

*14th November, 1935.*

**FINANCE COMMITTEE.**

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

**ALSO PRESENT:—**

THE COLONIAL TREASURER (HON. MR. E. TAYLOR).

HON. MR. R. M. HENDERSON, (Director of Public Works).

HON. SIR HENRY POLLOCK, KT., K.C., LL.D.

HON. SIR WILLIAM SHENTON, KT.

HON. MR. J. P. BRAGA, O.B.E.

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

HON. MR. T. N. CHAU.

HON. MR. J. J. PATERSON.

HON. MR. W. H. BELL.

HON. MR. M. K. LO.

MR. H. R. BUTTERS, (Deputy Clerk of Councils).

Votes totalling \$27,730, contained in Message No. 15 from H.E. The Officer Administering the Government, were considered.

Item 74.—33, Public Works Recurrent:—New Kowloon 21, Miscellaneous Item 1.—Maintenance of Praya Walls and Piers, \$2,000.00.

HON. MR. TS'O.—I would like to ask whether these replacements will be of wood or concrete?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—These are concrete piles.

Item 78.—33, Public Works Recurrent:—New Territories. 22, Buildings. 2.—Improvements to Buildings, \$1,400.00.

THE CHAIRMAN.—This vote had been before the Council informally before, and certain differences of opinion occurred among Honourable Members.

I think possibly the position has not been quite fully appreciated with regard to these two stations. Sheungshui protects a wealthy and prosperous marketing area and Au Tau is the main protection of the market town of Un Long. With the situation in the criminal world in Hong Kong as it is to-day, you have to protect your police stations against a sudden rush of bandits who have designs on capturing the armaments of the station for use in future robberies. That is easy, as these stations are placed unless they are surrounded by fences which has been done. These fences are to keep the raiders out of the station; and this obviously brings with it another danger to the people inside, the reserve guard, represented by the force in the station not on patrol. They cannot get out of the station until the gate in that fence is unlocked, and if the fence is covered by the attacking party it means almost certain death to them to attempt to open the gate. That is what happened last year at the large scale robbery at Shek Wu Hui, but things went wrong and the robbers fled. They occupied neighbouring buildings and fired at random at the station, in the hope of keeping the police inside.

The proposal here is for the erection of turrets in each station from which there will be reasonable field of fire so as to provide protection for the force inside while they are getting out, i.e., to keep the raiding forces at a distance whilst the gate is being unlocked. In my opinion, it is the very minimum we need to do in these times for the protection of these two towns."

HON. SIR WILLIAM SHENTON.—I wish to protest very strongly. I have already objected through another channel, in connection with this vote, and I now register my objection in this Finance Committee. We have already voted for a new station at Ta-ku-ling at a considerable cost in the Estimates. We have already substantially increased the force on the border by two Europeans and twenty-four Indians. We have also voted miles of barbed wire for frontier stations. The increase of the force at Ta-ku-ling is, in my opinion, quite sufficient to protect Sheungshui, which is further inland. In addition to that are on either side of the border very strong Customs Forces which should be able to deal effectively with any strong raiding bodies coming from China proper. If it is necessary to have these turrets at Sheungshui it is much more necessary to have them at Sai Kung, Shataukok, Ping Shan, Cheung Chau, and Tai O.

Au Tau is in the heart of the New Territories and I maintain that what we have done on the border is sufficient protection for Au Tau. There are also to be big developments at the side of Au Tau in the near future, and that will make it unnecessary to put up an armed force at Au Tau, and Ping Shan is only a very short distance from Au Tau.

I would like to read to you an extract from the *Eastern Engineering and Commerce*. It states: "It is unofficially

announced that work on the construction of a large aerodrome in Fanling, Br. leased territory, Hong Kong, will begin in the near future for the arrival of new aircraft from Home". That makes the vote ludicrous.

The developments taking place around the Au Tau police station, when completed should render the armament of Au Tau unnecessary and unwarranted.

If we have reached such a stage in the New Territories when it is necessary to turn these police stations into armed forces, something more serious needs to be done, not so much for the protection of the police station but for the inhabitants living in the New Territories. For these reasons I submit that this vote is not only unnecessary but unwarranted and I will oppose the vote.

HON. MR. PATERSON.—Perhaps my Honourable friend might like to hang those peace posters he saw yesterday on wire in the New Territories so that they might melt the hard hearts of the bandits. (Laughter).

THE CHAIRMAN.—Might I with all respect make a few corrections? Ta Ku Ling is a protection to Sheungshui only if the robbers take that route. There is no reason why they should go near Ta Ku Ling. They might take the military path and come out at Lo Wu.

HON. SIR WILLIAM SHENTON.—Ta Ku Ling was built because we were told that was the route the bandits were likely to take.

THE CHAIRMAN.—It is not correct to say that Ping Shan is only a stone's throw from Au Tau. Ping Shan is at least two and a half miles from Au Tau.

HON. SIR WILLIAM SHENTON.—What distance is that?

THE CHAIRMAN.—I would also like to point out that the main creek from Deep Bay into the New Territories runs up to that bridge over Kam Tin River. If anyone wanted to attack Au Tau police station and then get away over the Chinese border they would probably do so by boat. The matter is urgent, and I do not think these additional defence should wait until after the winter has passed. I think this winter will be a bad time. The use of firearms and organised raids amongst the criminal classes is much worse now than it has ever been before. I do not think it is fair to say that these fortifications are designed merely for protection of the police stations. They are, in my opinion, designed to enable the stations to function properly.

HON. SIR HENRY POLLOCK.—I presume these turrets will enable the police to extend their range of vision over a wider stretch of country.

