

# HONGKONG LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

10TH OCTOBER, 1898.

PRESENT:—

His EXCELLENCY the ACTING GOVERNOR, Major-General BLACK, C. B. (Officer Commanding the Troops).

Hon. T. SERCOMBE SMITH (Acting Colonial Secretary).

Mr. H. E. POLLOCK (Acting Attorney-General).

Hon. R. MURRAY RUMSEY (Harbour Master).

Hon. F. H. MAY, C.M.G. (Captain Superintendent of Police).

Hon. A. M. THOMSON (Acting Colonial Treasurer).

Hon. R. D. ORMSBY (Director of Public Works).

Hon. C. P. CHATER, C.M.G.

Hon. Dr. HO KAI.

Hon. J. J. BELL-IRVING.

Hon. WEI A YUK.

Mr. J. G. T. BUCKLE (Clerk of Councils).

MINUTES.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and adopted as a correct record.

PAPERS.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY laid on the table the report of the Principal Civil Medical Officer for 1897 and the report of the Injurious Liquors Commission; and also the report of the Finance Committee (No. 6), moving the adoption of the latter.

The ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER seconded, and the motion was carried.

THE SIGNBOARDS AT LODGING-HOUSES.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY—I have the honour to move the following resolution, which stands in my name:—That the following resolution passed by the Sanitary Board on 22nd September, 1898, be approved by the Legislative Council:— "That bye-laws 9 of the bye-laws made by the Board on the 13th day of March, 1891, and amended on the 2nd day of April, 1891, for the licensing, regulation, and sanitary maintenance of common lodging-houses, under sub-section 12 of section 13 of Ordinance 24 of 1887 and sub-section D of section 1 of Ordinance 26 of 1890, be revoked." The bye-law of question is that which refers to the placing in signboards outside

common lodging-houses and to the keeping in the rooms of lodging-houses of a board showing the number of persons allowed to inhabit that room.

This was seconded by the ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER and carried.

The DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS—I rise to move the following:—"Be it resolved by the Legislative Council that the percentages on the valuation of tenements, payable as rates, in the village of Hunghom be altered from 103/4 to 121/4 per cent. and in the village of Mongkoktsui from 9 to 101/2 per cent." This resolution proposes to add 11/2 per cent. to the rates now paid in these villages to meet the cost of gas-lighting, the mains having been extended to both these villages.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded, and the motion was carried.

NATURALISATION.

On the motion of the ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL, seconded by the ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY, the first reading of a Bill entitled an Ordinance for the Naturalization of one Un Chung Wo alias Un Oi U alias Un Hi alias Un Kwok Hi was passed.

THE ESTIMATES.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY—I beg to move the second reading of the Bill entitled an ordinance to apply a sum not exceeding \$2,587,898.80 to the public service of the year 1899. I think it may expedite matters later on in the course of this meeting if I now make a few remarks upon this Bill and upon the estimates. The total estimated revenue for the year 1899 is \$2,886,137, and the total estimated expenditure chargeable against revenue \$2,874,271.80, leaving a balance on the budget in favour of revenue of \$11,865.20. A few points have occurred to me as requiring a little explanation in regard to these estimates. In the Colonial Secretary's department honourable members will notice that there are two more cadets provided for

next year. At the examination held this year in London under the Indian Civil Service Regulations two cadets were to be selected. The next department which I shall deal with is the Post Office. Honourable members will notice that the expenditure at the Post Office for 1899 is estimated at \$25,000 more than the expenditure for the year 1898. There are various causes which account for the increase. There are the usual stipulated increments of salary; the extension of the business of the money order and registration branches has necessitated the appointment of new clerks; and two branch post offices have been opened, one at Kowloon and one in the western part of the city in the midst of the chief Chinese trading district. Rent has to be paid for these offices, and officials have been provided to manage them. Two probationers have also been appointed at very small salaries, so that when vacancies occur they may go into harness at once with some knowledge of the business. Our share of the mail subsidy has been increased and on account of the increase of business the transit charges are more. The next department to which I shall allude is the educational department. Honourable members will observe that the difference between the estimated expenditure for 1899 and the estimated expenditure for 1898 is \$6,000. I feel sure, Sir, that honourable members will concur in the action of the Government in establishing, subject to the sanction of the Secretary of State, a public school at Kowloon. The cost of maintaining that school is put down at \$3,888. The rest of the extra expenditure in the education department is due to an increase in the Queen's College. That increase may be explained as follows:—One senior master resigned in the course of the year; and in order to carry out better the policy inaugurated by Sir William Robinson of giving Chinese an English education rather than an education in their own language, three junior grade masters have been appointed in lieu of one senior master. With regard to both these schools—Queen's College and Kowloon School—I wish to say that from Kowloon School it is anticipated that \$1,500 will be derived in fees, and that from the Queen's College, where the fees have lately been raised, it is anticipated that there will be an increase of some \$5,000. These two sums, amounting to \$6,500, more than cover the extra expenditure contemplated in the education department. As to the medical department, the difference there is some \$4,500, and if honourable members will turn to page 35 of the details of expenditure and about a quarter down the page against the figure 4 they will see, "Provisions for patients," "Bedding and clothing," "Medical and surgical appliances." These show an increase of \$4,500, which is due to the fact that there are a larger number of patients—the Civil Hospital is better patronised, I hope by the Chinese—and also that the rate of exchange entails a larger expenditure in dollars than has hitherto been the case. Honourable members will remember that about this time last year, when the

