

OFFICIAL REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS**Wednesday, 3 February 1988****The Council met at half-past Two o'clock****PRESENT**HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR (*PRESIDENT*)

SIR DAVID CLIVE WILSON, K.C.M.G.

THE HONOURABLE THE CHIEF SECRETARY

SIR DAVID ROBERT FORD, K.B.E., L.V.O., 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 LYDIA DUNN, C.B.E., J.P.

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

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

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

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

THE HONOURABLE WONG PO-YAN, C.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 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. RITA FAN HSU LAI-TAI, O.B.E., 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, O.B.E., 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, J.P.

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

DR. THE HONOURABLE CHIU HIN-KWONG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHUNG PUI-LAM

THE HONOURABLE THOMAS CLYDESDALE, J.P.
THE HONOURABLE HO SAI-CHU, M.B.E., J.P.
THE HONOURABLE HUI YIN-FAT
DR. THE HONOURABLE CONRAD LAM KUI-SHING
THE HONOURABLE MARTIN LEE CHU-MING, Q.C., J.P.
THE HONOURABLE DESMOND 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
THE HONOURABLE ANDREW WONG WANG-FAT
THE HONOURABLE LAU WONG-FAT, M.B.E., J.P.
THE HONOURABLE GRAHAM BARNES, C.B.E., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS
THE HONOURABLE DAVID GREGORY JEAFFRESON, C.B.E., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR SECURITY
THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL LEUNG MAN-KIN, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT
THE HONOURABLE EDWARD HO SING-TIN, J.P.
THE HONOURABLE DOMINIC WONG SHING-WAH, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER (*Acting*)

ABSENT

THE HONOURABLE JOHN JOSEPH SWAINE, C.B.E., Q.C., J.P.
THE HONOURABLE RICHARD LAI SUNG-LUNG
DR. THE HONOURABLE DANIEL TSE, O.B.E., J.P.
THE HONOURABLE NATHANIEL WILLIAM HAMISH MACLEOD, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

IN ATTENDANCE

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

Oath

Mr. Dominic WONG Shing-wah took the Oath of Allegiance.

Papers

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

<i>Subject</i>	<i>L.N.No.</i>
Subsidiary Legislation:	
Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation By-Laws	
Kowloon-Canton Railway (Restricted Area) Notice 1988	19/88
The Chinese University of Hong Kong Ordinance	
Statutes of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (Amendment) Statutes 1988.....	20/88
Repatriation of Prisoners Act 1984	
Repatriation of Prisoners Act 1984 (Commencement) Order 1988	21/88
Marine Fish Culture Ordinance	
Fish Culture Zone (Designation) (Amendment) Order 1988.....	22/88
Shipping and Port Control Ordinance	
Shipping and Port Control (Specification of Areas) (Amendment) Notice 1988.....	23/88

Sessional Paper 1987-88:

No. 40—Regional Council Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year
ending 31 March 1989

Oral answers to questions**Private investment in new towns**

1. MR. CHEUNG asked (in Cantonese): *As the participation of private sector developers has played an important role in speeding up the development of new towns, will Government inform this Council what measures will be taken to improve the situation in new towns such as Sheung Shui, Fanling and Shek Wu Hui, which lack private sector investment?*

SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS: Sir, I am very grateful to Mr. CHEUNG for raising this subject now, because it is one to which the Administration has been giving considerable thought in the light of the recently revised housing strategy, and perceived changes in our patterns of employment. I will deal with the question in two parts. First, private investment in housing development and second, private investment in industrial development.

Housing development

If the new towns are to function properly as communities, there must be a mix of both public and private development and the overall planning of each new town makes provision for varying proportions of private and public housing. Historically and as a matter of policy all the new towns have been public housing led. This was a matter of necessity in the original programmes which were primarily dictated by the needs of the public housing programme, but it was also practical in private investment terms, because it was clear that private housing on any scale was more marketable against a background of a substantial public housing population and the supporting services and infrastructure provided for it. In general terms, this is likely to remain the case, although it applies much more emphatically in areas more distant from or less well connected with the urban areas. In Tuen Mun, for instance, private investment was especially slow in the early stages. In Fanling/Sheung Shui, although better served by transport in its early stages than Tuen Mun, the pattern has been similar. The present population is about 120 000 with 70 per cent living in public housing (including Home Ownership Scheme flats) and 30 per cent in private sector housing. The planned population on full development is double that figure, but the final ratio of public to private housing is expected to be about 58 to 42. The shift in balance will take place gradually, as it has in other new towns.

A substantial proportion of the land zoned for private development in Fanling and Sheung Shui is in private ownership and is expected to be redeveloped. To encourage redevelopment of the central areas zoned for commercial residential use, the maximum permissible plot ratio was recently increased. An approximate average of 4 hectares of residential and residential/commercial land per year is programmed for sale in the next four to five years. We have every reason to believe that this land will be popular with investors. We are also considering changes of policy in respect of other residential zones to encourage earlier development by the private sector.

Industry

Investment in industrial development is closely related to both the entrepreneurial demand and also to the availability of labour. The earlier planning of new towns assumed that a high proportion of the employment of those housed would be in local industry, and the successful provision of housing was closely related to the provision of or access to employment opportunities. In Fanling/

Sheung Shui New Town, with the earlier availability of efficient commuting services and communications, there was less emphasis on industrial development in its planning. This does not appear to have affected its progress or the popularity of housing there, as it is clear that the town is seen by many who live there as a very good commuting suburb. Over the last two years, however, after a very slack period, there has been a marked revival of interest in investment in industrial development in the northern New Territories. This has been reflected both in the sales of new industrial lots and also in the number of exchanges involving more intensive development being processed in the On Lok Tsuen industrial area. This revival appears to be more connected with the present evolutionary stage of our industrial development than in the general development of Fanling/Sheung Shui, but it does suggest that Government should aim to provide more such sites for disposal in the future, and this will be looked at now.

MR. CHEUNG (in Cantonese): *Sir, I would like to thank the Secretary for a very, very detailed explanation. I would like to ask the Secretary a question. If the New Territories North District Board and the residents think that there is a need to increase the area of saleable land, will there be such an increase?*

SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS: Sir, the North District Board's views on this matter are, of course, extremely important and will be taken into account. The pattern of sales and the pattern of development in Fanling of course is guided by a great deal of other factors, including the current investment in infrastructure in different parts and in different zones in the area.

