

HONGKONG LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

3RD DECEMBER, 1896.

PRESENT:—

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

His EXCELLENCY Major-General Black, C.B., Officer Commanding the Troops.

Hon. J. H. STEWART LOCKHART, Colonial Secretary.

Hon. H. E. POLLOCK, Acting Attorney-General.

Hon. A. M. THOMPSON, Acting Colonial Treasurer.

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

Hon. R. MURRAY RUMSEY, Harbour Master.

Hon. F. H. MAY, Captain Superintendent of Police.

Hon. C. P. CHATER.

Hon. HO KAI.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD.

Hon. E. R. BELILIOS, C.M.G.

Hon. WEI A YUK.

Mr. F. J. BADELEY, Acting Clerk of Councils.

MINUTES.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

SWEARING IN OF MEMBERS.

His EXCELLENCY—Gentlemen, it is necessary to swear in His Excellency Major-General Wilson Black, C.B., Mr. F. H. May, Mr. Wei A Yuk, and also Mr. T. H. Whitehead on his re-election as member for the Chamber of Commerce.

The hon. members mentioned were then sworn in.

PAPERS.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY laid upon the table the following papers—The report of the Director of the Observatory for 1895, the report of the Po Leung Kuk Society for the year 1895, the report on the progress of public works during the first half of the year 1896, the report on the progress of the Taipingshan Improvement works, the Government Offices Improvement Committee's report, and the report of the Commission on the Tung Wah Hospital.

GAP ROCK LIGHT DUES.
THE PRIVATE MEETING OF UNOFFICIAL
MEMBERS.

His EXCELLENCY—Gentlemen, I have the honour to lay upon the table certain correspondence respecting the abolition of the special Gap Rock Light dues. I have taken the liberty of laying this paper on the table myself because I wish to say that late last night, about a quarter to six, while engaged in official work, I received a vigorous protest which was written in his usual uncompromising style by the hon. member who has just been sworn in as representative of the Chamber of Commerce. I wish to say that the charge he has brought against me of entering into private correspondence on the subject is utterly untrue. The hon. member is aware of the saying, give a misstatement twenty-four hours' start and you cannot overtake it. The correspondence was perfectly public, so public that it might have been plastered on all the walls of all the houses in Hongkong as far as I am concerned. I leave the unofficial members who are charged with holding a secret conclave and being engaged in "secret confabulations" to protect themselves from the charge. I feel sure that some of them have consulted their constituents, Dr. Ho Kai, I think, being one of them. The correspondence was perfectly public and there was no intention whatever on the part of the Government to keep it secret.

Hon. HO KAI—Although it is unusual, I wish, since you have given me permission, to say a few words on this occasion. As a certain letter has been published by an hon. member of this Council casting a slur upon the whole of his unofficial colleagues in this Council, I think the earliest opportunity should be taken by individual members to clear themselves in public and give the true state of affairs in connection with this question. Your Excellency had referred this question of light dues to the unofficial members in the usual way. That of course, so far as the reference to unofficial members is concerned, was a policy adopted by

the Government and with that I had nothing to do. Whether that is a wise policy or an unwise policy it is not for me to criticise. But since your Excellency has seen fit to send a communication to the hon. senior unofficial member, at his request we gathered together and discussed the question. Of course the meeting was not conducted as openly as meetings of this Council, and so far as I am concerned I have always advocated the policy of the public participating in the unofficial members' deliberations in any place and at any time, and I think it would be better, if there is no objection on the part of the Government, that in future unofficial gatherings should be attended by the members of the Press at all events, so that our transactions there may not be misunderstood and misrepresented at the choice of anyone. Now the facts of the case are that about a fortnight ago your Excellency sent a communication to the senior unofficial member and he at once convened a meeting by circulating a communication to us, but unfortunately I was not aware the communication was marked "Confidential." I did not know whether it was marked by the Government or not, but the mark was on the envelope, and that was explained to us as soon as I got to the first meeting. When I was asked by a member specially whether I should regard the mark "confidential" as binding upon me I at once said that I would not be bound by any marking on the envelope, since the business affected the interests of those I represent and not my own interests. I further stated that I would not only decline to regard that as confidential, but any other communication of a like nature. It referred to me not in my private capacity but as a representative of the Chinese, and I therefore would not regard it as binding on myself in any way. In that case, as in many other cases when I have received communications of that kind, I have discussed these questions with my constituents. Such were the facts as far as my position is concerned. Certainly this secret conclave does not apply to me. I assure you I never regarded such a meeting as a secret conclave. We expressed our opinions to each other as freely as we could and after every meeting it is invariably my practice to tell the leading Chinese about it. I think my unofficial colleague, Mr. Wei A Yuk, will confirm me when I say that previously no important question has been brought before the unofficial members that I would not disclose and give away. With regard to the section of the public which I have not the honour to represent, I leave it to their own representatives to give their own explanation to them. This question has been discussed at two meetings and the result communicated to your Excellency. As soon as the result was communicated I think the hon. member for the Chamber of Commerce asked leave to publish the communication.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I rise to order. I did not ask if you would agree to my publishing the communication.

I had a perfect right to publish it.

Hon. HO KAI—You said you would publish it and we all said "Yes, certainly."

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Mr. Belilios did not say so?

Hon. E. R. BELILIOS—Oh, certainly.

