

26TH AUGUST, 1926.

PRESENT:—

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR (SIR CECIL CLEMENTI, K.C.M.G.)

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING THE TROOPS (MAJOR-GENERAL C. C. LUARD, C.B., C.M.G.).

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (HON. MR. W. T. SOUTHORN).

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (HON. MR. J. H. KEMP, K.C., C.B.E.).

THE COLONIAL TREASURER (HON. MR. C. McI. MESSER, O.B.E.).

HON. MR. E. R. HALLIFAX, C.M.G., C.B.E. (Secretary for Chinese Affairs).

HON. MR. H. T. CREASY (Director of Public Works).

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

HON. SIR SHOU-SON CHOW.

HON. MR. A. O. LANG.

HON. MR. H. W. BIRD.

HON. MR. R. H. KOTEWALL, LL.D.

HON. MR. D. G. M. BERNARD.

HON. DR. W. V. M. KOCH.

MR. S. B. B. McELDERRY (Clerk of Councils).

Minutes

H.E. THE GOVERNOR—The Minutes of the last meeting have been circulated to hon. members of the Council. Are those Minutes approved?

HON. DR. KOCH—Before these Minutes are put to the meeting may I ask if it would be possible to include in them more details regarding the replies given to questions asked. Two questions were asked by the Hon. Mr. Lang at the last meeting of the Council. In the Minutes it is stated that the Colonial Secretary replied. That does not give much information.

H.E. THE GOVERNOR—The replies given

are published in full in Hansard. That is the usual procedure.

HON. DR. KOCH—I thought a few lines might be added to the Minutes.

H.E. THE GOVERNOR—The full replies can be given in the Minutes if it is thought desirable, but I am afraid the Minutes are seldom read outside of the Council. I will, however, consider the point.

HON. DR. KOCH—Thank you.

The Minutes were then approved.

Papers

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY, by command of H.E. The Governor, laid upon the table the following papers, which had been published in the *Government Gazette* since the last meeting of the Council:—

Rescission of the Order of 9th March, 1926, proclaiming Amoy to be an infectious place.

General rules made by the administration of the Kowloon-Canton Railway, under Section 32 (1) of the Railways Ordinance, 1909, for regulating the use, working and management of the Tai Po Railway Pier and bund leading thereto.

Resolution passed by the Legislative Council on 12th August, 1926, under the provisions of section 38 of the Liquors Consolidation Ordinance, 1911.

Rescission of the Order of 24th June, 1926, proclaiming Haiphong to be an infectious place.

Rescission of the Order of 15th July, 1926, proclaiming Yokohama to be an infectious place.

Report of the Secretary for Chinese Affairs for 1925.

Report of the Superintendent, Botanical and Forestry Department for 1925.

Report of the Director of Education for 1925.
 Report of the Manager of the Kowloon-Canton Railway (British section) for 1925.
 Report of the Bathing Beaches Committee. (Sessional Paper No. 12 of 1926.)

Finance Committee

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY, by command of H.E. the Governor, laid upon the table the report of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on August 12th (No. 6) and moved that it be adopted.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER seconded, and this was agreed to.

Hon. Mr. D. G. M. Bernard's Queries

HON. MR. BERNARD asked the following questions:—

1. What is the present position and what are the Government's intentions with regard to the establishment of a Ferry Service across the Harbour capable of handling vehicular traffic which was referred to in Mr. Duncan's Report laid before this Council in December, 1924?
2. Will the Government explain how it was that two large vessels recently grounded in the Harbour off the Kowloon Railway Station?