MR. EDWARD HO: *Sir, I refer to paragraph 3 of the Secretary's reply. In order to encourage redevelopment of the central areas in Fanling, for example Shek Wu Hui, it is necessary to improve the existing narrow streets and inadequate infrastructure. Will Government inform this Council whether it has considered the necessity of these types of improvements?*

SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS: Sir, the plot ratios permitted on the individual lots are definitely intended to encourage the aggregation of lots which could result in improvements to the infrastructure and road pattern of that area. I understand that the Administration has also discussed with owners more comprehensive development schemes.

MR. ANDREW WONG (in Cantonese): *Sir, the Secretary only mentions housing development and industrial development but he has not mentioned anything about development of office space. In order to have a more balanced development, can the Government consider allocating more land for the development of office buildings so that there can be an increase in employment and there can be a better distribution of employment in new towns?*

SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS: Sir, in Sha Tin we have found there is some interest in jobs in the servicing sector but generally, other than in support of manufacturing and to a certain extent in government offices, the actual demand for office accommodation has been low and can normally be met from the commercial part of commercial/residential buildings. There has been, to my knowledge, very little pressure for the sale of purely commercial land in northern New Territories but I feel that, if such a demand was evidenced, Government would be most anxious to respond to it.

MR. CHEUNG (in Cantonese): *Sir, can the Secretary inform this Council: whether the limit of 50 hectares mentioned in the Sino-British Joint Declaration has limited the amount of land to be sold in Fanling?*

SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS: Generally speaking, Sir, the Land Commission has been very understanding of the needs for balanced development in the new towns in the approval of its land sales programme. I can say that Fanling sales have not been inhibited by the restriction on the amount of land. What they have meant, rather than restrictive, is that we have had to think very carefully about the priority of land sales throughout the Territory.

Translators and simultaneous interpreters

2. MR. YEUNG asked: *Will Government inform this Council what is the projected shortage of translators and simultaneous interpreters in the next three years and what measures will be taken to reduce such shortage given the increasing use of both Chinese and English at the meetings of various government boards and committees?*

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, at present there are 436 chinese language officers, 14 full-time and nine part-time simultaneous interpreters, who provide translation and interpretation services for government boards and committees.

It is estimated that the establishment of chinese language officers will expand by 5 per cent annually and simultaneous interpreters by 10 per cent annually to cope with the increase in workload in the next three years. However, I do not envisage any major difficulties in filling most of the new posts. Putunghua interpreters are most difficult to recruit but this problem is being overcome by in-service training.

In the event of any unforeseeable difficulty in meeting the demand, we can arrange to contract out translation work to private agencies or hire part-timers for translation and interpretation. The pool of translation agencies and part-timers is at present being expanded.

MR. YEUNG: *Sir, will Government state as a result of the shortage of translators, the extent of translation services required from private agencies or part-timers in the past two years and the expenditure incurred therefrom?*

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, I do not have those details available. I will make them available to Mr. YEUNG Po-kwan. (See Annex I)

MR. CHAM: *Sir, in using private agencies, how does Government ensure confidentiality of work contracted out to private agencies?*

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, by and large, the use of part-time agencies is limited to open meetings. If there is a requirement for confidentiality then government interpreters are used.

MRS. NG (in Cantonese): *Sir, we have hundreds of advisory committees. I would like to know whether we have Chinese copies of all the documents to be discussed in these committees. If this is not so, when will the Government be able to provide discussion documents in both English and Chinese?*

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, although somewhat outside the scope of the original question, I will try to answer. There is a growing use, as Mrs. NG says, of Chinese in our boards and committees. The large majority of them are now provided with translations of papers available but not in all cases. We are expanding the programme, Sir, and we hope that the improvement will come over the coming years.

MR. YEUNG: *Sir, will Government consider as a long-term policy sending more staff to pursue relevant courses on simultaneous interpretation in overseas institutions and organisations with the objective of providing similar departmental training for our own staff on their return?*

CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, Sir. We already are making use of overseas training establishments for our simultaneous interpreters and they are then used in the way that Mr. YEUNG Po-kwan suggests.

DR. HO: *Sir, is the present manning ratio favourable enough in terms of promotion so that translators will stay in the service?*

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, I think the wastage rates over the past few years would suggest that it is still an attractive career for people in this profession. The wastage rate due to resignation, retirement, and transfer to other grades has only been about 20 officers per year for the last five years and, in terms of simultaneous interpreters, only two officers have left the grade since its establishment in 1971. So, in terms of the overall numbers, I think our wastage rates are acceptable.

Punitive interest rates

3. DR. LAM asked (in Cantonese): *As the Hong Kong Association of Banks has recently introduced a rule to provide for punitive interest rates for money deposits, and will apply the rule as and when the association thinks fit after consultation with the Financial Secretary, will Government inform this Council of the pros and cons of adopting punitive interest rates and the impact it will have on Hong Kong?*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Sir, on 19 December 1987, the Committee of the Hong Kong Association of Banks, which I shall refer to as 'the Association', after consultation with me, exercised their powers under section 12(1) of the Hong Kong Association of Banks Ordinance and made a new rule called the 'Specified Rate Rule'. This rule provides for the charging of interest on large Hong Kong dollar balances maintained on the clearing accounts of members of the Association.

This rule by itself does not affect the position of bank customers, but it is envisaged that banks will pass on this charge to their customers. In order that this can be done in an orderly manner, the committee of the Association were of the opinion that there should be uniform practice amongst members of the Association in relation to the passing on of the charge to customers.

Consequently, on 14 January 1988, the committee, again after consultation with me, exercised their powers under section 12(1) of the Hong Kong Association of Banks Ordinance and made certain amendments to the rules on interest rates. These amendments empower the committee to specify practices to be adopted by banks so that negative interest rates may be imposed on large Hong Kong dollar balances maintained by their customers, if there is a need to do so.

The committee have also announced that by 10 March 1988 they will be in a position to implement negative interest rates, again if there is a need to do so.

Thus, the committee working closely with the Government have created a useful mechanism to counter speculation on a revaluation of the Hong Kong dollar against the US dollar. In effect, depending on the rate to be specified, the imposition of negative interest rates will make it expensive to hold large Hong Kong dollar balances.