Hon. HO KAI—I understood it was unanimously agreed that there was no objection and that we had a perfect right to publish it. Another serious charge has been brought against us and I take this opportunity, with your Excellency's permission, to publicly, emphatically, and strongly protest against an hon. member, whether official or unofficial, casting such an aspersion upon his hon. colleagues—men who are equally as if not more honourable than himself—certainly equally as honourable and as honest—as to say that a body of men had a private interest and a motive in advocating a policy which he considered to be injurious to the colony. I say that is an aspersion which I take the first opportunity to publicly deny. So far as concerns myself I am not a large landowner, nor am I interested largely in landed property, but those whom I have represented for the last few years, as his Excellency the Governor has appointed me, have large landed interests in the colony and it is my duty to look after their interests and weigh them in conjunction with other interests, but I entirely repudiate the charge that I have acted for private and interested motives, and I can only say that aspersions and allegations of evil of that kind will not hurt the unofficial members as a body but will only rebound upon the maker and entertainer of such statements.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—Your Excellency, after the very lengthy and able remarks of my hon. friend Hon. Ho Kai I have but very little to add. I may at once inform your Excellency and the members of the Council that I affirm every word and every statement made by my hon. friend. With regard to private communications, the hon. member could not inform the Council whether there was any private communication between your Excellency and myself or between the Colonial Secretary and myself. That is a point I wish to answer for myself. I say most emphatically that I have never had any communication from his Excellency the Governor or from the Colonial Secretary which I have not immediately placed before my colleagues and half an hour after they have discussed it I have sent a reply to his Excellency. Beyond that I state most emphatically that I have never had any communication from his Excellency the Governor or from the Colonial Secretary.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Perhaps I may be permitted to make a few remarks. If I have misrepresented or made any misstatements I have done so quite unintentionally and I am very sorry for it. I submit, however, that the methods which have been followed by my hon. colleagues in discussing public questions of great importance are in my opinion irregular and unconstitutional. In referring to the correspondence as private, correspondence cannot be regarded as otherwise than private if it is not made public. Letters are sent by the Governor to the unofficial members and they meet in secret. There are no reporters present and I consider that to conduct public business in such a way is totally opposed to constitutional Government and constitutional rule. As regards the hon. member's statement that I have cast aspersions and made charges, I submit that my letters will not bear any such interpretation and that a question of public importance should not be dealt with in the way this question has been dealt with. I would refer, in respect to the assertion that the correspondence is not private, to the correspondence which passed in 1894 between the unofficial members and the Government in connection with the composition of the Sanitary Board. These documents were, as far I am aware, private, that is to say, they did not see the light of day for a very long period of time—until over twelve months after they were written, and the community were totally unaware during all that time of what their representatives had said to the Government in their communications. If I have offended anyone I am extremely sorry as nothing was further from my intention.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I do not wish to prolong the discussion, nor is it my intention to do so, but it would throw considerable light on the matter if the hon. member would inform us if he consulted the Chamber of Commerce about this question. I have reason for saying that he did, and if that is so it would tend to show he did not regard it as private.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—The Chamber unanimously agreed to address the Government on this question and I cordially supported what they did.

His EXCELLENCY—Have you consulted them on the subject of this correspondence?

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—This correspondence was submitted only at a late hour at the last meeting of Committee, when it was unanimously decided to strictly adhere to the recommendation addressed to the Government, dated 31st July last, and to publish the letter from your Excellency to the senior unofficial member, but this, subsequently, was postponed for further consideration.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—Then I understand he has consulted the Committee of the Chamber and that he did not regard the correspondence as private.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I have not regarded it as private and it should not be so regarded by any hon.

member.

The discussion then closed.

FINANCIAL MINUTES.

Financial minutes Nos. 11 to 26 were, on the motion of the Colonial Secretary, referred to the Finance Committee.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY brought up the report of the Finance Committee and moved its adoption.

The ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER seconded.

Carried.

THE LIMEWASHING OF PREMISES.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I have the honour to move that the Council approve of the by-law regarding the cleansing and limewashing of premises. I may explain that this by-law has been altered to meet the convenience of the people who will be affected by it. My hon. friend opposite who represents the Chinese in this Council was consulted regarding this matter and his views were conveyed to the Sanitary Board. This by-law has been altered to meet those views and the convenience of those people who will be affected by the carrying out of the by-law.

The ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER seconded.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—This is a move in the right direction, but I should very much like to bring forward another matter connected with it, namely, the limewashing of the houses twice a year. I think, sir, that this is rather too much. It is not only an expense to the landlords but is a source of very great inconvenience and annoyance to the tenants. May I ask your Excellency if you will suggest to the Sanitary Board the taking of this matter into consideration. I think now that the colony has been so thoroughly cleansed that limewashing once a year is sufficient for all purposes.

The DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS—The matter of limewashing twice a year has been fully considered by the Board and the Board is unanimous in the opinion that at present it would be highly prejudicial to the health of the colony to make any change in the present system of limewashing. I hope that under those circumstances the hon. member will not press his suggestion.

His EXCELLENCY—Will it be expensive?

Hon. C. P. CHATER—The cost is about \$2 a floor, a house of three floors would be \$6, and as there are about 10,000 houses in the colony the expenditure is very great. Besides the expense it is a source of very great inconvenience and annoyance to the tenants. They have to turn

out while the limewashing is going on and I have known a great many tenants remove to empty houses in the vicinity rather than stand the limewashing operation. After the remarks of the Director of Public Works I will leave the matter in abeyance at present, trusting that as soon as the opportunity occurs the limewashing will be reduced from twice to once a year.

