

11TH APRIL, 1892.

PRESENT:—

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

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

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

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

Hon. F. H. May, Acting Colonial Treasurer.

Hon. F. A. COOPER, Director of Public Works.

Hon. R. M. RUMSEY, R. N., Harbour Master.

Hon. C. P. CHATER.

Hon. HO KAL.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD.

Hon. E. R. BELLIOS.

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

NEW MEMBERS.

Hon. F. A. Cooper, Director of Public Works, Hon. R. M. Rumsey, Harbour Master, and Hon. F. H. May, Acting Colonial Treasurer, were sworn in as members of the Council.

MINUTES.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

REPORTS.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY in moving the adoption of the Finance Committee's report number 5 said — It recommends revotes to the extent of \$15,272 for completing certain public buildings, and \$2,733 for the extension of the cattle depôt, and \$480 to defray the rent of the marine office at the Sailors' Home. I may mention that the Committee is unanimous in its recommendation as regards the appropriations.

The ATTORNEY -GENERAL seconded and the report was adopted.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I have the honour to lay on the table a statement of the revenue and expenditure of the Colony for 1891, and a comparative statement for the years 1890 and 1891, and the annual reports by the Sanitary Superintendent, the Sanitary Surveyor, and the Veterinary Surgeon for 1891, with the balance sheet of the water account for the same year.

NOTICES.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I rise to give notice of four questions which I will ask at the next meeting of the Council.

(1.)—With reference to the notification No. 289 in the Government Gazette of 29th June, 1891, notifying the appointment of Commander W. C. H. Hastings as

"Superintendent of the Water Police," will the Government inform the Council—1. If Commander Hastings has yet assumed the duties of that office. 2. If not, has Commander Hastings received any emoluments pertaining to the office in addition to free residential quarters, Tsim Tsa Ssui, &c.? 3. If so, what do they amount to, and what is the estimated value of the free quarters, &c.? 4. Is Commander Hastings still drawing any emoluments in respect of the office, and if so how much? 5. If Commander Hastings has not yet assumed the duties of the office, what does the Government intend to do in respect of the post? 6. Will the Government lay on the table any papers pertaining to the creation of the appointment, and the non-performance of the duties of the office by Commander Hastings?

(2.)—With reference to the grant of \$3,000 for Protestant chaplains, &c., for 1892, voted by the Council in November-December, 1891, will the Government inform the Council if the Secretary of State has approved of the vote, or any portion of it, if so how much, how is the money to be divided, and what is the principle on which the division is to be made?

(3.)—With reference to the memorial and petition of bankers, merchants, brokers, traders, and others carrying on business in the colony of Hongkong, addressed to the Right Honourable Lord Knutsford, Secretary of State for the Colonies, in connection with the Bill entitled "An Ordinance to amend the law in respect of the sale of shares in Companies registered under the Companies Ordinance 1865 to 1886, and in other joint stock Companies," will the Government lay on the table a copy of any reply thereto which may have been received?

(4.)—Will the Government revert to the convenient system obtaining in former years of appending to the printed draft of each new Bill a statement or memorandum of the objects and reasons for its introduction?

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I also beg to give notice of the following motion which I shall move this day fortnight:—

"In consequence of the constantly increasing cost of the administrative staff of the Government of Hongkong, it having risen from \$547,650 in 1887 to nearly \$700,000 in 1892, exclusive of \$65,200 for pensions, and that the Colony's revenue in the near future is more likely to decrease than expand. I beg to move that Government appoint a commission selected from the unofficial members of Council and the general community, with the Hon. Mr. O'Brien, the Colonial Secretary, as Chairman, with full powers to enquire into and report with a view to retrenchment on the working of all the departments of the Government, and as to the desirability or otherwise of the redistribution of work, the amalgamation of certain offices, the increasing of the hours of the official day, privileges in the way of leave, &c., &c."

Hon. C. P. CHATER—I beg to give notice of the following question:—"Will the Government lay upon the table a copy of any reply received to the petitions addressed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies by European and Chinese bankers, merchants, shipowners, and traders residing in the colony, praying the repeal of the Ordinance to restrict the loading and unloading of cargo on Sunday in the waters of the colony?"

QUESTIONS.

Hon T. H. WHITEHEAD—On March 14th, I gave notice of the following question:—"With reference to the Honourable the Acting Harbour Master's report on the junk trade of Hongkong for 1891, dated 11th of January last, and more particularly to paragraph 17 thereof which reads as follows:—"the only controllable causes of the depression of the junk trade are the suppression of the system of espionage established by the Chinese Customs in Hongkong, and the prevention of the neutrality of British waters," will the Government lay upon the table copies of the former correspondence referred to in the said report and any further correspondence or information in its possession on the subject of the system of espionage established by the Imperial Chinese Customs in Hongkong, &c.?" I am greatly obliged to your Excellency for having caused me to be furnished with copies of the reports and correspondence. I have perused and carefully considered the papers and I am satisfied that it is unnecessary to lay them upon the table. The Acting Harbour Master has evidently written under an entire misapprehension, and with a view to correct any mistaken impression which may have been conveyed to the public I would suggest that your Excellency may cause to be made public the despatches received from Mr. J. McLeavy Brown, the Commissioner of Customs for Kowloon, dated 10th and 14th of March last. Under the circumstances I ask your Excellency's permission to withdraw the question.

