Chinglish', in which some English words are used in spoken Cantonese is very unsatisfactory. Although people have come to accept the Cantonese/English mixture, the addition of Putonghua would probably produce a compound which would erode the means of communication even further. This practice and the potential danger of further erosion of the language of communication have to be stopped through a proper language policy which, unfortunately, the commission has not touched upon.

While the use of Chinese, leading on to Putonghua, should be strengthened, a proper use of the English language is also necessary.

This brings me to my next point, and that is about the strengthening of the teaching of English. I am glad, Sir, that adequate steps are being taken to strengthen the teaching of English as a language in secondary schools. I believe the tertiary institutions are also considering ways of improving the standard of English of its students—at least the University of Hong Kong is doing so and this should be of great help as one of the factors in ensuring that Hong Kong retains its status as an international trading centre and as a meeting point for the east and west.

My last point relates to special education. As a Member of the Council of the Hong Kong Association for the Mentally Handicapped and also of the Council of the Hong Kong Society for the Blind, and as the supervisor of a mentally handicapped school for some years, I am pleased to see proposals for the improvement of the existing in-service training course run by the special education department of Sir Robert Black College of Education for teachers of children with special education needs. In this connection, I would like to emphasise that block-release of trainee teachers might not be a practical solution in view of the shortage of teachers in the field. Part-time training courses might be more appropriate. I do hope that the Government would consider this very carefully.

MR. SZETO (in Cantonese): Sir, I would like to speak first on sixth form education.

The ills of our present sixth form education centre on the following areas. First, there is enormous examination pressure on our students. Soon after completing the Certificate of Education Examination at Form V, most students



have then to sit for three more public examinations in a span of two years, the Higher Level Examination, the Advanced Level Examination and the General Certificate of Education Examination of the University of London. Besides preparing and sitting for these examinations, there is little time left for them to engage in their studies. Second, owing to a variety of reasons, including difference in the admission procedures and criteria of post-secondary institutions, Form VII classes are often half-filled, resulting in considerable waste of educational resources. Third, the curriculum is designed exclusively for preparing students to take up university education. For students unable to gain admission and have to seek employment, the sixth form education which they have received offers little useful assistance in their quest for a job.

The report has failed to provide practicable solutions to these specific problems. With the proposed replacement of the Higher Level Examination by an Intermediate Level Examination, there will be increased examination pressure generally on students as more students will have to take part in the Intermediate Level Examination than in the A-Level Examination. Consequently, it will be impossible to achieve reforms on the objectives and curriculum of sixth form education as proposed in the report.

The root of these problems is the existence of two different university systems. This has long remained, as it were, a taboo to people seeking to resolve problems existing in our sixth form education, a subject which they would not nor dare to talk about, nor are they able to or are allowed to do so. However, without tackling the source of the problems, how can we come up with any solution? As it is, all we do is to scratch at the surface of the problems and to bark up the wrong tree.

The universities are our highest institutions of learning. The existence of separate systems in the universities, on which discussion appears to be forbidden, seems not only to exert an invisible influence on our sixth form education as well as our secondary and primary education, but also imposes severe restrictions on an overall review of our educational reforms.

Following the recent decision by the University of Hong Kong to lengthen its degree courses from three years to four years, the long standing problem of two separate university systems will be resolved. This breakthrough has enable a major obstacle to the reform of our sixth form education as well as our primary and secondary education to be removed. Since then, it has generated enthusiastic public debate on reforms to our education system, from primary level up to sixth form. All sorts of opinions have been expressed. There have been talks about 3+3, 4+2, 5+1 and 5+5+2 systems, each with its own supporters and detractors. It is gratifying to see a free expression of ideas. As there is no urgency for us to reach a consensus or a conclusion on the issue, we should allow further discussion and encourage it to develop into a comprehensive review of our education system, particularly with regard to primary, secondary and sixth form education systems.

The overall review of our education system conducted between 1982-84 did not touch on the separate systems in the universities. For this reason, it is a restricted review and not a comprehensive one as its name would suggest. A further, genuine overall review to take into account the historic transition towards 1997 would be much more meaningful.