Will the Government take steps to dredge the sandbank at an early date?
3. In view of the devastation at Happy Valley caused by the recent rainstorm will the Government state what steps are being taken to prevent a recurrence of this? I refer especially to the spot on Stubbs Road where a shoot has just been re-erected for dumping earth. This spot formed the subject of an enquiry on August 4th last year and Happy Valley has now been damaged twice from this quarter.
4. What action has the Government taken in regard to the recommendations made by the Jury at the enquiry of August 4th, 1925?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY read the following replies:—

1. A sessional paper is in course of preparation and will, it is hoped, soon be published giving full particulars of the scheme.
2. (a) The two vessels referred to, the s.s. *Danmark* and the s.s. *President McKinley*, flying the Danish and United States flags respectively grounded off Kowloon Point owing to the fact that they attempted to pass over a portion of the Harbour Bed where, as was clearly shown in the chart, there was insufficient depth of water.

There was in both cases actually more water than is shown on the chart.

- (b) The Harbour is not silting up at the spot where the two ships referred to grounded. This is shown by surveys made in 1917 and 1924 and by observations taken after the recent groundings.

It is proposed to undertake a further survey this year and the matter will be brought before the Finance Committee this afternoon.

3. Certain additional large open nullahs are being constructed which, it is hoped, will prevent a recurrence of the devastation at Happy Valley. With regard to the spot on Stubbs Road referred to, the damage to Happy Valley from this quarter on the occasion in question was negligible. The reconstruction of the shoot for dumping is necessary to expedite the completion of the open dump which cannot be left in its present unfinished state. The deposit of silt that flowed over the Happy Valley on this occasion was caused by the bursting of a covered nullah running under a neighbouring dump from the same property. The damage to the nullah was caused by boulders from the hill-side, and it is hoped that the risk of similar damage to Happy Valley will be obviated in future when the additional nullah construction already referred to has been completed.
4. The precautions taken by Government include the recommendations of the Jury as regards reconstruction made

on August the 6th, 1925. The other recommendations have been complied with as far as practicable, except as regards the amendment of the Public Health and Buildings Ordinance, which is still under consideration.

Doctors and Government Hospitals

HON. DR. KOCH asked the following questions:—

1. Will the Government state the reason which led them to go back on the promise or understanding that Private Medical Practitioners would be allowed to attend their own cases in the Kowloon Hospital?
2. It was understood, when the Victoria Hospital was built by Public Subscription as a Memorial of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, that Private Medical Practitioners were to be allowed to treat their own cases there.

Will the Government state the reason that led them to go back on their promise?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY read the following replies:—

1. Government is not aware that any such promise was made. The Honourable Member is referred to the reply given to the late Hon. Mr. P. H. Holyoak on December 29th, 1925, which will be found on page 116 of Hansard for 1925.
2. I have not been able to trace any such promise and I shall be obliged if the Honourable Member will be so good as to furnish me with details which will enable me to trace it.

HON. DR. KOCH — I will bring up the question again at a later date after I have made the necessary enquiries.

Rainstorm Damage

HON. DR. KOCH moved the following resolution:—

That the Government be pleased to appoint a Committee to search for, examine, and report on, the vulnerable parts of the Colony and Mainland contiguous to houses and roads which are liable to storm water damage, and make recommendations

which might tend to prevent the occurrence of such damage. Such Committee to consist of Experts outside the Government Service who would be associated with other Experts in the Government Service to be nominated by the Government.

In bringing forward this resolution for the acceptance of the Council, he said: "I would like to say a few words to recommend it to you. It will be in the minds of the older residents that years ago, typhoons and rainstorms did not create so much damage on land as they have within recent years.

When the typhoon of '06 caused such loss of life and destruction to shipping, the Government and the people were stirred and public steps were taken to try to avoid future dangers of a similar kind. In consequence, at considerable expense, the typhoon refuge on the other side was built and it has afforded excellent accommodation for craft during these severe blows, so that we have not had any repetition on any large scale of the destruction of 1906.

Now, since the last five years, the island has been opened up by a series of roads most excellently devised and well built, but I have noticed that every year, one might say without exception, at the period of these heavy rainstorms there have been landslides all along these roads and—this year—in the New Territories, causing them to be blocked to traffic for an appreciable length of time.