Sir, speculation on a revaluation has adversely affected the normal conduct of the business of banking and other commercial activities. It has also reduced the income of savers, of the man in the street.

Dr. LAM has asked what benefits flow from the adoption of negative interest rates and what impact it would have on Hong Kong. To the extent that negative interest rates are designed to ensure stability in our exchange rate, the effect is clearly beneficial. No one other than speculators gains from volatile exchange rates. The community of Hong Kong prefers stability.

Dr. LAM has also rightly drawn attention to the possible downside effect of negative interest rates—I was about to say ‘negative’ effect, but then remembered the algebraic implications. Of course, the committee and the Government recognise that negative interest rates, if actually applied, would cause some disruption to the business of banking. They may also cause friction between banks and customers and impose an additional administrative burden on banks. But we also recognise that under the circumstances, negative interest rates may become an unwelcome necessity if we are to defend ourselves against wholly unwarranted speculation.

Naturally, Sir, we all hope that it will not be necessary to implement these arrangements for negative interest rates, but if there is a need then undoubtedly we will have to do so. Hopefully, any period of implementation would be short and the disruption caused would be temporary.

Members will have observed that the mere threat of implementing negative interest rates has apparently been effective in deterring recent speculation. (The exchange rate is now happily at around the \$7.80 mark and interbank Hong Kong dollar interest rates have gradually been firming up as speculators unwind their positions at considerable loss to themselves.)

DR. LAM: *Sir, how can the Government prevent switching of Hong Kong dollar deposits from Hong Kong to other offshore financial centres such as Singapore to avoid the impact of negative interest?*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Sir, well the short answer to that is we can not prevent it. We are, as Dr. LAM knows, a very open economy and we have a very open monetary system so people could in fact shift their deposits around. But if they do so, it may render them slightly less nimble if they are indeed speculators.

MR. MARTIN LEE: *Sir, although the Financial Secretary has not given us an advance copy of his oral answer, I have given him a courtesy advance copy of my supplementary question in three parts. Will the Financial Secretary please confirm that all the proceeds to be collected by banks from Hong Kong dollar deposits arising from the imposition of negative interest rates will go to the Government? And, if so, is this not in the nature of a tax rather than a banking charge provided for in section 12(1)(e) of the Hong Kong Association of Banks Ordinance? And will the Financial Secretary please explain why this Council has been bypassed by the Government in its imposition of this indirect tax?*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: I thank Mr. Martin LEE for his courtesy in giving me an advance copy of his supplementary. I am afraid that I did not have time to give a copy of the main answer, which of course took some time to prepare. In any event, I have the greatest confidence in Members of this Council in asking supplementaries without having an advance copy of the main answer.

If, Sir, I could take the last part of the question first, that is to say, why has this Council been bypassed by the Government? Well, heaven forbid that we

should ever bypass this Council when the circumstances dictate that matters should be brought to this Council. But of course the Government in fact has not made these rules; the rules have been made by the Hong Kong Association of Banks in consultation with the Government and I do not think that it would have been appropriate to bring these rules to the Legislative Council.

Turning, Sir, to the first part of the question which relates to where the proceeds of negative interest rates would be paid. Mr. LEE asked whether the negative interest would be paid to the Government and, if so, is this payment not in the nature of a tax rather than a banking charge. The charge is not in the nature of a tax. The Specified Rate Rule made by the Hong Kong Association of Banks in December applies to the clearing balances of member banks. The rule contains a provision and I quote: 'The management bank shall promptly pay all amounts of interest charged pursuant to these rules to the Financial Secretary as controller of the Exchange Fund.' This, Sir, is therefore not a government levy on banks. The rule was made by the committee of the association, who have decided that the interest charge should be passed over to the Exchange Fund and I shall be very happy to receive that money for the account of the Exchange Fund, not for the purposes of general revenue. The charges levied by banks on large Hong Kong dollar balances of bank customers are, of course, for the accounts of banks and not for passing on to the Exchange Fund.

MR. JACKIE CHAN: *Sir, if the banks refuse to accept offshore Hong Kong dollar deposits, then Hong Kong would cease to be a centre of free flowing capital into and out of the Territory. Apart from contravening the Joint Declaration, has the Government considered the very damaging effect to Hong Kong's position as an international financial centre?*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Sir, there is certainly no question of any contravention of the Joint Declaration in the making of these rules. I think there is likely to be far more damage to Hong Kong as an international financial centre if our currency is subjected from time to time to the intense and, as I described it earlier, wholly unwarranted speculation.

MR. HUI: *Sir, has Government considered exempting the imposition of negative interest for the Government, the Community Chest, subvented organisations, and other charitable organisations? If so, is the administration of negative interest rates going to become impossibly complicated?*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Sir, obviously there are cases for some exemptions. The point I wish to emphasise is that we are not yet in a position in which negative interest rates are actually being implemented. Now it may be that some organisations will claim that negative interest rates should not be applied to them because they are not speculators, and obviously difficult questions of interpretation and administration will apply. I can only suggest to anyone who

feels that they are in this position that they should talk the matter over with their banks. A committee has been established to examine these difficult cases.

MR. LI: *Sir, a speculator looking for an immediate capital gain of at least 10 per cent. Will the Government confirm that a negative interest rate will have to be at least 10 per cent per quarter or 40 per cent per annum to be effective? And even if this rate is applied, as in Switzerland, it was not effective.*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Sir, I think it would be wrong for me to speculate, if I could use that word in a different sense, on what negative interest rate would be adopted. But, as I said at the end of my answer to the principal question, it seems that intelligent speculators have already taken account of the resolve of this Government to maintain the present rate. The rate, as I said earlier on, is now happily at around the 7.80 mark.

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT: I have five more people who wish to ask supplementaries. I have no wish to limit discussion but at some point I am going to draw a line. Mr. Martin LEE.

MR. MARTIN LEE: *Sir, were these rules made by the Hong Kong Association of Banks entirely out of their own volition or were they made at the directive, or, alternatively, with the gentle persuasion of the Financial Secretary?*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Mr. LEE knows me well enough to know that I rarely direct. I think gentle persuasion is perhaps the better term.

