

22nd May, 1930.

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 \$99,747, contained in Message No. 6 from H.E. The Governor, were considered.

Item No. 59: Public Works Department:—Other Charges, Special Expenditure. Purchase of one Broadcast Transmitter, \$50,000.

THE CHAIRMAN.—I am instructed by His Excellency to say that it appears to him that \$50,000 is rather a large sum of money to spend on this transmitter but he is prepared to be guided by the advice of the Unofficial members of the Finance Committee. His Excellency said he was not sufficiently acquainted with the position at the moment to say definitely whether the money should be spent or not. The Director of Public Works can give any further information members desire.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—Mr. King informs me that the present broadcasting apparatus, which is only half a kilowatt, is old and out of date. The new one will be a 2 K.W. transmitter and besides being useful for meteorological warnings broadcast to ships—more particularly to the small ships using the port—it will much improve broadcasting in the Colony. It will be of the same strength as the one in Canton. Mr. King anticipates it will be possible to raise licence fees for broadcasting. He has placed figures before me which show that if the present rates are doubled we shall have an income of \$35,000 in 1931 and of \$39,000 in 1932 from licences alone. This will more than pay for the cost of the instrument.

THE CHAIRMAN.—I should like to hear members' views as to how far the Colony should go in meeting the demand for a really up-to-date broadcasting institution.

HON. MR. J. OWEN HUGHES.—I should like to enquire what will be the radius of the transmitter. I take it, it will transmit weather reports beyond the confines of the Colony.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—Oh, yes, I believe we shall reach India and Manila.

HON. MR. J. J. PATERSON.—One thing that has struck me is that we now chiefly broadcast gramophone records; but as far as this charge is concerned I do think that now we are committed to running a station, it may just as well be done as efficiently as possible. It is no use trying to save money on an inferior instrument.

THE CHAIRMAN.—His Excellency the Governor desires me to mention that he will accept the advice of the Unofficial members.

HON. SIR SHOU-SON CHOW.—I notice that it is not proposed to proceed with the purchase of the 5 K.W. short wave transmitter, costing \$50,000. Do you intend to utilise this in place of the 5 K.W.?

THE CHAIRMAN.—That will depend on the policy adopted next year with regard to radio telegraphy. The 5 K.W. is for our radio telegraph service, and we can do without it until next year.

The vote was approved.

Item No. 64: Kowloon-Canton Railway:—Depreciation on stock of Russian rails, \$774.

HON. MR. W. E. L. SHENTON.—Are these rails going to be used, Sir?

THE CHAIRMAN.—Mr. Baker, the Manager of the Railway, is here if members would like to see him.

HON. MR. W. E. L. SHENTON.—Members would like a little more information about these rails.

Mr. R. Baker having been called into the meeting,

THE CHAIRMAN asked.—How does it happen that these Russian rails have deteriorated so much and that we cannot make use of them?

Mr. BAKER.—The reason they have deteriorated is that they have been stocked at Blackhead's Point and exposed to the weather all the time. I do not think the deterioration is very severe considering the length of time the rails have been there.

THE CHAIRMAN.—Do you think any steps could have been taken to prevent this deterioration? Would it have paid to have tarred them?

MR. BAKER.—It would not have paid to have tarred them. They have been all sold now, with the exception of about twenty rails, which we have taken.

Item No. 67: Public Works Extraordinary:—Installation of modern asphalt and screening plants at Tsat Tze Mui Quarry, \$5,000.

HON. MR. C. G. S. MACKIE.—I notice it was necessary to obtain the new plant in 1925. It seems to me it would have been more economical to have put the new plant into operation right away instead of keeping it for four years.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—At that time we had a big programme of work on and it was considered advisable to wait until such time as we were not working at such high pressure. The old plant has been capable of dealing with the work up to the present. It is essential that the new plant should be put in in place of the old, which is costing a great deal for maintenance. It is necessary to instal the new plant now.

THE CHAIRMAN.—You think it more economical to bring it into use now?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—It will have to be brought into operation now because the other has broken down.

All the votes were approved.
