

31ST DECEMBER, 1918.

PRESENT:—

HIS EXCELLENCY THE OFFICER ADMINISTERING THE GOVERNMENT, HON. MR. CLAUD SEVERN, C.M.G.

HIS EXCELLENCY MAJOR-GENERAL F. VENTRIS (General Officer Commanding Troops in China).

HON. MR. A. G. M. FLETCHER (Colonial Secretary).

HON. MR. J. H. KEMP, K.C., C.B.E. (Attorney-General).

HON. MR. C. McI. MESSER, O.B.E. (Colonial Treasurer).

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

HON. MR. E. R. HALLIFAX, O.B.E. (Secretary for Chinese Affairs).

HON. MR. E. D. C. WOLFE (Captain Superintendent of Police).

HON. MR. D. LANDALE.

HON. MR. LAU CHU PAK.

HON. MR. P. H. HOLYOAK.

HON. MR. HO FOOK.

HON. MR. S. H. DODWELL.

MR. A. DYER BALL (Clerk of Councils).

ABSENT:—

HON. MR. H. E. POLLOCK, K.C.

Captain Superintendent of Police

HON. MR. E. D. C. WOLFE took the oath on becoming a member of the Council as Captain Superintendent of Police.

Finance Minutes

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY, by command of H.E. the Officer Administering the Government, laid upon the table Financial Minutes Nos. 105 to 115 and moved that they be referred to the Finance Committee.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER seconded

and this was agreed to.

Tobacco Duties

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY by command of H.E. the Officer Administering the Government, moved the following resolution under Section 7 of the Tobacco Ordinance, 1916:—"It is hereby resolved that the resolution of the Legislative Council passed on the 3rd day of August, 1916, which imposed certain duties on tobacco, be repealed, and that the duties to be paid on tobacco as from and including the date of publication of this resolution in the *Gazette* shall be those specified in the Schedule hereto, the duties specified in the third columns of Parts I, II and III of the said Schedule being payable irrespective of the accuracy of the figures in the first columns thereof." In doing so he said: This resolution, which has been in the hands of hon. members, does not introduce any new principle in regard to tobacco duties. The last resolution was passed by the Council on August 3rd, 1916, and was to the effect that tobacco, cigars and cigarettes of a certain value should carry duty at a certain rate. For example cigars valued at not less than \$2.20 per lb. were taxed at \$1.50 per lb. and cigars of a less value at \$0.70 per lb. The rates at that time were similar to those set out in detail in the schedule attached to the present resolution. It has been found that the fluctuation in exchange both here and in other places led to a corresponding change in values. For instance cigars originally valued at \$2.20 per lb. were sometimes higher and sometimes lower than this amount taking into consideration the rate of exchange at Manila in pesos and it has been most difficult for the Superintendent of Imports and Exports to keep track of these changes, which brought the different classes of tobacco and cigars first on one side and then on the other side of the line. The Council are, therefore, now asked to approve this resolution which gives in full detail the rates which are to be borne by every class of cigarette, cigar and tobacco. Part 4 of the schedule provides for an all-round rate of \$1.50 per lb. on all cigarettes, cigars and tobacco of any kind whatsoever not otherwise specified in the schedule, leaving it

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intendent of Imports and Exports to fix any lower rate of duty as he may think fit in each case.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL seconded and the resolution was passed.

Chairs and Jinrikishas

HON. MR. S. H. DODWELL asked the following questions, the reply in each case being read by the Colonial Secretary.

Q.—What control have the Police over the chair coolies in the Colony?

A.—The chair coolies in the Colony are controlled by the Police under powers conferred (a) by the Licensing Ordinance No. 8 of 1887; (b) by the Vehicles and Traffic Regulation Ordinance No. 40 of 1912 and various Regulations made thereunder. These Ordinances give powers to control the issue of licences for chairs and chair coolies, the fees for such licences, stands, fares, and the dress and conduct of bearers. An Inspector of Police, with the title of Traffic Inspector, and a number of specially trained Police are detailed to supervise the traffic of the Colony generally. In the Hill District there is a definite contract between the Government and the licensee of the chairs under which the contractor undertakes to provide sixty chairs and to maintain a public telephone with an English-speaking person always in charge, and Government provides accommodation for the chairs and bearers.

Q.—What is the cause of the supply of chairs invariably being inadequate on wet days?