Now, there seems to be no doubt that there is something defective in the cutting of the roads. These roads have for the most part been cut through soft, disintegrated, and what I might call rotten soil and these cuttings have been left as they were made without any precautions having been taken to prevent what would strike anyone as the probability of these slips. Not only that, but on these main roads the Government has taken advantage of the boom in land some years ago to sell plots for building purposes which seem to me to be most insecure. Unless they are built on in a manner that would obviate any possibility of a collapse of retaining walls during these heavy rain-storms there will ever be present the danger of such happenings as occurred some months ago leading to the flooding of Happy Valley and as occurred

again last month leading to similar flooding and to a great deal of damage on Stubbs Road.

Then, also, there is no doubt that there should be some method of dealing with nullahs, especially at their source, which would obviate the terrible damage that occurs from time to time owing to their becoming blocked by boulders and so overflowing and washing away roads and bridges.

And a third matter that I would draw attention to is the damage that is done by boulders slipping away from their beds and smashing up houses and doing damage to property. Some years ago, a huge boulder slipped down Morrison Hill and damaged three houses. Two years ago, another huge boulder slipped down from the Admiralty grounds on the Peak and smashed a house on Barker Road. Now we have the last example of an immense boulder slipping down and smashing up No. 3 pumping station.

There seems to me no reason why engineering skill should not be brought to bear on this question to do something towards preventing these accidents which might almost be called avoidable. To the engineer, difficulties present themselves only to be overcome. It is not my province to point out in what manner they might be overcome but I suggest that if these cuttings on these roads were faced with stone or cement, if these huge retaining walls were properly built and properly supervised during building so that they should not act merely as dams, if these nullahs could be trained or diverted, and if these threatening boulders could be removed by blasting, then the great risk of the monotonous recurrence of these damages every year would be removed, a great saving of money effected as well as loss of life and discomfort avoided.

I was told the other day that a report was made to the Public Works about a boulder which was sitting upon a hill and threatening a house. The Public Works were warned that they would be held responsible, I believe. The reply that was received was that the Public Works were keeping it under observation. Now, when such possible danger has been pointed out to them, does it not seem rather casual that a department like the Public Works should make a reply of that kind, if I am correctly informed. One is almost tempted to think of the Director of Public

Works watching this boulder and rushing to bear it on his shoulders like a modern Atlas, when it shows signs of slipping.

Then, also, it seems to me that evident lessons to be derived from these damages are not always learned. For instance, the nullah that goes down Pedder Street and that wrecked the street during the storm is being re-built to the same dimensions as before, although on a previous occasion this nullah was also heavily damaged. Why could not the dimensions be made wider?

It is said that these rain-storms occur during high water and that the rising tide meets the rush of storm waters and so prevents it escaping into the sea. But surely if the nullah were made on a proper size from experience already gained this ought not to be a factor.

I have also seen that these landslides occur pretty nearly always at the same place or in places closely adjoining previous landslides and apart from the removal of the slipped soil nothing seems to be done. I have watched with great interest for months and months, every day, coolies on Stubbs Road near the Peak tram station where there has been a notable slip not yet righted; I have watched these coolies sitting and patting the parapet gently with mud in the hope that an Egyptian sun would bake it so that it might last for centuries. But the same thing occurs every time. The next heavy rain that comes along causes a wash-out in the same place. And thus, not only is safety not secured but we have every year very large sums of money voted to effect what prove to be only temporary repairs.

I maintain that if a Committee were formed who would examine all these danger spots, they would be able to make recommendations which if acted upon might obviate these recurrent storm damages. It might be costly, but in the long run it would be cheap. I have therefore no hesitation in putting forward this resolution for the approval of the Council and for the consideration of the Government."

HON. MR. KOTEWALL—While I do not endorse all the remarks of the proposer, I beg to second the resolution because I think that the Government should do something with a view to reducing as far as human ingenuity can the terrible damage done by rain-storms and floods.

HON. MR. BIRD—Sir, if I thought that any useful purpose would be served by appointing such a committee I would not hesitate to vote in favour of the resolution, but to my mind its work would merely be a waste of time. In my opinion none of the damage caused by the recent storm, that I have examined, could have been foreseen and guarded against.

