

11TH DECEMBER, 1890.

FINANCE COMMITTEE.

A meeting of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council was held on the 11th December. There were present:—Hon W. M. Deane, Acting Colonial Secretary, Chairman; Hon. E. J. Ackroyd, Acting Attorney-General; Hon. H. E. Wodehouse, Acting Colonial Treasurer; Hon. S. Brown, Surveyor-General; Hon. N. G. Mitchell-Innes, Acting Registrar-General, Hon. P. Ryrie, Hon. C. P. Chater, Hon. J. J. Keswick, Hon. Ho Kai, Hon. T. H. Whitehead, and Mr. F. A. Hazeland, Acting Clerk of Councils.

REDUCTION OF POSTAL RATES.

The CHAIRMAN—Gentlemen, before we come to the main purpose for which we are met this afternoon I have to inform the hon. members of this committee, with reference to the question of reduction of postage that was brought before the Finance Committee some six weeks ago. that a telegram has this morning been received from the Secretary of State, in which he says:—"Reduced Postal rate generally approved. Commencement here 1st January. Strongly recommended similar arrangements homeward mail nearly as possible at same time. Telegraph reply." It will be remembered that we referred this matter to the Chamber of Commerce. The papers were sent to the Chamber of Commerce on the 4th November, but we have received no answer yet. This is a very pressing matter and in order to put it into order I will as a matter of form move that the sum of \$5,000 be voted to allow this Colony to meet the expense incurred by the reduction of postage. I have given instructions that copies of the papers formerly brought before your notice should be put before you again, as although you will probably remember the general principles you may not be cognisant of the details. From the report of the Acting Assistant Postmaster-General, Mr. Sercombe-Smith, it appears that if instead of a ten cent rate we adopted a five cent rate there would be a decided loss to the colony. (The hon. gentleman read paragraph 12 of the report referred to.) The matter has been sprung upon as very suddenly by this telegram and I would throw it out as a matter of consideration for the Council as to whether we could not agree to the postage next year being made seven cents, as unfortunately we have at present no one cent stamp and no six cent stamp. To make it five cents would mean a dead loss and that sum is by no means the equivalent of the 2½d. that represents the outward postage. If six cents be decided upon as the ultimate charge the die for the stamps will have to be made in England which will take some time, and therefore I think that for possibly six months we might reduce the postage to seven cents the half-ounce, by which time the six cent

stamp might be got out, and then we could effect a farther reduction if necessary. I am very sorry indeed to have had to bring this matter so suddenly before you, but as you see I am simply speaking in consequence of a telegram received this morning, and I am not in a position to tell you the opinion of the Chamber of Commerce, for unfortunately they have not replied to my letter of the 4th November Therefore in order to bring the matter up for discussion I move that the sum of \$5,000 be entered on the estimates for next year to meet the probable cost of a reduction of postage.

Hon. O. P. CHATER—I should like to know what the loss would be supposing we were to reduce the rate to seven cents.

The CHAIRMAN—With exchange at 3s. seven cents is equivalent to 2.52d.; at 3s. 2d., 2.62d; at 3s. 4d., 2.81d.; at 3s. 6d., 2.94d.; at 3s. 7d., 3.08d. (The hon. gentleman then read further extracts from the report of the Assistant Postmaster-General.) This is one of those problems it is impossible to solve, because I suppose my hon. friend on the right (Hon. T. H. Whitehead) will agree with me that if any one knew what the rate of exchange was going to be for the coming year matters would be very simple indeed, but as it is we have simply to calculate chances and strike an average, and therefore taking exchange at 3s. 7d., if we reduce the rate of postage from ten cents to seven cents the public will obtain a substantial gain and the colony will certainly not sustain a loss exceeding \$5,000, supposing exchange does not take an extraordinary fall.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—How do you arrive at the conclusion you will have to provide \$5,000?

The CHAIRMAN—It is to provide against a possible loss. I think I will ask you to agree to my motion now, and in the next three days, before the matter comes before the Legislative Council, you will have time to study these papers and fully consider the matter It is a matter that really concerns the Chamber of Commerce and the unofficial members of Council much more than the Government, and in the meantime, before the matter comes before the Council, you will have an opportunity of forming your views and expressing them.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—There is a meeting of the committee of the Chamber of Commerce to-morrow afternoon, when the subject will doubtless be brought up.

