

OFFICIAL REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS**Wednesday, 23 January 1985****The Council met at half past two o'clock****PRESENT**

HIS HONOUR THE DEPUTY TO THE GOVERNOR (*PRESIDENT*)
THE HONOURABLE THE CHIEF SECRETARY
SIR CHARLES PHILIP HADDON-CAVE, K.B.E., C.M.G., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY
SIR JOHN HENRY BREMRIDGE, K.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
MR. MICHAEL DAVID THOMAS, C.M.G., Q.C.

THE HONOURABLE SIR ROGERIO HYNDMAN LOBO, C.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE DAVID AKERS-JONES, C.M.G., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

DR. THE HONOURABLE HARRY FANG SIN-YANG, C.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE FRANCIS YUAN-HAO TIEN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALEX WU SHU-CHIH, C.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHEN SHOU-LUM, C.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LYDIA DUNN, C.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE PETER C. WONG, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE WONG LAM, O.B.E., J.P.

DR. THE HONOURABLE THONG KAH-LEONG, C.B.E., J.P.
DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES

THE HONOURABLE ERIC PETER HO, C.B.E., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

DR. THE HONOURABLE HO KAM-FAI, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ANDREW SO KWOK-WING, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE HU FA-KUANG, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE WONG PO-YAN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE DONALD LIAO POON-HUAI, C.B.E., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR HOUSING

THE HONOURABLE WILLIAM CHARLES LANGDON BROWN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHAN KAM-CHUEN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE STEPHEN CHEONG KAM-CHUEN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHEUNG YAN-LUNG, M.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS. SELINA CHOW LIANG SHUK-YEE, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MARIA TAM WAI-CHU, O.B.E., J.P.

DR. THE HONOURABLE HENRIETTA IP MAN-HING

THE HONOURABLE PIERS JACOBS, O.B.E., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES

THE HONOURABLE DAVID GREGORY JEAFFRESON, C.B.E., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR SECURITY

THE HONOURABLE CHAN NAI-KEONG, C.B.E., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS

THE HONOURABLE RONALD GEORGE BLACKER BRIDGE, J.P.
COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR

THE HONOURABLE CHAN YING-LUN

THE HONOURABLE MRS. RITA FAN HSU LAI-TAI

THE HONOURABLE MRS. PAULINE NG CHOW MAY-LIN

THE HONOURABLE PETER POON WING-CHEUNG, M.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE YEUNG PO-KWAN, C.P.M.

THE HONOURABLE JAMES NEIL HENDERSON, O.B.E., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER

THE HONOURABLE KEITH LAM HON-KEUNG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CARL TONG KA-WING

THE HONOURABLE JOHN WALTER CHAMBERS, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE

THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL LEUNG MAN-KIN, J.P.
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

THE HONOURABLE PETER TSAO KWANG-YUNG, C.P.M., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS

ABSENT

THE HONOURABLE LO TAK-SHING, C.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALAN JAMES SCOTT, C.B.E., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT

THE HONOURABLE ALLEN LEE PENG-FEI, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE JOHN JOSEPH SWAINE, O.B.E., Q.C., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE KIM CHAM YAU-SUN, J.P.

IN ATTENDANCE

THE CLERK TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
MR. LI WING

Papers

The following papers were laid pursuant to Standing Order 14(2):—

<i>Subject</i>	<i>L.N. No.</i>
Subsidiary Legislation:	
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Marine Fish Culture Ordinance.	
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Pilotage Ordinance.	
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Shipping and Port Control Ordinance.	
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Inland Revenue Ordinance.	
Inland Revenue (Interest Tax) (Exemption) (Amendment) Notice 1985.....	4
Tax Reserve Certificates (Fourth Series) Rules.	
Tax Reserve Certificates (Rate of Interest) Notice 1985-----	5
Dentists Registration Ordinance.	
Dentists (Registration and Disciplinary Procedure) (Amendment) Regulations 1985.....	6
Census and Statistics Ordinance.	
Census and Statistics (1985 Pilot Census) Order 1985.....	7
Shipping and Port Control (Dwelling Vessels) Regulations.	
Shipping and Port Control (Dwelling Vessels) Regulations (Amendment of First Schedule) Order 1985.....	8

<i>Subject</i>	<i>L.N. No.</i>
Shipping and Port Control (Dwelling Vessels) Regulations. Shipping and Port Control (Dwelling Vessels) (Closed Areas) Order 1985.....	9
Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance. Antiquities and Monuments (Declaration of Monument) Notice 1985.....	10
Miscellaneous Licences (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 1984. Miscellaneous Licences (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 1984 (Commencement) Notice 1985.....	11
Pharmacy and Poisons (Amendment) Regulations 1984. Pharmacy and Poisons (Amendment) Regulations 1984 (Commencement) Notice 1985.....	12
Poisons List (Amendment) Regulations 1984. Poisons List (Amendment) Regulations 1984 (Commencement) Notice 1985.	13
Sessional Papers 1984-85:	
No. 36—Hong Kong Examination Authority—Financial Statements for the year ended 31 August 1984 and Programme of Activities 1 September 1983 to 31 August 1984.	
No. 37—The Prince Philip Dental Hospital—Report by the Board of Governors for the period 1 April 1983—31 March 1984.	
No. 38—Correctional Services Department Welfare Fund—Income and Expenditure Account with Balance Sheet and Certificate of the Director of Audit for the year ended 31 March 1984.	
No.39—Public Accounts Committee Report No. 7—December 1984.	

Oral answers to questions

Fire-watch teams

1. MRS. NG asked in Cantonese:—

繼陳英麟議員在去年三月十四日提出有關防火糾察隊的問題後，政府可否告知本局：

- (甲) 區議會是否仍然支付購買滅火筒、擴音器和頭盔等新裝備，以及維修這些裝備，包括補充滅火筒的化學劑等的全部費用？
- (乙) 政府對現時木屋區防火糾察隊執行任務的情況是否滿意？

(The following is the interpretation of what Mrs. NG asked.)

Further to the question asked by the Honourable CHAN Ying-lun on fire-watch teams on 14 March 1984, can Government inform this Council:—

- (a) *whether District Boards still meet the full cost of purchasing new equipment such as fire-extinguishers, loud hailers and helmets as well as the maintenance of such equipment including re-fill of fire-extinguishers; and*
- (b) *whether Government is satisfied with the operation of the existing fire-watch teams in squatter areas?*

SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION:—Sir, the funds for purchasing equipment for fire-watch teams and their replenishment are provided by District Offices, on the advice of the relevant District Board. Each Board examines the merits of each application against other competing claims, and recommends an appropriate amount of grant.