Take the case of the big rock which demolished the No. 3 pumping station. I believe anyone examining it would have considered its weight alone would have prevented any power except that of an earthquake from moving it.

The damage during these heavy rains is generally caused by some boulder being dislodged from a gully where the bulk of the rainwater collects, then finding its way with a lot of debris into a nullah, which promptly becomes blocked. The water which should be taken away by the nullah then finds some other course for which no provision has been made and serious damage is done.

The vulnerable parts of the Colony extend throughout the whole North side of the island and to examine all the rocks above Conduit Road and decide which are dangerous would need not only the agility of the mountain goat but the possession of second sight in an advanced degree. I do not propose to vote in favour of this resolution.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS— I would like to say that I know nothing of the report of the dangerous rock referred to by the hon. member who proposed this resolution, but I will make enquiries. With regard to retaining walls, extensive investigations have been made and data collected and recorded, and such walls are being kept under close observation by this Department to ascertain if any movement is taking place.

Where any rebuilding of retaining walls is necessary on private property the cost of rebuilding will of course fall upon the owners of the property.

No doubt, building sites have been sold that are most difficult to develop and every possible care will be taken in future that before Crown Land is disposed of, it shall be reasonable easy of development without being a danger to adjoining property.

The Government cannot accept the responsibility for the actual work of any private building, but must continue to restrict its operations to periodical inspections of work in progress to see that there is no departure from the approved plans and to take action in all cases where defective workmanship is discovered.

Areas adjoining building operations in progress are regularly inspected and every effort is made to see that dangerous boulders are removed by the owners of the land on which they are situated.

With the exception of obviously dangerous boulders which are being gradually and steadily removed it is practically impossible to determine the extent of the danger involved in any particular case. In many cases the danger only arises in the course of a few hours and is caused by the diversion of a heavy flow of water from a water course or nullah which may itself have become blocked by small boulders following exceptional rain, and however expert an officer may be this is a danger it is impossible to guard against.

Consideration has always been promptly given to any report from the public regarding the dangerous condition of the hillsides and this policy will continue to be adopted and any report of this nature will always be greatly appreciated.

Having regard to the foregoing facts I am of opinion that it would be difficult for the suggested committee of experts to render any material assistance.

HON. DR. KOCH, in reply, said—I am not in a position to give the name of the architect who informed me of the boulder to which I referred. I will endeavour to obtain his permission and then I will let the Director of Public Works know the details. After all, the remarks which have been made in opposing the resolution simply beg the question. Mr. Bird has stated what we all know.

We are not like hill conies who can skip about from rock to rock but any human being can see where dangerous spots are. It does not need provision of greatly magnified power. The places call out to us. The boulders of which I have spoken are located in disintegrating soil, and when we have a long series of daily rain, as we do for thirty or forty days at a time, that rain soaks through the rotten soil. Then when we have a particularly heavy rain the soil gives and the rock comes down.

It is a mercy that the rock which destroyed the No. 3 pumping station did not take another angle and destroy part of the University. Probably if some part of the University had been damaged a little more importance might have been attached to this question of prevention. They say it takes a bishop with a broken leg to cause the bridge to be mended; otherwise it is left as it is. Mr. Bird speaks about boulders coming down the nullahs. Of course they do. That is exactly the point I wish to make. They come down the nullahs and block the streams, and the bridges, which are far too narrow, are swept away. On the Magazine Gap Road two years ago something of this sort occurred, and it has occurred again this year. The boulders come down to the bridges and block them. The water spreads out on each side of the road and washes away the road and the bridge. One has only to go to Kennedy Road and Macdonnell Road to see the damage that has been done and to reason how it has come about.