MR. CHAM: *Sir, in the event of depositors deciding to maintain their Hong Kong dollars in cash by withdrawing from the banks and not keep them in the bank balances to avoid the negative rates, would this cause any ill effects on our money supply or our credit markets in Hong Kong?*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Sir, we are getting into quite difficult and technical areas. I think the short answer to Mr. Kim CHAM is 'no', it would not cause difficulties, and the question of large withdrawals of cash has in fact been addressed by the association and the necessary arrangements are in place. My understanding is that the two note-issuing banks have already made arrangements for adequate cash to be available at short notice to meet any demand.

MR. DESMOND LEE: *Sir, since there is no statutory self-regulatory body for deposit-taking companies, how legally enforceable will such negative interest rates be for the deposit-taking companies?*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Sir, the Deposit-taking Companies Association announced yesterday that they supported the introduction of negative interest rates as a measure to curb speculative activities on a stronger Hong Kong dollar

against the US currency. The Deposit-taking Companies Association has also indicated that they will be issuing guidelines for their members to follow. It is worth remembering, Sir, that registered deposit-taking companies are, in any event, prohibited from accepting deposits under three months. The only deposit-taking companies that would be affected are the licenced deposit-taking companies.

MR. CHEONG-LEEN: *Sir, the Financial Secretary claimed in reply to one of the supplementary questions that since announcement of the introduction of negative interest rates, there already seem to have been some salutary effects on the situation. Can he give an assurance to this Council that as and when it is deemed in the best interest of Hong Kong, he will use his influence, gentle persuasive efforts, whatever you may call it, to have the immediate withdrawal of negative interest?*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Well, Sir, as I have said, we have not implemented these arrangements. Rules have been put in place. The mechanisms are there. The message has been received by many who are involved in speculative activity. Certainly there would be no move in relation to the imposition of negative interest rates without consultation with me and I would certainly bear Hong Kong's interests most seriously in mind. That is what it is all about.

MR. JACKIE CHAN: *Sir, Government apparently wishes to be exempted from paying negative interest and similar requests are being made by the Community Chest and other charitable organisations. Is not the administration of negative interest rates going to become impossibly complicated?*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: I think, Sir, I have answered that question already.

MR. LI: *Sir, time and again, the Financial Secretary has assured us that the arbitrage mechanisms within the exchange rate system is working perfectly well. Now that he has introduced, or forced the Hong Kong Association of Banks to introduce the negative interest rate, does it not mean that the Financial Secretary has now shifted the burden of defending the peg entirely on the banking system and should he not examine the arbitrage system in the link rate system?*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Sir, I think we have said at all times that to maintain the link rate, the adjustment would have to take place through the economy, in other words through interest rates and indeed on the rate of inflation. Mr. David LI has referred to the arbitrage mechanisms. We believe those mechanisms do work but of course they may not work in perfect form as Mr. LI well knows.

Students' medical reports

4. DR. CHIU asked: *In view of the fact that students in many developed countries are required upon registration to submit their medical reports to the school*

authorities in order to enable them to have a clear picture of their students' health conditions including physical defects, allergies, fitness for sports and outdoor activities, will Government inform this Council whether it will consider introducing similar practice for Hong Kong students as a matter of policy?

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Sir, since 1978, the Medical and Health Department has been operating a Comprehensive Observation Scheme for all infants from birth to the age of five. The objective is to ensure that all congenital or developmental abnormalities are detected so that treatment and remedial action is taken as early as possible. Parents are thus made aware at an early stage of any physical or developmental problems affecting their children. It is likely that parents will pass this information on to the school authorities upon the admission of their children or after such conditions are diagnosed. In fact many schools request medical details of new entrants in the 'family particulars form'.

Separately the Education Department conducts a Combined Screening Programme of all Primary 1 pupils in order to detect visual, hearing, speech and learning disabilities. The results of this screening are conveyed to the schools concerned.

It is also the practice of schools to exempt pupils from physical education lessons or outdoor activities should their parents so request on medical grounds. Indeed a number of schools, especially at the primary level, write to parents at the beginning of each school year, asking whether their children need to be exempted from physical education lessons for health reasons.

In view of the measures that I have just described, I do not consider it necessary or practical, Sir, to require parents to submit formal medical reports to the school authorities on registration.

DR. CHIU: *Sir, I am disappointed to hear that the Secretary for Education and Manpower is not in favour of my proposal. What I am concerned about is how we can ensure that when students with special health problems such as haemophilia, epilepsy, drug anaphylaxis, asthma, and heart disease, and so on, voluntarily supply medical information to the school authorities for record in case of emergencies, the authorities concerned ...*

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT: Dr. CHIU, excuse me, could you ask a question rather than make a statement please?

DR. CHIU: *Yes, Sir. As not all parents voluntarily supply to the school authorities medical information on their children with special health problems, will the Government give consideration to my suggestion and introduce suitable measures?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Sir, as I said in my main reply, the Medical and Health Department already operates a Comprehensive Observa-

tion Scheme. The information available is also passed on to parents. I think, Sir, it is the duty of good parents to draw the schools' attention to serious problems affecting their children. As I said in the main reply, we can also encourage more widespread use of the family particulars form by schools in order to enable parents themselves to provide as much information to the schools as possible. We will, of course, Sir, ask the Education Department to consider issuing some guidelines on this particular subject.

MR. YEUNG: *Sir, will Government consider extending the useful Combined Screening Programme initially conducted for all Primary 1 pupils to all Form I students after a lapse of six years for the benefit of secondary schools too?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Sir, I think it is a matter of resources and priorities. The present scheme is working fine and we have not thought about it further. We will certainly examine the suggestion.

MR. SZETO (in Cantonese): *Sir, will Government inform this Council whether in the past three years there have been any students taking part in physical training lessons, who have died as a result of certain physical defects and the schools have not been informed by parents of such defects beforehand?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Sir, I do not have the ready information. I think it is quite a different point. I shall try to find out what the answer is and pass it on to Mr. SZETO Wah. (See Annex II)

Cervical smear screening test

5. DR. IP asked: *Will Government consider introducing routine cervical smear screening test (popularly termed Pap smear) for all women aged 30 and above in the early detection of cervical carcinoma which killed 150 women last year?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Sir, smear screening for cervical cancer is carried out at the family planning clinics of the Government Family Health Services and the Hong Kong Family Planning Association. It also takes place in social hygiene clinics, gynaecological and antenatal clinics in government, subvented and private hospitals. The Pap smear test is now widely available as a routine check or when medically required.