The standard equipment provided to a newly formed fire-watch team includes fire extinguishers, sand buckets, alarm gongs, arm-bands and handbooks.

The Administration is pleased with the operation of the existing fire-watch teams. They help the Government in educating and advising local residents, particularly hillside squatters, on fire prevention and on ways and means of reducing potential fire hazards in their homes. In the event of a fire, they play a useful role in raising the alarm and evacuating residents quickly. Having raised the alarm, it is then left to the professionals in the Fire Services Department to take over the job of fire fighting and rescue.

MRS. NG asked in Cantonese:—

閣下，通常在每一個民政區之下，是有若干隊的防火糾察隊，請問目前由那一個政府部門負責統籌及聯絡的工作？

(The following is the interpretation of what Mrs. NG asked.)

Sir, normally under each of the Districts there are a number of fire-watch teams; which government department is responsible for the co-ordination and liaison with them?

SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION:—Sir, the City and New Territories Administration.

MR. CHAN YING-LUN:—*Sir, with regard to the provision of loud hailers and helmets as stated in the question, can the Government state whether these are considered as extras to the standard equipment?*

SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION:—Yes, Sir, they are considered as extras and some of the District Boards have provided them for their teams.

Renovation/redevelopment of Kwai Fong Estate

2. DR. HO asked:—*Will Government:*

- (a) *Make a statement on the structural condition of the housing blocks on the Kwai Fong Estate;*
- (b) *inform this Council of the maintenance and repair plans for the said estate; and*
- (c) *indicate whether the residents affected will have to move out during the renovation period and, if so, what temporary rehousing arrangements will be made for them and what financial assistance will be provided?*

SECRETARY FOR HOUSING:—Sir, Kwai Fong Estate comprises 11 blocks containing 6 538 flats. It was designed and constructed by the former Public Works Department as Government Low Cost Housing, and was completed in three phases in late 1971 and early 1973.

In recent years a large number of repairs were required in some blocks of the estate. As a result, an inspection was carried out of all blocks on the estate in 1980-1981. Although some of the blocks were found to be in need of extensive repairs, none were structurally unsafe. A phased programme was therefore drawn up to renovate those blocks in need of repair. In a few cases where it is more cost-effective to redevelop rather than renovate blocks, this will be done. I can assure tenants in Kwai Fong Estate that none of the blocks they are presently occupying are in a dangerous condition.

As regards repair plans, Blocks 1, 2 and 3 will require routine maintenance as might be expected in buildings of that age. Work has already started on this. Blocks 4, 7 and 8 require more extensive repairs which are already in hand. Block 6 was in need of major renovation and repair, and that work will be completed by May of this year. The opportunity has been taken to bring the block up to present day standards with upgraded services including a complete rewiring, improved drainage and a communal TV aerial system.

Based on the experience of repairing Block 6, we have discovered that the work involves a great deal of inconvenience to tenants and is also very costly and time-consuming. In the light of this, it has been decided to redevelop some blocks although it would have been perfectly possible to repair them.

Blocks 9, 10 and 11 are situated in one corner of the estate, are joined together and form a very suitable area for redevelopment. The opportunity will be taken to use the latest design of blocks and to improve the layout and facilities in the area. On the grounds of cost-effectiveness and for the convenience of tenants, it is also a better solution to redevelop rather than repair Block 5. A phased programme of redevelopment will therefore be undertaken over the next few years to replace Blocks 5, 9, 10 and 11.

As I have already emphasised, the structural safety of these blocks is not a matter of concern.

Some residents will have to move out during the renovation period, but I would like to point out that for many years the Housing Authority has been involved in a massive and successful programme of redevelopment involving the rehousing of a quarter of a million people. It is therefore well aware of the disruption and inconvenience caused to tenants when they have to move homes, and great care is taken to ensure that this is kept to a minimum.

The experience we have gained during the redevelopment programme has provided a basis for the way in which we have consulted residents at Kwai Fong and have done our very best to meet their wishes.

Several months before renovation work started on Block 6 at Kwai Fong, tenants there were offered alternative accommodation in the nearby Shek Wai Kok Estate in Tsuen Wan and 78 per cent of the 928 families affected moved there. The remainder either moved to other estates of their choice or to other flats available in Kwai Fong.

Discussions will now be held with residents of other blocks to be redeveloped and offers of alternative accommodation in Tsuen Wan, Sha Tin or Ngau Tau Kok will be made to them. When Block 6 is completed in May of this year, over 900 new and upgraded flats will also be available in Kwai Fong. All residents who move away from the estate will be given the choice of moving back to the new flats in the redeveloped blocks when they become available.

Financial assistance to tenants affected is given by way of removal allowances which are presently under review by the Management Committee of the Housing Authority.

DR. HO:—*Sir, I thank the Secretary for Housing for the comprehensive answer, but may I ask the Government to consider giving the affected tenants an ex-gratia allowance adequate for the refurbishing of a new home and moving and also seeking school places for the children for those who have to move out of the Tsuen Wan area?*

SECRETARY FOR HOUSING:—*Sir, as I said in my last part of the answer the removal allowances are actually under review and such expenses as removal of telephones and so on will be taken into consideration. Also tenants will be moved to an estate of their choice and in many cases it will be nearby; therefore the question of schools may not arise but where the need exists, every effort will be made to assist the tenants.*

Theft from vehicles

3. MR. ALEX WU asked:—*Would Government inform this Council of the number of cases involving reported theft of audio and other equipment in parked cars and the rate of successful detection leading to conviction in the last two years?*

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY:—Sir, we do not have statistics by type of property stolen from parked cars. The only available breakdown of statistics on theft of all types of property from vehicles relates to the theft of property from *inside* vehicles (as opposed to the theft of such *external* parts or accessories as headlamps and tyres). In 1983 there were 4 230 reported cases of theft from inside vehicles. In 1984 there were 3 448 cases, a decrease of 18.5 per cent.

Statistics on detection and conviction refer only to all cases of theft from vehicles. In 1983, the detection rate for all thefts from vehicles was 20.8 per cent. In 1984 it was 13.7 per cent. Discounting those cases not brought to trial before the end of the year, the percentage of detected cases leading to conviction was 78.4 per cent in 1983 and 78.7 per cent in 1984.

MR. ALEX WU:—*Sir, according to the figures given, the percentage of detected cases leading to conviction was 12 per cent of reported cases. Is Government satisfied with this low rate and, if not, what remedial measures are being taken?*

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY:—No, Sir, the Government is not in the least satisfied with that rate of conviction. But the fact of the matter is, I am afraid, that theft from a vehicle is an extremely difficult offence to detect. It is for this reason that theft from vehicles and theft of vehicles has been a major part of the anti-crime publicity campaign which started in the middle of last year.

