

19th June, 1947.

PRESENT: —

HIS EXCELLENCY THE OFFICER ADMINISTERING THE GOVERNMENT (MR. D. M. MACDOUGALL, C.M.G.)

THE HON. THE OFFICER COMMANDING THE TROOPS (BRIGADIER F. H. C. ROGERS, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.)

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (HON. MR. R. R. TODD, *Acting*).

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (HON. MR. J. B. GRIFFIN, K.C.)

THE SECRETARY FOR CHINESE AFFAIRS (HON. MR. B. C. K. HAWKINS, O.B.E., *Acting*).

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY (HON. MR. C. G. S. FOLLOWS, C.M.G., *Acting*).

HON. MR. T. MEGARRY.

HON. MR. V. KENNIFF (Director of Public Works).

HON. DR. I. NEWTON (Acting Director of Medical Services).

HON. MR. D. F. LANDALE.

HON. MR. CHAU TSUN-NIN, C.B.E.

HON. MR. LO MAN-KAM, C.B.E.

HON. MR. LEO D'ALMADA E CASTRO.

HON. MR. R. D. GILLESPIE.

HON. DR. CHAU SIK-NIN.

HON. MR. M. M. WATSON.

MR. ALASTAIR TODD (Deputy Clerk of Council).

MINUTES.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13th June, 1947, were confirmed.

QUESTIONS.

HON. MR. LO MAN-KAM asked: —

Since the announcement, as published in the press on 16th June, 1946, of Government's policy in regard to the renewal of 75-years Crown Leases, which do not contain any right of renewal: —

(a) How many applications have been received by Government for the renewal of such Crown Leases? and

(b) How many of such applications have been granted?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: —

(a) 80 applications for the renewal of 75-year Crown Leases have been received by the Director of Public Works and are being dealt with. In 40 cases the applicant has been advised of the terms on which renewal of the lease will be recommended to Government. 18 of these applicants have so far accepted the terms proposed and their applications will be granted.

(b) Formal approval for renewal has already been given in two cases.

HON. MR. LO MAN-KAM asked: —

In regard to the Housing Problem and with reference to the statement which the Honourable the Colonial Secretary made to this Council on 21st November, 1946, has Government any further statement to make, for the information of this Council and of the public, by way of supplementing and bringing the statement of 21st November, 1946, up to date?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: —

The indications, to which reference was made in paragraph 1 of the reply given on 21st November, 1946, that the community had begun in spite of high prices to repair and rehabilitate have been sustained. In regard to new buildings, however, progress has been disappointing and the needs of the community are far from being met.

2. Since October, 1946, the Buildings Ordinance Office has dealt with applications for reinstatement of old buildings and the construction of new buildings as follows: —

Month	Total Applications	No. of separate premises covered by applications.
1946		
November	298	471
December	225	352
1947		
January	243	380
February	203	408
March	262	413
April	225	325
May	323	490

The total of applications made during the 7 months November, 1946 to May, 1947, inclusive, is 1,779 as compared with a total of 930 for the five months June to October, 1946. The total number of separate premises covered by applications made during the 7 months November, 1946, to May, 1947, inclusive, is 2,839.

3. Although progress in rehabilitation continues at a steady rate the main reason against more rapid progress, in addition to the reluctance on the part of owners to build at present high building costs, is still the world shortage of materials including steel rods and sections, sanitary ware, galvanised piping and glazed tiling. The position in regard to glass and better quality timber has improved considerably. Electrical supplies such as wiring and lamps have also improved but sockets, plugs and small electric motors are still difficult to obtain.

4. The transport situation is satisfactory and there are now sufficient load carrying vehicles available to meet normal demands.

5. Public Utility Companies have continued to restore their services to meet the demands resulting from the rehabilitation of residential accommodation. The Government emergency lighting scheme at Mt. Cameron has been discontinued, and electricity is now supplied to this area by the Hong Kong Electric Company.

6. All Government Quarters which are capable of repair have, with the exception of one house, been rehabilitated to austerity standards. Work will begin in the near future on the construction of two blocks of flats at Leighton Hill providing accommodation for 26 families, Plans for a further two large blocks on other selected sites are well advanced. Shortage of staff in the Public Works Department is still a handicap. That Department is still short of 24 senior and 23 subordinate officers in spite of every effort to recruit officers both locally and abroad.

7. In view of the increased activity in building operations outlined in paragraph 2 above it has not thus far been considered necessary to take action, as envisaged in the previous statement, to ascertain the intentions of owners in regard to destroyed property. The matter has, however, had to be raised again from the point of view of the danger to public health arising from these ruins.

8. Wherever possible Government has during the past eighteen months offered to owners inducements to build new property or to re-build their destroyed property. In this connexion mention may be made of the concessions granted in the Landlord and Tenant Ordinance, 1947, in the Inland Revenue Ordinance, 1947, and in regard to the renewal of 75-year Crown Leases.

9. The ultimate solution of the housing problem lies of course in new building on a scale greater than it has been possible hitherto to attempt either by private enterprise or by Government. In the past year the authorities have examined a number of large-scale building plans proposed either by themselves or suggested for consideration by private individuals or companies. In all these schemes at least one common factor has prevented their translation into reality: that is the impossibility of obtaining regular bulk supplies of certain materials which are essential to building. There have of course been other difficulties in plenty, many of them connected with finance. Most if not all of these difficulties could probably have been overcome in some fashion had the physical possibility of large-scale new building in fact existed. In view of the grievous housing conditions in which a large part of the community has at present to exist, Government would in the last resort consider becoming itself a landlord on a larger scale, uneconomic as that might be, if it had access to supplies of building materials in sufficient quantity. In its search for these Government has so far failed: but the search will continue unabated. In the meantime it will press on with its own not inconsiderable building programme so as to house the maximum number of Government families in Government quarters and thus relieve the pressure on private accommodation.