estimates were before them, the question of raising the fees for medical attendance in the Government Civil Hospital was gone into, and in accordance with the feeling of the Council at that time, the fees were raised, the increase dating from first January, 1898. The result is that the fees for 1898 have exceeded those for the previous year by \$5,000. With regard to the police department, there we have a difference of \$7,500 between the estimated expenditure for 1899 and the estimated expenditure for 1898. If honourable members will refer to page 38 of the details of expenditure they will see that for the detective force the sum has been increased from \$1,056 to \$2,124, which increase is explained in the foot-note as follows:—"Of the increase of \$1,068 \$900 is for European detectives, and the balance (\$168) is to admit of the detective allowance of \$2 a month being paid to the whole of the Chinese detective staff." I feel sure that the Council will agree that it is better, as recent events have shown, to endeavour to put your men out of the reach of a temptation to which unfortunately some have given way. Another reason for the increase is that in all police forces, nearly, I am given to understand, there is a distinction in pay between the detective force and the uniform force, and that the uniform force in Hongkong has opportunities of obtaining allowances—such as by joining the Fire Brigade—not open to the detective force. As it was desired to have the best men of the force in the detective branch the Government have thought it advisable to grant these allowances. The next items to which I would call attention are "Passages and bonuses in lieu of passage \$15,000" (against \$13,000), the increase being due to fall in exchange, and "Clothing and accoutrements \$12,000" (against \$10,000), also due to the fall in exchange. Then I come to the item "Temporary ration allowance to Indian police \$1,540.30. I may explain to the Council that some time ago the Indian police petitioned for a slight increase of pay, or at any rate for some increase in ration allowance, owing to the rise in the price of flour and other articles of food. The matter was considered by the Executive Council, and it was proposed to ask the Secretary of State to sanction this increase, which at present is only to be of a temporary nature. With regard to the sanitary department, there is a difference in the estimate for 1899 and that for 1898 of \$8,000. I believe no member of this Council will dissent from the view that it is absolutely necessary in the interests of the sanitation of the colony to increase our sanitary staff. It is in order to meet that increase that an extra expenditure for 1899 is essential and that you are asked to vote it. In 1898 we had

one senior inspector and 12 other inspectors. For 1899 it is proposed to have one chief inspector from England, five first class inspectors, six second class inspectors, and six third class inspectors, a staff which I believe is about equal to the staff employed in England at New-castle-on-Type, a town where the population is less than that of Hongkong, and where the habits of the people and the nature of the climate render it not so necessary to have so big a staff as in Hongkong. If honourable members will turn to page 44 they will see the item, "10 cover cost of general increase of salaries of Chinese employes \$14,000." Some time ago the Chinese employes of the Government petitioned for an increase of salary. That petition was referred to a small committee composed of the Honourable Colonial Treasurer, the Honourable Wei A Yuk, and Mr. Edward Osborne. Their report has gone home to the Secretary of State and was in favour of an increase on a certain scale being granted to the Chinese employes. This increase when worked out totalled up to \$14,000. and it is hoped that there will be no opposition on the part of this Council to that vote being included in this year's Bill. With regard to public works recurrent, nothing occurs to me to which it is necessary to allude, and I pass on to the "Public works extraordinary." The powder magazine at Stonecutters Island (estimated cost \$50,000) is being built at the earnest request of the General Commanding the forces in the colony after an interchange of views between the Colonial Office and War Office. As to the item "Public Works department store \$18,000," you know that it is not safe to put anything in the dilapidated building used hitherto; it is therefore necessary that we should have another one, especially in view of the fact that it will probably be necessary to pull down Crosby's store to make way for the new Post Office. With regard to the item "No. 7 Police Station \$65,000," the amount was included in last year's estimate, and the sum of \$6,000 was provided last year to begin the reconstruction of this station, but it was found impossible to go on with the work, and it is hoped that this station, which is certainly in need of being rebuilt, will be commenced and carried through next year. With regard to the item "Chair shelter at the Peak \$4,300." as that matter is now being discussed in the press I will content myself with saying that it is with very great regret the Government has left it out. The estimated revenue only exceeds the estimated expenditure by \$11,865, which is a very narrow margin, and one which the Secretary of State will probably require to be increased. Therefore, it may be necessary to sacrifice other items. Another item in the "Public works extraordinary" is "Disinfectant station and inspector's quarters \$12,000." the present disinfectant is situated in a position near the quarters of the nursing sisters attached to the Government Civil Hospital, and is more or less of a nuisance to them, and it is proposed to transfer it to a site at Taipingshan and to build quarters for an inspector and coolies. As to the item "Two public latrines \$5,000." it may be passed over without any more remark, as the