The CHAIRMAN—I am anxious to put matters into form. I therefore make this motion, and if you agree to it, it will be brought up on Monday for confirmation by the Legislative Council. and hon. members will then be able to express their opinion and to assent or not to the reduction.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL In this

report of the Acting Postmaster-General, I find that in paragraph 5 and all the other paragraphs he calculates the loss but he does not say what is the basis of his calculation, but when you come to the very last paragraph. 17, by English mail, he says Hongkong pays to Egypt 22d., Italy 53d., France 67d., and United Kingdom 1.67d., total 3.09d. on each half-ounce letter. I suppose he has taken that 3.09d. as the basis of the cost. Of that you see the United Kingdom gets 1.67d. If the postage is to be reduced is the share of the United Kingdom to remain the same and are we to pay Italy and France the same?

The CHAIRMAN—All these matters can be looked into in the interim, but as I before observed, I am simply addressing the committee on a telegram received this morning, which is of a most urgent character, because they state that in England they start with the mail leaving on the 1st January and they desire us if possible to approve of a reduced rate of postage and to let that take effect with the corresponding mail from here. On the whole I think I will invite the committee to agree to my motion, because it leaves the hon. members entirely free to oppose it when it comes before the Legislative Council for confirmation if on consideration of the whole facts and on consideration of the reply of the Chamber of Commerce they think it necessary to do so.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL—Will this be in addition to the \$30,000 refund of postage to England, Italy, France, and other countries and the \$32,000 for the colony's share of the expenses of the postal convention?

The CHAIRMAN—That is on one side of the account. Against that we have receipts from the sale of postage stamps, but we are obliged to put it down in this way. This would be a loss, and therefore it would be an addition.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL—This \$5,000 would be an actual loss?

The CHAIRMAN—No; it is to cover a possible loss, because whether there will be a loss or not depends upon exchange, and no member of Council would take upon himself to say what the rate of exchange for the next year would be.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—What necessity is there for the Finance Committee voting this sum to-day?

The CHAIRMAN—The telegram I read.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—But what necessity is there?

The CHAIRMAN—To bring the matter forward to be confirmed in Council. What is voted in Finance Committee is not binding on the Council.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I hardly see the necessity of voting this sum to-day.

The CHAIRMAN—The difference is this, that unless we agree to it to day, after the meeting of the Legislative Council on Monday. when it will be brought forward, it would have to be referred to the Finance Committee; but as I

have brought it before the Finance Committee to-day I should be justified in moving that instead of being referred to the Finance Committee it be dealt with by the Legislative Council itself.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—As there is every prospect of the Government having the views of the Chamber of Commerce before them on Saturday morning, I think it would be better to postpone our decision.

The CHAIRMAN—We cannot decide; it is for the Legislative Council to decide. I am perfectly willing to withdraw the motion now, having obtained the discussion and put hon members on the *qui vive* as to what is going to take place next Monday. The only difference is that we shall simply proceed to consider the matter in Council next Monday instead of referring it to the Finance Committee. I now withdraw the motion, but I would ask members to be perfectly prepared by next Monday, when the matter will come up for settlement.

THE SLAUGHTER-HOUSE.

The CHAIRMAN—We now come to public works extraordinary. Three items were left over for further consideration, Nos. 11, 13, and 14. No. 11 is slaughter-house and sheep and pig depots, estimated cost \$90,000, and it is proposed to spend \$60,000 next year. The question is whether this \$60,000 shall be passed or not.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—I see in 189 we voted for the slaughter-house \$3,000, for the extension of the cattle market \$14,000, and for the sheep and pig market \$25,000.

The CHAIRMAN—Perhaps you would like to go back a little earlier. In 1887 there was voted for the extension of the cattle market \$10,000 and in 1888 the same.

Hon. C. P. CHATER I should like to have some explanation.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—In the estimates for 1889 there was \$35,000 for the slaughterhouse and \$25,000 for the sheep and pig depot, making a total of \$60,000. The present item is \$30,000. The amounts placed in the estimates for 1889 were simply the amounts to be expended in that year. At that time no detailed plans had been prepared. Since that period the matter has been very carefully gone into and detailed estimates have been prepared, and the amount of \$90,000 is the result of those estimates.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—Then what we were called upon to vote in 1889 was only approximate amounts.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Yes.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—Or sheer guess work.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—At that time no site had been determined on, so the amounts could only be approximate.

Hon. P. RYRIE—That money has not been spent.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—No. The works are now proceeding and a small amount has been spent. The amount of accommodation

provided is probably much larger than hon. members have any idea of. In the sheep depôt there is accommodation for 500 sheep, in the pig depôt accommodation for 1,500 pigs, and I think I mentioned at the last meeting that the slaughter-house is on a much larger scale than the present one, because the latter is too small to allow the work to be carried on properly. Attached to the slaughter-house is what is called a cooling shed, where the meat is to be kept until it is taken to market. The present practice is to allow the people to take the carcasses to their own houses, where they are kept until the time of opening the market arrives. As regards the cost, these establishments cover 92,562 square feet of land and the estimated cost is \$90,000, so that the cost of the land with the buildings on it will be something less than \$1 per square foot.

