

# LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL No. 31.

FRIDAY, 21<sup>ST</sup> MAY, 1886.

PRESENT:

HIS EXCELLENCY WILLIAM HENRY MARSH, C.M.G.,  
Administering the Government in the absence of His Excellency SIR GEORGE FERGUSON BOWEN, GC.M.G.  
His Honour the Acting Chief Justice, (JAMES RUSSELL.)  
The Honourable the Acting Colonial Secretary, (FREDERICK STEWART, LL.D.)  
„ the Acting Attorney General, (EDWARD JAMES ACKROYD.)  
„ the Colonial Treasurer, (ALFRED LISTER.)  
„ the Surveyor General, (JOHN MACNEILE PRICE.)  
„ PHINEAS RYRIE.  
„ WONG SHING.

ABSENT:

His Honour the Chief Justice, (SIR GEORGE PHILLIPPO, Knt.,) on leave.  
The Honourable the Attorney General, (EDWARD LOUGHLIN O'MALLEY,) on leave.  
„ WILLIAM KESWICK, on leave.  
„ THOMAS JACKSON, on leave.  
„ FREDERICK DAVID SASSOON, on leave.

The Council met pursuant to adjournment.

The Minutes of the last Meeting, held on the 14th instant, were read and confirmed.

BILL READ A THIRD TIME AND PASSED.—On the motion of the Acting Attorney General, seconded by the Acting Colonial Secretary, the Bill entitled *The Spirit Licences Ordinance*, 1886 was read a third time.

Question put—that this Bill to pass.

Bill passed.

CLOSING OF THE SESSION.—His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government closed the Session with the following speech:—

HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

1. The time has now arrived for closing the Session of 1885-86, during which a considerable amount of useful legislation and other public business has been dealt with by you.

2. I believe it will be necessary to summon a special meeting in the month of September next, in order to consider the Estimates for the ensuing year; but the opening of the next annual Session will not take place until October or November, in accordance with the practice of the two past years.

3. The financial position of the Colony at the beginning of the present year was better than had been anticipated. The Revenue of 1885, which had been estimated at \$1,137,558 yielded \$1,251,890, besides \$66,659 for premia on sales of land. The only year when the Revenue has been larger was 1883 when, owing to exceptional circumstances, a very large amount was received from licences for boiling opium for exportation. The marked increase of receipts over 1884 is due no doubt to the termination of the hostilities recently carried on in this part of the world.

4. In consequence of this improvement in the Revenue of 1885, the balance of assets at the commencement of the present year was \$427,692 instead of \$190,088 as estimated in October last.

5. I am happy to inform you that the receipts during the first quarter of the present year have been about \$17,000 in excess of the Estimates, and \$27,642 in excess of the receipts during the first quarter of 1885, thus exhibiting a continued healthy development of commerce.

6. In consequence of this satisfactory condition of the finances, it will probably not be necessary for the Colony to borrow any money until towards the end of the year, and I do not anticipate that a larger amount than \$300,000 will be required this year.

7. Before this satisfactory condition of the finances had been ascertained by the closing of the accounts of the past year, it was thought that it would be necessary to raise extra Revenue for the purpose of defraying the interest and sinking fund on the loan, which will amount to about £15,000 a year, when the whole £200,000 has been borrowed; and the Council, being consulted on the means to be devised for providing more funds, unanimously recommended "that the best means of doing so would be chiefly by an increase of the stamp duty."

8. A Special Committee of this Council, to whom the question of details of extra stamp dues was referred for consideration, reported after careful investigation that no urgency exists for extra taxation at the present time, and recommended that the consideration of increase to Revenue should be postponed. I accordingly announced to the Council that I would not proceed any further this session with the measure proposed for this purpose. It does not

seem probable that any extra taxation will be necessary until the whole amount of £200,000 has been borrowed. One of the Un-official Members has even expressed the opinion that the ordinary Revenue which we shall receive will, through the progressive development of our commerce, be sufficient to meet all calls made upon it. I should be glad if this forecast were to prove correct.