Publicity on regulations governing iron grille gates

4. MR. CHAN YING-LUN asked:—*Does Government consider the present arrangements for publicising the provisions under the Building (Planning) Regulations regarding the installation of iron grille gates adequate?*

SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS:—Sir, since 1976 a series of small posters illustrating various types of illegal building activity has been available to the public at the Buildings Ordinance Office and in District Offices. One of these shows the illegal type of iron grille gate. In buildings completed since 1 January 1984, Buildings Ordinance Office staff have arranged for the posters to be displayed in the buildings.

Moreover, there have from time to time over the years been several publicity campaigns aimed at conveying to the general public the message that they should not carry out any building works without consulting the Buildings Ordinance or an Authorised Person registered under the Buildings Ordinance.

However, as a result of the Building Authority's action at New Kwai Fong Gardens in Kwai Chung specific publicity has been given to the question of iron grille gates and I am satisfied, Sir, that the present arrangements for publicising the provisions of the regulations in respect of them are adequate.

MR. CHAN YING-LUN:—*Sir, with the kind of publicity as mentioned in the reply why is it that most residents of New Kwai Fong Gardens have contravened the Buildings Ordinance in respect of the iron grille gates?*

SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS:—*Sir, stepped-up publicity was only taken after the action on the illegal iron grille gates at New Kwai Fong Gardens. Previously, publicity activity on all illegal building works only included iron grille gates as part of all illegal building works.*

Lifting cranes on construction sites

5. MR. TONG asked:—*Would Government inform this Council which department or departments are responsible for the operational safety of lifting cranes on construction sites and whether Government consider existing safeguards adequate?*

COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR:—*Sir, the operational safety of lifting cranes on construction sites is governed by Part II of the Construction Sites (Safety) Regulations. These regulations provide for the strength, stability, testing, maintenance and frequent inspection of all such cranes. They also stipulate safe operational methods and that only trained and competent people can operate such cranes. Enforcement of these regulations is the responsibility of the Factory Inspectorate of the Labour Department.*

The regulations are drafted in some detail and I am satisfied that they are adequate for their purpose. However, as my predecessor said in reply to a similar question in this Council in 1977, I must stress that legislation alone cannot prevent accidents. What is also needed is good supervision and a recognition by top management that they must make accident prevention a major part of their policies.

MR. TONG:—*Sir, where a crane is operating in such a way its arm extends to an area beyond its own site, in the event of an accident where the crane arm causes damage to third parties as in the recent case in MacDonnell Road, what safeguards are there to protect the innocent third party who is suffering losses?*

COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR:—*I understand that most contractors have third party insurance as a matter of course so they would be protected by the normal safeguards under the law and also if they have financial difficulties, they would be covered by insurance.*

MR. TONG:—*Sir, I am surprised that the only department that has a concern over the safety of cranes is the Labour Department because as we clearly indicate in this case that I mentioned where the arm extends way way beyond the site...*

HIS HONOUR THE PRESIDENT:—*Mr. TONG, you must ask a question please.*

MR. TONG:—*Thank you, Sir. I feel that I would like to ask a question...are there any existing regulations to ensure that adequate insurance coverage exists in the event of such accident as the one I have mentioned?*

COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR:—The only legal requirement is for insurance cover for workmen's compensation protecting the employees; there is no legal requirement for third party insurance, but in fact, as I have said, nearly all contractors have it, and the number of accidents affecting the public is in fact very very small. If such an incident does occur, of course it does attract maximum publicity, but the number of such incidents is very small indeed. In most years there has been no injury affecting the public and only one year out of the last six years have the public been affected when two people were injured in one year.

MR. TONG:—*Would Government consider looking into whether a certain limit is put or certain upper amount is put to ensure that contractors do carry adequate public insurance?*

COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR:—In view of the very small number of such incidents, and I have never heard of any case, and I understand that the Secretary for Lands and Works hasn't heard of any either, where the lack of such insurance has caused any practical problem, it seems to me that there is no real need for such a legal requirement at present.

Noise abatement measures in schools

6. MR. CHEUNG YAN-LUNG asked in Cantonese:—

政府可否告知本局，自於一九八一至八二年度完成減少校舍噪音的初步研究以來，在減低學校校舍外噪音的影響方面有何進展？

(The following is the interpretation of what Mr. CHEUNG Yan-lung asked.)

Will the Government inform this Council of the progress made towards reducing the effect of external noise on schools since the completion of the pilot study on noise abatement measures in schools in 1981-82?

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER:—The data from the pilot study and from two broad surveys which were subsequently undertaken have been analysed by the steering committee, which is now finalising its report for submission to Government. The report will recommend a maximum tolerable noise exposure level for classrooms and propose measures to abate noise in excess of this limit.

In addition, the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines are also being amended to provide for the noise factor to be taken into consideration in the location of future school sites. Where schools must be built in noisy locations to suit the demands of accessibility or proximity to residential development, the school building will be oriented to shield classrooms from noise or appropriate noise insulation measures will be incorporated into the design.

It is anticipated that the report will be submitted to Government within the next few weeks and it is intended to consult the Board of Education to seek their views on its recommendations.

MR. CHEUNG YAN-LUNG asked in Cantonese:—

自從有關減少校舍外噪音的初步研究於一九八二年完成之後，統籌委員會為何需要這麼長的時間進行評估與及分析研究結果？

(The following is the interpretation of what Mr. CHEUNG asked.)

After the completion of the pilot study on noise abatement measures in schools in 1981-82, why did the steering committee take such a long time to carry out the analysis?

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER:—I agree, Sir, this has taken time. It is quite a complex issue settling on standards particularly for noise as the environmental experts will tell you; but particularly in this case, what happened was the initial survey was for the urban area and it was originally thought that this was adequate to assess the position in the New Territories. This has proved not to be the case and a further survey had to be done to cover the New Territories.

MR. CHEUNG YAN-LUNG asked in Cantonese:—

閣下，鑒於多年來學童已經忍受着嚴重的噪音騷擾，政府可否採取一些臨時措施，以便改變這種情況？

(The following is the interpretation of what Mr. CHEUNG asked.)

Sir, in view of the fact that students have been disturbed by noise for years, is it possible for Government to take out some temporary measures to improve the situation?

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER:—Not really I think in addition to what schools have managed to do for themselves. I am afraid this is an area where stop-gaps really won't do; if this is to be done; it will have to be done properly.

MR. STEPHEN CHEONG:—*Sir, in the Secretary's reply that the report will be submitted to Government, may I ask whether within that particular report there would be a full analysis of cost benefit to the community as a whole of whatever measures undertaken?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER:—I don't think I can answer that off the cuff as the report has not yet been submitted but I will write to Mr. CHEONG within the next few days with as much answer as I can give.