The by-law was then approved.

RATING ALTERATIONS.

The ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER—I beg to move—

1.—"That the percentages on the valuation of tenements in Aberdeen at present payable as rates under *The Rating Ordinance*, 1888, as amended by Ordinance 5 of 1892 be altered from 7 per cent. to 9 per cent."

2.—"That the percentages on the valuation of tenements in Shaukiwan, East and West, at present payable as rates under *The Rating Ordinance*, 1888, as amended by Ordinance 5 of 1892 be altered from 7 to 9 per cent."

3.—"That the percentages on the valuation of tenements, payable as rates, levied within the area bounded—

On the North, by the Harbour.

On the South, by the contour of the hill-side 600 feet above sea level.

On the East, by a straight line from North Point to the western end of the Taitam tunnel and produced to meet the southern boundary.

On the West, by the eastern boundary of the City of Victoria,

be altered from 7 per cent. to 9 per cent."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Carried.

ARMS AND AMMUNITION.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Your Excellency, I rise to ask a question:—"Will the Government inform the Council whether the Police Department continues to furnish the Imperial Chinese Maritime Customs with information concerning permits issued for the export from the colony of arms and ammunition?" With your Excellency's permission I would mention that you were good enough to cause me to be favoured with an answer some little time after the last meeting of Council, which answer was duly communicated by me to the firms interested in this trade, and they very much appreciated the fact that your Excellency then gave an answer instead of leaving it over till the next Council meeting. If your Excellency has no objection I will pass the correspondence on the subject to the press for publication. I have a copy of it here.

HIS EXCELLENCY—Oh, yes.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—The correspondence to which the hon. member refers might have been handed to the press when it was written. I do not know what the

reason of the delay is. The reply to the hon. member's question is no.

THE GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH.

His Excellency read his opening speech, which was as follows:—

Honourable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council,—The time having arrived when it is usual to convene the Legislative Council for the purpose of discharging those important duties which annually devolve upon it, I gladly resort to you for assistance and advice. The pleasure of meeting you again is enhanced by the satisfactory state of public affairs, especially as regards the finances of the colony.

Before proceeding to deal with that and other interesting matters, I have to express the gratification which it affords me, and which I am sure you all share, to welcome the presence at this table of His Excellency Major-General Black and Mr. Wei A Yuk, as official and unofficial members respectively of this Council. The course of events which brought about this change in the constitution of the Legislative Council is still fresh in your memory. I shall not refer to them in detail, but content myself with remarking that as His Excellency the General Officer Commanding is to administer the Government during the absence at any time of the Governor, it is obviously advantageous to the colony that he should occupy a seat in the Legislative Council, while the appointment of Mr. Wei A Yuk, a resident highly respected in Hongkong, will, it is hoped, bring the Government into still closer touch with the Chinese community, which forms such an important element in the population of the colony.

The constitution of the Executive Council has also undergone a change, which was recommended by me and approved by the Secretary of State. It now consists of two unofficial members, Mr. Chater and Mr. Bell-Irving, in addition to the official members who previously composed it. You will agree with me in the opinion that the colony is to be congratulated on this reconstruction, which has strengthened the Executive by the addition of two able advisers, whose experience, especially on matters affecting the commercial welfare of Hongkong, cannot fail to be of the highest value at all times to me and to my successors in office.

Turning now to the orders of the day, the first item which claims attention is a Bill entitled "An Ordinance to appropriate a percentage of seventeen and a half per centum of the Colonial revenues as a contribution for the defence of the colony."

This Bill is the outcome of lengthy correspondence and negotiations with which you are familiar, and it is introduced under instructions from the Secretary of State. I may mention that the unofficial members have recently forwarded a memorial praying that the contribution may be again fixed at the former figure of £40,000. I can, however, hold out no hope that this request of the unofficial members will be

acceded to. I have no option therefore but to ask you to pass this Bill into law, and so finally settle the much-vexed question of the Military Contribution.

The next item of importance, and indeed the most pressing one on the order paper, is the Appropriation Bill for 1897.

From the draft Estimates, which have been in your hands for some time, and which I now lay upon the table, you will have observed that the revenue for 1897 is estimated to yield \$2,438,823. This estimate has been arrived at with due caution; it is less than the actual revenue for 1895 and the probable total for the current year, and I have every reason to expect that it will be realised. The various items do not, I think, call for any special remark at this stage. The total expenditure for 1897 is estimated at \$2,769,083, but of this \$368,000 is chargeable to the Loan. The estimated sum chargeable to current revenue is therefore \$2,401,083, or \$37,740 less than the estimated revenue.

The principal increases in expenditure, as compared with the Estimates for 1896, appear under the following heads:—

1. Public Works Extraordinary chargeable to Loan	\$170,800
2. Military Expenditure	30,079
3. Pensions	26,000
4. Public Works Recurrent	23,300
5. Post Office	22,181
6. Public Debt	11,447
7. Sanitary Department	9,800
8. Medical Department	4,542

The increase in military expenditure is due partly to an increase of \$9,000 in the amount set apart for "Barrack Services," but chiefly to increased (estimated) revenue. Only \$61,000 of the estimated total military expenditure is included in the Appropriation Bill, viz., \$49,000 for Barrack Services and \$12,000 for the Volunteers, as the Bill to which I have already referred and which is designed purposely to remove the question of voting the Defence Contribution from the arena of yearly debate, will provide for the appropriation of $17\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the revenue, less premia on land sales, to meet that contribution.