HON. C. P. CHATER—Are these sheep and pig depôts to be anywhere near the slaughter-house?

THE SURVEYOR-GENERAL—They are all in connection with it. I have the plans with me and it might be easier to show the plans than to give a verbal description.

HON. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Has much levelling been required?

THE SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Yes. The difficulty was to find a site at all for the purpose where land was not too valuable, and the difficulty has been overcome by making land.

HON. T. H. WHITEHEAD—And the cost?

THE SURVEYOR-GENERAL—It has all been included in the estimates.—The hon. gentleman here produced the plans and explained them. He said there were separate slaughter-houses for cattle, swine and sheep, besides a special slaughter-house for the Jewish portion of the community, and another for the Indian portion. There were also coolie quarters for the people who looked after the cattle.

HON. C. P. CHATER—Is it advisable to have the slaughter-house so near the depôt?

THE SURVEYOR-GENERAL—The matter has been carefully gone into by the Sanitary Board, and the Colonial Veterinary Surgeon reports that there is no objection to having the slaughter-house near the depôt. I may say there is no doubt this will be one of the most remunerative works that have ever been undertaken by the Government. The revenue derived from the slaughter-house is at present \$36,000, and in addition to that the rent of the cattle depôt is \$2,700, which will be raised to \$3,000, and the sums which the Chinese are willing to pay for having their sheep and pigs kept there amount to \$3,790, which will make \$6,790 from the depôts, and this with \$36,000 as the revenue from the slaughter-house gives a total of nearly \$43,000.

HON. C. P. CHATER—Yes, but out of that sum we already get the \$36,000, so that the increase will be the difference, and that will be very small.

THE SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Yes, but the question is this, when we get such a large revenue ought not the Government to give a slaughter-house adequate to the wants of the business?

HON. C. P. CHATER—I am quite of opinion another slaughter-house in a different place is essentially necessary, but at the same time I cannot get over the fact that the amount of money asked for seems to be huge. \$90,000 sums to be a very large sum.

THE SURVEYOR-GENERAL—You have buildings covering 92,000 square feet. It is a very large undertaking.

THE ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL—Have you got a separate estimate for the house?

THE SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Yes; the estimate is made up as follows:—Sheep and pig depôt \$37,000, slaughter-house \$34,106, water supply \$6,432, drainage \$2,600.

HON. C. P. CHATER—I see the slaughter-house in 1879 was \$35,000. What is the difference between that and your estimate?

THE SURVEYOR-GENERAL—This is an entirely different estimate. It is rather a remarkable coincidence that the amounts should be so near.

HON. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Can you give us the cost of excavating?

THE SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Without a considerable amount of labour I could not, but I think perhaps it may be deduced from the figures I have given. For instance, \$37,000 for the sheep and pig depôt; out of that amount \$5,193 is for the building, and the remainder is for the site and retaining walls.

THE ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER—Does the erection of one involve the erection of the other? If one is passed must all be passed?

THE SURVEYOR-GENERAL—The slaughter-house is separate from the depôts, but the depôts have been considered an urgent necessity for many years past. The present state of things is absolutely scandalous and a thing that would hardly be tolerated in any civilized community. At present the pigs, as far as I understand, are stowed away in tiers one over the other in the basements of Chinese houses.

HON. C. P. CHATER—The depôts will be a very remunerative public work no doubt. The income will be \$6,700 from sheep and pigs, and it costs the Government \$37,000 to put up the buildings. That is a very good return, which we are at present not getting at all. But the slaughter-house is different. We are getting \$36,000; when we put up the new buildings will we get so much more?

THE CHAIRMAN—The profit on the old slaughter-house ought to be taken into consideration. That is a most important item.

THE SURVEYOR-GENERAL—That would come to a very considerable sum. The property would probably sell for more than \$20,000. It is something more than 10,000 square feet. In fact I may say we have had an offer for it.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Will \$90,000 be the total cost?

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Yes, that is the estimated total cost, which I have every reason to believe will not be exceeded.

The question was then put and the vote was passed *nem. con.*

PUBLIC LAUNDRIES.

The next vote considered was that for public laundries, estimated total cost \$25,000, estimated expenditure 1891. \$12,500.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Has it been decided to spend this \$12,500? Have plans been prepared and estimates arrived at?

