

25TH SEPTEMBER, 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. N. G. MITCHELL-INNES, Colonial Treasurer.

Hon. A. M. THOMSON, Acting Registrar-General.

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

Hon. R. M. RUMSEY, Harbour Master.

Hon. C. P. CHATER.

Hon. J. J. KESWICK.

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.

DR. HO KAI'S ABSENCE.

His EXCELLENCY—Dr. Ho Kai has asked to be excused from attending to-day on account of a death in his family.

GAOL EXTENSION.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I rise, sir, to move the resolution which stands in my name. As it will be seconded by the hon senior unofficial member, and is, I understand, to meet with no opposition, and as hon. members are already aware that the vote has been limited to the minimum indispensably required, I need not detain the Council by stating the case and setting out the facts and figures which render the expenditure unavoidable. The amount mentioned in my resolution will suffice to provide the additional accommodation detailed in the Secretary of State's despatch of the 24th of March last, which has already been communicated to the Council. It also includes a sum of \$2,500 for a juvenile reformatory. The former expenditure will be chargeable to the loan; the latter will be charged against current revenue. The necessary land for the extension has already been acquired with the consent of the unofficial members. On the balance of the vote expenditure will not be

incurred until the Public Works Committee has an opportunity of considering the plans. I beg to move that this Council do agree to an expenditure not exceeding \$96,000 on gaol extension.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—Sir, I beg to second the motion of the Hon. Colonial Secretary, and in so doing I should like to take this opportunity of very briefly reviewing the circumstances connected with this matter of gaol extension. As it was first mooted it was a measure which, in the opinion I may say of the whole of the residents in the colony, was eminently unsatisfactory as entailing a very heavy expenditure which could ill be borne by the ratepayers, and which was, in a great measure, unnecessary. The unofficial members of Council, acting as the representatives of the taxpayers and concurring in their views, thereupon addressed a memorial to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State petitioning against such a heavy expenditure being laid upon them. Their memorial was strongly supported by your Excellency and was duly forwarded. But it was not till the 31st May that the signatories received a copy of a despatch from the Marquis of Ripon, dated 24th March, recommending a considerably modified scheme. Accompanying this, in the "orders of the day," was a notice that the Hon. Colonial Secretary would, at a meeting of Council to be held on the 2nd June, move that a sum of \$147,500 be voted for the purpose of carrying out the Marquis of Ripon's new scheme. I must confess that the first impression produced upon my unofficial colleagues and myself was that the Government was treating an important subject somewhat lightly in giving such short notice and thereby affording us very little or no opportunity for the consideration, which its importance demanded. Therefore during the short period between 31st May and 2nd June we lost no time in holding a meeting among ourselves, and the outcome of it was the letter which your Excellency will remember I addressed you asking you to be pleased to postpone the consideration of the matter and to request the Hon. Director of Public Works to place at our disposal the plans and estimates of the proposed extension. Your Excellency met our request with a ready acquiescence, and the Hon. the Director of Public Works was very willing and afforded us all the information needed. The result of our deliberations with him and later on with your Excellency was that we agreed that the land in question should be purchased at once and that the Hon. the Director of Public Works should proceed and get specifications ready and ask for tenders, the total expenditure, including the land and buildings not to exceed the sum of \$110,000. I need hardly remind the hon. members of the Council that the original scheme for the erection of a new gaol in Bonham Road was estimated to coast between \$600,000 and \$700,000. This being judged inexpedient, the next sum demanded