The increase under the item of Public Works Recurrent is accounted for chiefly by the cost of maintaining the new waterworks at Shaukiwan and Aberdeen, and increased cost of maintenance of roads and bridges, and of the repairs to buildings which will probably be necessary during next year.

The additional charge on account of the Public Debt is due to the increase in the contribution to the Sinking Fund, which commenced only in October last.

The large increase in the cost of the Sanitary

Department calls for some special explanation.

It has been found that the present staff of inspectors is not sufficient to provide for the inspection of the Chinese houses with the frequency and regularity which are necessary. The Sanitary Board has accordingly recommended, and the Secretary of State has sanctioned, the appointment of two more inspectors of nuisances, with the necessary additional interpreters and foremen of street cleansers. The salaries for these new appointments, with various stipulated increments in the pay of other officers, and the salary of a temporary clerk who was appointed in April, 1895, and whose salary does not appear in the 1896 estimates, accounts for the increase in personal emoluments, while the increase under "other charges" is principally due to the higher figures at which the scavenging contracts are let.

The increase under the heading "Post Office" is due entirely to estimated increase in transit charges, or the sum which this colony has to pay for the conveyance of its mail matter. This increase need cause no alarm; on the other hand it is a matter of congratulation, for it indicates an estimated expansion of business and consequent increase of profit.

The increase in the cost of the Medical Departments is owing to the appointment of an Assistant Surgeon in place of the Medical Officer of the Gaol, at a higher salary; to the appointment of an additional Sister, and to well deserved increases in the pay of Dr. Lowson and the Analyst and Assistant Analyst, and a few minor appointments, including the Chinese staff for the new Isolation Hospital.

Economies have been effected as opportunity offered, on the lines suggested by the Retrenchment Committee, but such opportunities have been rare.

The rate of exchange for the estimates for 1897 has been taken at 2/1, the same rate as was taken for 1896, which may be regarded as a safe rate so far as the word "safe" can be applied to exchange.

If any further information is desired with regard to the Estimates it will be furnished in Finance Committee or when the Council is in Committee on the Bill. I have now only to ask you, gentlemen, to vote the sum necessary to defray the charges for the coming year.

I will now make a few remarks upon the general condition of the colony financially and otherwise.

The total estimated revenue for 1896 was \$2,288,366. Of this sum \$2,120,680 had been collected up to the end of October, and the total revenue will probably be about \$2,495,000, while the total expenditure chargeable to revenue will be about \$2,445,000, leaving a surplus of revenue over expenditure of \$50,000.

The increase in receipts over the amount which was estimated is principally due to premia on land sales, which have yielded already over

\$250,000 as against an estimated total for the whole year of \$70,000.

There are also noticeable increases in the receipts up to the 31st October, under the headings "Light Dues," "Licences and Internal Revenue not otherwise specified" and "Post Office," over the estimated receipts up to that date.

The principal items of unforeseen expenditure, which were not provided for in the estimates for 1896, are \$20,000 for a new floating engine for the Fire Brigade and \$70,200 for expenses incurred in connection with the repression of the plague.

Turning now to the question of the health and sanitation of the colony, the present year will be a memorable one owing to the unfortunate recurrence of the disease known as bubonic plague, which was so disastrous in 1894. The outbreak commenced early in the year, the disease was at its worst stage in April and May, and was not finally stamped out till the end of September. The total number of cases brought to notice was 1,204, of which 1,097 ended fatally, The Europeans attacked numbered 15, of whom 7, including two soldiers and one inspector of nuisances, succumbed to the disease. Sister Catherine, one of the two sisters who were engaged in nursing at the Plague Hospital, was also attacked by the disease, but fortunately recovered. The largest number of fresh cases in one week was 100, from the 23rd to 30th May, and the greatest number of deaths was 87, for the week ending 9th May.

During the whole of this period the Sanitary Board and its staff, ably assisted by members of the police and of the garrison, whose services were kindly lent, and all those connected with the work of suppressing the plague, were untiring in their efforts, and they deserve great credit for their zeal and energy. It is perhaps too much to hope that disease will not again visit this colony, and we must, I fear, be prepared for its re-appearance in spite of every effort to prevent it.

It is satisfactory to record that though many of the wealthier Chinese sent their wives and families to the mainland, there was no general exodus of the population such as occurred in 1894. and business proceeded much as usual. Dr. Yersin and Dr. Kitasato, whose names and attainments are so well known, have each prepared an antitoxin for the treatment of the plague, and I am taking steps to secure a supply of the preparation. Finally, I cannot dismiss the subject of the plague without recording the colony's indebtedness to the Medical Department of this colony, including the Sisters. Dr. Wilm, of the Imperial German Navy, whose services were kindly lent by Admiral Hoffman also rendered invaluable assistance throughout in treating the patients at the Kennedytown Hospital, of which he was in charge, and by his scientific investigations, which, it is hoped, will prove of much benefit in dealing with this terrible disease. Many useful measures have been undertaken by the Sanitary Board with

a view to the prevention of overcrowding and for the improvement of the sanitary condition of the native quarters of the city. This question, however, is of so difficult a nature that I have appointed a Commission to enquire into the existence of insanitary properties and to report on the best mode of dealing with them. The matter is now under their consideration. The colony is to be congratulated on its immunity from any outbreak of cholera such as has visited the sister colony of Singapore.