If the nullahs were looked after and properly trained at the beginning, or diverted in some way, they could undoubtedly be rendered safer than they are. Take Pedder Street nullah. A few years ago the new A.P.C. Building site was under water because the nullah was not big enough. We had a lesson then, but we took no notice of it. At Jardine's corner there is a large pipe in the nullah which occupies a considerable part of that nullah and to that extent diminishes the capacity of it. But we are doing to-day what we did a few years ago. I do not believe any attempt is being made to enlarge the nullah. When we have another storm we shall be in the same position. Then look at the damage done at Sheklongtsui.

All these things are matters of engineering. I have the greatest respect for engineers but if they go along in their placid, regular routine

way they do not see these things. Therefore I think that if a Committee is set up and these things are pointed out good will be done. These things will be brought to the notice of the engineers concerned who will be able to work out some sort of preventive scheme.

H.E. THE GOVERNOR—I am entirely in sympathy with the mover of the resolution in the object which he has in view, namely the protection of the Colony against the dangers of which we all know. But the Government cannot agree—nor do I think the Unofficial members agree and I do not think even the seconder of the resolution agrees—with the remedy the hon. member suggests which is the appointment of a committee. I do not think a Committee would help us at all in this matter.

What I do think will help us is action by the Director of Public Works and his officers, and assistance from public spirited members of the community who would draw immediate attention to danger apprehended from any boulder. If that is done, we have done as much as is humanly possible to guard against unforeseen dangers. Foreseen dangers can be guarded against and I think the Director of Public Works does his utmost to protect us from any danger that can be foreseen. Many dangers cannot be foreseen. When they come upon us all that we can do is to make good the damage and then take steps to guard against future danger in the same locality. Such steps are now being taken.

The Director of Public Works is fully alive to the necessity of exercising great care in the future sale of house plots and no house plot is sold if it is in a position where its development is likely to become a public danger. My honourable friend is fully alive also to the danger of retaining walls and is having them examined. But most of the retaining walls which are suspect are not Government property, and it is for private owners to look after their own property.

The Government are unable to accept the resolution as it stands and I hope the hon. member will not press it to a division. I am in full sympathy with the

object of the resolution but I do not think the appointment of a committee will achieve that object.

HON. DR. KOCH—I am quite satisfied with the explanation that has been given. I hope it is understood that I do not blame the Public Works Department or the Director of Public Works or any officer of the Department. I know that they are hard worked. At the same time unless these things are brought continually to their notice they may slip from attention. After what you have said, Sir, I think I have achieved my purpose and I ask permission to withdraw the resolution proposed.

The resolution was withdrawn and the discussion closed.

Peak Trams

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL moved the second reading of a Bill intituled, An Ordinance to amend the Peak Tramway Ordinance, 1883.

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

Council then went into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause. No amendments were made to the Bill in Committee and upon Council resuming,

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL moved that the Bill be read a third time.

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

Wireless Telegraphy

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL moved the second reading of a Bill intituled, An Ordinance to amend the law relating to Wireless Telegraphy.

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

Council then went into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause. No amendments were made to the Bill in Committee 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.

Midwives

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL moved the second reading of a Bill intituled, An Ordinance to amend the Midwives Ordinance, 1910.

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

Council then went into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause. No amendments were made to the Bill in Committee and upon Council resuming,

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL moved the Bill be read a third time.

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

Trade Loan Ordinance

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL moved the first reading of a Bill intituled, An Ordinance to charge a certain loan upon the general revenue and assets of the Colony of Hong Kong.

His said—Preambles to Ordinances have gone out of fashion but even now a preamble is occasionally added to an Ordinance in order that the reason for the Ordinance may always be on record with the Ordinance where it can easily be referred to. I do not think it is necessary to add very much to the preamble of this Ordinance. We all know to what the phrase "a period of financial stringency" refers. Perhaps I might explain, however, that the intention of this Ordinance is merely to give the usual security which is always given in loans to a Colonial Government—the security being the charge of the loan on the revenue and assets of the Colony. It has been contemplated for some time to give this formal security by an Ordinance but there was some little question as to the form the Ordinance should take.