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Yes. A committee or the Sanitary Board sat for some time with reference to this matter, and the question is rather an urgent one, because owing to the training of the Albany Nullah and branch nullahs above Kennedy Road, the washermen in that locality will very soon be turned out by force of circumstances, that is to say the nullahs where they now wash their clothes will be trained in masonry channels and will no longer be available for that purpose. It is rather a pressing question what is to be done with the people when they are turned out from there, and it was thought advisable if possible to erect some laundries at Wanchai with a view of providing accommodation for these particular men who now wash above Kennedy Road. The committee recommended that an experimental block of ten laundries including quarters for the coolies who carry on the work, should be erected at an estimated cost of \$25,000. It was thought that amount would rather more than cover the cost of this establishment at Wanchai.

The COLONIAL TREASURER—Experimental, is it?

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—In this way, that nothing of the kind has been done before, and it would be advisable to see how the laundries work before we go to any additional expense. If they work well the idea is that all the washing of the colony should be done in these places instead of in the nullahs as at present.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Have the Chinese been approached with a view of ascertaining whether they would be willing to fall in with the idea?

The ACTING REGISTRAR-GENERAL—Yes, I have had the washermen before me, and the only fear they seem to have is whether some would be allowed to iron in their own houses as at present and others be sent to the outskirts. They appear to think they might be subjected to unfair competition. The idea of the Sanitary Board was to got them all into these places, and I believe it was stated in the committee that if the experiment did not succeed there would be no loss because the houses would be a valuable property.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Yes, the houses to be erected would be valuable as Chinese residences,

not the washing houses but the quarters for the coolies.

The ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER—Would the work be remunerative?

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Yes. It was not thought advisable that a high charge should be made, as that would cause opposition, but the idea was to let them have them at something like 10 per cent, which would cover the cost of maintenance and interest.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL—If you charge a high rent they will put it on the washing.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Yes; it was thought advisable to make the charge as low as possible, just sufficient that the Government should not lose by the outlay.

The CHAIRMAN—There bill-side washermen must be driven from where they now are within a very short time, and the question is, where are they to go to? Are they to wash the dirty clothes in their own houses with every change of spreading infection, or are proper laundries to be established under the control of the Sanitary Board?

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Yes, that is the question, and as regards the nullahs above Kennedy Road it is a question of two or three months.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—But you cannot have the laundries ready in two or three months.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—I suppose we shall have to be a little lenient with them and not displace them hastily.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL—Some have already been displaced. Those near the tramway have all been removed.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Then I suppose they have gone into the next nullah or up stream.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—If the Chinese can carry on their avocations in the manner they do now they will not go to the laundries, but if the Government stop them carrying on their avocations in the manner they do and compel them to use the laundries, no doubt the laundries would pay and pay well.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—As regards washing in the streams there is no doubt the Government have power to prevent it for sanitary reasons, As regards the ironing, it would be difficult to prevent them ironing where they chose.

The CHAIRMAN—But you have power to make by-laws.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Yes, and the idea of the Sanitary Board was that it will not be very easy to move in the matter unless some sort of compulsion is used.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—Then the question is, if you do that, whether the \$25,000 will suffice.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL—This is only for a trial.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—The number of washermen in the whole of the city, according to Mr. McCallum, is something like sixty, and they employ two or three men each, so there is a

total of something like 150. These new laundries would afford accommodation for sixty, so that we would require ultimately nearly three times as much accommodation.

The CHAIRMAN—But if the first succeeds you can put up the rest.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Yes; if it pays the Government it does not much matter whether the \$25,000 or a large sum be spent. But the matter has been gone into very carefully, and it is thought that if these places are put up the Government can afford to let the laundrymen have the establishments at a much lower rate than they are paying for their present quarters, and that therefore there would be an inducement to them to move into the new laundries.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—And yet it would pay the Government?

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Yes, because the laundries would be put up where land is not of much value.

The vote was passed *nem. con.*

PUBLIC LATRINES

The next vote was one for public latrines, estimated total cost \$17,000, estimated expenditure to 31st December, 1890, \$7,000; estimated expenditure 1891, \$10,000.

Hon. HO KAI moved to omit the vote. He argued that it would be better to leave it to private persons to establish public latrines, making a small charge for their use.

Hon. J. J. KESWICK seconded.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL said that this was also a matter that had been recommended by the Sanitary Board. It was considered there was a class of the population who were unable to afford even a small fee for the accommodation. And although not directly remunerative the work was so indirectly because the contractor who removed the soil paid a considerable sum for it. There was a vote on the estimates last year; some iron work had been got out from home, and without further expenditure part of the amount already expended would be wasted. If hon. members would visit the villages, and also some of the back streets and lanes in the city, they would see that latrines were not only desirable but a necessity from a sanitary point of view. There was a special committee appointed some time ago of which Mr. Chadwick and himself were members and they were strongly in favour of the erection of free latrines; in fact this formed a special branch of the work which Mr. Chadwick considered necessary for the improvement of the health of the colony.

