

28TH MARCH, 1892.

PRESENT:—

His Excellency the Governor, Sir WILLIAM ROBINSON,
K.C.M.G.

Hon. G. T. M. O'BRIEN, Colonial Secretary.

Hon. W. M. GOODMAN, Attorney-General.

Hon. J. H. STEWART-LOCKHART, Registrar-General.

Hon. N. G. MITCHELL-INNES, Colonial Treasurer.

Hon. F. A. COOPER, Surveyor-General.

Hon. W. C. H. HASTINGS, Acting Harbour Master.

Hon. C. P. CHATER.

Hon. Ho Kai.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD.

Hon. E. R. BELLIOS.

Mr. A. M. THOMSON, Acting Clerk of Councils.

MINUTES.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

FINANCE.

Several financial minutes were presented and were referred to the Finance Committee.

The minutes of the proceedings of the Finance Committee at its last meeting were presented and the votes therein recommended were passed.

THE PROPOSED LOAN.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I beg leave, sir, to bring up the report of the Committee appointed to consider and report on the question whether it was desirable a loan should be raised by this Colony, and if so how it might best be raised. The report has not yet been printed and at the present meeting I only lay it on the table. As soon as it is printed copies will be furnished to all members. Perhaps with the permission of the Council I may take this opportunity of saying that though your Excellency does not agree with the conclusions arrived at in that report, still out
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the weight and experience of the gentlemen who have signed it your Excellency does not propose at present to press the matter further.

THE CENTRAL SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD gave notice that at the next meeting of Council he would ask the following question:—"Referring to Dr. Eitel's report on the Government Central School for Girls and to the statement therein that the Government were about to appropriate a site for a new school, will the Government lay upon the table any papers or correspondence on the subject, and state if the Government intend to take the opinion of this Council on the subject before making any appropriation either in money or land in connection therewith?"

QUARANTINE.

Hon T. H. WHITEHEAD—Pursuant to notice given at the last meeting I beg to ask the following question:—"Does the Government intend to give effect to the opinions expressed in the report (dated Hongkong, 20th February, 1892) of the Commission appointed to consider quarantine and quarantine regulations, by amending that part of the Merchant Shipping Ordinance of 1891 which deals with quarantine, and if so when does it propose to do so?"

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I have the honour to state that the Attorney-General has been instructed to draft an Ordinance to give effect to the recommendations of the Quarantine Commission.

THE CHINESE CUSTOMS AND THE JUNK TRADE.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Your Excellency has been good enough to place in my hands the papers referred to in a question of which I gave notice at the last meeting—(as to the system of espionage established by the Imperial Chinese Customs in Hongkong and the preservation of the neutrality of British waters in the Colony)—and until I have had an opportunity of going through and considering those papers I would ask your Excellency's permission to postpone the question for one or two meetings of Council.

THE SURVEYOR-GENERAL'S TITLE.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL—I have the honour to move the second reading of a Bill entitled "An Ordinance to give effect to the change in name and style of the Surveyor-General and the Surveyor-General's department." Very few words will be necessary from me on this occasion. The name of the Surveyor-General has been changed to Director of Public Works, which is more in accordance with the duties performed by him, and in case any difficulties might arise in connection with Ordinances or Orders in Council in which orders are given to the Surveyor-General to do this or that and whereby duties are imposed on the Surveyor-General, this Ordinance says that wherever the substitution of the words "Director of Public Works" is necessary to give effect the substitution shall be made.

The Bill was read a second time, committed, and passed.

BILLS PASSED.

The following Bills were read a third time and passed—An Ordinance to consolidate and amend the Law relating to the grant in this Colony of Letters Patent for Inventions; an Ordinance to make further provision as to the issue of Night Passes for Chinese; an Ordinance to amend Ordinances No. 3 of 1860, No. 15 of 1875, and No. 17 of 1891 in relation to the power of the Governor in Council to grant certain licences.

ADJOURNMENT.

HIS EXCELLENCY—I propose to adjourn the Council to the 11th April unless anything arises in the meantime.

FINANCE COMMITTEE.

A meeting of the Finance Committee was held after the Council meeting, the Colonial Secretary presiding.

The CHAIRMAN—The first minute I have to bring before the Committee is one recommending a vote of \$15,272.18, being the difference between the aggregate of the expenditure to the 31st December, 1891, and of the amount provided in the estimates for 1892, and the total estimated cost of the public works mentioned in the minute. It is practically a revote. The money has already been voted; the items contained in the list merely represent the amount it was not found practicable to expend by the end of last year. I dare say the Committee might like some information as to why it was not found possible to spend the money voted and which it was intended should be spent, and as to that the Surveyor-General will be good enough to give information.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL — The expenditure was estimated at the beginning of last year. A liberal sum was put down to cover all possible expenditure and at the end of the year it was found there was a balance remaining. These works will be finished this year and I ask that the amounts should be re-voted in order to clear off all liabilities connected with the works.