A typhoon of unusual severity swept over the colony on the 29th July last. It caused great damage to property, but fortunately, owing to the timely warning of its approach given by the Director of the Observatory, the loss of life was not great.

Improvements have been made in the condition of the Tung-wah Hospital. The desirability of reforming that institution has formed the subject of enquiry and report by a Commission. I am in possession of their views on the matter and am devoting my earnest attention to the question, which is one of considerable difficulty and delicacy.

With regard to the constitution of the Sanitary Board I regret that I am not yet in possession of the Secretary of State's final decision, which, however, I hope to receive shortly.

As regards Public Works, the extension of the Wongneichong Recreation Ground has been undertaken and is progressing. The project includes the widening and improving of the roads and an addition to the Recreation Ground of about $7\frac{1}{2}$ acres.

The extension of the Gaol has been proceeded with and accommodation has been provided within the Gaol compound for a prison for females, instead of the unsuitable house in Wyndham Street hitherto rented for that purpose.

The provision of an adequate supply of water to the City of Victoria has received my careful attention, and projects have been prepared for an ultimate supply of 4,000,000 gallons a day throughout the year. The present state of the water supply and particulars of the proposed extensions have been dealt with in an able and elaborate report by the Director of Public Works which has already been laid before you (Sessional Paper $\frac{19}{1896}$). That report has been referred to Mr. Osbert Chadwick, who concurs in the proposals contained therein. The Secretary of State has communicated to me his approval of the scheme, and contracts have been entered into, with the approval of this Council, for the commencement of the works. The waterworks for Kowloon have also been com-

pleted, and a constant supply is now available over the southern portion of that peninsula.

The new system of signalling the approach of vessels has been completed in accordance with the recommendations of the Committee appointed in 1893.

The statue of the Queen in commemoration of Her Most Gracious Majesty's Jubilee has been erected on the Praya Reclamation and was unveiled by me on the 28th May, amidst general rejoicings and loyal demonstrations.

With respect to Taipingshan considerable progress has been made with the demolition of insanitary dwellings, and the necessary works for relaying out the resumed area for building purposes. Contracts have been entered into for dealing with about one half of the resumed area, and works in connection with the greater part of the remainder will shortly be commenced. A report on the subject will be laid on the table, to which I direct your attention, as the anticipations which I was led to form this time last year have not been fulfilled.

As to the Praya Reclamation Works, though difficulties have arisen in connection with the rapid completion of certain portions, fair progress has been made. The marine lot-holders have, in several instances, obtained permission to enter into their portions, and fine buildings are in course of erection on some of the land reclaimed.

In addition to the foregoing works, the condition of the villages has not been overlooked, and works of drainage, water supply, and general improvements have been completed, whilst others are in hand in Shaukiwan, Aberdeen, Mong-kok-tsui and Tai-kok-tsui. The requirements of the increasing population of the Hill District have not been lost sight of, and it is proposed at an early date to commence the construction of an improved road from near Victoria Gap to the Mount Kellet Road.

The increasing requirements of the colony in the matter of Government offices and the question of providing new offices and concentrating them, so far as possible, under one roof, appeared to me to call for a special enquiry. I referred the matter accordingly to a Committee, whose report I have just received. That report will be published.

With respect to Education I regret to say that the experiences of the year have been somewhat unfortunate. The recurrence of the plague, and the measures taken to prevent overcrowding, together with the rise in house rents resulting from those measures, caused a large number of Chinese, as I have already said, to send their women and children out of the colony. The attendance at schools by Chinese children, and more particularly girls' school, decreased considerably; the decrease amounting to probably 30 per cent. of their normal attendance. The attendance at five Chinese schools ceased entirely and the schools had to be closed, but as three new schools have been opened in places unaffected by plague and its

consequences the total number of schools under the Education Department is 119 as compared with 121 in 1895. The above unsatisfactory experiences have been confined almost entirely to schools attended by the poorer classes of the native population. The other schools, especially those attended by non-Chinese children, have for the most part retained their normal attendance. Efforts are being made to increase the number of schools offering English teaching to natives, but only one school of this description could be opened during the present year. Steps have been taken, however, to improve the teaching of English at Queen's College, and in order to allow more time for that purpose the purely Chinese branch of that establishment has been entirely abolished.

With regard to shipping, Hongkong continues to hold an important position amongst the ports of the Empire. During the nine months ending 30th September last. over 8,000 ships of European construction entered and cleared at the Harbour Office, bringing and taking away cargoes amounting to nearly 55 per cent. of their registered tonnage, and conveying to and from the colony 1,026,469 passengers.

In addition to these, 53,000 trading junks carried 1,309,338 tons of cargo in and out, and conveyed 161,991 passengers.

Compared with the same period of 1895 this means an increase of 412 European constructed vessels, carrying 233,675 more tons of cargo, and an increase of over 8,600 junks with 125,638 tons of cargo, and a total increase in the passenger traffic amounting to 1,986.

A correspondence with the unofficial members in regard to the proposed abolition of the light dues levied to cover the cost and maintenance of Gap Rock Lighthouse will be laid on the Council table.