A long discussion ensued.

On the CHAIRMAN putting the question to the vote.

Hon. HO KAI said he would withdraw his amendment if the expenditure had already been incurred as in that case the amendment was useless.

The CHAIRMAN read the rule to the effect

that after the question was put no further discussion could be allowed.

Hon. HO KAI said he thought he was entitled to give an explanation.

The CHAIRMAN—I must ask you either to withdraw your motion or not.

Hon. HO KAI—I withdraw if the money has been already spent.

The CHAIRMAN—The question is that \$10,000 be expended during next year. To that an amendment has been moved that \$10,000 be not expended next year.

The LERK then called the roll for the vote on the amendment that the vote be expunged, and the division was as follows—

FOR.	AGAINST.
Hon. Ho Kai	Hon. T. H. Whitehead
Hon. J. J. Keswick	The Acting Registrar-General
Hon. C. P. Chater	The Surveyor-General
Hon. P. Ryrie	The Act. Colonial Treasurer
	The Acting Attorney-General

The amendment was therefore lost and the vote was passed.

THE CIVIL HOSPITAL.

The first vote in connection with this was for the Staff Quarters. Estimated total cost \$66,000; amount expended to 30th June, 1890, \$24,377; estimated expenditure to 31st December 1890, \$39,377; estimated expenditure 1891, \$26,623.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—There are quarters for the nursing staff, the assistant surgeon, the apothecary, and some others connected with the hospital. The foundations were completed before my arrival, and as the plans were prepared and the buildings now in progress we have very little choice left in the matter. In the course of last year contracts were entered into, and the buildings are now so far advanced that before the rainy season they will be roofed in. I hope. The amount set down in the estimates is required to meet liabilities under existing contracts.

Hon. P. RYRIE—It seems an enormous sum, \$66,000, for a house for the nursing staff. You might build a barrack for a regiment for that.

Hon. J. J. KESWICK—You might build the Civil Hospital itself for that, at any rate.

The CHAIRMAN—Some explanation is due to the committee on this point. The original estimate was only \$43,000 and now it is \$66,000.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—In what year was the estimate for \$43,000 made?

The CHAIRMAN—In 1889.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—I expect that was the amount estimated as required for that year.

The CHAIRMAN—No, the amount estimated for 1889 was \$30,000 and the original total estimated cost \$43,000.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—I have never seen that original estimate.

The CHAIRMAN—Is it your opinion that the work can be completed for the sum now asked for and that no further call will possibly be made?

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Yes, contracts

have been entered into to complete the work for the amount mentioned in the estimates.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—These estimates would never vary if all the contracts were let in the same way. It is a much better plan always to let your contracts for a lump sum. You then know exactly where you are whereas in other methods you go on from year to year, and by the time the work is finished the estimate is more than doubled. At least that has been our experience in the past, although we hope it will not be in the future under the present incumbent of the office. As I said before the best plan is to let the contracts for lump sums, as is done by nearly every one in the colony.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—I think all the Government contracts are let in that way.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—I understood from the Surveyor-General on the last occasion quite the reverse. He said in his experience he had never known work done in that way. The contracts were always let according to measurement and not for a fixed sum.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—I think there has been some misunderstanding with respect to what I said. The measurements are made simply for making monthly payments for the work completed as it goes on.

Hon. P. RYRIE—I understood you myself to say that it was impossible to let a contract for a lump sum for foundations because you never knew what you might come upon. You might find easy or you might find difficult ground.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—That is so. If alterations are made and the plans departed from, not only in the case of Government but in all contracts, the contractor has to be paid for extra work.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—How much was the contract for the foundations?

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—I think it is mentioned in my report, \$12,800.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Does that include the retaining walls?

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Yes, everything up to the basement.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—How many rooms are there in the building? I don't want to know the number of doors or of panes of glass, but I should like to know the number of rooms.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—I cannot say offhand. There will be a good many; hon members if they go about the colony must have seen the building.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Where do the staff reside now?

The CHAIRMAN—The nurses are lodged at present in what ought to be the Lock Hospital.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I understand the Hospital requires enlarging. If that is so, instead of retaining this palace, costing \$66,000, for a house for the staff. I think it would be a very good thing to convert it into a wing of the hospital.

The ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER—It is a long distance from the hospital.