From 1980 to 1983, a three-year pilot study on routine screening organised by the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, and the Department of Pathology of the University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Anti-Cancer Society and the Medical and Health Department was conducted at the Government's maternal and child health centres. A total of 18 013 smears were examined, of which 130 were found to be abnormal. The total number of cervical cancers detected was 23 and the pick up rate was therefore only 1.27 per

1 000. This was considered to be too low to justify a screening programme for all women. Targetted screening of women with increased risk of contracting cervical cancer is therefore preferred.

DR. IP: *Sir, is Government aware that the incidence of cervical carcinoma can be reduced by 20 per 100 000 if screening tests were carried out and that there is a 100 per cent cure for precancerous state if diagnosed early by screening, in contrast to only some 10 per cent for late stages of this cancer? If so, taking the matter in perspective, would Government reconsider accepting screening for all women in spite of a low pick up rate?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Sir, I think a decision on introducing universal screening of this type has to depend on priorities but I will pass to the Director of Medical and Health Services the information which Dr. IP has provided and ask him to reconsider whether this should be undertaken.

DR. CHIU: *Sir, will the Government inform this Council what the financial and manpower implications would be if routine cervical smear screening test for all women aged 30 or above were to be introduced?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Sir, I do not have a complete answer to that question but I am told that the cost per smear is \$25, so perhaps that gives some indication of the quite large expenditure which would be incurred if it were to be applied universally to all women over 30.

DR. IP: *Sir, the reason just given for not introducing a screening programme for all women at risk was that the pick up rate was too low. How does this pick up rate compare with the other government routine screening tests that are already being carried out? Secondly, what pick up rate does Government consider high enough to make screening programmes worthwhile; and lastly, are there any other screening tests in this world for cancer with a higher pick up rate than this and for which immediate treatment can offer 100 per cent cure?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Sir, I am afraid I do not have the answer to these rather technical professional questions. I will consult my medical advisers and will reply to Dr. IP in writing. (See Annex III)

DR. IP: *Sir, who are at risk in developing cervical carcinoma? Does Government intend to educate this at-risk group and can women in this group walk in any of the clinics mentioned and obtain a routine Pap smear?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Sir, I am told that the high risk groups are women who have multiple sexual partners, those who suffer from or have a history of sexually transmitted diseases and women who have had early sexual experience. I am sure that if any women in these categories ask for tests to be conducted, they will be conducted.

Effects on health of operation of computer terminals

6. MR. TAM asked (in Cantonese): *In view of the increasingly prevalent use of computers in various trades in Hong Kong, will Government inform this Council whether it is aware of any overseas or local studies which have found that operating computer terminals for long hours would adversely affect the health of the operators and, if so, what measures will be taken to protect these operators?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Sir, no systematic study has been undertaken in Hong Kong on the effect of operating computer terminals for long hours on the health of operators. I understand that extensive studies on this subject have been carried out overseas. These studies have found that operators of visual display units sometimes complain of eye-strain, headaches and pains in the neck, shoulder and back.

According to these studies, eye-strain and headaches are caused by such factors as inadequate lighting of the working environment, the small size of characters on the screen, poor adjustment of brightness and contrast, and flickering on the screen caused by the poor quality of the visual display unit. Neck, shoulder and back pains are largely the result of incorrect posture, poor chair design or poor layout of the work station.

As regards radiation, the studies conducted overseas have shown that the radiation emitted by a visual display unit is very low, so low that it poses no harmful effect to health.

Current medical opinion is that the operation of visual display units is safe and is unlikely to have adverse effects on the health of operators, provided that appropriate attention is given to working conditions and suitable rest periods are given. No other measures are therefore required to protect these operators.

From an advisory angle, Sir, the Labour Department has published a booklet on the 'Health Aspects of Visual Display Units', giving detailed information and advice on this subject. This booklet is available free of charge to interested parties.

MR. TAM (in Cantonese): *Sir, since visual display unit operators sometimes suffer from eye-strain, headaches and pains in the neck, shoulder and back, why can the Government not give more publicity to this problem so that the operators will pay attention to the problem and will not suffer from such complaints?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Sir, as I have already said, the Labour Department has published a booklet on this particular subject giving guidance both to workers and to management in various working situations. I think this is reasonably good enough.

Construction of landfill sites and the demolition of incinerators

7. MR. CHUNG asked (in Cantonese): *With reference to the reply by the Secretary for Health and Welfare on the question of pollution caused by the Lai Chi Kok Incineration Plant on 6 November 1985, will Government inform this Council:*

- (a) what progress has been made on the construction of controlled tips in the New Territories to replace existing incinerators in the Territory; and
- (b) when the incinerators at Lai Chi Kok and Kennedy Town will be demolished and what improvements have been made to minimise the pollution caused by these incinerators in the meantime?

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Sir, the incineration plants at Lai Chi Kok and Kennedy Town will be shut down as soon as new facilities are available to dispose of waste which is now being burned there. Under the Government's waste disposal strategy, these new facilities will be refuse transfer stations located in urban areas, from which waste will be transported in bulk to three large landfill sites in the New Territories.

Detailed design for the first of the landfills, located at Nim Wan in western New Territories has just begun. Site preparation will begin in early 1989, and the landfill should begin to receive waste in late 1990.

A study of the outline design and environmental impact of the second landfill site in north-east New Territories is almost complete. Preparatory works should begin in early 1991, with disposal of waste at the site beginning in late 1993.

The third landfill site will be located at Junk Bay to the north-east of Fat Tong Chau (Junk Island). Work is in progress on the preliminary engineering design and landfilling is expected to commence in late 1994.

The existing landfill sites at Shuen Wan, Pillar Point Valley and Junk Bay will continue to be operated until the three new facilities are commissioned.

It is intended that the Kennedy Town incinerator should be closed down in 1992 when a refuse transfer station is commissioned in the western part of Hong Kong Island. In the meantime, electrostatic precipitators have been installed at the plant. These electrostatic precipitators significantly reduce the amount of dust emitted, but do not remove gaseous and fine particulate pollution.

