

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, No. 2.

THURSDAY, 10TH JANUARY, 1889.

PRESENT:

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR
(SIR G. WILLIAM DES VOEUX, K.C.M.G.)

The Honourable the Colonial Secretary, (FREDERICK STEWART).
 „ the Attorney General, (EDWARD LOUGHLIN O'MALLEY).
 „ the Acting Colonial Treasurer, (HENRY ERNEST WODEHOUSE, C.M.G.).
 „ the Captain Superintendent of Police, (WALTER MEREDITH DEANE).
 „ PHINEAS RYRIE.
 „ WONG SHING.
 „ BENDYSHE LAYTON, (*vice* the Honourable ALEXANDER PALMER MAC EWEN).

ABSENT:

The Honourable the Surveyor General, (JOHN MACNEILE PRICE).
 „ JOHN BELL-IRVING.
 „ CATCHICK PAUL CHATER.

The Council met pursuant to notice.

The Minutes of the last Meeting, held on the 2nd instant, were read and confirmed.

MESSAGE.—Read the following Message from His Excellency the Governor:—

G. WILLIAM DES VOEUX.

The Governor, in accordance with the intimation made to the Legislative Council last year, has had under consideration the Report of the Commission which was appointed to enquire respecting the interpretation in the Courts and other Government Departments; and as the result of further enquiries and much discussion of the subject, he is now prepared with definite recommendations, which, if adopted, will he hopes promote a more general knowledge of Chinese in the Public Service and bring about a substantial improvement in its interpreting capacity.

It should however be mentioned in the first instance that the existing state of things proved on investigation to be scarcely as defective as might be supposed from the report of the Commission. The Judges and Magistrates (from whom no information was sought or obtained) did not altogether confirm the view taken by the Commissioners in paragraph 7 of their report, and have furnished evidence showing that in respect of Hakka, the most important of the dialects specifically mentioned, the Colony is fairly well served. And even as regards the dialects of Swatow and Amoy the Governor, as the result of his enquiries, is not disposed to think that there is so wide a gap between present deficiency and what is practically obtainable as a superficial consideration of the subject is apt to indicate.

It is to be borne in mind that ideal perfection in interpretation is quite impracticable of attainment even when the two languages are far more akin than English and any dialect of Chinese. In the quick translation of any one language into any other the success of cross-examination, is, and must be, frequently affected by the failure to distinguish delicate shades of meaning; and in view of the fact that there are used by witnesses here a great number dialects of a language so utterly unlike English as is that of China, it is quite hopeless to expect the attainment of a condition under which the Courts would be altogether free of difficulty and embarrassment in respect of interpretation.

Of the Hakka dialect alone which is mentioned in the report as one single dialect there are, the Governor is informed, several varieties, each sufficiently distinct from the rest to render a good interpreter of any one very possibly a bad interpreter of any other: and it is obvious that under such circumstances to secure for the Courts the command of satisfactory interpretation in all cases is a work of no ordinary difficulty, which at the best can only be accomplished approximately.

It would be evidently inexpedient to attempt the provision of all the necessary capacity and qualifications in a class of officers employed on no other duty. For that would not only involve the very great expense of a large Department of Interpreters and of students (many of whom would probably prove ineligible for office after large sums had been spent on their training) but it would mean a body of officers, for the most part required for service only very occasionally, and whose idleness, as regards public work, in the intervals would be perhaps injurious to themselves, and certainly to the Government service generally.

For this reason it seems desirable to depend on regular interpreters only in respect of the two or three dialects in most common use; and as regards the less common dialects or varieties of dialects to provide the requisite capacity among other Public Officers whose services as interpreters would be called for only when actually required.

Partly with this object therefore, and also to promote improvement in all interpretation, as well as to obtain greater efficiency, through improved knowledge of Chinese, in other departments than the Judicial, the Governor has drafted certain regulations (I) which are now laid on the table and offered for consideration, as appearing likely to secure what is required within reasonable limits of expense, and under other conditions least open to objection.

With further view to the same objects, the Governor has deemed as well worthy of the test of experiment the suggestion of the Commissioners as to the encouragement of the acquisition of Chinese among the younger members of the non-chinese, community; and some proposals for the purpose in the form of regulations (II) are also offered for consideration.

The case of the Police requires somewhat different treatment. Their tenure of office for a short fixed period renders unsuitable a reward in the shape of a lump sum; and it is moreover expedient in their case that a somewhat lower standard of knowledge of Chinese than is required from other Public Servants should not go without reward. For these and other reasons, after consultation with the Captain Superintendent and the Board of Examiners, the Governor has deemed it well to retain the principle of the existing system of rewards for acquisition of Chinese, increasing however the sums paid per mensem for the lower standards of knowledge, and adding a third standard, the attainment of which will carry a reward quite equal to that offered to the rest of the service. In another paper (III) now laid on the table will be found the scale of premiums which it is proposed to offer.

Though these various regulations which are suggested for adoption will probably be found to require amendment after experience has been gained of their working, the Governor hopes that they will at least bring about substantial improvement in the condition of things which was the subject of the Commissioners' enquiry, and will thus tend to the greater efficiency of the Public Service.

By Command,

FREDERICK STEWART,
Colonial Secretary.

Government House, Hongkong, 10th January, 1889.

I.

In C.S.O. $\frac{1407}{88}$

*Proposed Regulations for Public Officers, other than Members
of the Police Force, for the encouragement of
proficiency in the Chinese Language.*

I.