The CHAIRMAN—Is there anything in the construction of this building to prevent its being used as a hospital with private wards instead of officers' quarters?

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—It might be utilised for that if not required as a residence for the hospital staff. A portion of it might be adapted as a hospital for private paying patients.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—It seem to me that an expenditure of \$66,000 for a residence for the hospital staff is wanton and reckless extravagance.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—I have already expressed my opinion on the subject in my printed report. It is being built on a larger scale than is perhaps necessary, but there it is, nearly completed.

Hon. HO KAI—May I enquire if this vote was brought forward last year?

The CHAIRMAN—Yes, and also in 1889. The original estimate was \$43,000, the revised estimate \$75,000; estimate for 1889 \$30,000, estimate for 1890 \$60,000.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—The \$60,000 was for the building and there was \$12,000 for the foundations, making \$72,000 in all, but after going carefully into the matter I reduced it to \$66,000. I think I may say that estimate is sufficient, because contracts have been entered into by which the contractor undertakes to complete the building for that lump sum.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I think if a feasible one the suggestion I have thrown out is well worthy of consideration, that this palace when finished shall be converted into a wing of the Hospital.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—You must have some accommodation for the nurses.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Yes, but this is an extravagant price to pay for it.

The CHAIRMAN—It is a rather long way from the Hospital, but I should say it is quite possible that in the end it will be utilised for private paying patients, but that of course is beside the present question. The question now is whether we shall vote the money for this particular purpose, and I am afraid we are tied by the acts of our predecessors.

The vote was agreed to.

A vote for Coolie Quarters, estimated cost \$7,000; estimated expenditure 1891, \$3,200; and a vote of \$7,131 for alterations and additions to the Hospital were agreed to.

LUNATIC ASYLUM FOR CHINESE.

The next vote was for a lunatic asylum for Chinese; estimated cost, \$20,000; estimated expenditure to the 31st December 1890, \$12,800; estimated expenditure 1891, \$7,200.

The CHAIRMAN—With reference to this vote, I can only say that hon. members will doubtless recollect the late member, Hon. A. P. MacEwen, bringing before the notice of the Government in a most emphatic way the want of proper

accommodation for Chinese lunatics, and this amount really appears on the estimates in consequence of Mr. MacEwen's representations last year. The work is, I believe, under contract.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—It is under contract and well advanced.

Vote agreed to.

POLICE STATION AT ABERDEEN.

The next vote was a Police Station at Aberdeen; estimated cost, \$32,115; expended to June 30th, 1890, \$4,611; estimated expenditure, 31st December, 890, \$8,615; estimated expenditure 1891, \$23,500.

The CHAIRMAN—As to Aberdeen Police Station, there may be one or two hon. members who can carry their memories far enough back to remember the old one. It was one of the oldest houses in the colony, a huge building of granite, standing on a plateau 200 feet above sea level. The men simply died off in a fearful manner from fever, and the consequence was that this station was abandoned a great number of years ago. Year after year a new station has been promised, and at last steps have been taken to commence it. The plans as at first laid out were not altogether approved of by the police officers for two reasons. One was that the basement was backed by a hill and that there was therefore no ventilation through into the rooms of the men who have to sleep below; and again, the place was divided into two wings which were joined by a staircase in the middle. But it is most undesirable, in case of a typhoon or attack, that in a police station one wing should be cut off from the other. The present Surveyor-General has revised the plans and removed the difficulties, arranging that all the rooms occupied by the men shall have thorough ventilation and that the building shall be one instead of separated.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL—Where about is it to be?

The CHAIRMAN—On the hill, rather above the present Harbour Office, and commanding the narrow passage by Aplichau and the valley.

The ACTING REGISTRAR-GENERAL—And it is expected there will not be the fever here there was at the old place?

The CHAIRMAN—It is to be hoped not, because there is thorough ventilation all round; about the other there was a great deal of jungle.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Will this amount be sufficient?

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—It is anticipated it will. The contract is to be let in a lump sum.

The vote was approved.

POLICE STATION AT QUARRY BAY.

The next vote was one of \$7,000 for a police station at Quarry Bay.

The CHAIRMAN—The Government pledged themselves five or six years ago to Messrs. Butterfield and Swire that this station should be built, and

now the amount has been put on the estimates. It is only intended to be a small one.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—The contract has been let and it is within the estimate.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—The contract is let?

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Yes. All these items were voted last year, and but for certain circumstances the money would have been spent, or might have been.

The vote was passed.

KENNEDYTOWN POLICE STATION.

The next vote was one of \$2,000 to complete Kennedytown Police Station.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—When is it proposed to occupy this magnificent police station?