I might, perhaps, also add some details with regard to this loan as apparently there is a desire on the part of some members of the public to know something of these details. The actual amount outstanding at present is a sum of £1,600,000. A part of the money borrowed has been

paid back. The outstanding amount is repayable—the bulk of it in about a year and a half's time and the rest in about four and a half years' time. But at any time the Government of Hong Kong can repay the whole by giving one month's notice to the lenders. The money was borrowed at $\frac{5}{2}$ per cent. The interest obtained from persons to whom the money has been lent by the Government is 8 per cent., with an increase of $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. every six months. Having regard to the usual mortgage rates and to the general degree of risk, or absence of risk as the case may be, in respect of money lent by the Government out of this loan, I do not think that 8 per cent. is an unreasonable interest.

The amount which is at present on loan by the Government is a sum of about fourteen and a half million dollars. Fifteen and a half millions were lent but over a million dollars has been repaid. It will be seen from the preamble that further borrowing by the Government under this Ordinance is looked upon as possible, but as a matter of fact it is not anticipated that any further money will be borrowed by the Government. It is merely included in the preamble as a theoretical possibility.

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

Charges of the Year 1925

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved the second reading of a Bill intituled, An Ordinance to authorise the appropriation of a supplementary sum of \$832,249.52 to defray the charges of the year 1925.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER seconded.

HON. DR. KOTEWALL—Sir, arising out of the item "British Empire Exhibition," \$205,197, under Miscellaneous Services on page 10, may I ask when a report on the working of the Hong Kong Section will be published? I know that the Hon. Secretary for Chinese Affairs has been very busy since his return to the Colony, but I hope that he will soon be able to find time to submit a report showing the total receipts and expenditure for both 1924 and 1925, what benefits he considers have accrued to the Colony from our participation in the Exhibition, and in what way he thinks that the trade of Hong Kong with the other parts of the Empire can be

promoted or improved.

On page 12 under the same head, the original estimate of \$9,000 for the running expenses of motor-cars is shown to have been exceeded by \$11,008, or an increase of 120 per cent.; and the explanation given is that the item was underestimated. Knowing as I do the care which the Treasury has always exercised in the preparation of Estimates, I cannot believe that this enormous excess could have been due entirely to under-estimating; but the Hon. Colonial Treasurer can tell us whether the explanation inserted against the item is adequate or not.

Under Public Works Recurrent on pages 34, 36 and 38, large savings are shown to have been effected in the items "Maintenance of Roads and Bridges" and "Maintenance of Sewers, Nullahs, etc.," the explanation furnished in every case being that the expenditure was kept down to the minimum. While I strongly support the Government in its general policy of economy, I respectfully submit that it is false economy to cut down the expenses allowed for the maintenance of roads and nullahs, for a heavy rain, not to speak of a rainstorm, causes greater damage to a neglected road or nullah than to one that is kept in good repair.

Under Public Works Extraordinary on pages 42, 46, 48 and 50, the various items "General Works" under Roads, Training Nullahs, and Miscellaneous Drainage Works, all show very large increases, some ranging from 100 per cent. to 190 per cent.; and the reasons adduced for the excesses are either "Expenditure greater than anticipated due to the development of the Colony," or "Necessary to keep pace with the expansion of the district." It would be a matter of considerable interest to the public to learn whether it is a fact that the amounts estimated by the Government in 1924, a normal year, as being sufficient for the normal requirements of 1925, were actually exceeded to the enormous extent I have indicated in spite of the strike and boycott, as a result of the natural development of the Colony.

Wembley Accounts

THE SECRETARY FOR CHINESE AFFAIRS—It has been impossible to present a report on the working of the Hong Kong Section of the Wembley Exhibition up to the present as accounts continue to arrive from London. Some were received only a fortnight ago. There was, as anticipated, a great mass of detail to be settled after the close of the Exhibition and there was prolonged uncertainty as to the disposal of Colonial buildings in general. Now, however, it seems that the detail remaining can be dealt with in Hong Kong and we are in a position, I think, to proceed to the closing of the accounts and the presentation of a report.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER — With reference to the question raised by the Hon. Chinese Member regarding motor cars, the vote includes both motor cars and lorries. After the estimate was made a good deal of extra expenditure was incurred. For example there was considerable expense in obtaining motor cars for taking the nursing sisters of the Government Civil Hospital to Victoria Hospital and bringing them back.