I do solemnly recommend to the authorities to shelve the proposal in the report concerning the introduction of an Intermediate Level Examination and to undertake a further, genuine overall review of our education system, particularly with regard to its structural aspect. In this review, a centralised system providing for concurrent decisions on the admission of students by the post-secondary institutions should be formulated.

I also support the recommendations of the report to allow candidates of the A-Level Examination to use either English or Chinese in their answers and to make the 'Chinese Language and Culture' subject compulsory for all students as a basic course.

The next topic I shall deal with is pre-school education.

Whether we view it from the standpoint of education theories or social need, it is essential to provide early childhood education in Hong Kong. As a matter of fact, it is not very rare for a child not to have received any pre-school education before he enters primary. Pre-school education has become universal as a requisite stage in child education. In the report, the term 'pre-primary services' is coined to avoid giving a positive and definite answer to the question 'Is kindergarten education essential?', thereby relieving the Government of the obligation to take up more responsibility in this area. The word 'services' denotes some form of welfare assistance, particularly to the helpless. As such, what the report sets out is merely a fee assistance scheme for the parents. There is no attempt to place a greater responsibility for pre-school education on the Government.

At present, all kindergartens are run by the private sector, but the quality of education they offer is seriously undermined because of unreasonably low remuneration for teachers and poor educational facilities plus the fact that 80 per cent of kindergarten teachers are untrained. It is therefore essential for the Government to play a more active role in improving the quality of pre-school education. This could be done by way of making direct subsidies to approve non-profit-making institutions for pre-school education expediting the provision of training for teachers, formulating a reasonable salary scale for kindergarten teachers comparable to that of child care centre staff and unifying the operation of kindergartens and child care centres.

The fee assistance scheme for parents as outlined in the report can hardly enhance the general quality of pre-school education. I feel that a parallel subvention policy should be adopted, that is to say, apart from the aforesaid fee assistance scheme for parents, the Government should, by way of making

provisions in the annual Budget, gradually convert some of the non-profit-making kindergartens into subsidised ones. These subsidised kindergartens should continue to charge fees. They should be operated in accordance with government requirements with regard to teacher: pupil and pupil: space ratios, number of trained teachers, salaries and so on and should set an example for the private sector institutions. Healthy competition between subsidised and privately-run kindergartens could enhance the general quality of pre-school education.

The 1981 White Paper proclaimed that a new training institute for kindergarten teachers would be set up in 1984. While this proposal is yet to be implemented, the report now recommends that the training institute should not be pursued in the short run. Why this recommendation is made is incomprehensible. Furthermore, the pace at which teacher's training is to be provided, as suggested in the report, will be much slower than that proposed in the White Paper. Teacher preparation is vital to the quality of education, and so the provision of training must be accelerated. I propose that a joint training institute should be created to provide unified training courses for both kindergarten teachers and child care centre staff, which could avoid wastage of resources resulting from the provision of training by different institutions. The two-year training course run by the Grantham College of Education should be expanded in 1988 and pre-service training should be introduced in 1990.

The normative salary scale recommended by the report is useful and constructive. However, salaries for teachers simply drawing up a normative salary scale will not help to improve remuneration for teachers because all kindergartens are now being run by the private sector. The authorities should work out feasible measures to ensure that the normative salary scale will be generally adopted by the kindergartens.

I support the recommendation of unifying kindergartens and child care centres, and I hope that a working party, comprising frontline workers in pre-school education and representatives of educational bodies will be set up as soon as possible to map out a specific plan for its implementation.

I understand that two adjournment debates will be held on the No. 2 Report of the Education Commission. As I will not attend the second debate, I hope I would be forgiven for my long discourse in which I have managed to accommodate in one speech everything I want to say on the subject.

MRS. TAM (in Cantonese): Sir, The Education Commission's Report No. 2 has made supplementary proposals on the language of teaching. Basically it follows the principle and spirit of Report No. 1 which is to encourage secondary schools to use Chinese as the language of teaching and at the same time to try to raise the students' standard of English. I am in full support of this principle of equal emphasis on both languages and I believe this complies with the needs of

Hong Kong, an international city. However, as to how we can realise the above objective, I think the report's proposals are insufficient for the purpose of meeting present needs.