I consider that I am bound to redeem the pledge given by my predecessor to the effect that this special rate should cease as soon as the cost of the lighthouse had been defrayed.

With a view of covering the deficit which will result from this abolition five of the six unofficial members are of opinion that a fixed charge of $2\frac{1}{2}$ cents per ton should in future be imposed as light dues on all shipping entering the harbour, and in that opinion I concur.

The criminal statistics are highly satisfactory. Comparing the number of cases under various headings for the 12 months ending 31st October, 1896, with those for the preceding twelve months, we find decreases of 21 per cent. in robberies from the person, 53 per cent. in burglaries and larcenies from dwellings, 30 per cent. in cases of obtaining money under false pretences, 37 per cent. in cases of unlawful possession, and 7 per cent. in larcenies. There

were 25 cases of wilful wounding as against 17 in the preceding period, and 14 more cases under the Women and Girls' Protection Ordinance than in the previous 12 months. The increases under various other heads are trifling and the number of murder cases was the same for both periods.

The new home of the Pó Léung Kuk, or Society for the Protection of Women and Girls, was opened by me on the 13th of November. Government contributed towards the cost of its erection a sum of \$20,000. The Society has already done good work, and it is hoped, that now it is in possession of a home, it will be able not only to continue its labours, but to carry them on more efficiently. It gives me pleasure at all times to aid the Chinese community of this colony in charitable work, such as that of protecting those who are not able to protect themselves, and I shall always be ready to give them what assistance lies in my power to render such work as thorough as possible.

From the foregoing remarks, gentlemen, you will gather that on the whole the condition of the colony socially, politically, and financially, is very satisfactory. We have had during the term of my government two visitations of plague. We have had strikes, several typhoons, and on one occasion a vast and unparalleled exodus of people, but Hongkong has held its own with wonderful vitality. Government has not harassed the community with unnecessary or vexatious legislation. The law has been enforced whenever it was necessary, but the community, speaking generally, is happily a law abiding one. The revenue has increased and is increasing with the growth of population, and the only drawback to a wider and more extensive outlook is the limited area of the colony itself.

In conclusion, gentlemen, you will believe me when I say that as long as I remain here—and for how much longer that may be I cannot tell—I shall continue to co-operate with you in any measures having for their object the public good. I pray that your deliberations under the blessing of God may conduce not only to the honour of Her Majesty the Queen, but to the increased happiness and welfare of the entire community of this Her Majesty's possession in the Far East.

APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES.

His EXCELLENCY—I will now appoint the following Committees:—Finance Committee:—The Colonial Secretary, Chairman; all the Members of Council, except the Governor.

Law Committee:—The Attorney-General, Chairman; Hon. J. J. Bell-Irving, Hon. Ho Kai, Hon. E. R. Belilios, Hon. Wei Yuk.

Public Works Committee:—The Director of Public Works, Chairman; the Colonial Treasurer, Hon. C. P. Chater, E. R. Belilios, Hon. T. H. Whitehead.

THE REVENUE AND THE MILITARY CONTRIBUTION.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I have listened with very keen interest to your Excellency's exhaustive address, which will receive careful consideration. When the Council is in Finance Committee on the Estimates I should like to be informed how it arises, that with a less total revenue for 1897, viz., \$2,438,000, as against the revised estimated revenue for 1896, viz., \$2,495,000, that the military contribution payable for 1897 will be \$30,000 more than may be paid in 1896. It is true that \$9,000 more is required to be contributed for barrack services, but I should like to receive an explanation as to the increase of \$21,000 in the contribution towards military purposes, seeing that the 1897 revenue is estimated at \$56,000 less than for 1896.

THE MILITARY CONTRIBUTION BILL.

The ACTING ATTORNEY -GENERAL—In moving the first reading of the Bill entitled an Ordinance to appropriate a percentage of seventeen and a half per centum of the Colonial revenues as a contribution for the defence of the colony, I trust your Excellency will allow me, as this is probably the last time that I shall have an opportunity of addressing this Council, to offer a few remarks upon this very important subject. I fully recognise, sir, and appreciate the strenuous efforts of the unofficial members of this council to curtail, so far as they possibly can, the expenditure of this colony, but, sir, it seems to me that this question is not a local question, but a matter of Imperial interest, and it must be dealt with as such. We have no right, sir, I think, to look upon this matter as purely a question of the internal position of this colony; but we must consider the point as an Imperial question and we must deal with it in a broad and comprehensive spirit. (Hear, hear). We have heard, sir, from home, and we have received a telegram within the last few days adding to our previous information upon the subject, that the people of England, the people of Great Britain, are at the present moment engaged in strenuous efforts to make our country strong and able to hold her own in the future as she has done in the past. (Applause.) I think, sir, I am right in saying that the people of Great Britain have this year shown a disposition to contribute, and to contribute liberally, to the defence of the Empire of which we are all so proud, and I am sorry, sir, that it may appear from the memorandum of the unofficial members of this Council that Hongkong is not equally willing to bear her share in the burden of the Empire. I speak, sir, in this Council as an Englishman who is proud of the traditions of his country, and I am sure that not only every member of this Council but every British subject in this colony must have rejoiced and felt glad when he received the news that the people in the old

country were freely contributing towards the defence of the Empire. Of course, sir, I quite recognize the fact that there is a local aspect of this question to be considered as well as an Imperial aspect, but looking to what we see going on around us out here in the East, looking at the fact that it is necessary out here at the present moment not only that our merchants and men of business should be active and intelligent but also that we should have upon the spot an armament of considerable strength— looking to that fact, sir, I feel it to be a very great misfortune that at the present moment the unofficial members of this Council should not see their way to allow this money, the military contribution of $17\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., to be voted without opposition. (Applause.)

