

HONG KONG LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

15th February, 1940.

A meeting of the Finance Committee was held in the Council Chamber, the Colonial Secretary (Hon. Mr. N. L. Smith, C.M.G.) presiding.

ALSO PRESENT:—

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY (HON. MR. H. R. BUTTERS, *Acting*).

HON. MR. A. B. PURVES (Director of Public Works).

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

HON. MR. S. H. DODWELL.

HON. MR. LO MAN-KAM.

HON. DR. LI SHU-FAN.

HON. MR. LEO D'ALMADA E CASTRO, JNR.

HON. MR. A. L. SHIELDS.

HON. MR. T. E. PEARCE.

HON. MR. W. N. T. TAM.

MR. C. B. BURGESS (Deputy Clerk of Councils).

Votes totalling \$558,665, being \$41,932 under Estimates 1939, and \$516,733 under Estimates 1940-41, contained in Message No. 1 from His Excellency the Governor, were considered.

Item 301.—18, Miscellaneous Services:—Unallocated Stores (Maintenance of Vehicles), Public Works Department \$2,824.

HON. SIR HENRY POLLOCK.—I don't quite understand how this item is worked out. Are we in the unfortunate state of having stores and now having to pay for them?

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY.—It is purely a book entry. This is to give effect to instructions received from the Secretary of State which were circulated for the information of Members.

HON. SIR HENRY POLLOCK.—Suppose there had been no instructions from the Secretary of State what would have happened?

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY.—It is purely a matter of accounting.

HON. MR. SHIELDS.—Have the stores already been paid for? If they have, why do we have to pay for them now?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—They have been paid for in London, but not here. It is an unallocated charge.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY.—This is merely to clear up the existing position so that in future we can offset stores against a particular department. There is no new money involved.

HON. MR. SHIELDS.—Are the stores ordered with the consent of the Secretary of State?

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY.—In future the purchase of new stores will come before this Committee.

Item 2.—6, Defence. A.—Volunteer Defence Corps:—6, Bonus and Camp Pay \$74,000.

HON. MR. SHIELDS.—Is this expenditure to be debited to the new taxation under the War Account?

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY.—That is contemplated, if and when such legislation is passed.

THE CHAIRMAN.—This question is under consideration, whether normal Volunteer expenditure should not come under ordinary revenue. This particular vote is definitely in consequence of the war.

Item 4.—6, Defence. A.—Volunteer Defence Corps:—Special Expenditure: Mobilization Stores \$32,000.

HON. MR. LO.—In connection with this special expenditure, I would like to know whether this question has been taken up, because in theory, if all the essential defences come under the Volunteers this would naturally constitute in effect an increase in Military Contribution. That I think, should be taken up with the proper authorities to find out how far this increased expenditure for military defence is to be borne by the local Government and by the Imperial Government.

THE CHAIRMAN.—I will look up the papers.

Item 7.—11, Harbour Department and Air Services. A.—Harbour Department:—Special Expenditure: "Beckwith Fog Bell" \$14,000.

HON. SIR HENRY POLLOCK.—How often are these routine visits made? Does it say when the last visit was made prior to the 28th December, 1939?

THE CHAIRMAN.—The last visit was made on the 27th October for the purpose of recharging the light. The bell was intact then.

HON. SIR HENRY POLLOCK.—What steps does Government propose to take to prevent this money from being wasted through the bell being stolen again?

THE CHAIRMAN.—That point has not been raised. I will take the matter up.

Item 9.—11, Harbour Department and Air Services. A.—Harbour Department:—Special Expenditure: New Launch H.D.4 (Replacement) \$18,751.

Item 10.—11, Harbour Department and Air Services. A.—Harbour Department:—Special Expenditure: New Launch, Police No. 10 (Replacement) \$33,600.

Item 11.—11, Harbour Department and Air Services. A.—Harbour Department:—Special Expenditure: New Launch G..P.O. 1 (Replacement) \$37,860.

HON. SIR HENRY POLLOCK.—When was this contract made? It occurs to me that if we made the contract earlier we would not have had to vote this extra expenditure.

THE CHAIRMAN.—The tender was advertised on the 29th September.

HON. MR. LO.—I think the point is this. Why was it that in spite of the war the contract in No. 9 was placed and the actual amount was \$53,000 against \$55,000 whereas in No. 11 we have \$63,000 as against \$70,000?

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY.—The plans of several launches had to be prepared. Some must have priority over the others.

THE CHAIRMAN.—I will make enquiries.

HON. SIR HENRY POLLOCK.—It does seem unsatisfactory. I should like to be informed why the contract was not formed earlier because it is obvious that had the contract been entered earlier we would not have had to pay this extra money.

Item 12.—19, Police Force:—12, Emergency Expenses arising from the Sino-Japanese Conflict \$63,000.

HON. SIR HENRY POLLOCK.—Can you tell us the different heads in this item? It says something about Police Reservists, the Chinese Soldiers' Internment Camp and hard-lying allowances for Police, etc.

THE CHAIRMAN.—Two months' Reservists—\$12,400; another four months' Reservists—\$14,000; 15 months' hard-lying allowances—\$15,000; 15 months' lighting internment camp—\$1,000; salaries to Laichikok Hospital staff—\$1,500; The Police Reservists are estimated at present strength for the first two months of this year and reduced for the next four months.

HON. SIR HENRY POLLOCK.—How much of this expenditure is due to the Chinese soldiers in the internment camp.

HON. MR. SHIELDS.—Is it usual for the Police to be paid hard-lying allowances?

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY.—It is because the Police concerned have very scratch accommodation—hard-lying in that sense.

THE CHAIRMAN.—The Police have been detailed to vital points such as reservoirs and various out-lying points because of the war in place of military sentries.

HON. MR. SHIELDS.—Is it laid down that the Police shall receive hard-lying allowances?

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY.—In normal circumstances such employment of Police is not contemplated. The allowance is on the analogy of the allowance to Harbour Department staff under General Order No. 104.

THE CHAIRMAN.—I should like to see the papers on that point, and will let you know.

Item 14.—30, Public Works Extraordinary:—Communications: Bowen Road—Widening and forming footway between Garden Road and Bowen Road Tram Station \$15,000.

THE CHAIRMAN.—Is this complete now, Mr. Purves?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—Not yet.

Item 16.—30, Public Works Extraordinary:—Communications: Argyle Street Extension, Eastern end of, \$72,277.

HON. SIR HENRY POLLOCK.—Is it not possible to find out whether there will be more rock than anticipated beforehand by means of boring?

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY.—Morrison Hill is an outstanding example.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—It would be possible to get a fairly accurate estimate by boring, but this spot is all boulders and you may miss one.

HON. SIR HENRY POLLOCK.—It is unsatisfactory when you have to pay so much more money.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—No money could have been saved, as the road alignment could not have been altered.

Item 17.—30, Public Works Extraordinary:—Port Works: 50, Kun Tong Refuse Dump \$14,000.

HON. DR. LI.—When is this work likely to be completed. You may remember that this question was raised in the Urban Council and we expected to see this work expedited.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—The dump is supposed to last as such for many years. It may last for 20 years. It is used for depositing the City's garbage in.

HON. DR. LI.—If it was not for the fly nuisance, probably it could be left for half a century, but the problem was so great then that it was thought something should be done.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS.—Some steps are taken to protect the refuse by covering it with soil. More money would be needed to cover it more effectively.

Item 20.—6, Defence. A.—Volunteer Defence Corps:—12, Improvements to Camp \$1,022.

THE CHAIRMAN.—I think this was mentioned at the last meeting.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY.—Initial approval was given.

All the votes were approved.
