

25TH MAY, 1893.

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

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

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

Hon. HO KAI.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD.

Hon. E. R. BELLIOS.

Mr. A. Seth, Clerk of Councils.

MINUTES.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

PAPERS.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I have the honour to lay on the table a statement of disbursements for forestry works in the years 1894 and 1895; the reports of the Harbour Master, the Sanitary Superintendent, and the Acting Postmaster-General for 1892; also the report of the Committee appointed to enquire into the Po Leung Kuk; the report of the Commission on the defalcations in the Treasury; and a statement of the revenue and expenditure for 1892. With your Excellency's permission I desire to make an observation on this last paper. It is purely of an explanatory character. The revenue for 1892 amounted to \$2,236,933 and exceeded the revenue for 1891 by \$211,630 and that for any previous year by a still larger amount. This is very satisfactory but it should be observed that the revenue for 1892 includes several

exceptional windfalls, and that therefore it would not be safe to accept it as a guide to the near future. The last entry on the revenue side—"Water account"—which shows an estimate of "nil" and a receipt of \$82,860, might perhaps puzzle some hon. members in the absence of a word of explanation. The item really forms part of "assessed taxes" and was estimated under that head. If the receipts under "Water account" be added to those under "Assessed taxes" it will be seen that "Assessed taxes" produced in 1892 a total of \$541,013 or \$101,013 more than was estimated, and \$76,771 more than in 1891.

FINANCIAL MINUTE.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I have the honour to submit the financial minute standing in my name and move that it be referred to the Finance Committee.

The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded.

Carried.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE.

The DIRECTOR of PUBLIC WORKS—I have the honour to lay on the table the report of the Public Works Committee (No.2) and move that it be adopted.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Carried.

AFFORESTATION.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—The motion standing in my name has reference to the statement of the Superintendent of the Afforestation Department. As that statement has already been circulated to hon. members and is now in their hands it is unnecessary for me to detain the Council by reading it. It contemplates an expenditure in 1895 of \$2,600 for rearing trees to be planted in that year and for planting them out, and I beg to move that the Council, having considered the statement of the Superintendent of the Botanical and Afforestation Department, resolves that it is expedient to incur the liability proposed to be incurred in 1895.

The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded.

Carried.

WAGLAN LIGHTHOUSE.

Hon. E. R. BELILIOS—I rise to give notice that at the next meeting of the Legislative Council, with your Excellency's permission. I will ask the following question:—"Will the Government state whether in connection with the erection of the new lighthouse on Waglan Island there was any understanding or agreement between the Chinese Government and the Imperial British Government, or between the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs and the Colonial Government of Hongkong; also whether there was any special reason for the lighting of the Eastern approach to the port of Hongkong being undertaken by the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs." My object, sir, in putting this question is simply to ascertain whether, Waglan Island being in

such close proximity this colony—barely to 2½ miles distant from Cape D'Aguilar—the Chinese Government in erecting a new lighthouse placed it there with the view solely of lighting the Eastern approach to this harbour without any ulterior motives. That one Power should thus gratuitously—

HIS EXCELLENCY—I think it would be more appropriate for you to make these remarks in asking the question.

Hon. E. R. BELILIOS—I should like to explain why I ask it.

HIS EXCELLENCY—Very well.

Hon. E. R. BELILIOS—That one Power should thus gratuitously light an entrance to an important port held by another Power is entirely an unique fact in international relations. Therefore I am justified in asking the question whether the work has been undertaken out of sheer love of England—(laughter)—or for motives of self-interest such as a desire to make it appear to Chinese eyes that this island though a British possession is yet part and parcel of the Celestial Empire, or a wish to acquire another post of observation, by means of which to more completely control and supervise the junk trade of the colony.

THE PO LEUNG KUK INCORPORATION
ORDINANCE.

The REGISTRAR-GENERAL—Sir, I have the honour to move the first reading of a Bill entitled "The Po Leung Kuk Incorporation Ordinance." I do not propose at this stage of the Ordinance to make any remarks, and I reserve what I have to say until I move the second reading at the next meeting of the Council.

Hon. HO KAI seconded.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—Before the question is put I should like to say a word or two on behalf of the Government. For many years past a great and beneficent work has been carried on in our midst by the Po Leung Kuk and it is not too much to say that it could not have been accomplished without their instrumentality. (The Registrar-General—Hear, hear). They have given their services freely, without reward and without expectation of reward, and it cannot be questioned that they have deserved well of the State. When therefore on their asking about the beginning of last year to be placed in a position to carry on their work more efficiently they were met with a charge of being a secret society and with other invidious allegations, they and the Chinese community generally not unnaturally felt that they had received a strange and unmerited return for conspicuous services gratuitously rendered in the assistance and protection of the weak and the defenceless. The hon. member who publicly charged them in this Council Chamber with being a secret society—

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Sir, I rise to order. I ask your Excellency, as president of this Council, whether the hon. member is in order. The

reports of the Special Committee appointed to enquire into certain matters pertaining to the Po Leung Kuk Society have only just a few minutes ago, been laid on the Council table and until hon. members of this Council and the public have had an opportunity of carefully reading over the evidence taken by the Commission and digesting it and the reports which have only just now been laid on the table, I ask your Excellency whether the hon. member is in order. The points to which he has just referred have been explained in the proceedings of the Special Committee appointed by your Excellency and I submit that the hon. member is out of order in referring to these matters until time has been given to read and consider the reports.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I submit, sir, that I am perfectly in order. I am not speaking in support of the Bill, or in opposition to it, or upon any of the details of the Bill; I am making a general statement on behalf of the Government.

