

6TH OCTOBER, 1910.

**PRESENT:—**

HIS EXCELLENCY THE OFFICER ADMINISTERING THE GOVERNMENT, HON. SIR F. H. MAY, K.C.M.G.

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING THE TROOPS, MAJOR-GENERAL R. G. BROADWOOD, C.B.

HON. MR. A. M. THOMSON (Colonial Secretary).

HON. MR. W. REES DAVIES, K.C. (Attorney-General).

HON. MR. C. MCL. MESSER (Colonial Treasurer).

HON. MR. W. CHATHAM, C.M.G. (Director of Public Works).

HON. MR. F. J. BADELEY (Captain Superintendent of Police).

HON. MR. E. A. IRVING (Registrar-General).

HON. MR. WEI YUK, C.M.G.

HON. MR. E. A. HEWETT.

HON. MR. MURRAY STEWART.

HON. MR. E. OSBORNE.

MR. C. CLEMENTI (Clerk of Councils).

**Minutes**

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

**Financial Minutes**

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY, by command of His Excellency the Governor, laid on the table Financial Minutes (Nos. 83 to 84), and moved that they be referred to the Finance Committee.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER seconded, and the motion was agreed to.

**Financial**

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY, by command of His Excellency the Governor, laid on the table the report of the Finance Committee (No. 13), and moved its adoption.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER seconded, and the motion was agreed to.

**THE ESTIMATES.**

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the Council go into committee on the Bill entitled, "An Ordinance to apply a sum not exceeding Six million and forty-two thousand five hundred and forty-three Dollars to the Public Service of the year 1911."

THE COLONIAL TREASURER seconded, and the motion was agreed to.

HIS EXCELLENCY—The hon. member who represents the Chamber of Commerce asked a question among the criticisms he made on the Budget regarding the increase in establishments. I did not quite apprehend the drift of his question at the time, for I understood him to refer to the increase over the whole of the estimates, and the explanation I gave is not correct, so far as the staff of the Imports and Exports Office is concerned. Although it is larger than the staff employed in the current year, it is not in excess of the lump sum put on the estimates for the current year. Therefore, there is no difference. Similarly the railway staff, although brought on the estimates for the first time, cannot be compared with any railway staff for the current year, because no such staff is shown on the estimates for 1910. The hon. member's question really was an explanation of the increase in the establishment outside those two items. I gave information in my budget speech on various items, but to give hon. members the fullest information I had prepared since last Council meeting a detailed statement showing every addition to each department and on the other side the reductions. This has been circulated to hon. members, and they will see that deducting the deductions—the abolitions, which were real abolitions and not pretence abolitions—and making allowance for the reduction in the Sanitary Board on the "other charges" votes resulting from economy due to the new system of disposing of refuse, the whole excess amounts to a sum of about \$40,000 odd a year. I hope the hon. member now has got all the information he wants.

HON. MR. HEWETT—I had all those figures before me at the last meeting. The apparent increase on the question of salaries is something like \$74,000 or \$75,000. I think the increase on the Harbour Department is only about \$265, and when your Excellency explained that \$60,000 was on account of the Liquors Bill, your Excellency, I think, was speaking perhaps a little bit off the book. You had not the figures before you, but your explanation now clears the ground. Of the \$75,000 to which I referred, \$25,000 was for the Sanitary Department, and there is a very large increase in the Legal Department, and so on all the way through the service. There is a large increase in the permanent establishment of the working of the Colony. That is the point I wanted to make. That the Government have retrenched by \$30,000, \$40,000, or \$50,000 on the cleaning of the streets and so on does not in my opinion have any bearing on the subject at all. You might just as well say that because you are reducing the expenditure on public works you are placing the money on the other side of the account. But that is not the point. The Colony is very hard up. There is no reason to suppose that trade is going to improve within the next twelve months, and yet you are permanently increasing to a very serious extent the working cost of the Colony. Unfortunately I had not the right to reply at the last meeting. Could I have done so I could have explained then.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY—You have to look at each item and ask for an explanation. For instance, you quoted "Legal Department." There is a movement now for making the Crown Solicitor a government officer. That is sufficient explanation for part of the increase.

HON. MR. HEWETT—I refer to the Magistracy and everything else.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY—Take each item separately and do not talk about an increase of \$75,000.