HIS EXCELLENCY—You have another question to put?

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—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?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—Sir, the question of the hon. member really contains three questions—whether the Government intend to lay certain correspondence on the table, whether it is their intention to consult the Council before appropriating any public money for a certain purpose, and whether they intend to consult the Council before appropriating any land for the same purpose, the purpose in question being the construction of a building to serve as a Government Central School for Girls. The

answer is that there is no correspondence which the Government consider it necessary to lay on the table; that there is no intention of appropriating any public money for the purpose; and that a site has already been appropriated for the building which the hon. member on the opposite side of the table (Hon. E. R. Belilios) has so munificently undertaken to construct at a cost of \$30,000 and present to the Government for purposes of education.

THE RATING AND WATERWORKS ORDINANCES.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I rise to move the first reading of a Bill entitled an Ordinance to amend Ordinance No. 15 of 1888, entitled "The Rating Ordinance 1888." and Ordinance No. 16 of 1890 entitled "The Waterworks Ordinance, 1890." If the Bill be read a first time to-day, I shall explain the provisions and intention of the Bill at the second reading.

The ATTORNEY -GENERAL seconded.

Bill read a first time.

THE BANKRUPTCY ORDINANCE, 1891.

The ATTORNEY -GENERAL—I beg to introduce and read for the first time a Bill entitled an Ordinance to amend "The Bankruptcy Ordinance, 1891." I now move the first reading. It is not usual to make any speech upon the first reading of a Bill, but sometimes an exception arises when I may say a word. I may say in regard to this Bill that I shall explain it very fully on the second reading, and I shall only remark now that the Bankruptcy Act of 1891 was a very long and complicated Ordinance and it was considered at a great many meetings of the Standing Committee. It was hardly to be expected that a work of such a heavy nature should be absolutely complete and perfect at the first essay. It was sent home to England and referred. I believe, to the Board of Trade and Inspector-General of Bankruptcy. A very careful examination was made of it, and a tabular statement was sent out of the differences between the law of this colony and the law of England. After carefully considering this in consultation with Mr. Fielding Clarke, Acting Chief Justice here, the result was that these few amendments were thought desirable. Many of them are little more than slips of verbiage and what may really be called printers' errors. There is scarcely any change of substance. Those few changes what are proposed in substance I will explain more fully at the second reading. I beg now to move the first reading of the Bill.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Bill read a first time.

ST. JOHN'S CATHEDRAL.

The ATTORNEY -GENERAL—I beg to move the first reading of a Bill entitled "An Ordinance to provide for the due performance of divine worship and other services in accordance with the rites of the Church of England at St.

J o h n ' s

Cathedral Church at Victoria in this Colony and elsewhere, to incorporate a Church body, to vest the said Cathedral in such body, and for other purposes in connection therewith." It is unnecessary for me to make any remarks on the first reading of this Bill. A perusal of it will explain its object and purpose.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Bill read a first time.

THE PO LEUNG KUK.

The REGISTRAR-GENERAL—I rise to propose the first reading of a Bill entitled an Ordinance for the establishment and incorporation of the Chinese society for the protection of women and children commonly known as "The Po Leung Kuk." When the second reading of the Bill comes on I will explain the reasons for introducing it and the objects for which it is made.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I am sorry to say that I am not able to support the first reading of this Bill. No statement of the objects and reasons for its introduction has yet been given. The Bill itself did not reach my hands until late on Saturday afternoon and a Bill of such importance as this is, should, I think have been accompanied by a statement of the objects and reasons for which it is proposed. So far as I know the Po Leung Kuk has been doing good work here for a number of years, but I know of no necessity for the introduction of such legislation as this. It will give legal power and status to a Society which cannot be regarded as other than a Chinese secret society. It is dangerous in the

extreme and it will ultimately be found. I am certain, if this Bill is passed, to be injurious to the trade and shipping, and detrimental to the true interests of this colony. I therefore cannot support the first reading.

HIS EXCELLENCY—Do I understand you to give notice of a motion that the Bill be read this day six months?

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—No, I give no notice of motion. I simply don't support it. I am opposed to it.

HIS EXCELLENCY—You may raise your objection at the second reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded the first reading of the Bill.

Bill read a first time.

ADJOURNMENT.

HIS EXCELLENCY—There is no further business before the Council. I propose to adjourn until this day fortnight. After that I hope we shall be able to meet every Monday until the close of the session: I hope we shall be able to close the session by May 20th, if by that time we shall have been able to answer satisfactorily the questions which the hon. member has laid upon the table. I think the colony has had sufficient legislation for the present. ("Hear, hear," from the unofficial members).

The Council then adjourned.