HIS EXCELLENCY—I think that it is due to the Po Leung Kuk that some statement should be made, although I am prepared to admit that perhaps it would be better if it were made at the second reading of the Bill. But the Po Leung Kuk have been charged with certain lapses and we desire to clear them as far as we can as soon as possible.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I submit that I am as anxious to do so as anyone, but to state one side of the case without hearing the statement accompanying the reports of the Po Leung Kuk Committee is out of order.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—If the hon. member had had the patience to allow me to speak for one or two minutes more he would have heard me refer to his explanation. It is only right that I should do so and it was my intention to do so. I was saying that the hon. member who publicly charged the Society, in this Council Chamber, with being a secret society, and who made other allegations personally to your Excellency, has explained that he did not intend to use the term "secret society," which has only one meaning to Chinese ears, in an objectionable sense, and that by his other allegations he did not intend to convey what your Excellency understood him to convey. That is well. More than a year has been lost and a great deal of time and labour and some public money expended by the Committee of enquiry, in eliciting facts which were perfectly well known before the enquiry began to every one who took any intelligent interest in the matter. But this time and labour and money have not been altogether thrown away, for they have been the means of placing publicly on record in a collected, if somewhat voluminous, form the facts of the case, or many of them, for the information of those who were previously ignorant of them who may have the patience to read the evidence attached to the reports. (Laughter), It

is a matter of satisfaction but no surprise to the Government that the result of this protracted enquiry has been to show that it by no means overrated the obligations under which the Society has placed the Government, the community at large and all who are interested in the cause of humanity (Applause.)

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Sir, I rise to move an amendment that the first reading of the Bill entitled "The Po Leung Kuk Incorporation Ordinance" be postponed until after the publication of the reports of the Special Committee appointed to investigate and report on certain points connected with the Bill for the Incorporation of the Society, and of the evidence taken by that Committee, and until members of Council have had time to read and consider the same. I do not think that any case has been shown for any undue haste—(laughter)—in proceeding with the first reading of the Bill and I think it would be only right and proper that hon. members of this Council should have an opportunity of perusing the reports of the Special Committee and the accompanying evidence taken by it. I think it is also due to the public that they should have an opportunity of reading and considering and digesting the reports as well as the evidence taken. These are my reasons for moving the amendment.

HIS EXCELLENCY—Does anybody second it?

Hon. E. R. BELLIOS—I rise to second the amendment of the hon. member representing the Chamber of Commerce. I may as well mention at the outset that I am entirely with the Government and am prepared so far to support the motion for incorporating the Po Leung Kuk Society by law. But, Sir, considering that in the first instance when the Bill was brought forward for discussion it was postponed in order that a Special Committee should sit and look into the measure and report upon it, I think it is only right that hon. members should have the opportunity of reading and digesting that report before we again discuss the matter.

HIS EXCELLENCY—They will have the opportunity— one week from to-day. That will be quite sufficient.

The amendment was then put, the Council voting as follows:—

FOR.	AGAINST.
Hon. T. H. Whitehead	The Colonial Secretary
Hon. E. R. Bellios	The Colonial Treasurer
	The Registrar-General
	The Attorney-General
	The Harbour Master
	The Director of Public Works
	Hon. Ho Kai

The amendment was therefore lost, and the Bill was read a first time.

MASONIC BENEVOLENCE FUND INCORPORATION ORDINANCE.

HIS EXCELLENCY—The hon. senior unofficial member, who is absent, asked me not to proceed with the second reading of the Bill standing in his name; we will therefore adjourn until Thursday next.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I was just about to say that the hon. senior unofficial member requested me to ask your Excellency to postpone the second reading of this Bill.

ADJOURNMENT.

HIS EXCELLENCY—The Council will now adjourn until this day week.

FINANCE COMMITTEE.

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

The CHAIRMAN—The only business before the Committee is the financial minute just referred to us by the Council. It reads:—"The Governor recommends the Council to vote a sum of thirteen thousand dollars, (\$13,000), for the extension of MacDonnell and Austin Roads at Kowloon." At the last meeting the Committee agreed to the expenditure of \$19,000 odd on the construction of certain roads in Kowloon. It is now asked to agree to the expenditure of \$13,000 on the construction of another road in the same district. The construction of the road in question has been asked for by two of our number, the hon. senior unofficial member, who I am sorry to say is absent through illness, and the Hon. Mr. Belilios.

When it is proposed to expend money on a work which will directly benefit any of ourselves, it behoves the Committee to carefully scrutinise the proposal. The road mentioned in the minute will be of special advantage to the Charbonnages enterprise and the success of that enterprise will benefit the colony at large. Apart from that my hon. friend the Director of Public Works has informed me that the construction of the road in question is in his opinion the most urgently important of any of the public works for which provision has not already been made. It will complete the road system in Kowloon, it will facilitate the settlement of certain outstanding land claims, it will improve the value of some Crown land adjoining it, and it will provide a much needed outlet for the village of Yaumati. He has also pointed out to me that the work can be economically executed at the present time as the construction of the road can be conveniently supervised by the officer in charge of the construction of the other roads in the Kowloon district. Under these circumstances I have no hesitation in advising the Committee to agree to the expenditure recommended in the minute. Does any hon. member require any further information before I put the question?

The vote was agreed to without remark.

The Committee adjourned *sine die*.