The CHAIRMAN—Directly the medical officers and police officers are satisfied the hill at the back is not to be cut away for reclaiming purposes. For my part, if I should be in charge next year I would not recommend its occupation if by any chance, as I now hear is possible, the hill at the back, consisting of a series of old graves, should be cut away to fill up the Praya. All I can say is that if I have anything to do with the police and this earth cutting goes on I should enter my strongest protest against the occupation of the station, on account of the health of the men. I may mention this police station was started by Mr. Price earlier than the two previous ones, Aberdeen and Quarry Bay, contrary to the wish of the officer in command of the police, who considered the other stations much more important and that they ought to be finished. The Surveyor-General was of opinion that the establishment of a police station would assist in the promotion of what was then a great object of the Government, the occupation of Kennedytown, and it is no doubt apparent that if you put down a police station a population grows up round about it. That was most noticeable at Yaumati, a straggling village until the police station was put up. No sooner was that done than the village commenced to grow and it has continued to grow ever since.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Earth cutting, hon. members may be glad to know, has not affected the health of Kennedytown so far. If there is one part of the Colony where earth-cutting is going on it is here. There are large reclamations in progress, and we are tearing the hill-side to pieces for this sheep and pig depôt, and earth-cutting is going on on a very large scale. I have made frequent inquiries as to the health of the people living in the neighbourhood, and only about a month ago I was told that throughout the summer the men engaged in this work had had remarkably good health and that the air of this part was a good deal better than that of Taipingshan owing to its being open to the monsoon.

The CHAIRMAN—That is a very good thing for the future of Kennedytown. If it starts

with a good reputation there is a better prospect of its being occupied.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—This is a man who is greatly interested. (Laughter.) He is the contractor and is interested in the health of his workmen, and if there was any unhealthiness the first thing he would do would be to come and ask me for extra money on account of it.

The CHAIRMAN—My own experience of earth cutting this last summer, I am sorry to say, is not quite the same. I had fever through it, which I never had before during twenty years.

The vote was approved.

DISTRICT SCHOOLS.

The next vote was for a district school at Saiyingpun; estimated total cost \$10,000; estimated expenditure 1891, \$8,000.

The CHAIRMAN said this school was a matter that had been under consideration for several years, and he believed the building had now been started.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL said the contract had been let and the work was going on. It was one of the schools provided for in the estimates of 1889. Five new schools were placed on these estimates to be built, but as he was not aware what districts they were to be built in, he had the five removed and placed them on the estimates one by one as they proceeded with them.

The vote was agreed to.

A vote of \$8,000 for a district school at Yau-mali was also approved.

ADDITIONS TO GOVERNMENT HOUSE.

A vote for additions to Government House was proposed. Estimated cost \$40,000; estimated expenditure to the 31st December, 1890, \$25,000; estimated expenditure, 1891, \$15,000.

The CHAIRMAN said this matter was practically finished, and he presumed they might take this amount as voted.

Vote approved.

THE GOVERNOR'S PEAK RESIDENCE.

The next vote was for the reconstruction of the Governor's Peak residence. Estimated cost \$40,000; estimated expenditure 1891, \$40,000.

The CHAIRMAN said this was a re-vote. Nothing had been done in the matter and the amount was proposed for this year.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I think we had better postpone the vote till the plans are decided upon.

The CHAIRMAN—That is what we cannot do. We must vote on the principle. If we first of all enter into negotiation privately and then come to the Council for the vote, it will cause delay and result in the matter falling through.

The ACTING ATTORNEY GENERAL—And the Council would say "Why do you enter into negotiations privately and bind yourselves without consulting us?"

The CHAIRMAN—I think it is rather a matter of principle. You have to say whether you will vote this sum of \$40,000 for the Governor's Peak residence or not.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—That the building is necessary there can be no doubt. The present building is unworthy of the Governor of Hong-kong. What we should like to know is when and where the new building is going to be built.

The CHAIRMAN—That cannot be answered. In this case you are asked to vote for a principle. If this Council were to vote this sum for any given property and negotiations were then opened concerning it, you would find the price of that property would go up a large percentage, or I should be very much surprised if it did not.

The vote was agreed to.

QUARTERS FOR THE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE BOTANICAL AND AFFORESTATION DEPARTMENT.

The next vote was one of \$18,500 for quarters for the Superintendent of the Botanical and Afforestation Department; estimated total cost \$18,500; estimated cost 1891, \$10,000.

The CHAIRMAN—The Surveyor-General will be able to give some explanation with regard to this vote.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—This vote appears on the estimates of 1889. Some years ago the present residence was examined by the Surveyor-General and condemned, but since then, as it was proposed to build a new place, very little has been done in the way of repairs, and now the building is really on its last legs and something must be done because the present building is almost untenable. Plans have been got out and tenders obtained for the new building.