THE CHAIRMAN.—Yes.

HON. MR. PATERSON.—Sheungshui was put up purely as a Police Station, and one side of the Station is blanked by buildings.

THE CHAIRMAN.—Almost three sides.

HON. MR. BRAGA.—I happen to be one of the Unofficial Members who expressed their dissent to the views stated on the Minute Paper by the Hon. Sir William Shenton and enlarged in this Committee. Personally, I think it is from a sense of false economy that this Committee is asked to refrain from voting the small sum the Government is asking the Committee to sanction for a defence which, in my opinion, is the minimum which the Government can provide at this moment for the security of the New Territories. I have it on good authority from a number of residents in the New Territories that why there are not more residents coming out from the City to the New Territories it is because they cannot enjoy any sense of security on account of these bandits and highwaymen being let loose and the series of incidents in China and on the borders of New Territories. I would like to impress upon Government the urgent necessity of passing and employing this vote to the best advantage.

HON. MR. PATERSON.—May I speak as a resident of the New Territories? I think we should really go a little further than a provision of these stations with turrets and give the police some form of striking force which will enable them to get quickly to the scene of any raid many of which occur in village some distance from the police stations. The police would have considerable difficulty in getting to some of these smaller villages in time. That opens up a more extensive and expensive field.

HON. SIR WILLIAM SHENTON.—I entirely agree with Mr. Paterson. If we have got to a stage when it is necessary to turn these police stations into fortresses then something more serious should be done.

THE CHAIRMAN.—The Government at the moment is pressed for time in other matters and it would be at least three months before we could arrive at any comprehensive plan of defence for the New Territories. We should have to consider finance, working plans, and in the meantime, the perilous winter will have to be passed without any additional protection. That is why I have urged the Council to pass this vote.

HON. SIR WILLIAM SHENTON.—That is no excuse at all. An enquiry into the defence of the New Territories should have been held a long time ago.

HON. MR. BELL.—Is the Government considering further steps in this direction at the moment?

THE CHAIRMAN.—At the moment the Government is preoccupied with currency and other matters. As a result, there has been no time since the point was raised to give it full consideration. I am prepared to agree that the matter should be considered on a much wider plane.

HON. MR. PATERSON.—An inquiry should be held at the earliest possible moment. One of the delays will be that the matter has to be referred Home and that is a slow business.

THE CHAIRMAN.—You know the position of the Colony's finances and you have to look carefully at any additional expense. We must do something before the critical period of Chinese New Year.

HON. SIR WILLIAM SHENTON.—If the situation is so serious at Au Tau for the protection of Un Long, then Ping Shan should at once be fortified on the other side.

THE CHAIRMAN.—I have not had the opportunity of asking the Inspector General of Police whether it is as vulnerable as the Deep Bay side.

HON. SIR WILLIAM SHENTON.—I should have thought it would have been more vulnerable because the bandits can come over the flats from the White House to Ping Shan.

HON. MR. LO.—I have heard the Hon. Sir William Shenton and while I agree a lot has to be done I have not heard a single word as to why we should not spend \$700 on each of these stations. We have heard nothing why the Committee should refuse the vote, therefore I support it.

HON. MR. TS'O.—I think it warrants a bigger scheme. Why not vote the small sum now? If one station requires turrets to protect it other stations will require them as well.

HON. SIR WILLIAM SHENTON.—The voting of this small sum is a waste of money. We require something very much greater and a very careful investigation into what actually is required.

HON. MR. PATERSON.—These votes are part of the whole and should be proceeded with right away.

THE CHAIRMAN.—Let us take the vote as it stands. I presume everyone is in favour except Sir William Shenton?

HON. MR. BELL.—I trust this matter will be pressed forward and put before the Government immediately.

HON. SIR HENRY POLLOCK.—How long will it take to complete these turrets?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—I cannot say.

HON. MR. BELL.—It is only \$700 for each station. It should not take very long.

HON. SIR WILLIAM SHENTON.—I have recorded my dissent.

The vote was approved.

THE CHAIRMAN.—I take it that the Committee as a whole considers it advisable that the protection of the New Territories against armed robbery and banditry should be fully and carefully investigated immediately.

This was agreed to.

Item 79.—22, Medical Department:—21, Transport, \$200.00.

HON. SIR WILLIAM SHENTON.—Why is it necessary for probationers to come over to Hong Kong to receive lectures instead of receiving them at Kowloon?

THE CHAIRMAN.—I cannot say for certain but it is presumably because we have an organised course of lectures which can only be held in one place.

HON. SIR WILLIAM SHENTON.—I would like more particulars.

HON. MR. TS'O.—What is the money for?

THE CHAIRMAN.—Transport facilities. The probationers are part of our nursing staff, and if we want them to come over to the lectures we have to pay their fares.

HON. MR. BRAGA.—I think it would be hard on the probationers to come all the way from Kowloon Hospital, across the harbour and up to the Government Civil Hospital and pay their own fares out of their own pockets on the small salaries they receive.

The vote was approved.

Item 82.—34, Public Works Extraordinary:—Hong Kong Port Works. 33, Construction of Seawall and Cattle Pier at Kennedy Town, \$9,500.00.

HON. SIR HENRY POLLOCK.—I would like to know whether this construction of a sea-wall and cattle pier will enable small steamers to come alongside?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—I do not think small steamers can come alongside. There is only six feet of water at low water. It is really meant for junks coming alongside and is what the Sanitary Board required.

HON. SIR HENRY POLLOCK.—Are the facilities offered sufficient to diminish the cruelty to animals?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—It enables the animals to walk onto the pier from the junks at any state of the tide.

All the votes were approved.

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