

16th May, 1929.

PRESENT:—

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

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (HON. MR. W. T. SOUTHORN, C.M.G.).

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (HON. SIR JOSEPH KEMP, K.T., K.C., C.B.E.).

THE SECRETARY FOR CHINESE AFFAIRS (HON. MR. R. A. C. NORTH.)

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

HON. MR. H. T. CREASY, C.B.E. (Director of Public Works).

HON. COMMANDER G. F. HOLE, R.N. (Retired) (Harbour Master).

HON. MR. T. H. KING, (Captain Superintendent of Police).

HON. SIR SHOU-SON CHOW, K.T.

HON. MR. R. H. KOTEWALL, C.M.G., LL.D.

HON. MR. A. C. HYNES.

HON. MR. W. E. L. SHENTON.

HON. MR. J. P. BRAGA.

HON. MR. S. W. TS'O, O.B.E., LL.D.

HON. MR. B. D. F. BEITH.

MR. E. I. WYNNE-JONES, (Deputy Clerk of Councils).

ABSENT:—

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING THE TROOPS (MAJOR GENERAL J. W. SANDILANDS, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.).

HON. DR. A. R. WELLINGTON (Director of Medical and Sanitary Services).

HON. SIR HENRY POLLOCK, K.T., K.C.

MINUTES.

The minutes of the previous meeting of Council were confirmed.

PAPERS.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY, by command of H.E. The Governor, laid on the table the following papers:—

Prohibition under the Merchant Shipping Ordinance, 1899, on 10th April, 1929.

Mental Hospital. Notification re change of name of Lunatic Asylum to—

Declaration under the Merchant Shipping Ordinance, 1899, on 2nd May, 1929.

Declaration under the Merchant Shipping Ordinance, 1899, on 3rd May, 1929.

Declaration under the Merchant Shipping Ordinance, 1899, on 7th May, 1929.

Report of the River Steamers Commission 1928 (Sessional Paper No. 5 of 1929).

QUESTIONS.

HON. MR. J. P. BRAGA asked:—

1.—In view of the weight of public opinion against the recommendations of the Committee appointed to advise on the taxation of motor-cars (S. P. 3/1929), is it the intention of Government to proceed with legislation on the lines of the Committee's recommendations?

2.—If so, will the Government delay any legislation until it has had time to receive representations which the recommendations in question are likely to call forth from the Automobile Association, the motoring and oil trades and transport companies operating in Hong Kong and Kowloon, and other interests affected?

3.—In the consideration of the aforesaid recommendations will the Government keep in view:

- (a) a very generally expressed opinion, to which prominence was given in a leading article of the *South China Morning Post* of the 2nd May, that "one of the primary needs of the Colony is decentralization—development of suburban residential areas particularly—and for this cheap transport is essential;"
- (b) the possibility of an increase in 'bus fares affecting the masses on whom the proposed taxation may fall most heavily and who are least capable of bearing it;
- (c) the further rise in the high cost of living in the Colony; and

(d) the indirect blow at the free-trade policy of the Colony, on which its development and prosperity were founded, by penalizing one class of motor-car manufacturers in favour of another?

4.—Does the Government realise that adoption of the recommendations of the Committee would be tantamount to increasing the taxation on the average car in the Colony by over 200%, thus tending to reduce the efficiency and excellence of the public service of motor-cars at present conducted by owner-drivers and discouraging, through enormously increased operating costs, private ownership?

5.—What was the actual quantity of petrol imported in Hong Kong in 1928 and what is the estimated quantity for 1929 and the value thereof?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied:—

1 and 2.—The Government does not propose to proceed immediately with legislation for the introduction of taxation of motor-cars as recommended by the Committee. The report was published for general information and the Government is prepared to receive representations from interested parties.

3.—The Government will bear in mind the observations made by the honourable member.

4.—The Government has no proof of the correctness of the premises on which the honourable member bases his pessimistic estimate of the effects of the proposals suggested by the Committee.

5.—Exact figures are not available. The amount imported for local consumption in 1928 is estimated at 1,700,000 gallons. The estimated consumption in 1929 is 2,000,000 gallons.

Values vary according to price. At the present retail price of 70 cents a gallon the retail values would be \$1,190,000 and \$1,400,000 respectively.

Fire Brigade Casualties.

HON. MR. J. P. BRAGA asked:—

1.—Has the Captain Superintendent of Police had his attention drawn to the leading article in the *Hong Kong Daily Press* of May 7th, alleging that the standard of efficiency among the rank and file of the Fire Brigade is low because nearly 50 per cent. of the force leave the service every year by dismissal, resignation or desertion, and is that statement accurate?

2.—Is it considered that the wages offered to firemen are such as to attract suitable recruits to the service, and have any complaints regarding the wages paid been brought to the notice of the authorities?

3.—Besides the question of salaries, what other grounds, if any, exist for dissatisfaction with the conditions of service in the Fire Brigade Sub-department of the Police?