HON. MR. HEWETT—Unfortunately I did not know I would have an opportunity of speaking again to-day. Otherwise I would have brought the notes I made when your Excellency and the Director of Public Works replied. Had I brought those notes I could have replied *seriatim*. Speaking now as I believe in the interests of the community I thought the Budget very unsatisfactory, and the Government explanations on the budget were equally unsatisfactory. I wish to put that on record.

HIS EXCELLENCY — I suppose you can remember what you said?

HON. MR. HEWETT—I remember very well what I said. I had details of the increase in the staff before me, but I did not think it necessary to bring them up. If I had them I could have shown that the explanation given by the Government was very unsatisfactory.

HIS EXCELLENCY—You will find the whole of the increases in this paper.

HON. MR. HEWETT—I do not intend to go into details, such as one extra punkah coolie or an additional typewriter. All I know is that the papers show a permanent increase. In the present financial condition of Hongkong there is no immediate prospect of any improvement in the trade of the Colony, and the Government ought to do what public firms are doing, reduce expenditure. But you are not. You are increasing it, and there is no satisfactory explanation that that increase is justified. We know it is very easy to make fresh appointments. Still I consider the estimate put before the Colony is an unsatisfactory one, and we have not had a satisfactory explanation of the permanent increase in the working of the Colony.

HIS EXCELLENCY—Those are like all general statements—impossible to meet.

HON. MR. HEWETT—My statements must be general, because I know nothing of the details of your departments.

HIS EXCELLENCY—Pardon me, they need not necessarily be general statements, We have taken the trouble to make the thing easy for you. Take out each single item of increase, and you can challenge any one of them before you vote for the Bill.

HON. MR. HEWETT — How can I possibly challenge any increase of expenditure?

HIS EXCELLENCY—If you think it necessary you can.

HON. MR. HEWETT—How can I possibly? I don't know anything about the details.

HIS EXCELLENCY—The hon. member is a member of the Sanitary Board, and the largest increase is in the Sanitary Department.

HON. MR. HEWETT—Yes, I disagreed with it.

HIS EXCELLENCY—There is an increase of \$25,000.

HON. MR. HEWETT—Yes, that is so.

HIS EXCELLENCY—The full details of that amount are set out in the appendix to the estimates which has been in the hon. member's hands for more than three weeks. The large increase on establishment there is due to a reorganisation. This is entirely a creature of the Sanitary Board. It was not devised by the Government, but was recommended by the Board to the Government. The Board came to the Government and said, "Instead of contracting for the removal of refuse we want to remove it ourselves." You cannot undertake a large operation like that without a staff. Here is every single person on the staff put down. (Reads.) I think the scheme is a good one, and I compliment the Board on having devised it. Naturally it brings a large increase on the estimates for that department. On the other hand, we are justified in setting against that increase in establishment the prospective decrease on the contract for the removal of refuse. It has been estimated by the Sanitary Board that the decrease in money spent on the contract will about balance the increase on establishment. If that turns out to be a success next year, it will probably happen that this increase in establishment will really be a very considerable economy, because we know quite well that contractors have a habit of increasing their prices. I think the scheme a thoroughly sound one, but why the hon. member should come forward and say the Government is extravagant and wasting money, and adduce as an example one of the items which he himself put forward as a member of the Board, is somewhat difficult to understand. I am responsible for passing these estimates. I have never been in the habit of what might be called in popular parlance cramming things down people's throats. The hon. member asked for information, and we have been at great pains to give him the fullest information. I think I have satisfactorily explained that item, and I would like to

know if there is any other on which he seeks enlightenment.

HON. MR. HEWETT—You have explained the item of the vote to the Sanitary Board, which accounts for a third of the permanent increase in staff. These estimates were prepared by government officials. They were not prepared by the Board. Presumably the Head of the Department put them before the Board. I personally did not approve of them, but unfortunately I was prevented from attending the meeting at which they were passed. The meetings of the Board are very unsatisfactory, because they are practically governed departmentally, and the unofficials have nothing to say in the matter.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY—We understood this recommendation really came from the Sanitary Board.

HON. MR. HEWETT—It did not. The unofficial members of the Sanitary Board are in exactly the same position as the unofficial members of this Council. It is perfectly absurd to say that we as business men know all the details of government workings as we do of the workings in our own office.