accommodation provided by such conveniences in the colony is very insufficient and should be increased. With regard to the "Washing tanks at Tai Hang \$4,400." at present I understand a good deal of public washing is done at Tai Hang in various pools up the same stream, and it is now proposed to put a series of tanks side by side so that every dhobie will get equally clean water. \$2,000 is provided for the placing of wells in villages not yet supplied with water. It is important that all places not yet reached by the water system should if possible have a good supply of fresh water, so that the sanitary state of villages may be improved. \$40,000 is provided towards the Governor's peak residence in accordance with instructions from the Secretary of State and \$16,000 towards laying out Farm Lot 1 and Training Nullah at Yaumati. The Crown rent on the old Farm Lot is as nothing compared with what will be received when houses are built upon it, and in addition the Government will be receiving rates. Provision is made for a new shed at the swine depot at Kennedytown. The depot is at present insufficient for the accommodation of the swine brought here and the sooner we can get the new shelter built the better, as it will be a remunerative undertaking. With these few remarks I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

The ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER seconded, and the motion was carried.

The estimates were then referred to the Finance Committee, His Excellency vacating the chair for the time being and being succeeded by the Acting Colonial Secretary.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—On page 36 I see "Police Magistrate and Coroner \$7,800, the estimate for this year \$7,200," and I see at the foot note "Reduction on new appointment." I should like to know whether the new appointment has been made.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY—I am as yet unable to state whether the new appointment has been made. The Secretary of State has had it in his mind to reduce the salary on the new appointment being made to \$500 a month. That is to make the salary the same as that of the office of Chief Magistrate at Singapore, and this Government has made representations that in the event of the Police Magistrate and Coroner being one and the same person the sum of \$7,200 would probably be more just. However, the matter has not yet been decided by the Secretary of State, and as he has not sent to us a definite answer we have put our recommendation in the e s t i m a t e s .

Hon. C. P. CHATER—And is it the intention of the Government to increase the number of Magistrates from one to two?

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY—I have heard of no intimation to that effect.

Hon. C. P. CHATER — Under the heading "Miscellaneous services" I see the item "Commission to Crown agents, \$1,600 in 1898 and \$2,500 for 1899," and I observe a foot note, "Increase on account of Crown agents' charge of 1 per cent. on freight and insurance of stores." I should like to have some explanation on this subject.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY—When the Crown agents put this charge of 1 per cent. on freight and insurance I, as Treasurer, protested against it on the ground that it was not in accordance with the regulations and that it was a charge contrary to all commercial practice. The Secretary of State, however, will not relieve us from this commission.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—Are there any returns for freight and insurance?

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY—I do not think there is.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—I believe there are returns. Do we get them or do the Crown agents?

The ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER—I have never seen any.

It was decided that the Acting Colonial Secretary should enquire as to this return.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—On the same page is an item Exchange Compensation for 1898, \$85,000 whilst the estimate for 1899 is put down at \$95,000.

How is this arrived at?

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY—We fix the dollar at 1s. 11d. this year. Last year it was fixed at 1s. 9d.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—Then the item ought to have been less.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY—It ought to have been less but there may be more receiving compensation. and the figures for 1898 now probably under estimated.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—Surely not to that extent.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY promised to give the unofficial members the particulars.

The Council subsequently resumed, His Excellency returning to the chair.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY—I have the honour to report that the Appropriation Bill for 1899 has been considered by the Finance Committee and that there are no objections to the items. I now have the honour to move that this Council go into committee on the Bill and consider it clause by clause.

The ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER seconded.

The Bill having been considered in committee the Council again resumed, and on the motion of the ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY, seconded by the ACTING COLONIAL TREASURER, the Bill was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The Council then adjourned *sine die*.

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