The CHAIRMAN—Why is so much as \$10,000 required for a house?

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—The basement is for offices, stores, and department purposes. Only the upper floor is used as a residence.

The CHAIRMAN—Then it is not quite correct to put it down in the estimates as quarters. I understand it is not only for quarters but also for offices and stores, and there was some question of a museum.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Yes, offices, stores, and a herbarium.

Hon. P. RYRIE—Does the Assistant-Superintendent get quarters too?

The CHAIRMAN—No, he receives an allowance. The vote was approved.

MAGAZINE FOR EXPLOSIVES, STONECUTTERS' ISLAND.

This was a vote for a new magazine at Stonecutters' Island; estimated cost \$17,625; estimated expenditure to the 31st December, 1890, \$5,000; estimated expenditure 1891, \$12,625.

The CHAIRMAN said this vote was necessary on account of the present place being unfitted for use now. It was really an old gaol and had served its purpose, but since so many new explosives had been invented it had become necessary to build a new store. The work was a re-

muterative one because the Government charged for the storage of explosives.

Vote approved.

SHAUKIWAN MARKET.

A vote of \$3,000 for a new market at Shaukiwan was agreed to.

NEW GOVERNMENT OFFICES AND LAW COURTS.

On a vote of \$150,000 for New Government Offices and Law Courts,

The CHAIRMAN said nothing had been decided upon with reference to this matter, and the vote was therefore struck out.

LOWERING QUEEN'S ROAD WEST.

The next vote was one for lowering Queen's Road West; estimated expenditure \$12,000; estimated expenditure to 31st December 1890, \$6,000; estimated expenditure 1891, \$6,000.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL said this proposal had originated shortly before his arrival in the colony. As hon members were aware there were in a part of Queen's Road West two rather steep inclines, and it was proposed to cut these hills away making a nearly level road to West Point and Kennedytown. The amount in the estimate was \$12,000. That was for cutting down the first hill. The second one was a much more extensive work; it was for cutting down the hill immediately at the back of the gas works. The second project would make available a considerable quantity of land for building purposes, and there was every reason to believe that the proceeds from the sale of this land would go a long way towards paying the cost of cutting down the two hills.

The CHAIRMAN—The effect of lowering this part of the Queen's Road West will be to increase the incline up the Pokfulum Road?

The CHAIRMAN—Yes.

The ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER—What are the advantages to the public.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—The increased value of property in the neighbourhood. That, I believe, is one of the chief arguments of the petitioners.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—The fact that the contractor can use the earth in the reclamation going on close to there permits of the work being done at a much cheaper rate than it otherwise could be.

The ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER—What will be the cost of cutting down the second hill?

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—I have not gone thoroughly into the estimate, but I have every reason to believe that approximately it is correct, and that is \$131,000!

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL—What! \$131,000.

The CHAIRMAN—I do not know what the feelings of the committee are, but I do not think we ought to vote an expenditure of \$131,000 if it leads us to a further expenditure of over \$100,000.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—I find I am wrong. The total estimate for cutting down both bills is \$131,000.

The CHAIRMAN—That leaves more than \$100,000 as the cost of cutting down the second bill.

Hon. C. P. CHATER said it did not follow that because the first project was carried out the second hill must necessarily be cut down also. A numerous signed petition had been sent in in favour of the work being carried out. He was not advocating it being done because, as had been hinted once or twice, it would benefit his own property, for he had none within half a mile of that part of the town, but because it was a public improvement.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL said there was no doubt that the people in the neighbourhood took a great interest in the undertaking as they had offered to pull down their houses and rebuild them without any charge to the Government. If the work was to be done at all it should not be lost sight of that the people on both sides of the road were unanimously in favour of the scheme at present and required no compensation from the Government.

The vote was agreed to.

STORES ACCOUNT.

The next vote was one of \$10,000 necessitated through the new system of stores account.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL said this sum was inserted with a view to improving the present system of keeping stores. He proposed to introduce the system he had been accustomed to all his life, and one that was followed by companies and private individuals. Under the present system when anything was required a requisition was sent home for the particular articles required for each separate building. By the system proposed it was intended to keep a small stock of articles required and charge it in the first place to stores account, and when the articles were issued on requisition to debit the work for which the goods were used. It would under this system be very much easier to keep a correct account of the cost of each work or building, because in the past it frequently occurred that material ordered for one work had been used on another to save time and prevent the work being stopped.

The vote was agreed to.

The Committee then adjourned.