(The following written reply was provided subsequently.)

Because of changes in the surrounding environment since they were built (increased traffic, noisier aircraft), many schools now suffer from external noise to the point where it interferes with their work.

The degree to which schools are affected varies from instances where the teacher cannot be heard unless speaking in a strained voice, to situations where aircraft and traffic noise are frequently intolerable. Indeed some schools are now experiencing a level of noise of such magnitude as to require the use of voice amplifiers by the teaching staff. This not only adds further to the noise to which the children are subjected but interferes with normal teaching as children may have difficulty in being heard by the teachers. The Report will grade noise nuisance into different categories of intensity and will recommend treatment appropriate to each category. This categorisation will ensure that costs are kept within reason and will enable remedial work to be carried out in phases according to need and priority.

The noise reduction measures will have the effect of producing quieter classrooms which will enable teachers to be heard more easily and students to better concentrate on their studies. Such qualitative improvement is an educationally desirable end-product in itself and not one which can easily be measured in quantitative terms.

In those schools which are suffering most from noise nuisance, the only realistic alternative to noise reduction measures would be to close the school (or at least the classrooms most severely affected) and re-establish it in a quieter location. In such cases, the cost benefit to the community as a whole of the measures proposed seems to be self-evident.

Control of radioactive substances

7. MR. SO asked in Cantonese:—

政府可否告知本局：

- (甲) 現行法例對管制放射性物質的處理和運送是否有效？
- (乙) 政府已訂定什麼緊急措施去應付放射性物質的洩漏和污染？

(The following is the interpretation of what Mr. So asked.)

Will Government inform this Council:

- (a) whether existing legislative controls are effective in regulating the handling and transportation of radioactive substances; and*
- (b) what contingency plans Government has made to deal with leaks of radioactive substances and contamination?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE:—Sir, the Radiation Ordinance provides extensive controls on the handling and transportation of radioactive substances, and the Government is satisfied that they are effective in present circumstances. These controls are exercised through the Radiation Board, which grants licences, subject to such conditions as it thinks fit, for the manufacture, sale, possession or use of any radioactive substance. The board has made regulations under the Ordinance to deal with various safety aspects, including the precautions to be taken by licensees when moving any radioactive substance within the territory. Such substances may only be transported after a written permit has been issued by either the Director of Medical and Health Services or the Commissioner for Labour, depending on whether the substance is to be used for medical or industrial purposes. Staff of the Radiation Health Unit of the Medical and Health Department and of the Occupational Health Unit of the Labour Department may be contacted in case of need for technical advice on particular operations.

As regards contingency plans to deal with leaks of radioactive substances and contamination, the Fire Services and police, supported by technical experts in other departments, will respond to any dangerous or potentially dangerous incident, and specific instructions have been issued to deal with incidents involving radioactive substances. There are also decontamination facilities on both sides of the harbour.

MR. SO asked in Cantonese:—

閣下，福利衛生司可否就本年一月五日在啓德貨運站所發生的事件，向本局作一簡單的報導？

(The following is the interpretation of what Mr. So asked.)

Could the Secretary for Health and Welfare give a brief report on the incident which happened at the Kai Tak Airport on 5 January this year?

HIS HONOUR THE PRESIDENT:—I think the question is somewhat removed from the original question; but if the Secretary wishes he may answer.

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE:—Sir, I had anticipated that this might be the point of discussion. The incident which happened at Kai Tak Airport on

5 January was in fact a false alarm and there was no leakage of radioactive material. The procedures for dealing with an incident of this kind operated quite satisfactorily. An officer from the Medical and Health Department's Radiation Health Unit was called to the scene and the area was declared safe. I gather that there were short delays in the shipping of some goods from the Airport; but the whole incident was over in less than two hours.

First-aid training in secondary schools

8. MR. CHEUNG YAN-LUNG asked in Cantonese:—

政府會否考慮將急救課程列入初中課程的可行性？

(The following is the interpretation of what Mr. CHEUNG YAN-LUNG asked.)

Will Government consider the viability of including first-aid courses in the curriculum for lower-forms in secondary schools?

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION:—Sir, in addition to the topics contained in the Form I-III Social Studies syllabus on the value of first-aid and the importance of acquiring basic life-saving knowledge and skills, first-aid training is already provided in schools through the informal curriculum by suitably trained personnel from the St. John Ambulance Association and the Hong Kong Red Cross.

St. John officers provide regular courses of first-aid training to student members of the St. John Cadets, the Scouts and Guides, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and the Community Youth Clubs. Red Cross officers provide training for Red Cross Youth members. Through participation in one or more of these extra-curricular activities, students have ample opportunities to receive training in first-aid and further training within the formal curriculum is not considered necessary.

DR. IP:—*May Government consider that first-aid courses be suitably included in the curriculum of the recently introduced subject of human biology?*

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION:—Sir, within the existing social study syllabus, safety education is provided in Forms I to III syllabus. I can certainly confirm that we will consider inclusion of similar topics in the human biology subject.

Fire detection and fire prevention in hotels and commercial buildings

9. MISS DUNN asked:—*Is the Government satisfied that fire detection systems and fire prevention arrangements in high rise hotels and commercial buildings are adequate?*

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY:—Yes, Sir, the requirement to provide adequate fire service installations, including *fire detection systems*, in buildings is prescribed in the Buildings Ordinance.

The Fire Services Department examines plans for all new buildings to ensure that appropriate fire service installations are included. On completion, the Department inspects each building to ensure that these requirements have been met. Thereafter, it is required by law that these installations are properly maintained and that a Registered Fire Service Installation Contractor certifies them to be in good working order once a year.

The Government is satisfied that the fire detection systems in hotels and commercial buildings are adequate, save for the very old ones built before 1964 when the requirements I just mentioned came into effect.

As regards *fire prevention* in hotel and commercial buildings, the Fire Services Department regularly conducts training courses on fire prevention for hotel management staff. In 1984, 890 persons voluntarily took part in these courses.

In addition, the Fire Services Department inspects hotels and commercial buildings and, where appropriate, advises the management of these buildings on the removal of fire hazards and on fire prevention.

The Government is also satisfied that fire prevention arrangements are satisfactory, a view supported by the small numbers of fires that occur in hotels and in commercial buildings.

MISS DUNN:—*Sir, what were the Building Regulations applicable to fire detection systems prior to 1964, and in which way do they differ from the present regulations?*

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY:—I am afraid I haven't got my history books with me and I can't go back that far, but there is a substantial difference as I understand it between whatever it was that was in force before 1964 and what we have to-day. I might add that those buildings, particularly the hotels, must be a cause of great concern to the Fire Services Department because of the very nasty result which can happen if there is a serious fire in a hotel. The Fire Services Department is working very hard with the hotel owners associations to encourage them to introduce effective improvements and these talks are going well as I understand it.