Public Works Estimates

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY—As regards the Public Works estimates referred to by Dr. Kotewall, the Council may rest assured that wherever a saving has been made it has been done after very careful regard has been given to public requirements. While the Government—when the crisis took place in 1925—requested the Public Works Department to reduce its expenditure to a minimum, it did not in any way suggest that necessary work should be cut out. I think my hon. friend, the Director of Public Works, may be trusted not to have omitted any essential part of maintenance of buildings, roads or nullahs, referred to by the hon. Chinese member. As regards the under-estimating, or over-expenditure to which the hon. member drew attention, the Council will remember that the year 1925 opened with every prospect of great prosperity. When the estimates were framed I gather that it was not possible to foresee exactly how far that prosperity would take the Colony. The requirements, therefore, could not be estimated with very great accuracy, and the Colony may, I think, congratulate itself

that in spite of the crisis which developed, its prosperity was such as to render certain estimates of expenditure totally inadequate, and also congratulate itself on having ample funds available to meet every expenditure which was incurred.

I might add for the information of the Council that every possible effort is being made to see that the estimates of next year are prepared with every regard to the total expenditure which is likely to be incurred, and I hope it will not be possible for members of this Council to draw attention to large over expenditure on votes when the estimates for 1927 come to be criticised.

The Bill was read a second time.

Council then went into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause. No amendments were made to the Bill in Committee and upon Council resuming,

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved the third reading of the Bill.

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

Council adjourned *sine die*.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Finance Committee followed, the COLONIAL SECRETARY presiding.

Supplement the Estimates of 1926

H.E. The Governor's message No. 9 was considered. The message included items Nos. 156 to 162 to supplement the estimates of 1926. The items totalled \$10,429 and all were approved.

THE CHAIRMAN—There is one thing I should like to bring up and that is this question of dredging the harbour. The Director of Public Works has represented to the Government that although the two ships referred to by the Hon. Mr. Bernard in the Council meeting went aground through no fault of any silting in the harbour it is expedient that the mind of the public should be set at

rest, and he therefore asks for the appointment of an engineer who will undertake a survey of the harbour bed. We have no engineer available on our staff who can be detailed for this work. If you agree to the expenditure it is proposed to appoint the engineer at once and to pay him from the savings on other votes until the end of the year. He will appear on the estimates for 1927.

HON. MR. BIRD—Will he be a specialist, qualified for harbour surveys?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS—The officer who has been selected to carry out the survey is not the officer for whom we are now asking. We are asking for another engineer to relieve this officer as he cannot be spared from the work he is now doing until we can get some one to take his place. The officer who, when relieved, will undertake the survey work has had considerable experience and has already done a good deal of work in the harbour.

HON. MR. LANG—Supposing this expert to whom you refer recommends harbour dredging in certain places, what is the position? No dredger is available. The only one here belongs to the Dutch Company working at North Point.

HON. MR. BIRD—We can borrow one from Macao.

HON. MR. LANG—If the Dutch Company are not working at Macao, what will be the position then?

HON. MR. BIRD—They will be there for some years.

THE CHAIRMAN—How long have we been without a dredger?

HON. MR. LANG—The last dredger belonged to the Dock Company, and that was sold in 1910 I believe.

THE CHAIRMAN—If the report of the survey discloses the need of dredging, we shall have to bring the matter before the Finance Committee, and the money will have to be found to carry out the dredging whether it be done by the purchase of a new dredger—

HON. MR. LANG—Which is expensive.

THE CHAIRMAN—Or by employing a contractor. The question will have to be considered when we know the extent of the dredging to be done.

The appointment of the additional engineer was approved.