The CHAIRMAN—You are of opinion they will be required?

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Yes, as far as I can see.

Hon. HO KAI suggested that the items should be considered separately.

The items were as follows:—Slaughter House, Kowloon, \$2,162.74; Civil Hospital staff quarters, \$4,514.33; Quarters for Superintendent, Botanical and Afforestation Department, \$2,506.66; District School, Searingpoon, \$3,088.54; and Repairs to St. John's Cathedral, \$3,000, no portion of which had been spent last year. The only item on which any discussion took place was the last.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Is it proposed to expend this sum this year?

The CHAIRMAN—Yes, and a good deal more.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—It will require more to put the building in repair?

The CHAIRMAN—Yes, but that will be brought before the Council at a later date. This sum of \$3,000 will be required to do the work it was contemplated to do when the vote was passed by the Council. Subsequent to that date it has been found that there is a considerable amount of decay and some additional expenditure will have to be incurred. What amount it is impossible to say at present, but this \$3,000 has nothing to do with that. This is to cover the cost of work which it was intended to do last year and which the Council has already voted the money for.

Hon. HO KAI—Is it not provided for in the estimates for 1892?

The CHAIRMAN—No; if it were it would not be necessary to bring it forward now. It was provided in 1891.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—It evidently was omitted from the estimates for 1892—both this item and the previous one.

Hon. HO KAI—I should like to ask on what authority this is voted.

The ATTORNEY -GENERAL—The Secretary of State authorised that the Cathedral should be put in repair before it was handed over. Last year this money was voted, but the work was not done before the 31st December, and therefore that vote lapsed. I understand we are now asked to re-vote the same sum, and there will be some more to be voted afterwards, but this is simply a re-vote.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Might it not be well that the Governor's minutes in future when they pertain to revotes should ask that we "re-vote" the sum, instead of simply "vote"? We would then know it was a re-vote.

The CHAIRMAN—Yes, I think that would be convenient.

The item was then passed.

The CHAIRMAN—The next minute recommends the vote of a sum of \$480 to defray the rent of the Mercantile Marine Office at the Sailors' Home or twelve months from 1st January to 31st December, 1892. I may mention that on inquiry I find these premises have been occupied for a considerable time without rent and without any demand for rent on the part of the trustee of the Sailors' Home. They now have made a demand. It appears the site for this building was given by the Government, but the building was erected entirely by voluntary contributions and the Government did not contribute any part of the cost of the building. It seems therefore, I think, impossible to resist the claim for rent when such a claim is made and the only question is whether the rent is a reasonable one. On that point I have consulted the Surveyor-General, and he is of opinion it is a reasonable rent. The proposal now is that we

vote \$480 for this year and we will have to pay it in future years. However, the question now is as to the \$480 for this year.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—May I ask how many years this office has been occupied by the Government?

The ACTING HARBOUR MASTER—Twenty-seven years.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—And at whose instigation has this demand for rent been made?

The CHAIRMAN—By parties who are competent at law to prefer it.

The ACTING HARBOUR MASTER—They have been asked to pay the water rate for the first time.

The CHAIRMAN—The reason that instigated the demand I don't think can have much to do with it. The Acting Harbour Master says he thinks it is because they think they have been hardly treated in some other respect. They have for the first time been required to pay water rate. But I don't think the claim is one we could dispute on principle and the amount seems fair.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—If we get more by charging the institution with water rate we should be justified in paying this, but if not would it not be better to revert to the old system and forego water rate?

The CHAIRMAN—I don't know that it is competent to do that. I have not considered that.

The ATTORNEY -GENERAL—The terms of the Rating Ordinance require them to pay the rate. They are not one of the exempted institutions. And I am bound to say I think they are justified in making this claim. I am speaking without the figures before me, but I think there is very little difference. Perhaps Captain Hastings could tell us.

The ACTING HARBOUR MASTER—The water rate comes to \$37 a month.

The ATTORNEY -GENERAL—I think it is a just claim. They are not exempt from water rate.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I am quite agreeable to its passing.

The vote was then passed *nem. con.*

The CHAIRMAN—The next minute recommends a vote of \$2,733.11, being the difference between the aggregate of the amount spent up to the 31st December, 1891 (\$1,266.89 as against \$4,000 estimated expenditure) on the extension of the Cattle Dépôt-(Extraordinary Public Works No. 10) and of the amount voted for this work on the estimates for 1892 (\$6,000), and the total estimated cost of the work, viz., \$10,000. Perhaps the Surveyor-General will be good enough to furnish the Committee with the reasons for this.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—It is simply a question of a re-vote.

The CHAIRMAN—So I understand.

The vote was passed *nem. con.* and the Committee adjourned.