Public Officers who pass an examination, to the satisfaction of the Examiners, in the Chinese language, of the Cantonese or Hakka dialect, or any other dialect to be approved by the Governor, will receive an allowance according to the following scale:—

	<i>Officers in receipt of salaries under \$200 per month.</i>	<i>Officers with salaries over \$200 a month.</i>
For colloquial and written Chinese,	\$400	\$600
For colloquial only,	300	450

This regulation to apply only in respect of dialects which Officers have hitherto not professed to understand, or in which they have hitherto not been employed to interpret.

II.

The allowance will be granted to Cadets who acquire proficiency in other dialects than those in which they have passed.

III.

On receipt of an allowance under these regulations, an Officer will be required to give security for the re-payment of the whole sum, or such proportion of it as may be fixed by the Governor, in the event of the Officer leaving the service of the Colony within three years from the time of receipt.

IV.

The allowance for a Chinese Teacher will be continued to Officers, who have passed their Examinations, for a period not exceeding three years, on their satisfying the Board of Examiners at the end of each year, that they are profiting by the teaching.

II.*In C.S.O. $\frac{1407}{88}$*

Proposal for the encouragement of the acquisition of the Chinese language among residents of the Colony, with a view to secure efficient interpretation in the Courts of Justice and Public Offices.

I.

The Governor to appoint, from residents in the Colony under 16 years of age, who have shown an aptitude for acquiring the Chinese language, and who have distinguished themselves in the Examination for the Colonial scholarship or other similar competition three student Interpreters, each to be attached to such department of the Public Service as to the Governor may seem fit.

II.

The salary of the student Interpreters will be 40 Dollars a month, payable however subject to a certificate of the Examiners after every period of six months, to the effect that satisfactory progress is being made in knowledge of the Chinese language, and in the facility of interpreting it into English and *vice versa*.

III.

Any student Interpreter who at the end of three years from his appointment as such shall pass satisfactory examination in the Chinese language, and whose conduct in other respects shall have earned approval, will be appointed to an office with a salary of not less than 100 Dollars a month if, or as soon as, he is of the age of 18 years.

IV.

Every student Interpreter on his appointment shall furnish security for the repayment of a sum not exceeding half of the whole sum received by him by way of salary, in the event of his leaving the service of the Colony before the expiration of 6 years from the time of his appointment.

III.*In C.S.O. $\frac{1407}{88}$*

Proposed Regulations for Members of the Police Force for the encouragement of proficiency in the Chinese language.

I.

Instead of the four certificates hitherto granted, two certificates shall be granted in ordinary cases, with a third one to be awarded only in cases of exceptional knowledge.

II.

Instead of the allowances of \$2.50 and \$1 a month now given to European and Indian Constables respectively who hold a certificate from the Board of Examiners, the following scale of remuneration shall be adopted, viz.:—

	<i>1st Certificate.</i>	<i>2nd Certificate.</i>	<i>3rd Certificate.</i>
European Constables,	\$2.50	\$5.00	\$10.00
Indian Constables,	1.00	3.00	5.00

such remuneration to be drawn only so long as the receiver remains in the Police Force.

III.

For the first certificate, a knowledge of colloquial shall be required.

For the second certificate, a higher standard of colloquial will be necessary, as well as acquaintance with a book in Colloquial to be approved of by the Board: and in the case of the third certificate an acquaintance with the written Chinese character will be necessary, as well as an advanced knowledge of Colloquial.

IV.

In no case shall the third certificate be granted without the sanction of His Excellency the Governor, upon the recommendation of the Board.

V.

Members of the Police Force already holding certificates under the old scheme, shall be allowed to continue drawing their present allowances, but will be at liberty to offer themselves for examination for the second and third certificates under the new scheme, and shall be entitled, on passing, to the higher allowances.

QUESTIONS.—Mr. LAYTON, pursuant to notice, asked the following question:—

Has Mr. Leigh's Report on the Proposed Drainage Scheme been forwarded to the Secretary of State for the Colonies?

His Excellency the Governor replied.

Mr. RYRIE, pursuant to notice asked the following question:—

Has the Government got any official information of the occurrence on board the "caledonien," which is reported in the public prints, of an Officer of the Supreme Court being obstructed in the execution of his duty?

His Excellency the Governor replied.

BILL ENTITLED AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CATTLE DISEASES, SLAUGHTER-HOUSES, AND MARKETS ORDINANCE, 1887.—The Attorney General moved the first reading of this Bill.

The Colonial Secretary seconded.

Question—put and passed.

Bill read a first time.

BILL ENTITLED AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE REFORMATORY SCHOOLS ORDINANCE, 1886.—The Attorney General moved that the further consideration of this Bill in Committee be postponed.

The Colonial Secretary seconded.

Question—put and passed.

BILL ENTITLED THE MERCHANT SHIPPING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT ORDINANCE, 1889.—The Attorney General moved that the further consideration of this Bill in Committee be postponed.

The Colonial Secretary seconded.

Question—put and passed.

BYE-LAWS UNDER "THE PUBLIC HEALTH ORDINANCE, 1887."—His Excellency stated that it was not possible to proceed with these Bye-Laws as it had been found necessary to refer them back to the Sanitary Board for reconsideration.

ADJOURNMENT.—The Council then adjourned to Thursday, the 17th instant, at 4 P.M.

G. WILLIAM DES VOEUX,
Governor.

Read and confirmed, this 17th day of January, 1889.

ARATHOON SETH,
Clerk of Councils.