In order to promote teaching in the mother tongue and to raise the standard of English at the same time effectively, there are two prerequisites. The first is school resources. The second is compatible social environment. We must ensure that there are sufficient resources and schools to meet the requirements of promoting and implementing teaching in the mother tongue. But whether parents and schools are willing to accept and choose teaching in the mother tongue depends on a social environment which favours or rejects a policy of equal emphasis on both languages. On school resources, apart from the report's proposal of increasing the number of teachers in the teaching of Chinese and English and split classes, the authority concerned should consider:

Firstly, the pattern of implementation of teaching in the mother tongue. Presently, Government's approach is to let schools decide whether they would require their teachers to teach in the mother tongue and the pattern for so doing. Administrative Circular Number 13/86 sent to government subsidised and grant-in-aid schools, listed out all possible patterns for the choice of schools. The Government has respected the discretion of schools which would choose a pattern best suited to their needs. This is acceptable. However, the circular also allowed schools to, apart from Chinese and English language subjects, teach some subjects in Chinese and others in English as one of the patterns for implementing the proposal of teaching in the mother tongue. I cannot agree to this. This will bring confusion to the students who may have difficulties in adapting to it. It will be even more inconvenient when they change schools. So I hope the relevant authorities would abandon such an option.

Secondly, to implement teaching in the mother tongue, one prerequisite is text-books written in Chinese, especially those for the matriculation curriculum. So, I am in full support of the setting up of the Chinese Language Foundation.

Thirdly, on the way to raise the standard of English when we implement teaching in the mother tongue, I would think that apart from split class teaching, the relevant authorities should conduct a review on the effectiveness of the overall phenomenon of English teaching presently in use. At the moment secondary schools usually depend on the communicative approach in the teaching of English. But in a predominantly Chinese society like Hong Kong, where the majority of citizens communicate in Chinese in everyday life, I wonder whether this communicative approach adopted for teaching English as a second language is effective, or should the relevant authorities not consider other approaches to tie in with different needs of different types of students. Also when we talk of employing overseas personnel to teach English, I can't help being worried about their ability to understand the difficulties faced by the local students in the learning of English and to make appropriate adjustments. For long-term planning, I think the Government must strengthen the training and education of local English teachers as soon as possible.

Apart from school resources, a compatible social environment is a problem demanding our immediate attention. At present the Civil Service, our social values as well as opportunities for further education place more emphasis on English rather than Chinese. We cannot blame schools and parents who have not enough confidence in schools whose medium of teaching is the mother tongue. Parents may be worried about the future of the children, for example, it is said that students can choose not to use English in future Higher Level Examinations. However, before we have corresponding language arrangements, parents are worried that their children may find it difficult to adapt to the English curriculum once they enter tertiary institutes and so parents are reluctant to choose secondary schools which teach in the mother tongue. The worries of schools are also understandable. Since parents lack the confidence in selecting these schools, some of the schools in turn are worried that once they start teaching in the mother tongue they would only get Form I students of lesser ability and this will be detrimental to the schools' performance and reputation. Therefore, in order to encourage schools and parents to accept and offer teaching in the mother tongue, I think the relevant authorities must make suitable arrangements to bring about a compatible social environment. I would like to put forward the following proposals:

Firstly, Government should set an example. When recruiting civil servants, it should emphasise Chinese as well as English and publicise widely about it.

Secondly, Government should encourage tertiary institutes to provide more remedial language teaching for first year students to enable students who have been taught in the mother tongue in secondary schools to adapt to a new medium of teaching.

Sir, I believe in order to realise teaching in the mother tongue and the policy of equal emphasis on both languages, the Government must make known to the public its direction and determination and attend to the implementation in schools as if these were the only task at hand.

Sir, with these remarks I support the motion.

5.43 pm

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Sir, I am pleased to have the opportunity to reply to Members' frank and constructive comments on the second report of the Education Commission. The issues covered in Report No. 2 are many and complex. The process of analysing the public comments which have been received on the report is only beginning. The views which Members have expressed in this debate represent an important part of the consultation process.

I would like first to refer to the background to this debate, to highlight the major proposals in the report and to give some indication of the major lines of public comment. As this comment has yet to be fully analysed, it would be

premature to respond to individual criticisms in detail. I will, however, indicate two areas where misunderstandings of the commission's methodology seem to have occurred. Finally, I will refer to our plans for the implementation of the report's recommendations.