MISS DUNN:—*Sir, can the Secretary for Security say how many hotels and commercial buildings were built before 1964?*

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY:—Yes, we concentrate, Sir, on hotels because, in fact, the fire risk in commercial buildings is very low and it is better to deal with commercial buildings in terms of regular inspections to make sure the fire

hazards are removed and standards are generally up to scratch. As far as hotels are concerned, there were 15, I think, hotels now in existence which were built before 1964 and one of these hotels is right up to standard.

MISS DUNN:—*Sir, is persuasion the only action available to the Government in respect to these hotels? Is there any other action that the Government can take?*

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY:—The trouble is that with the buildings before 1964, because they weren't built to the present day standards, it is not that easy, in fact it is very difficult, to bring them up to the standard of to-day. The work involves virtually pulling them down and rebuilding them in fact. What improvements can be introduced into each hotel depends on the nature of the building. Therefore it is much better to use persuasion rather than have tight rules under the law. If the hotels were being not prepared to introduce improvements where the Director of Fire Services recommends they should be introduced, then we would have to think in terms of the Law.

MR. TONG:—*Sir, could the Secretary also inform us in addition to hotels, hospitals and old people's homes that were built before 1964 that are not yet up to standard?*

HIS HONOUR THE PRESIDENT:—The matter you have raised is far too removed from the substance of the original question. But you may put an appropriate question on another occasion, Mr. TONG.

Computerised control systems in the Aberdeen Tunnel

10. MR. KEITH LAM asked in Cantonese:—

政府可否告知本局：

- (甲) 香港仔隧道安裝電腦操作系統延誤的原因；
- (乙) 是否有計劃去補救這情況；
- (丙) 負責安裝該系統的承造商是否須負賠償之責？

(The following is the interpretation of what Mr. Keith LAM asked.)

Will Government inform this Council:

- (a) *of the reasons for delay in installing the computerised inter-face system for the Aberdeen Tunnel;*
- (b) *whether there are any plans to remedy the situation; and*
- (c) *whether the contractor responsible for the system can be held liable for compensation?*

SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS:—Sir, I presume that since the Aberdeen Tunnel computerised control systems have been installed for some time Mr.

LAM'S question concerns the present position regarding their operation and I therefore propose to answer accordingly.

- (a) There are two computer systems used in the Aberdeen Tunnel one for traffic control which controls warning signs and traffic movements and the other for toll collection which is essentially for accounting and statistics gathering purposes. The traffic control system has been operating successfully for more than a year and has been formally taken over and paid for. However, the toll collection system although operating successfully for 98 per cent of the time has not measured up fully to requirements. In consequence, we have not yet accepted and paid for the equipment concerned although in most respects such as controlling toll lanes, the toll collection system is operating satisfactorily. The faults which are comparatively very small when compared to the whole system are probably caused by 'bugs' in the software and a great deal of effort has already been put into locating them and finding the reasons for the malfunctioning.
- (b) The answer to the second part of Mr. LAM'S question is that the contractor is fully appreciative of the need to locate the source of error and has been actively engaged throughout in seeking to rectify the position as quickly as possible. He is currently pursuing with the sub-contractor satisfactorily an arrangement for the solution of the present difficulties.
- (c) With regard to the third part of the question, as the contractor is cooperating fully with the Government, and our mutual aim is to provide a fully satisfactory operational system, it would be premature to seek further compensation in addition to the maximum amount of liquidated damages of \$2.25 million already withheld from payments under the contract. Furthermore, Government has also withheld payment for the toll collection computer equipment, although it is operating successfully for all but a very small percentage of the time.

MR. STEPHEN CHEONG:—*Sir, would the Secretary for Lands and Works be kind enough to inform this Council which particular computer system is responsible for the regulation of ventilation according to traffic flow?*

SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS:—It is the toll collection computer which counts traffic flow as well. So it is from that information that you can regulate the speed of the fan.

MR. STEPHEN CHEONG:—*Is it therefore true that because of the bugs involving the toll collection computer system that the intended savings of regulations of fans and so on has not been operating smoothly?*

SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS:—At the present level of traffic volume, it is not necessary, in fact, to turn on the fans most of the time. Therefore the

question of controlling the fan speeds does not arise. It is only when traffic volume has built up to perhaps double the present amount that we will need to control the speed of the fans. Meanwhile as the problem with this particular computer are being solved, we have decided to introduce interim measures for the control of the fans.

Collection of seaborne refuse

11. MR. YEUNG PO-KWAN asked:—*Could Government inform this Council which department or departments are responsible for the collection of seaborne refuse within Hong Kong waters outside the Victoria Harbour?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE:—Sir, although the Director of Marine is not a statutory authority for the collection of seaborne refuse, he does have general responsibility for the provision of such a service throughout the territory. However, because of resource constraints, the department is at present only able to provide, first, a scavenging service in Victoria Harbour and five major typhoon shelters: Aberdeen, Yau Ma Tei, Aldrich Bay, Causeway Bay and Cheung Chau; secondly, a ship-to-ship refuse collection service for oceangoing vessels moored in Victoria Harbour; and thirdly, a boat-to-boat refuse collection service or dwelling boats in four typhoon shelters: Aberdeen, Yau Ma Tei, Aldrich Bay and Causeway Bay.

The Urban Services Department is responsible for the collection of floating refuse at all gazetted beaches, including those in the New Territories.

MR. YEUNG PO-KWAN:—*Sir, does the Government have any long term plan to increase the resources so as to be able to provide further services other than those stated in the answer given?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE:—Sir, the Marine Department does have a five year plan to extend the collection of waterborne refuse to areas in the New Territories, in particular, to Tuen Mun, Sha Tin and to Chung Mei Tuk near Sai Kung. We hope that it will be possible to introduce these services subject to resources being available within the next four or five years.

MR. YEUNG PO-KWAN:—*I understand that you just mentioned that Government is aware of the seaborne refuse problem at Chung Mei Tuk in Sai Kung; will Government consider providing refuse collection service to boat dwellers there, just to improve the living conditions?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE:—Sir, this is really a matter of priority. Chung Mei Tuk is in the list I quoted just now but is third on the list; it is felt that the situations at both Tuen Mun and Sha Tin warrant earlier action than at Chung Mei Tuk.

MRS. FAN:—*As the Secretary for Health and Welfare explained that it is a matter of priority then what would Government advise the boat dwellers in Chung Mei Tuk to do in the meantime?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE:—I understand that an attempt to alleviate this problem was made by installing refuse bins on the banks of the bay. But this did not seem to work. I think if the people living on the boats in Chung Mei Tuk are keen to improve their living conditions, this might be a way of achieving some progress in the interim.