A.—There is no limit to the number of chair licences, which is governed by the laws of demand and supply. There are sufficient chairs for ordinary demands; especially in fine weather, which, preponderates in the Colony. In wet weather the demand is enormously increased. The supply is then limited by the number of chairs and the frequency of the trips. On a continuous wet day the coolies get worn out by incessant work and are unable to keep going for an indefinite number of hours, or to undertake more than a certain amount of work. General work finishes about 8 p.m. and thereafter is spasmodic and chiefly confined to dinner parties, theatrical performances, dances, and so on, which may mean a considerable amount of waiting and may be in pouring rain, with but little money in it. Statistics taken at the chair stand at the foot of Garden Road from the 20th to the 27th December give the following averages:—

Time:	7 p.m.	8 p.m.	9 p.m.	10 p.m.	11 p.m.
Average	8	8	6	5	4
No. of					
Chairs					

The evenings of the 20th and 21st instant were wet. The number of chairs counted at the above hours were:—

20th	4	3	7	6	5
21st	6	9	9	4	4

Lack of notice in the case of public or private functions and unwillingness on the part of the public adequately to remunerate the chair coolies who turn out are among the chief causes of the inadequacy of chairs at night.

Q.—Is it not possible to remedy this serious inconvenience to the Public, and generally to exercise more control over both the chair and the jinrikisha traffic?

A.—The remedy lies largely in the hands of the public. The Police are always ready to supply chairs to a particular place. If the person requiring chairs or jinrikishas is not prepared to guarantee adequate remuneration for any vehicles that may be sent, the Police cannot do more than notify the coolies that vehicles have been asked for.

Q.—Cannot steps be taken by the Government that will lead to a gradual, if not to an immediate, improvement in the local jinrikishas?

A.—There has been a steady improvement in the local jinrikishas during the past 10 years. More comfortable vehicles have been introduced, with rubber tyres, covers for the seats and backs, and improved aprons; while better uniforms for the pullers have also been provided. The existing jinrikisha service compares favourably with the services in other places in the Far East. Improvements cost money, and such compensatory increase in the fares as might be required would not be popular with the public.

HON. MR. HOLYOAK — Arising out of the answer to question four, I would take leave to differ with the statement that the existing jinrikisha service compares favourably with the services in other places in the Far East. I think the general public are of the opinion that the present service is a disgrace to the Colony.

H.E. THE OFFICER ADMINISTERING THE GOVERNMENT—Does the hon. member wish to ask a supplementary question?

HON. MR. HOLYOAK—I am speaking to the answer given to question four.

H.E. THE OFFICER ADMINISTERING THE GOVERNMENT—Do you wish to propose a motion?

HON. MR. HOLYOAK—I am challenging the statement made, but I can put it in some other form if your Excellency so rules.

Arms and Ammunition Ordinance, 1918

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL moved the second reading of the Bill intituled, "An Ordinance to amend further the Arms and Ammunition Ordinance, 1900." He said: The sole object of this Bill is to bring air guns within the scope of the Ordinance so that they may not be dealt in, or carried or possessed except under licence. Air guns have often been found to be dangerous weapons and cases have occurred in Hongkong recently where injury has resulted from their improper use. The definition of "Arms" has been repealed and recast merely for greater convenience and accuracy of expression. The only material change in the Ordinance is the inclusion of air-guns under the term "Arms."

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded and the Bill was read a second time.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL then moved that the Council go into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause.

The only amendment made in committee was the insertion of the word 'and' before the word 'with' in line four of Clause I, and upon Council resuming.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL moved the third reading of the Bill.

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

FINANCE COMMITTEE.

Council adjourned and a meeting of the Finance Committee was held, the Colonial Treasurer presiding.

Kowloon-Canton Railway

The Officer Administering the Government recommended the Council to vote a sum of one hundred and thirty dollars in aid of the vote Kowloon-Canton Railway, General Charges, Other Charges, Incidental Expenses.

THE CHAIRMAN—The vote was for \$1,100 which has not been sufficient.

The vote was agreed to.

Charitable Allowances

The Officer Administering the Government recommended the Council to vote a sum of five hundred dollars in aid of the vote Charitable

Services, Other Charitable Allowances.

THE CHAIRMAN—The vote is \$1,000 and it has been exceeded by this amount.

The vote was agreed to.

Peak Tramway Alterations

The Officer Administering the Government recommended the Council to vote a sum of nine hundred and fifty dollars in aid of the vote Public Works, Extraordinary, Hongkong, Communications, Approaches to the temporary stations near Barker Road and Kennedy Road on the Peak Tramway Line.