was \$250,000; which your Excellency very kindly consented to withdraw from the last estimates pending the result of our petition to the Secretary of State; and now this last proposal of \$147,000 which the Hon. the Colonial Secretary was to move at the meeting of Council on 2nd June has been further reduced to what I say, the very reasonable figure of \$96,000. Your Excellency, I think we may well congratulate ourselves on having this vexed question settled without friction—a question which has agitated this colony for 10 or 15 years, and I trust the matter is settled in a complete, economical, and, if I may say so, most satisfactory manner.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Sir, I rise to support the motion. This gaol question has been a burning one for a long period of years, and if the home government had persisted in forcing the colony to incur the expenditure of \$600,000 for the construction of a new prison, a constitutional crisis would most undoubtedly have been brought about, justly and rightly so, for the expenditure of so much money would have been absolute wanton extravagance. The unofficial members may not be "amenable to reason" on certain questions, while their action on other matters, as asserted by the Hon. the Colonial Secretary, "does not betoken any marked capacity for administration," nevertheless the Right Hon. the Secretary of State for the Colonies takes a different view, and I think, Sir, it may safely be admitted that the unofficial members have not misjudged this particular case, and that the course which we have systematically followed in opposing the proposed reckless waste of public moneys "has not injured the credit of the colony." The protracted "obstruction" to the enormous expense of building a new gaol cannot be deplored by any of the ratepayers inasmuch as the colony is now to have efficiently done for \$96,000 what was formerly to have cost at least \$600,000. The latter estimate was mentioned in your Excellency's address to the Council on 16th November last, but the final outlay would probably, judging from previous experience, have been nearer \$1,000,000. For energetically helping us to effect this modified arrangement the colony is greatly indebted to your Excellency and to your immediate predecessors, while the Council and the ratepayers are to be heartily congratulated on the fairly satisfactory compromise which has ensued from obstinate unofficial opposition, or "obstruction" if it may be so called.

His EXCELLENCY—I understand this vote receives the unanimous sanction of all present. I think the hon. the senior unofficial member has very correctly stated the case and I am extremely glad indeed to think that this difficult question which has vexed the colony for 10 or 15 years has at last been so amicably and, I hope, for ever settled (hear, hear). I am grateful to the senior unofficial member and the member who represents the Chamber of Commerce

for having referred to my action in this matter. Certainly it is very gratifying to know that I have been the means, in a measure, of reducing this estimated expenditure from \$600,000 to the moderate sum of \$96,000. I wish to say, gentlemen, in doing what I have done, that I was guided, not only by the opinion and advice of the unofficial members, but by the opinion of one of the most honest and independent gentlemen who perhaps ever sat at this table, that is, the late Hon. Phineas Ryrie. It is now fifteen years ago since he stated that we ought to have a gaol with sufficient accommodation for the separate system being carried out thoroughly. He went on to urge that 500 or 600 cells should be made by adding a wing to the present building and that that number would be sufficient for years to come. He also concluded an excellent speech with these words, "I would also respectfully submit that while we all believe the population will increase, when we get the separate system the ratio of the increase of crime to the population will be a ratio of decrease as compared with the increase of population." I can only hope that those anticipations of the late hon. member will be realised. I have no farther business to bring before the Council.

AN UNFOUNDED RUMOUR ABOUT THE COLONIAL  
TREASURERSHIP.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I rise to give notice

that at the next meeting I will ask the following question—

HIS EXCELLENCY—Mr. Whitehead, please allow me to finish. I have no further business, and I propose to close the session this afternoon; and I will give due notice when we shall meet again. I thank you for your services during the past ten months. I don't think I shall need your services again till about the third week of November next.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Sir, I apologise for unintentionally interrupting you, but I missed my opportunity of giving notice of my question. The proceedings went on so promptly. I give notice that at the next meeting I will ask the following question:—"Is there any truth in the report that the Postmaster-General at Singapore is about to be appointed to the Colonial Treasurership, Hongkong, and if so will his Excellency the Governor move the Secretary of State to refrain from making any new appointment until this Council has had an opportunity of considering and reporting on the question whether it is advisable to continue the office on its present footing?"

HIS EXCELLENCY—There is no foundation whatever for the report. I can answer that question at once.

ADJOURNMENT.

The Council then adjourned *sine die*.

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