Members are aware that Report No. 2 was published in English on 16 September 1986 and in Chinese on 8 October 1986. A period of public consultation, to last until the end of December, was announced. Enthusiastic public debate followed. Wide media coverage was given to nearly all the report's proposals and this coverage was carefully monitored. Staff of the commission provided briefs, gave interviews and attended seminars on various aspects of the report. In addition, nearly 100 formal written submissions were received. These came from school councils, district boards, institutions of tertiary education, prominent members of the community and academics as well as ordinary citizens. The concern shown by individuals and by organised groups during this exercise, whether supportive or critical of the report, was an encouraging sign of increasing public awareness of issues of fundamental importance to the future of Hong Kong's education system.

A considerable volume of comment was attracted by the report's recommendations on pre-primary services. The commission's proposals include an expanded programme of teacher preparation, the introduction of normative staff salary scales in kindergartens, an improved fee assistance scheme for the parents of kindergarten pupils, and, as a long-term aim, the unification of pre-primary services. Most of these proposals received broad public support. Some questions were raised about the effectiveness of the proposed improved fee assistance scheme and there have been suggestions that government subsidy should be directed towards kindergarten operators and teachers rather than parents. It has also been suggested that the proposed programme of teacher preparation should be accelerated. Many of the detailed comments received will be helpful in devising an implementation plan for the commission's pre-primary proposals as will the various suggestions made today by Mrs. Selina CHOW, Dr. HO Kam-fai, Mr. CHUNG Pui-lam, Mr. SZETO Wah, Mr. HUI Yin-fat and Mr. David LI.

I must add a few words about the commission's philosophy towards pre-primary services (or pre-primary education—both are involved) since this has attracted as much discussion as the commission's specific recommendations. The commission has taken the view that, although it is not possible to assert dogmatically that pre-primary education is essential, it is so widespread and so clearly perceived as beneficial that no child should be denied access to such education. Although this may not go as far as Members may like, I can assure them that it was developed after very careful and sensitive consideration of all the issues involved. The commission's recommendations, if implemented, will do much to improve the standard of kindergarten education and will lead to the unification of pre-primary services which so many educators have advocated.

And the commission has left the door open to future refinements of the system by recommending long-term research into the effect of pre-primary education in Hong Kong.

The report's chapter on teacher preparation concentrated on the training of graduate teachers and on special areas such as degree level teaching qualifications and the training of teachers for special schools. Again, the majority of comments have been favourable. Most criticisms which have been made relate to whether the commission has gone far enough, for example, whether the various training programmes could be expanded or whether more pre-service training could be offered. We must, of course, be realistic and remember that education is expensive and priorities have to be carefully balanced. In this context I would like to thank Mr. LEE Yu-tai and Mrs. Pauline NG for the points they have raised in relation to the colleges of education. I am sure that these points will be taken into account by the commission in its forthcoming study of the colleges for its Report No. 3.

The third major chapter to which I must refer is the one on open education; in particular, the commission's proposal for the establishment of an open education consortium which would develop a comprehensive programme of courses at post-secondary level using distance learning techniques. This has been amongst the most enthusiastically received of the report's proposals. There have been many useful suggestions as to how the consortium should be further developed. And in this context, I am grateful for the comments and support given by Mr. LEE Yu-tai and Mr. CHUNG Pui-lam. Differing views have been expressed in relation to what level of course should be offered first, what institutions should be included in the consortium and what should be the extent and form, if any, of Government subsidy. Dr. HO Kam-fai has raised the spectre of an authoritarian and bureaucratic monolith which would usurp the autonomy of existing institutions. Such a development would, of course, be unacceptable and I am sure that this was not the commission's intention. But to ensure international recognition and administrative efficiency, I agree with the commission that 'something more than the co-operation of autonomous institutions is required for an effective programme'. I will come in a moment to the measures which are being taken to work out a realistic plan for the consortium's development.

The report also contains proposals on the financing of education and on language in education. On the financing of education, the report recommends the development of a series of financial models which will enable different educational strategies to be tested and compared. This section of the report has attracted relatively little comment; whether because of its technical nature, or because it is so obviously in the best interests of our educational system and students, I am not sure. As indicated in the report, implementation of these recommendations has proceeded in advance of the completion of the public consultation period.