THE CHAIRMAN—The Government undertook to make these alterations in connection with the improvement in the Peak Tramway.

The vote was agreed to.

Miscellaneous Works

The Officer Administering the Government recommended the Council to vote a sum of thirteen thousand dollars in aid of the vote Public Works, Recurrent, Hongkong, Miscellaneous, (17) Typhoon and Rainstorm Damages

THE CHAIRMAN—The chief items included in this vote are a retaining wall for the new filter beds on Pokfulam Road where further slides have necessitated extensive work; the repair of the retaining wall at 'Tanderagee' and the extension of the Government laundry on Kennedy Road.

The vote was agreed to.

Drainage Works

The Officer Administering the Government recommended the Council to vote a sum of one thousand dollars in aid of the vote Public Works, Extraordinary, Hongkong, Drainage, (8) Miscellaneous Drainage Works, B. — General Works.

THE CHAIRMAN—This is largely in connection with the road improvement at Aberdeen which has necessitated laying new drains.

The vote was agreed to.

Improvement on Kennedy Road

The Officer Administering the Government recommended the Council to vote a sum of thirteen thousand dollars in aid of the vote Public Works, Extraordinary, Hongkong, Communications, (5) Roads, K.—General Works.

THE CHAIRMAN—This is partly in connection with the widening and improvement of Kennedy Road necessitated by the sale of lots along that road and partly by the excess over estimates in various miscellaneous works which have been carried out.

The vote was agreed to.

Maintenance of Buildings

The Officer Administering the Government recommended the Council to vote a sum of one thousand dollars in aid of the vote Public Works, Recurrent, Hongkong, Buildings, (1) Maintenance of Buildings.

THE CHAIRMAN—This is due to unforeseen painting at Government House and to urgent repairs to the matsheds for housing scavenging coolies.

The vote was agreed to.

Water Works

The Officer Administering the Government recommended the Council to vote a sum of nine hundred and ninety-one dollars and ninety cents in aid of the following votes:—

<i>Public Works, Extraordinary, Kowloon.</i>	
Buildings, (31) Royal Observatory,	
New Magnetic Hut	\$ 13.91
Water Works, (40) Miscellaneous	
Water Works	977.99
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Total	\$991.90
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The vote was agreed to.

Rainstorm Damage

The Officer Administering the Government recommended the Council to vote a sum of three hundred and seventeen dollars and seventy-four cents in aid of the vote Public Works, Recurrent, Kowloon, Miscellaneous, (34) Typhoon and Rainstorms Damages.

THE CHAIRMAN—This vote is necessitated as was the previous vote, owing to certain bills being received late.

The vote was agreed to.

Ferry Piers

The Officer Administering the Government recommended the Council to vote a sum of two thousand four hundred dollars in aid of the vote Public Works, Extraordinary, Kowloon, Miscellaneous, Resumption of Ferry Piers.

THE CHAIRMAN—There will be a vote next year of \$60,000 in connection with Ferry Services to Yaumati and Sham Sui Po. This work has been put in hand in anticipation of the general scheme.

The vote was agreed to.

West River Floor Relief Fund

The Officer Administering the Government recommended the Council to vote a sum of fifty thousand dollars in aid of the vote Miscellaneous Services, West River Flood Relief Fund.

THE CHAIRMAN—There is very great distress on the West River and assistance has been given in a number of ways, by improving dykes, etc. It is proposed to hand this money to the Tung Wah Hospital to administer and the hospital will, of course, report in due course.

The vote was agreed to.

Council Resumes

Council resumed and the Colonial Secretary, having reported that Financial Minutes Nos. 105 to 115 had been passed in committee, moved that they be adopted.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER seconded and this was agreed to.

New Year Greetings

H.E. THE OFFICER ADMINISTERING THE GOVERNMENT—This closes the work of the Legislative Council for the year 1918. It has been a year that will ever be remembered as the most eventful in the history of our Empire. For months the issue of the great struggle for freedom lay in the balance, but right has triumphed and we now await the final consummation of all our hopes for the future in a Treaty of Peace that will bring security and happiness to the nations of the world both great and small. It is in no conventional phrase, therefore, that I express to hon. members my best wishes for a Happy New Year. I do so in the full assurance that the lessons that the past four years have taught us will not be forgotten, and that we shall be true to the great trust reposed in us by those brave souls who have won so noble a victory, and who, while unable to accomplish the full measure of their task in this world, have attained the peace of God which passes knowledge.

Council then adjourned *sine die*.