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Exclude the municipal revenue and I am quite willing.

The ACTING ATTORNEY -GENERAL—Of course if he excludes the municipal revenue I take it the contribution would be much less.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Increase the percentage if necessary, but let us have justice.

The ACTING ATTORNEY -GENERAL—The hon. member speaks about justice and so on, but as I have already said, it seems to me the question is whether we are willing to contribute freely towards the defence of the Empire, and I think it would be evidence of our willingness to contribute towards that defence if the members of this Council unanimously voted this money. I think, sir, it is of paramount importance that we should be well protected in the Far East, that our navy should be kept at a high standard, and that we should have a strong Imperial garrison in Hongkong. I hope these few words of mine—I am sorry that I have not the eloquence of some of the other members of the Council to express myself better— I hope that the unofficial members of the Council will give some weight to the few words I have spoken and I hope they will, if possible, reconsider their determination and that they will vote this money, this contribution for the defence of the Empire.

The ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER seconded.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I rise, sir, to move that the further consideration of this Bill be postponed until a reply has been received from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the last memorandum of the unofficial members on the subject. I concur in much that has fallen from the lips of the Acting Attorney-General in regard to the necessity for England being fortified and in a position, not only on sea but on land, to hold her own against any adverse combination. At the same time I submit that this colony should and has the right to claim to be placed on the same basis as Singapore has been placed and no portion of our municipal revenue should be attached by the Imperial Government for Imperial military purposes.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—I have to second the amendment which the hon. member who represents the Chamber of Commerce has proposed. As your Excellency pointed out in your opening address the unofficial members have sent a memorandum to the Secretary of State for the Colonies asking that the military contribution should be as it has been for the past ten years, namely, £40,000, instead of what it is proposed to be in the Ordinance now before us. In spite of the remarks made by the hon. the Attorney-General, with which I for one quite agree, I think, sir, in justice to the unofficial members an answer to our memorandum ought to be received and we ought to have time to discuss the answer before we agree to the first reading of the Bill. Therefore, sir, I beg to second the amendment of the hon. member for the Chamber of Commerce.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY — On behalf of the Government I regret very much that delay is impossible. I do not think that any hon. member of this Council will for a moment deny that this Government has given the question every consideration, and has afforded every opportunity possible to every member of the Council to have this question put before the Secretary of State. Therefore, to come forward now that this Government has given all these opportunities and to try and burk this Bill, as hon. members are trying to do, does not, I think, reflect credit on those Imperial instincts which the hon. member on my right informs me they possess. The representative of the Chamber of Commerce smiles. I congratulate him upon his smile, but I would like to know whether he has consulted the leading members of the community on this question.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I have consulted the leading members of the community, and a very large number of them. They quite agree with what the unofficial members have done and have stated, viz., that we should be placed on the same basis as Singapore.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I am glad to hear that the hon. member has consulted the leading members of the community. All I can say is that those views are not the same as I have heard expressed; they are entirely opposite.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Will you kindly give names?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I do not think it is necessary for me to give names; I am stating what are facts. It is a feature of this discussion that the two members representing the Chinese have made no opposition and have not joined their unofficial colleagues in opposing this Bill.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Hon. Ho Kai signed the document on the subject.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—That is a fact which is perfectly well known to Hon. Ho Kai and this Council. I can see no reason for the delay, and if the hon. member had listened as carefully to your Excellency's address as he said he did he would have heard that your Excellency could hold out no hope that their memorandum would be entertained, and I have no doubt that your Excellency has very good grounds for that statement.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—With your Excellency's permission I should just like to make one remark and that is on the subject of a word used by the hon. Colonial Secretary, namely, to "burk" this Bill. My object is not to burk this Bill. He says that we have had every opportunity for discussing the Bill for some time past. So we have, and the purport of our discussion is the memorandum forwarded to the Secretary of State. All I ask is that the consideration of this Bill, or rather the first reading of this Bill, should not take place until we have had an answer from the Secretary of State. I have no object in burking the Bill.

Hon. HO KAI—I was about to rise to support the amendment when the Colonial Secretary rose; otherwise there would have been no statement about my silence. My supporting the amendment does not show that I am unwilling to contribute towards an increased contribution to the Imperial Government. On the other hand, we want more security for the defence of our position abroad and at home and we shall have to pay for it. The only thing I object to in this case is the unfair position in which we have been placed. That is to say, we are placed in a position distinctly different from that of Singapore. Seventeen and a half per cent. has been charged on both colonies, but on the one hand the municipal rates were excepted, while in the case of Hongkong our municipal rates have been included. Now we are fighting a difficult question and a principle, and fighting for a principle does not in the least, I submit, make us half hearted to what tends to the protection of the glorious Empire to which we all belong. (Applause.)