Electrostatic precipitators are also being installed at Lai Chi Kok plant 'A'. When this plant is recommissioned in October 1988, the 'B' plant will be closed down permanently. Emissions from the Lai Chi Kok plant will therefore continue to represent less than half of those previously produced by the fully operational plant. Plant 'A' itself will be shut down in late 1990 when the first refuse transfer station at Kowloon Bay is commissioned.

MR. CHUNG (in Cantonese): *Sir, I would like to thank the Secretary for Health and Welfare for giving a very clear and concise answer. However, I would like to have one more point clarified. According to the Secretary for Health and Welfare's answer, does it mean that no matter whether the landfill site in Nim Wan, New Territories, is commissioned on schedule or not, residents in Lai Chi Kok and Lai Wan districts can expect that when the refuse transfer station in Kowloon Bay is commissioned in late 1990, plant 'B' of Lai Chi Kok incinerator will be closed down because we can still rely on the landfills in the Shuen Wan and Pillar Point, as well as Junk Bay?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: *Sir, I have good hopes that this will be the case. There has been a certain amount of delay in the commissioning of the landfill site in the New Territories but this should not result in a delay in the closing down of Lai Chi Kok.*

PROF. POON: *Sir, since the Kennedy Town and Lai Chi Kok plants will still be in use for a few more years, the electrostatic precipitators can only reduce the amount of dust emitted, would the Secretary inform this Council of the present level of gaseous pollution caused by these incinerators and has the Government considered any interim measure to reduce this level?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: *Sir, the other discharges other than the particulates include such toxic contaminants as dioxins which are emitted at rates of around 3 mg per hour at Kennedy Town and 27 mg per hour at Lai Chi Kok. While these discharges are certainly not helpful and to some extent harmful, they are not thought to be at a level which causes a serious health hazard and in view of the very limited life expectancy of the two plants, it is not thought appropriate to try to eliminate these particular discharges. This would be a very expensive business which would not really be worthwhile.*

DR. HO: *Sir, I had the experience of visiting the controlled tip at Shuen Wan in the New Territories. The smell emitted from this site was most offensive to the residents nearby especially in rainy or humid weather. I wonder what measures Government will propose to take to reduce the intensity of the smell in the new sites named in the answer?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: *Sir the landfill sites to which I referred will be of a new generation of controlled tips. In fact, the word, 'controlled tip' is no longer used as an indication of this. Last week, I visited in Essex a controlled site or rather landfill site operated in the sort of way that we hope to apply in Hong Kong. These, of course, are much further away from built-up areas but in any case the measures that will be taken should ensure that smells and other environmental nuisances are reduced to an absolute minimum. Extensive environmental studies are being undertaken at present to ensure that this happens.*

Public opinion surveys on the Green Paper

8. MR. MARTIN LEE asked: *With reference to the two public opinion surveys on the Green Paper carried out by AGB McNair HK Ltd. on behalf of the Survey Office, in the light of the statement attributed to the Managing Director of AGB McNair by Mr. George FOULKES MP during the House of Commons debate on the Hong Kong Annual Report 1987 on 20 January 1988 to the effect that if AGB McNair had been given a free hand it would have asked more direct and simple questions than those which actually were asked and that it felt constrained by the complicated wording of the Green Paper, will Government inform this Council whether it will still rely on the findings of the surveys that only 15 per cent and 12 per cent respectively of people polled would like to see direct elections introduced in 1988?*

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, in winding up the debate on the Survey Office report which took place in this Council on 18 November last, I noted that a wide range of comments had been made on the AGB McNair surveys. I said on that occasion, and I quote: 'As in any survey of this nature, there will inevitably be different judgments as to how precisely any particular question should be put. I do not believe it to be part of my task to defend the professional judgment of the company or the approach it has adopted. Listening to Members' speeches this afternoon, it is clear that while there is strong criticism of the report from some Members, others have been satisfied by the careful explanations which the company has provided. I believe, however, I should assure Members that both views will of course be taken into account by the Executive Council when considering the report'. Sir, I can confirm that these views have been taken into account by the Executive Council.

MR. MARTIN LEE: *Sir, may I respectfully seek a ruling from you because I do not, with respect, think that the Chief Secretary has answered my question. The question was based on a disclosure of fact made to Parliament as recently as 20 January this year which took the hon. Member of Parliament then on his feet, Sir Peter BLAKER, as much by surprise as it took me, listening to it up in the public gallery. What the Chief Secretary said was simply to refer to his own speech made in this Council on 18 November last year when there was no such disclosure of fact. So may I respectfully ask you to direct him to answer my question?*

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT: Mr. LEE, it is unwise for the Chair to make a ruling about whether answers are adequate or not. It is always open to a Member of this Council to ask further questions. It must be for those who answer to judge the adequacy or otherwise of their answers. If you wish to ask a further supplementary question, you may of course do so.

MR. MARTIN LEE: *Sir, such a non-answer makes the asking of supplementary questions very difficult but I will try. Does the Administration appreciate that the relevant question copied by AGB McNair HK Ltd. from the Green Paper, consisted of 251 words in English and 368 characters in Chinese, and yet still failed to ask the simple question as to whether the people polled would like to see direct elections introduced in 1988?*

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, my original answer indeed addressed the question from Mr. LEE. He is asking me to comment on the professional judgement of a survey firm in forming their questions and what was in their mind when they formed those questions. I repeat, Sir, that I do not believe it is for me to make such a judgment. However, I may be able to help Mr. LEE in two regards; firstly, I would like to reiterate that as far as the company was concerned, neither the Survey Office nor the Government had in any way sought to give detailed directions on how the survey should be conducted or to influence the drafting of the questionnaire. My understanding of the position of AGB McNair is that having been asked to conduct public opinion surveys on the issues and options set out in the Green Paper, it was their professional opinion that they should as far as possible follow the wording of the Green Paper since to depart from that wording could lead to a distortion of the findings of the survey.

MR. CHEONG-LEEN: *Sir, in view of the McNair Survey findings, based on simple and direct questions, I believe, that broadly speaking the general public favour retaining the existing 30-member composition of Urban Council and does not advocate Urban Councillors relinquishing their ex-officio seats on district boards, why is Government putting forth proposals which are opposite to such public opinion?*

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR: That would appear to be the subject of another question, Mr. CHEONG-LEEN. Would you put down a separate question on that as it does not relate to the original question or the original answer?