9. I thank you in the name of Her Majesty's Government for your loyal vote of a further sum of £60,000 for the completion of the Military Defences of the Colony. These works are proceeding as fast as is possible, and I have been informed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies that the greater part of the armament will probably be consigned to Hongkong during the current year. The mountings of the breech-loading guns are of new pattern, and require to be specially tested, and this of course to some extent retards the supply.

10. The small though powerful ironclad *Wivern*, two first class and two second class torpedo boats are already stationed here, and four more first class torpedo boats are to be sent out, two of which I am informed are now on their way. When the forts have been completed,—and they are being pushed forward by General CAMERON as vigorously as the nature of the work will allow,—the Colony need be under no serious apprehension of foreign attack.

11. I informed the Council on the 17th March last that Her Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Peking had made strong representations to the Ministers of the Tsungli Yamèn on the unwarrantable action of Chinese Officials in seizing a Chinese subject, accused of piracy, who had taken refuge in this Colony. The Ministers, as I have already stated, expressed their regret for what had occurred, and satisfactory excuses have been made by the Viceroy of Fokien and of the Two Kwang.

12. The Commission provided for under Article 7 Section 3 of the Chefoo Convention for the purpose of considering the establishment of some system that shall enable the Chinese Government to protect its revenue without interfering with the junk trade of this Colony, has at length been appointed. Mr. JUSTICE RUSSELL has been selected by me to represent the Hongkong Government on this Commission. The other Commissioners are Mr. BRENNAN, Consul at Tientsin, and Shao, Taotai of Shanghai.

13. The Law Revision Commission has been very diligent in the performance of the important duties with which it has been entrusted. Ten Ordinances prepared by this Commission, have been passed by the Council since the beginning of the year, and a number of other Draft Bills will be ready for the next Session of Council.

14. I have appointed a Commission to inquire into the system of land-tenure and into the disposal of Crown Lands, with a view to the adoption of such improvements as may facilitate the transfer of allotments held from the Crown; an inquiry which I believe will, when completed, be of great practical utility both to the Government and to the community.

15. With regard to Public Works, satisfactory progress continues to be made with the works for the extension of the public water-supply, and it is estimated—at the present rate of progress—that the tunnel intended to convey the waters from Tytam to this side of the Island, will be completed before the end of next year; whereupon the new supply will be made available for public use, and an important measure of relief obtained, without having to await the completion of the Reservoir in the following year.

16. A further large instalment of useful sanitary work has been effected during the past season in the reconstruction and extension of the main drainage and sewerage system of the town, principally in the Chinese quarters. Contracts have been entered into also, for the completion of the new Victoria College within eighteen months from the present date, and arrangements have been made for the further development of the western suburb of Kennedy Town by the formation of new streets and thoroughfares and the erection of an adequate Police Station for the protection of the growing interests of that rising locality. The new permanent Lazaretto Buildings at Stone Cutters' Island which were contracted to be finished by the 1st of July will be completed by that date, and will become available for occupation should occasion arise.

17. Among other measures for the better prevention of Cattle epidemics in the Colony, to which subject your attention was directed during last session, I have approved a large extension to the present Cattle market buildings at Kennedy Town, by which means all livestock imported into the Colony and intended for our markets, will be brought under close and continuous inspection, thus rendering feasible a more effective protection of the food supplies of the public.

18. I propose to construct, as soon as the hot season has terminated, a permanent Police Station at Mount Gough for the protection of the residents at the Peak, whose number is likely to be considerably extended.

19. In conclusion, Honourable Gentlemen, I desire to convey to you my acknowledgements for the loyal and valuable co-operation which you have afforded my Government during the labours of the session and for the supplies which you have so liberally voted for the Public service.

I now prorogue this Council to the 15th day of September next.

W. H. MARSH,  
*Administering the Government.*

Read and confirmed, this 27th day of August, 1886.

ARATHOON SETH,  
*Clerk of Councils.*