The CAPTAIN SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE — The objection to this Bill is that so far no good reasons have been shown why we should not be placed on the same footing as Singapore. May I point out to the unofficial members that very good reasons have been shown by the Secretary of State in the correspondence that took place in 1895 why this colony should be placed on a different footing from Singapore in this matter. The simple reason is that the revenue of Singapore is about three times the revenue of this colony, and although the municipal revenue is eliminated still they get a large contribution. If you eliminated what is called municipal revenue here—but there happens to be no such thing—you get a less contribution. I understand the unofficial members are quite ready to pay and I am not in the least surprised to hear that they are as patriotic as any of us here. The hon. member representing the Chamber of Commerce has even said that if you eliminate the municipal revenue he does not at all object to an increase of the percentage. It seems to me it is six of one and half a dozen of the other. The question is,

how much are we going to pay, and I do not think it matters much whether you include municipal revenue or exclude it and make it twenty odd per cent.

The amendment was then put, with the following result:

AYES.	NOES.
Hon. E. R. Belilios	Hon. Wei A Yuk
Hon. Ho Kai	Hon. F. H. May
Hon. C. P. Chater	The Harbour Master
Hon. T. H. Whitehead	The Director of Public Works
	The Acting Colonial Treasurer
	The Acting Attorney-General
	The Colonial Secretary
	H.E. Major-General Black

The amendment was therefore lost, and the motion for the first reading of the Bill was then put and carried.

FIRST READING OF BILLS.

The following Bills were read a first time:—

A Bill entitled An Ordinance to apply a sum not exceeding Two Millions Three hundred and Fifty-nine thousand Seven hundred and Eighty-nine dollars to the Public Service of the Year 1897.

A Bill entitled An Ordinance to declare and amend the Law of Partnership.

A Bill entitled An Ordinance to further amend "The Post Office Ordinance, 1887."

A Bill entitled An Ordinance to provide for compensation being paid to Pawnbrokers in certain cases.

A Bill entitled An Ordinance to consolidate and amend the Laws relating to Probates and Letters of Administration in this Colony.

THE ARRANGEMENT OF SEATS.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—May I be allowed to draw your Excellency's attention for one moment to the re-arrangement of the seats at this table and to suggest that the Government follow a similar course to that pursued in Singapore and elsewhere in the East, and that is that the hon. official members take the head of the table and the unofficial members the foot of the table as is done in nearly all the Crown colonies. I think it is very desirable and would facilitate public business.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—The suggestion of the hon. member will be taken into consideration. I do not know what has prompted it. The combination of the unofficials and

officials has worked harmoniously, and so far as I am aware it has not hampered, hindered, or interfered in any way with the conduct of public business.

H.E. Major-General BLACK—In Jamaica we sat nearly as we are at present and I believe business was facilitated thereby, because you can get good information. I wish I was sitting next to my hon. friend Mr. Chater, as I would then get plenty of information. (Laughter.)

ADJOURNMENT.

His EXCELLENCY adjourned the Council until next Monday.

FINANCE COMMITTEE.

A meeting of the Finance Committee was held immediately after the Legislative Council. Hon. J. H. Stewart Lockhart. (Colonial Secretary) presided and all the members were present.

The following votes were recommended:—

No. 11.—A sum of \$3,000 to meet the expenditure for the sewerage of the City of Victoria.

No. 12.—A sum of \$10,000 to meet the probable further expenditure in connection with the water and drainage works for the current year.

No. 13.—A sum of \$4,000 to meet the expenditure for the erection of a Matron's House at the Gaol and other alterations necessary to convert a portion of the buildings into a female prison.

No. 14.—The sum of \$20,000 for the construction of a new floating fire engine.

No. 15.—A sum of \$3,000 in aid of the vote for "Miscellaneous Works" (Public Works Annually Recurrent).

No. 16.—A sum of \$808.50 for the purchase of blank charges and friction tubes for use at the Fog Signal Station, Gap Rock.

No. 17.—A sum of (\$500), in aid of the vote for "Repairs to Epidemic Hulk *Hygeia*" (Harbour Department).

(Note.—Increased cost due to re-mooring the hulk after the recent typhoon.)

No. 18.—A sum of \$25,000 to meet the following expenses during the current year:— Repairs to buildings \$18,000; repairs to roads, City of Victoria \$5,000, out of Victoria \$1,000, Kowloon 1,000.

No. 19.—A sum of \$2,000 in aid of the vote for "Incidental Expenses" in the Police Department.

No. 20.—A sum of \$650 in aid of the vote "Incidental Expenses," Sanitary Department, for the current year.

(Note.—Increased cost due to the enforcement of By-law No. 6 under the provisions of Ordinance No. 15 of 1894.)

No. 21.—A sum of \$300 in aid of the votes (a) Forage for horses, \$160; and (b) Meals for prisoners in cells, \$140; for November and December, 1896.

No. 22.—A sum of \$336 for the salaries of the Chinese staff at the new Kowloon Animal Depot.

No. 23.—A sum of \$5,000 for raising the Praya Wall at Sheklongtsui opposite Marine Lots Nos. 126 and 177 to 183.

No. 24.—A sum of \$70,000 for expenses incurred in connection with the plague.

No. 25.—A sum of \$3,605.10 to meet the following expenses:—

Health Officer's Office.—Coal, &c. \$120. Government Civil Hospital.—Provisions \$1,830, Surgical Instruments \$285, Medical Comforts \$300, Light and Fuel \$800, Washing \$120, Incidental Expenses \$150, Water Account \$30

No. 26.—A sum of \$4,600 to cover the amount underestimated in respect of "Miscellaneous Services Other."