THE CAPTAIN SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE replied:—

The Captain Superintendent of Police had perused the article in the *Hong Kong Daily Press* of May 7th. In 1928 the casualties through resignation, desertion and dismissal were 31, 14 and 21 respectively, making a total of 66. The authorised establishment (Chinese) in 1928 was 240. The casualties under the same head during 1927 were 11, 23 and 14 respectively, making a total of 48. The figures for 1929 up to April 30th, are 5, 19 and 10 respectively, making a total of 34. It is thus seen that the casualties under the above heads approximate to 25% and not 50% of strength. The following is an extract from the Annual Report of the Chief Officer, Fire Brigade, on the year 1927:

"Recruits. The difficulty in connexion with recruits for the Fire Brigade has now disappeared although vacancies are still of frequent occurrence owing to the ease with which men can leave the Brigade if they wish to do so, *i.e.* on one month's notice."

Up to the end of 1928 firemen were on a monthly engagement. It was then decided that, owing to the large number of men who left the Brigade, for one reason or another, after short periods of service, all Chinese members of the Brigade should be called upon to sign an agreement for five years service, and provide a security of from \$25 to \$100 for the keeping of the agreement. This accounts for the large number of resignations in 1929. Members were given the option of resigning or signing a five years agreement. The places of these men have already been filled with the exception of seven: for these last places there are already seven candidates whose characters are at the moment under investigation.

2.—It is considered that the wages offered to the Chinese staff of the Fire Brigade, in comparison with the wages ruling in other branches of Government service, are adequate. In a report dated December, 1928, the Chief Officer wrote:

"There have been several revisions of pay to the Chinese staff, and I consider that they are all, from Sub-Officers

downwards, well paid. I do not advocate any increase in emoluments over and above any granted generally to Chinese Government employees, irrespective of the departments they are working in."

Representatives of the various ranks of the Fire Brigade attended before the Salaries Commission which has recently concluded its sittings. No complaints regarding wages have been brought to the notice of the authorities.

3.—The three principal causes of casualties in the Fire Brigade are:—(a) The work entails a bigger physical strain than candidates anticipate. (b) The discipline, and confinement to Station, which the work entails. (c) The ease with which a candidate could formerly obtain and discard \$20 a month and lodging. As to (a), most of these casualties cannot be avoided; it sometimes happens that a man is prepared to continue in the Brigade, but the Superintendent has to turn him away, after trial, because he has not the requisite physical strength. It is a debatable question whether higher pay would overcome this difficulty. Higher pay might attract a more intelligent class of candidate, but it is highly probable that he would possess a lower standard of physical strength and nerve. (b) The Chinese mind does not take kindly to Fire Brigade discipline. The demands of their duty are recognised by the grant to firemen of 24 hours leave every six days. (c) This difficulty has been met, it is hoped, by the institution of a five years agreement.

FINANCE COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY, by command of H.E. The Governor, laid upon the table the report of the Finance Committee, No. 5, dated 2nd May, 1929, and moved that it be adopted.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER seconded and this was agreed to.

HONG KONG AND SHANGHAI BANK ORDINANCE.

HON. MR. W. E. L. SHENTON moved the second reading of the Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the constitution of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation."

HON. MR. A. C. HYNES seconded and the Bill was read a second time.

Council went into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause.

HON. MR. SHENTON moved that clause 16 be amended by adding a marginal note "Limit of Debts and Liabilities."

The amendment was approved.

HON. MR. SHENTON moved that clause 17 be amended by adding a marginal note "Power to wind up and application of the Companies Ordinance thereto."

The amendment was approved.

Upon Council resuming,

HON. MR. SHENTON moved the third reading of the Bill.

HON. MR. HYNES seconded, and the Bill was read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

H.E. THE GOVERNOR.—The Council will adjourn *sine die*.

FINANCE COMMITTEE.

Following the Council, a meeting of the Finance Committee was held, the Colonial Secretary presiding.

Votes totalling \$60,366, contained in Message No. 6 from H.E. The Governor, were considered.

All the votes were passed.

THE CHAIRMAN.—I propose to put before you at the next meeting of the Finance Committee a formal vote for \$4,150 for the erection of a bathing shed at Kau Pa Kang at Lai Chi Kok. The beach at this spot is easily reached by road buses which run fairly close to it and it is conveniently situated for a large number of Kowloon residents. It has been represented that it would be a popular bathing beach, and although it is not one of the original suggestions of the Bathing Beaches Committee, we think it will be generally approved if we put up a bathing shed there and deal with it under public bathing beaches. If this is approved, the work will be put in hand immediately.

HON. DR. R. H. KOTEWALL.—Will this be a temporary structure?

THE CHAIRMAN.—It will be a structure similar to all other bathing sheds—a matshed structure.

HON. DR. R. H. KOTEWALL.—Then it will have to be re-built next year?

THE CHAIRMAN.—Yes, it will be like North Point and other bathing sheds. We hope, of course, to get revenue from it. We anticipate making as much as \$3,000.

HON. MR. J. P. BRAGA.—Could you give us an idea as to how soon this bathing shed will be available? Will it be available for this season?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—It will be ready next month if we can obtain approval to carry on.

THE CHAIRMAN.—That will be in three weeks time?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—Yes.

HON. MR. J. P. BRAGA.—That is very satisfactory. A bathing beach is very badly needed in Kowloon.