MR. CHEONG-LEEN: *Sir, may I have a written reply if that is convenient?*

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR: I will pass on your request to the Chief Secretary.

DR. LAM (in Cantonese): *Sir, regarding the speech by the Chief Secretary on 18 November last year, does he know at that time that AGB McNair do not have the full freedom to design the questionnaire as mentioned by Mr. FOULKES, MP?*

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, as I have explained in my answer to Mr. LEE, the way in which the questionnaires were framed is a matter for AGB McNair. I thought that I had made that very clear in my answer to the supplementary question by Mr. LEE. The Government did not try to influence AGB McNair, nor did the Survey Office try to influence AGB McNair in the formation of their questions.

MR. MARTIN LEE: *Sir, did the Government realise at all material times that the formulation of the options contained in the Green Paper might influence the framing of the questionnaire by AGB McNair?*

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, the remit to the company was very clear. It was simply to conduct two public opinion surveys between July and September 1987 on the issues and the options set out in the Green Paper. It was up to the company concerned to frame their questions on the basis of that very broad remit and I repeat, Sir, that it is not for me to comment on their professional judgment.

Written answers to questions

Whole-day schooling for primary students

9. MR. HUI asked: *Will Government inform this Council of the number of vacant classrooms in government and aided primary schools; how many of these vacant classrooms are in bisessional (am and pm) and unisessional (whole day) schools; and will consideration be given to gradually resuming whole-day teaching for all primary students in the Territory by utilising these vacant classrooms?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Sir, the number of vacant classrooms in government and aided primary schools in the current school year in terms of bisessional and whole-day schools is shown in the following table:

	<i>In bisessional schools*</i>	<i>In whole-day schools</i>	<i>Total</i>
Total classrooms	15 770	1 260	17 030
Vacant classrooms	3 164	431	3 595

**Note:* Each physical classroom has been counted twice in this case.

It is already the Government's policy to encourage primary schools to convert to whole-day operation wherever feasible. Thirty-eight schools have so converted during the past three years.

Coverision to whole-day operation is physically possible whenever a school building is vacant for half the day, or when the combined enrolment of both bisessional schools does not exceed the permitted capacity of the school building. At present there are 47 schools which could extend operation into the other half of the day, and the Director of Education is making efforts to persuade the school authorities to convert to whole-day operation. The combination of two school sessions sharing the same building presents rather more difficulties, but efforts are likewise being made to encourage whole-day operation.

While in theory all the vacant classrooms could be used to hasten the extension of whole-day schooling, in practice there are various constraints. For example, it is not desirable to require children to change schools; nor is it desirable to force children to take up places outside their normal catchment area. The Administration will take all practical steps to extend whole-day schooling as circumstances permit.

Review of Overseas Education Allowances

10. MR. LAI asked: *Will Government inform this Council whether it has any plan to review the overseas education allowances for local civil servants whose children are receiving education in the United Kingdom since its introduction in 1972?*

CHIEF SECRETARY: Sir, civil service fringe benefits were recently considered in the context of the 1986 Pay Level Survey. As a result, the Government is in the process of reviewing housing benefits for civil servants but has no plan to review overseas education allowances or other fringe benefits for the time being.

Participation in an owners' corporation's business

11. MR. POON CHI-FAI asked: *In view of a recent incident in which individual members of an owners' corporation were involved in legal proceedings as a result of their participation in the corporation's business, will Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *what are the legal responsibilities of an individual member when he participates in the business of an owners' corporation or a mutual aid committee or their respective sub-committees;*
- (b) *has the Government provided any briefings on legal matters or legal advice for the individuals mentioned in (a) above; and*
- (c) *what steps the Government will take to prevent civic-minded people from being deterred from taking part in voluntary community work because of possible involvement in legal proceedings?*

SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION: Sir, the management committee of an owners' corporation (OC) acts as its executive arm. The committee has to abide by resolutions of the corporation passed at general meetings. The members of the management committee have to maintain proper books and other records of the corporation, and could be held liable if they failed to do so, but otherwise so long as the members of the management committee act in good faith and exercise reasonable diligence in the exercise of the powers conferred on them by the Multi-Storey Buildings (Owners Incorporation) Ordinance, they should not be held personally liable for the acts of the corporation.

Mutual aid committees (MACs) are not bodies corporate. They are not therefore capable of being sued independently of their office-bearers, who may be jointly and severally liable for acts purported to be made on behalf of the MAC. But in normal circumstances, so long as they act in good faith and exercise reasonable diligence, MAC office-bearers should not incur legal liabilities in discharging their duties.

As regards Mr. POON Chi-fai's second question, an explanatory pamphlet printed in English and Chinese is freely available at all district offices to those interested in the work of OCs and how they are formed. This pamphlet sets out in layman's terms the main provisions of the MultiStorey Buildings (Owners Incorporation) Ordinance, including those relating to the appointment of a management committee and to its powers and duties. From time to time, many district offices organise building management seminars for OCs and MACs. Various aspects of building management are covered in these seminars, including the obligations of OC and MAC office-bearers. Where there are doubts on specific legal points, individual OCs or MACs are advised to seek legal advice. In this connection, a total of 106 inquiries were referred by the district offices in 1987 to the Free Legal Advice Scheme operated by the Law Society of Hong Kong.

As regards the third question, it is not within Government's power by legislation or otherwise to prevent a person from being joined as a party to civil proceedings. If a person believes that he should not have been made a party to proceedings he may apply under the Rules of the Supreme Court for the proceedings against him to be discontinued.

However, as explained earlier, in normal circumstances, OC and MAC office-bearers should not incur any personal legal liabilities in the course of their duties so long as they act in good faith and exercise reasonable diligence in discharging their duties.

The Government will through the liaison network of the district offices explain the above to OC and MAC office-bearers and will continue to give them all the support and assistance possible.

Government Business

First Reading of Bill

SOCIAL WORK TRAINING FUND (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988

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

Second Reading of Bills**SOCIAL WORK TRAINING FUND (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988**

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE moved the Second Reading of: 'A Bill to amend the Social Work Training Fund Ordinance'.

He said: Sir, I move that the Social Work Training Fund (Amendment) Bill 1988 be read the Second time.