10. In spite of these baffling shortages of material, one or two building schemes (including one of 250 houses) are under discussion with private companies. Government will do all possible to help the rapid establishment of these schemes if they prove practicable and to further any other project which seems likely to alleviate the present deplorable situation. A small housing scheme for 17 residences has recently been approved.

11. Government is deeply conscious of its obligations to the citizens of this Colony in the present prolonged housing crisis. Although the general position may be held to have improved somewhat over the last year it is more evident now than twelve months ago that no quick solution is more likely here than it is in other parts of the world. Housing is and for the past year has been this Colony's number one problem. It is hoped that Council will appreciate that

the fact that no satisfactory solution has yet been found is not due to lack of effort. Honourable Members can rest assured that these efforts will not slacken in the months to come.

HON. MR. R. D. GILLESPIE asked: —

Would Government agree to allow donations to the War Memorial Fund to be deducted from salaries or profits before arriving at the net chargeable income, or profit, assessable to tax under the Inland Revenue Ordinance?

It is felt that if this could be done it would considerably encourage donations to this very deserving cause.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: —

1. The proposal has already been carefully considered by Government and by the special committee appointed to report on the Inland Revenue Bill. It is not the practice in the United Kingdom or in other Colonies to allow charitable donations or donations to funds such as the War Memorial Fund as a charge against profits or income, the only exception to this rule being an annual donation to a hospital at which the employees of the donor are entitled to free treatment or reduced rates.

2. Government therefore regrets that it is not prepared to depart from this general rule in the case of the War Memorial Fund. Government is already contributing to the Fund on a dollar for dollar basis and if the suggestion of the Honourable Member were adopted it would mean that more than 50% of future sums accruing to the Fund would be found by the taxpayer.

MOTIONS.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL moved: —

Resolved pursuant to section 3 of the Public Officers (Changes of Style) Ordinance, 1937, that the style of the office of "Government Chemist (Monopoly)" be changed to "Government Chemist (Imports and Exports Department)" and that the style of the office of "Assistant Government Chemist (Monopoly)" be changed to "Assistant Government Chemist (Imports and Exports Department)", for all purposes, and that the following additions be made to the Schedule to the said Ordinance: —

OLD STYLE OF OFFICER, OFFICE OR DEPARTMENT.	NEW STYLE OF OFFICER, OFFICE OR DEPARTMENT.
Government Chemist (Monopoly)	Government Chemist (Imports and Exports Department)
Assistant Government Chemist (Monopoly)	Assistant Government Chemist (Imports and Exports Department).

He said: The purpose of the resolution is to effect change of style of the officers named in the resolution. As Honourable Members are aware, Section 3 of the Public Officers (Chancres of Style) Ordinance, 1937, allows of additions or amendments to the schedule of that Ordinance to be effected by way of resolution of this Council.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded, and the motion was carried.

MIDWIVES AMENDMENT BILL, 1947.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL moved the First reading of a Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Midwives Ordinance, 1910." He said: Sir, this is a short Bill, the objects and reasons of which are sufficiently, I think, stated in the Objects and Reasons printed with the Bill. It is not, I think, necessary for me to detain Council any further in explanation of this measure.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded, and the Bill was read a First time.

Objects and Reasons.

The "Objects and Reasons" for the Bill were stated as follows: —

1. Section 8 of the Midwives Ordinance, 1910 (No. 22 of 1910), requires that every woman enrolled as a midwife on the roll of midwives authorised to practise as such who desires her name to be retained on the roll on its next annual publication shall give notice of such desire to the secretary of the Midwives Board in the month of January in each year and pay a retention fee of one dollar.

2. It is considered that because their identity and addresses are known to Government it is not necessary to require midwives in Government employment, while remaining in such employment, to give such notice or pay such retention fee.

3. The object of the Bill is, by amendment of section 8 of the Ordinance, to remove such unnecessary requirement.

DIVORCE (VALIDITY) (DALZIEL) BILL, 1947.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL moved the Second reading of a Bill intituled "An Ordinance to remove doubts as to the validity of certain Decrees granted in the Colony for the dissolution of a marriage."

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded, and the Bill was read a Second time.

On the motion of the ATTORNEY GENERAL, seconded by the COLONIAL SECRETARY, Council then went into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause.

Clause 2.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Sir, I rise to move an amendment to this clause, an amendment which I forecast in my presentation of the Bill on the First reading. The amendment which I propose is that the word "purported" should be inserted between the words "in" and "exercise" in the definition of "Court" which occurs in clause 2 of this Bill.

The amendment was agreed to.

Council then resumed.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL reported that the Divorce (Validity) (Dalziel) Bill, 1947, had passed through Committee with one amendment and moved the Third reading.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded, and the Bill was read a Third time and passed.

COMPANIES (CESSATION OF EMERGENCY STATUS) BILL, 1947.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL moved the Second reading of a Bill intituled "An Ordinance to make provision for the cessation of the emergency status attaching to certain companies registered under the Companies Ordinance, 1932, or incorporated under any other Ordinance of the Colony."

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded, and the Bill was read a Second time.

On the motion of the ATTORNEY GENERAL, seconded by the COLONIAL SECRETARY, Council then went into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause.

Council then resumed.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL reported that the Companies (Cessation of Emergency Status) Bill, 1947, had passed through Committee without amendment and moved the Third reading.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded, and the Bill was read a Third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

H. E. THE OFFICER ADMINISTERING THE GOVERNMENT: That concludes the business, and the Council now stands adjourned until 3rd July, 1947.