Private tutorial schools

12. MR. CHAN YING-LUN asked:—*Can Government inform this Council whether action is being taken to monitor private tutorial schools and whether complaints have been received from the public on malpractices involving these institutes?*

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION:—Sir, the Education Department registers all schools falling within the ambit of the Education Ordinance. Private tutorial classes are included if they fall within the definition of a school in the Ordinance, which is an institution, organisation or establishment which provides education for twenty or more persons during any one day, whether or not at the same time.

All registered schools are supervised by the Department through regular inspections. This includes the investigation of any complaints received and remedial action required.

Private tutorial schools do not form a special category under the Education Ordinance. Complaints involving private tutorial classes have been received from time to time. However, the great majority of them have been found to fall outside the ambit of the Ordinance.

MR. CHAN YING-LUN:—*Sir, how does Government ensure that once an institution has over 20 students, it is then registered with the Education Department so as to bring it under Government supervision?*

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION:—The requirements under the Ordinance have been there for many years and are well known to all school operators who intend to start a school. In addition we provide publicity materials in all our offices in the districts, and in Headquarters. I therefore consider there is adequate arrangement for the public to understand the requirement for 20 or more persons at any one time to form a school. In addition, we send our inspectors to visit districts just in case there are such cases coming up our way and we then find out whether these schools are the target of registration.

MR. CHAN YING-LUN:—*In the second paragraph of the reply by the Director of Education, besides investigation of complaints received, does the Government also take action to prevent malpractices?*

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION:—Within the context of the Ordinance my powers, of course, are to ensure that the provisions are fully complied with. The Ordinance itself in fact, does not have a preventive function. However, through our wide network of district offices, our inspectors and our area staff, this message has always been publicised through all these contacts. So in effect there is also a preventive role in our efforts.

MRS. CHOW:—*Since the great majority of such private tutorial schools, as the Director of Education has just told us, fall outside the ambit of the Ordinance, which is the authority that deals with malpractice in these schools?*

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION:—Of the cases which were referred by the public to us, the great majority, in fact, do not fall within the definition of a school. However, many of these cases were raised by the Consumer Council. We have in fact a joint committee with the Consumer Council on a regular basis to look at these complaints and to take remedial action. This Committee started in 1974. It meets regularly and has produced good results.

MRS. CHOW:—*Is it not true that a number of these tutorial schools have actually advertised with money-back guarantees if students fail in their examinations after they have attended these schools, and is money actually refunded in case of failure and is Government considering measures to curb such advertisement?*

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION:—Based on information referred to us from the Consumer Council, these cases in fact were simply business advertisements which, on the face of it, were not breaking the law. However, we are now seeking legal advice to see whether or not those cases can be taken to court if they in fact do break the law.

MR. CHAN YING-LUN:—*Regarding those private tutorial schools which are not registered, what is the advice of the Education Department to students who would consider joining one of such schools?*

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION:—We occasionally did issue press releases, and in addition through our district offices inform all parents and students about the need to use care and commonsense in choosing courses of this kind. This message will continue.

Statements

The new nationality title

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL:—With your permission, Sir, I wish to report to the Council that the Hong Kong Bill, which was introduced into the British Parliament on 10 January, passed its second reading in the House of Commons on 21 January.

In opening the second reading debate on the Bill, Sir Geoffrey HOWE referred to the United Kingdom Memorandum associated with the Sino-British Joint Declaration which provided for British Dependent Territories Citizens of Hong Kong to retain an appropriate status will entitle them to continue to use passports issued by the Government of the United Kingdom. Sir Geoffrey said, and I quote:

‘Following consultations with the Hong Kong Executive Council, it is intended that the title of the new form of Nationality should be "British National (Overseas)". It has not been easy to devise a title which meets all the necessary requirements. On the one hand it needs to make clear that we are dealing with a form of British Nationality. Nothing less than that would be acceptable in Hong Kong. On the other hand it is essential that the title we choose can continue to be used after 1997. For this to be possible, the title must clearly carry no implication of a continuing constitutional relationship between Britain and Hong Kong after 1997. I believe that the title we have chosen meets these needs. It has necessarily been the subject of careful consultations with the Executive Council. The completion of these consultations has enabled me to announce the title to the House today. There should now be adequate time to explain the choice of the new title to the people of Hong Kong.’

Sir, I wish to explain to the Council, if I may, briefly the considerations which have influenced the choice of title. First, the Minister of State, Mr. Richard LUCE, told the House of Commons on 5 December 1984 that the status to be acquired and retained under the terms of the U.K. Memorandum would be a new form of British nationality. The title must, therefore, be different from any of those currently provided for in the British Nationality Act 1981. These existing titles are: British citizen, British Dependent Territories citizen, British Overseas citizen, British subject and British protected person.

Secondly, the title must be unique so that it can be readily identified with persons who on 30 June 1997 are BDTC's by virtue of a connection with Hong Kong. This is important to facilitate acceptance by third countries of the new status and the future passports carrying that status.

Thirdly, the title must clearly stipulate that the status to which it corresponds is a form of British nationality.

Fourthly, the choice of title must take into account the fact that it will continue to be used after 1997, when Hong Kong will have ceased to be British territory. In this connection, any title which contains both the word 'British' and the name 'Hong Kong' would not meet this requirement.

Finally, I should also put on record the fact that, after a number of options had been considered, it was concluded that 'British National (Overseas)' would be the most appropriate in all the circumstances.

Census and Statistics Ordinance

Census and Statistics (1985 Pilot Census) Order 1985

SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES:—Sir, the Order now laid on the table of this Council authorises the Commissioner for Census and Statistics to conduct a pilot land population census in 1985.

On 25 October 1983, the Governor in Council ordered that a population by-census should be conducted in 1986. As part of the overall census plan, a pilot census will be carried out in 1985 to test the organisation and procedure for the by-census in 1986. The pilot census will, in effect, be a 'dress rehearsal' for the main operation. All aspects of the planned system for the 1986 by-census, including the census content, field organisation data processing, will be tested. The pilot census will be conducted in March 1985, and will cover a sample of about 12 000 land-based households.

The Public Accounts Committee, Report No. 7—December 1984

MR. S. L. CHEN:—Sir, in accordance with section 5 of Standing Order 60(A), the Report of the Public Accounts Committee of this Council is laid on the table today.

This has been a notable year in the short history of the Public Accounts Committee. For the first time the Committee held its meetings in public to hear the evidence given by Controlling Officers. I should like to say straight-away that I consider that this was a most successful experiment, and its success was due not least to the very forthcoming and constructive attitude adopted by the Controlling Officers who appeared before the Committee.