HIS EXCELLENCY—That particular scheme was drawn up by a sub-committee of the Board, on which unofficials were represented.

HON. MR. HEWETT—Of which I was not a member.

HIS EXCELLENCY — But some of your colleagues were members.

HON. MR. HEWETT—I was not consulted. I know nothing about it. That only accounts for a third of the increase. The only criticism I think unofficial members of this Council are called upon to make

is on broad lines, and on broad lines I consider the working of the Government is extravagant. I stand by that. No figures or facts will convince me that money is not being wasted on public works and in various other departments, but particularly on public works.

HON. MR. STEWART—What was the amount due to the alteration of the status of the Crown Solicitor?

HIS EXCELLENCY — About \$3,084. The increase in the Judicial Department is largely due to the alteration in the appointing of a deputy official receiver. That is practically a new sub-department which, I think, has given satisfaction. It is quite conceivable that the fees earned by that department will more than pay the extra expense involved. Then there is certain increase in the police. Some people are always crying out for more police, so we made some small increase in order to cope with the increase of crime complained of the other day. Then under the Medical Department there is a new apothecary. This appointment was rendered necessary by the Liquor Bill, a creature of the unofficial members and not a concoction of the Government.

HON. MR. HEWETT—The Liquor Bill, pardon me, is not a creature of the unofficial members.

HIS EXCELLENCY—Everybody now seems to disclaim fathership. (Laughter.)

HON. MR. STEWART—They are responsible for the idea, but not for the working of it.

HIS EXCELLENCY—That is the principal increase in the staff of the department. I hope many more will not follow. (Hear, hear.) Then we come to the Education Department. There was laid on the table not long ago a very long report by the committee appointed by Sir Frederick Lugard to consider that subject and that introduces—

HON. MR. HEWETT—I think the increase in the Education Department is a small one, and speaking for the unofficials we endorse that increase.

HIS EXCELLENCY—It is a considerable increase on the establishment. Of course, it is covered by the increase of fees. The fees were increased about a year ago, and it was not meant that there should be an increase of revenue, but the increased revenue has been used to increase educational facilities. On this estimate it comes up as a fairly large increase. Public Works Department shows the increase of one assistant

engineer. This is merely a temporary increase to carry on the Mongkoktsui breakwater. Two land surveyors extra have been put on—not permanent—in order to cope with the arrears of work in that department. The work involved in the New Territory and various large developments have necessitated an increase. The increase in the Post Office is due largely to changing into larger offices. I can only say in my substantive appointment as Colonial Secretary that one of my principal duties is to put the brake on and do everything I possibly can to keep the expenditure down. I wish I could show you estimates in my present capacity of Officer Administering the Government showing decreases instead of increases. I am sorry the hon. member should think we have been extravagant. All I can say is, in the absence of any direct condemnation of any particular item, I cannot do anything more than bear this criticism in mind and hope for better times.

Council resumed.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved the third reading of the Bill.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER seconded, and the Bill was read a third time and passed.

HIS EXCELLENCY—Council adjourns until this day week.

#### FINANCE COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Finance Committee was held afterwards, the Colonial Secretary presiding. The following votes were passed:—

#### **Fish for Reservoirs**

The Officer Administering the Government recommended the Council to vote a

sum of Five hundred and eighty-eight Dollars and fifty-three Cents (\$588.53) in aid of the vote Miscellaneous Services, Black Bass to stock the Reservoirs.

THE CHAIRMAN explained that this vote was to meet an account sent in by the Manila Government.

HON. MR. STEWART—Did these fish arrive in good order and condition?

HON. MR. HEWETT—What reservoirs are you going to put the bass into? All of them?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS—I presume so. They are in a pond at Tytam at present, and some of them have been put in that reservoir.

HON. MR. HEWETT—With a view to keeping the water clean?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS—Yes.

HON. MR. OSBORNE—Will it be a Government preserve, or will the public be allowed to fish there?

THE CHAIRMAN—I don't know. We might have some fishing some day.

### **Sanitary Department**

The Officer Administering the Government recommended the Council to vote a sum of Forty-one Dollars (\$41) in aid of the vote Sanitary Department, Other Charges, Sanitary Staff, Refund of fees for Sanitary Institute Examinations.