

*15th May, 1930.*

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**FINANCE COMMITTEE.**

A meeting of the Finance Committee was held in the Council Chamber, the Colonial Secretary (Hon. Mr. W. T. Southorn, C.M.G.) presiding.

Votes, totalling \$53,870, contained in Message No. 5 from H.E. The Governor, were considered.

Item No. 46: Education:—Equipment of King's College, \$293.

HON. MR. W. E. L. SHENTON.—I should like to ask whether this is covered by insurance?

THE CHAIRMAN.—I imagine not, because the Government does not insure. It is held to be cheaper in the long run for the Government to carry its own insurance.

HON. MR. W. E. L. SHENTON.—I know that applies to fire risks.

THE CHAIRMAN.—I think it applies to everything.

Item No. 47: Public Works Extraordinary:—Access and Patrol Path to Lo Wu, \$750.

HON. MR. R. H. KOTEWALL.—I notice that it is stated in the Message that little progress was made during 1929 owing to dilatoriness on the part of the contractor. I should like to know whether there is a penalty clause for delay and, if there is, has it been enforced?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—It is recommended that the maximum fine be enforced. We are rather in sympathy with the contractor, who is a Hong Kong man who went out to the New Territories to compete with a New Territories man. We have had to take the work out of his hands and put it in the hands of a New Territories contractor. There has been no excuse he could put before us, and it was recommended by Mr. Rouse, in March, that the full fine be imposed. We have security from which we can obtain payment.

THE CHAIRMAN.—There is a penalty clause and the enforcement of it is under consideration.

HON. MR. W. E. L. SHENTON.—I was going to ask a similar question and also whether steps have been taken to accelerate the work.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—We are putting the work in the hands of another contractor.

HON. MR. W. E. L. SHENTON.—Do I understand that there is what may be described as a "ring" in this kind of work?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—That may be so.

Item 48: Public Works Extraordinary:—Filling in Lai Chi Kok Prison garden, \$1,500.

HON. MR. W. E. L. SHENTON.—I should like to know what the position is in regard to the plans?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—The plans have been received to-day and these, together with a report, are now under consideration.

HON. MR. W. E. L. SHENTON.—Will they come before the Committee?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—Yes, before the Site Selection Committee. The plans show the site and the amount of filling which will now be required.

Item No. 52: Education:—Contribution to cost of Advisory Committee of Education in the Colonies (£210), \$328.

HON. MR. R. H. KOTEWALL.—What are the functions of this Advisory Committee?

THE CHAIRMAN.—The Committee was established originally as an Advisory Committee on Native Education in British tropical African dependencies and from that its work was extended to cover Asiatic and other Colonial territories. It was reconstituted on January 1, 1929, as an Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies. The cost is estimated at £4,000 per annum. £210 is the share payable by Hong Kong, £625 by the Federated Malay States, £308 by Straits Settlements and others proportionately.

HON. MR. R. H. KOTEWALL.—Have we ever had occasion to seek their advice on any subject in connexion with education in Hong Kong?

THE CHAIRMAN.—I think only in connexion with the selection of teachers. I may say that the Committee is preparing the issue of a publication called the "Colonial Educational Bulletin" which will keep all the different Colonies advised of what is going on in the educational world in other places.

HON. MR. R. H. KOTEWALL.—I take it, Sir, they would be prepared to give us such advice as we need?

THE CHAIRMAN.—Undoubtedly.

HON. MR. R. H. KOTEWALL.—This information, I think, is very interesting and useful.

Item No. 53: Fire Brigade:—Special Expenditure: Motor Fire Engine, \$384.

HON. MR. J. J. PATERSON.—Arising out of a reply to a previous question that the Government carried its own insurance, I should like to ask why this fire engine was insured?

THE COLONIAL TREASURER.—A good many things are insured by the Crown Agents at Home. Small things are not insured.

THE CHAIRMAN.—I cannot tell off-hand why one particular thing is insured and others not. As a general rule in all Government business, the Government carries its own insurance. Apparently certain odd things are insured by the Crown Agents.

Item No. 54: Miscellaneous Services:—Geographical Survey. Visit of Bri.-General H. St. J. L. Winterbotham, \$1,905.

HON. MR. J. OWEN HUGHES.—Are we to have reports of the work carried out by Brig.-General Winterbotham?

THE CHAIRMAN.—Brigadier Winterbotham has sent in a preliminary confidential report but I understand his full report will go to the Secretary of State. It is not sent to us for publication, but as a confidential memorandum on the results of his visit.

All the votes were approved.

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