Before the Committee started upon its public hearings there had been some concerns in some quarters of the civil service that senior public servants would be either pre-judged by press reports or, worse, presented as figures of ridicule. I am very pleased to say, Sir, that in my opinion all these fears proved in the event to be groundless. Although in our Report my Committee has not been afraid to pass strictures where we thought that these were required, nevertheless we felt

that the Controlling Officers always managed to give a good account of themselves, even when, for reasons of loyalty, some of them appeared to be trying to defend the indefensible.

When we decided that it would be a good thing for the Committee to hold its hearings in public, we firmly believed that this would help the public to get a better understanding of the way in which its Legislative Councillors carry out their duties. I think that that has been achieved, but I should also say that the public hearings acted as a stimulus not only for the Controlling Officers but for the Committee itself to examine and discuss thoroughly the issues presented in the Director of Audit's Report.

I am convinced, Sir, that public hearings of the Public Accounts Committee are here to stay, and if any of my Unofficial Colleagues feel apprehensive about the intention to commence public hearings of the Finance Committee in March, I would reassure them that the extra effort and tension involved is well worthwhile.

It has been my practice, Sir, when introducing this report to offer some personal observations on the process of developing better financial management in the Government. I should like, if I may, to offer one suggestion this year. This relates both to what I said last year and the year before, the need to inculcate a greater sense of financial awareness in managers in the Government. The Committee heard with pleasure this year of the improvements which were brought about by the introduction of thoroughly modern accounting and financial information systems in the Medical and Health Department, and in particular that this new scheme had been successful in promoting that greater sense of financial awareness and budget consciousness in managers. But I am aware, Sir, that the Ledger Accounting and Financial Information System, generally known as L.A.F.I.S., will take time to extend to every corner of this large Administration. Nor do I think that it is the sole solution to the problem which I see. Financial awareness cannot begin and end with one management system.

What is needed, in my view, is a training scheme whereby all officers rising to directorate rank in the civil service are required to go through a course in financial management which outlines the essentials of Government's budgetary system, teaches them the basic principles of cost accounting and management accounting, and gives them a firm grasp of the essential principles of financial control, financial forecasting and even financial modelling. I do not think that this is too much to ask either of the Administration which has such tremendous financial responsibilities as our Government or of the officers who carry the final responsibility for managing public moneys.

I would like to think, Sir, that this suggestion could be considered as coming with the overtones on a compliment rather than a criticism: no standard can be too high for our civil servants to attain.

Report on the Prince Philip Dental Hospital for the period 1 April 1983-31 March 1984

MISS DUNN:—Sir, tabled today is a report on the activities of the Prince Philip Dental Hospital together with a statement of accounts for the financial year from 1 April 1983 to 31 March 1984.

The year was an important one in the development of the hospital. For the first time, a fourth year of dental students continued in their studies leading to the fifth and final year of the dental curriculum. Most of these students have now completed their studies, and the Prince Philip Dental Hospital shares with the Faculty of Dentistry a deep sense of pride in producing the very first group of some 60 locally trained dentists. Overseas examiners have spoken of their impressive qualities. This bears testimony not only to the knowledge and skills of the students but also to the talents of their teachers.

So there has been much discussion about the numbers of dentists that the Hospital is training. Some say that already the needs of the community have been satisfied and that job opportunities for future graduates will be scarce. I do not think so. I believe that the potential for the dental service to the community has yet to be realised. People in Hong Kong still look upon dentistry as the response to pain or disease. There is scope for greater awareness of preventive dentistry, for the spread of knowledge of oral hygiene and dental health care. Dentists will be needed in greater numbers, not only to participate in this educative process, but in responding to the more exacting standards of dental fitness that will come from a better educated community.

Government business**First reading of bill****INSURANCE COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1985**

Bill read the first time and ordered to be set down for second reading pursuant to Standing Order 41(3).

Second reading of bill**INSURANCE COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1985**

THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES moved the second reading of:—‘A bill to amend the Insurance Companies Ordinance’.

He said:—Sir, I move that the Insurance Companies (Amendment) Bill 1985 be read the second time.

The purpose of the proposed amendment is to relax the present law, which invalidates any policy of insurance in which the name or names of the insured and any beneficiaries are not inserted.

Hong Kong's law in this respect derives from a section in the Life Assurance Act 1774, otherwise known as the Gambling Act 1774. The Act, which applies to Hong Kong by virtue of the Application of English Law Ordinance, was directed primarily at preventing what its recital describes as 'a mischievous kind of gaming'. At that time a person could effect insurance on a human life or lives in which he had no genuine interest. In order to deal with this problem, the Act provided that the names of all the insured persons and the beneficiaries should be clearly stated in the policy, so as to demonstrate a recognised pecuniary interest in the life insured on the part of the policy holder and beneficiary. By way of example of the mischief described, I regret to say that prior to 1774 there were recorded instances of jurors in England effecting policies on the lives of defendants charged with capital offences.

This requirement to state the names of all the parties is now out of tune with market practice in relation to group life assurance policies, and accordingly the effect of section 2 of the Life Assurance Act 1774 has been modified in the United Kingdom. The proposed amendment, if enacted, will provide that section 2 of the 1774 Act will not invalidate a policy of insurance for the benefit of unnamed persons within a specified class or description if the class or description is stated in the policy and all persons who are entitled to benefit are clearly identifiable. This amendment is in accordance with the current law in the United Kingdom.

The Insurance Advisory Committee, the Hong Kong Life Insurance Council, and the Insurance Council of Hong Kong have all been consulted and support the proposed amendment.

Sir, I move that the debate on this motion be adjourned.

Motion made. That the debate on the second reading of the Bill be adjourned—SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjournment

Motion made. That this Council do now adjour—THE ATTORNEY GENERAL.

3.30 p.m.

HIS HONOUR THE PRESIDENT:—Honourable Members, ten Members have given notice of their intention to speak. As it would be optimistic to assume that each will speak for three minutes only, I do not think we can finish in half an hour as provided under Standing Orders. So I propose to exercise my discretion under Standing Orders 9(7) and 9(8) to allow Members such time as is necessary to complete their speeches and such time as is then necessary for the tenth speaker, that is to say, the Official Member, the Secretary for Education and Manpower, to reply to those speeches. I shall then put the question on the adjournment.

Education Commission Report No. 1

DR. HO:—Sir, I rise to speak on the recently published Education Commission Report No. 1. The Education Commission should be congratulated on the sensible and imaginative recommendations it has put forward in the report. In my view, these recommendations are practicable and congruent with the social and economic realities of Hong Kong. They are worthy of our support.