On language in education, the report has put forward a number of recommendations supplementary to the major proposals in Report No. 1. I am grateful for the support given to these recommendations by Prof. POON and note his additional points in relation to the teaching of Potunghua. We will also give careful consideration to the points made by Mr. S. L. CHEN, Mrs. Rosanna TAM and Mr. LIU Lit-for in this important area.

Members will be aware that another adjournment debate has been scheduled for 18 February on the commission's sixth form proposals. I will, therefore, defer till then my response to the important points raised by Mr. SZETO Wah in relation to that topic.

I must now turn to a number of remarks which have been made, both in the media and in some of the written submissions, relating to the scope and methodology of the commission's report as a whole. These remarks fall into two categories. First, there are suggestions that additional topics should have been considered by the commission, or that topics which are included in the report should have been tackled in more detail. Curriculum development, the length of tertiary education courses, the question of sixth form colleges and the merits of a '3+3' secondary school structure are among the subjects which have been aired. I believe that, in deciding the number of subjects which can be covered by one single report, we must find a balance. Report No. 2 does cover the more complicated and fundamental of the original recommendations of the 1982 visiting panel which remained outstanding from Report No. 1. But the Commission is a permanent body and the fact that a subject was not included in Report No. 2 does not mean that it will not be covered by the commission in future. Indeed, the commission has already announced its programme of work for Report No. 3 and has begun to seek comments on some of the topics to be covered in Report No. 4.

The second area of criticism in relation to the report as a whole has been that the commission did not consult adequately on some subjects before publishing its report. Although most of these criticisms have been directed particularly at the sixth form proposals, which, as I said earlier, are to be the subject of a separate debate, this point is so basic that I must refer to it now. I wish to emphasise that, as Mr. S. L. CHEN and Mr. LIU Lit-for have said, consultation on all major subjects in the report was thorough and the views of all concerned institutions and groups were taken into account by the commission. In particular, there is no truth in the suggestion that the views of major tertiary institutions were ignored, as has been suggested recently in some media reports. The written record shows that consultation with the universities and other institutions of higher education was detailed and continuous. Not that the commission could accommodate every view put forward; in the end, Members had to take a view in the interests of students and of the community as a whole. But no major institution can fairly claim that the commission did not take their views seriously or failed, whenever possible and appropriate, to accommodate them.



I hope that what I have said indicates clearly both the breadth and the success—in terms of the response received—of the consultation process on Report No. 2. The next step is for the analysis of all comments to be completed by the Administration. Issues which have proved to be controversial or significant modifications which have been proposed will then be referred back to the Education Commission for advice. Thereafter, it is intended that all the topics in the report will be put to Executive Council in mid-1987.

In order to assist in the assessment of public comments and advise on suitable plans for implementation before consideration by Executive Council, working groups have been set up on pre-primary services, sixth form education and open education. The latter group includes representatives of all five UPGC-funded institutions and is now considering detailed plans for the development of the commission's open education proposals, including the setting up of the planning committee for the open education consortium. In addition, a Steering Committee on the Financing of Education has been convened to implement the recommendations in chapter IX of the report; in particular, to administer the proposed consultancy on financial models.

Sir, I conclude by repeating that particular attention will be paid, in the drawing up of our final recommendations, to Members' views as expressed in today's debate and in the further debate to be held next month on the commission's sixth form proposals.

*Question put on the adjournment and agreed to.*

## NEXT SITTING

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT: Before I adjourn the Council, may I wish all Members a very happy and healthy Chinese New Year.

我想恭祝各位議員丁卯年身壯力健，萬事如意。

In accordance with Standing Orders I now adjourn the Council until 2.30 pm on Wednesday 18 February 1987.

*Adjourned accordingly at five minutes past six o'clock.*

*Note:* The short titles of motions/bills in the Hansard Report have been translated into Chinese for information and guidance only; they do not have authoritative effect in Chinese.

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**WRITTEN ANSWER**

**Annex I**

**Written answer by the Secretary for Security to Mr. YEUNG's supplementary question to Question 8**

With regard to the details of how the random selection will actually be done, the Narcotics Division are working them out in consultation with the Census and Statistics Department and the Education Department.