This Bill makes several minor amendments to the Social Work Training Fund Ordinance, which provides for the management of this fund by a committee chaired by the Director of Social Welfare.

The most significant amendment relates to the tabling of the report and statement of account of the fund in this Council. At present the Ordinance requires this to be done by 30 September each year, which has proved to be impracticable because this date always falls within the annual recess. To avoid specific approval having to be sought on each occasion for late tabling, the Bill proposes to change the date to 31 December.

The other main change is the removal of the Director of Medical and Health Services or his nominee from the membership of the committee. Since the medical social workers are now employed in the Social Welfare Department there is no longer a need for the Medical and Health Department to be represented. As a consequence the quorum for the committee is to be reduced from four to three.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

TRAMWAY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987**Resumption of debate on Second Reading (13 January 1988)**

Question proposed.

MR. CHAN KAM-CHUEN: Sir, I rise to support the Tramway (Amendment) Bill 1987.

The passing of this Bill would officially add a new dimension to tourism and will be of special interest to tourists who come from cities which had regrettably dismantled their tramway systems too soon.

Every tourist who first visited San Francisco would seldom give up the opportunity of taking a ride on their famous streetcar (the American term for a

tram) to the terminal where everyone gets down and turns the streetcar around. It is fun for the tourists and it also shows the spirit of co-operation of the local people. It so happens that one of these streetcars is now in Hong Kong for an exhibition.

The increased fare will, of course, not affect the local citizen on their regular trips to work and shopping, unless they wish, for nostalgic reasons, turn the time machine back and go on one of these modified trams with brass railings and ride back into the last century.

As to the normal tram services mentioned by the Secretary for Transport on the introduction of this Bill, the joint efforts of the Hong Kong Tramways Ltd. and the Government have greatly improved these services in recent years. Some of the good points of our tram services relevant to this Bill which are enjoyed by tourists and Hong Kong people alike are as follows:

- (1) A double-decker tram has a much higher passenger carrying capacity than a double-decker bus.
- (2) It has the highest road safety records when compared with all the other modes of public transport.
- (3) It does not pollute the air we breathe.
- (4) It is durable and is easier to maintain.
- (5) Its speed is adequate as 50 km is the permitted speed within the urban areas served by the tramway which contributes to a safe, smooth and comfortable ride.
- (6) Its fare is the lowest amongst public transport, at HK\$60 cents or US\$0.077 cents. This is a social safety net for the less privileged working class, aged and retired, who can travel on the six overlapping routes of over 30 km on such a low rate.
- (7) It is well maintained and has an attractive appearance covered with colourful advertisement galore.
- (8) It is supporting the traffic safety campaign by gradually shifting their tram stops near to traffic lights and pedestrian crossings.
- (9) It is a more efficient user of energy than motor vehicles.

With these observations, Sir, I support the motion and hope that this may help to prolong the stay of tourists in Hong Kong.

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT: Sir, I wish to thank Mr. CHAN for his support of the motion and for his very helpful comments.

I wish to stress, Sir, that while the Bill enables tram services as a form of tourist attraction to be regularised, there is, at the same time, sufficient guarantee in the Bill to ensure that the services to tourists will in no way affect the tramways' normal services to the general public.

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 Bill

Council went into Committee.

TRAMWAY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987

Clauses 1 and 2 were agreed to.

Council then resumed.

Third Reading of Bill

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL reported that the

TRAMWAY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987

had passed through Committee without amendment. He moved the Third Reading of the Bill.

Question put on the Bill and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time and passed.

Adjournment and next sitting

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT: In accordance with Standing Orders I now adjourn the Council until 2.30 pm on Wednesday, 10 February 1988.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes to Four o'clock.

Note: The short titles of the Bills listed in the Hansard have been translated into Chinese for information and guidance only; they do not have authoritative effect in Chinese

WRITTEN ANSWERS**Annex I****Written answer by the Chief Secretary to Mr. YEUNG's supplementary question to Question 2**

The information is as follows:

- (a) In 1986 and 1987, translation services required from private agencies and part-timers accounted for around 1 per cent of the total translation workload in Government. The expenditure incurred amounted to \$238,000 for 1986 and \$382,000 for 1987.
- (b) In 1986 and 1987, less than 5 per cent of the total simultaneous interpretation service was provided by part-timers, and the expenditure incurred was \$100,200 for 1986 and \$129,390 for 1987.

Annex II**Written answer by the Secretary for Education and Manpower to Mr. SZETO's supplementary question to Question 4**

The Education Department is aware of two fatal cases which apparently match the circumstances you had in mind: one in 1984 and one in 1986. Neither school was informed beforehand by parents of any health problem or physical defect suffered by their children.

Annex III**Written answer by the Secretary for Health and Welfare to Dr. IP's supplementary question to Question 5**

The Pap smear test is widely available at government clinics and those of the Hong Kong Family Planning Association. Government, subvented and private hospitals also provide facilities for testing. Three clinics, one each in Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories have been designated as specific centres for Pap smear testing, and this service is available to all. In effect, although there is not a mass screening programme as such, all women are covered by this network and no-one who wishes to undergo a Pap smear test would be prevented from doing so because of a lack of facilities.

I am advised that no information is available on the level of pick-up rates which would indicate the desirability of a mass screening programme, however, it is recognised world-wide that the essence of the screening problem is a lack of

WRITTEN ANSWERS—Continued

motivation among women to present themselves for testing, especially when they themselves feel quite healthy. It is this reluctance to be tested that is recognised as the main constraint on the success of screening programmes in many countries. In Hong Kong, the natural modesty of Chinese women is also felt to be a contributory factor.

Because of this, the Director of Medical and Health Services feels that increased health education efforts in this area would be more productive than a mass screening programme. Special efforts aimed at increasing awareness among women at risk are being undertaken by the Central Health Education Unit and the Hong Kong Family Planning Association, as well as the Social Hygiene and Family Health Services. Publicity leaflets, health talks and media presentations on the subject are continuously made available to the public. In addition, the principal theme of the 1988-89 central health education campaign emphasises the prevention and early detection of cancer. The primary prevention approach will emphasise healthy life styles, diet etc., while secondary prevention measures will be aimed at increasing public awareness of the various methods which can lead to the early detection of cancer.