Education should be kept constantly under review with regard to changing circumstances and community needs. I look forward to seeing the future reports of the Commission. Different people will have different views on education. My honourable colleagues and I are expressing our personal views on the report. I hope that members of the public will also comment freely on the recommendations.

Due to the normal time constraint on an adjournment debate, I shall make my comments brief.

First of all, I accept the arguments put forward by the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee and the Education Commission against an open university modelled on the U.K. Open University. The Commission has instead proposed the development of open education at all levels to provide second chance opportunities to people beyond school age to further their education. I fully agree with this recommendation. Open education complements traditional tertiary education of which there is a great demand. By providing alternative forms of attendance to full-time education, open education enables mature students with full-time employment to acquire abilities and qualifications beneficial to employment.

The standards of open education courses should be equivalent to that of comparable full-time courses in order to match the expectations of employers. As open education students are likely to have full-time employment and family commitments, they should be allowed to progress at their own pace. There should also be a wide range of courses to cater for the interests of students. In order to keep these courses cost-effective, the drop-out rate should be lowered to a minimum. Some form of part-time or day-release mode of instruction,

characterised by an element of regular teacher-student contacts, is an effective way to ensure a high rate of class attendance and an acceptable level of academic standards.

At present open education programmes are organised by the two universities, the Hong Kong Polytechnic, the Hong Kong Baptist College, the Adult Education Section of the Education Department and various voluntary organisations. There should be a co-ordinating body to bring together these institutions for planning and collaboration purposes.

My second and last observation is on technical education. I am heartened to note that the Education Commission has accorded a high priority to the provision of subsidised post-Form III places in technical institutes and training centres. In order to make technical education more attractive to Form III leavers and their parents, I urge the Government to improve the linkage between technical institutes and the two polytechnics. Graduates of technical institutes should have better access to the tertiary education.

MR. ALEX WU:—Sir, I am grateful to Your Honour for exercising discretion under the Standing Orders to allow the debate to exceed the prescribed time limit. There existed at one time the danger of our soprano voices having a drowning effect on the choir when such time limit would allow Dr. Ho to be accompanied by three ladies only.

The Education Commission, as revealed in its No. 1 Report, has made careful deliberations on the question of language in education taking into account the observations made by the Visiting Panel. The latter had recommended, as noted in the Report, and I quote: ‘a progressive shift from mother-tongue education in kindergartens and primary schools to genuinely bilingual programmes in the junior secondary forms’. I am delighted to see that the Education Commission endorses this view as is noted in paragraph 3.8, and I quote: ‘For Hong Kong to retain its position as a leading international centre of finance, trade and industry, we are convinced that bilingualism is essential.’

Sir, I fully support this view. Hong Kong’s next generation must be competent in both English and Chinese. I am concerned, however, taking the present situation into consideration, whether Hong Kong is ready for the introduction of bilingual education. His Excellency the Governor had, in his opening address to this Council in October last year, referred to the lack of suitable materials for the teaching of Chinese language and that the need to produce Chinese textbooks for the use of primary and secondary schools was ‘a long felt need’. I am happy to see that the Education Commission has recommended in paragraph 3.21(e) that the Chinese and English syllabuses should be redesigned and that arrangements should be made ‘for the publication of textbooks in both languages so that they will be available to all schools regardless of the language mode chosen.’

Sir, I wish to take this opportunity to reiterate my remarks made at the last policy debate about the recommendations made by the Working Party on the Chinese Language Foundation. The Working Party submitted its report to the Government in March 1982. It has become a matter of growing concern to me that after a lapse of almost three full years, there is still no indication from the Government as to how and when the recommendations of the working party would be implemented. The Education Commission notes in paragraph 3.10 that consideration is still being given to the establishment of a Chinese Language Foundation. I urge the Government not to drag its feet on this issue any longer.

On the teaching of Putonghua in schools, the Education Commission recommends in paragraph 3.28 that schools should be encouraged to teach Putonghua during school hours or as an extra-curricular activity. I agree that considering the political change which is to take place in Hong Kong in the next decade, Putonghua will be used more extensively than before. I think the recommendation made by the Education Commission on this issue is timely and appropriate.

However, there is another aspect in the encouragement to use Putonghua. I am sure we are all aware of the plight of the Cantonese-speaking pupils. They face the difficulty of reconciling the spoken and written form of Chinese in the Cantonese context. Let me illustrate ‘食嘢’ (meaning ‘to eat’) is the spoken form (口頭語). Whereas in a composition, the pupils will have to use the written form ‘書面語’ (with the same meaning) which is (吃東西). The use of Putonghua will not only remove this obstacle, but will also make Chinese composition easier and will raise the standard of written Chinese. This had been recognised by the Working Party on the Chinese Language Foundation.

Sir, while I am conscious that the numerous educational issues the Education Commission must address need to be set in an order of priority, I note, nevertheless, with concern and regret the absence of any reference to the arts in education in the next phase of the Commission’s work. This subject was not to be found in Chapter IX: ‘Tasks Ahead’.

I make no apology, Sir, to reiterate that the arts must not be overlooked; they must not be relegated to school extra-curricular clubs. They are not peripheral to the school curriculum, but rather are central to education, if we still hold to the concept of education as the development of the whole man. The Education Commission itself has affirmed its belief in education as—and I quote—‘the means whereby the people of Hong Kong can strive for economic prosperity, social well-being as well as personal fulfilment.’ I applaud this sentiment. But I am convinced that education will fulfil this vital role only if it is education in the broadest and fullest sense of the word. Surely, the arts must be recognised as an integral part of any such educational system.

I, therefore, strongly urge the Education Commission in the near future to focus its attention on this basic issue, the arts in education.

Sir, at the recent official opening of the 13th Hong Kong Arts Festival you referred rightly to the importance of the thriving and effervescent arts scene in Hong Kong. It is our duty to see that this veritable exploration of cultural activities continues to flourish and to enrich our daily life. Our responsibilities begin at the grassroots or more appropriately, grass shoots, in order not to be confused with the nomenclature used by my honourable friend, Mr. K. C. CHAN, in his recent speech. It is in and through our Government supported education system, and especially our schools, that we must prepare our young people to absorb and to develop the rich heritage of our endeavours. In so doing we shall be laying the foundations for the happiness and fulfillment of future generations of our citizens.

MRS. CHOW:—Sir, first of all I would like to express my appreciation to the Education Commission for making a good start in charting the course for our future education development in a most objective and effective manner. Our community should be encouraged by the responsiveness of the Commission in awarding such priority to the very subjects which we all consider most important and urgent.

Having voiced my concern a number of times in this Council over the J.S.E.A. as well as having repeatedly advocated its abolition, I am relieved to learn that the Commission has recommended that the J.S.E.A. be phased out eventually. I am however, somewhat disappointed that the phasing out process should take as long as six years.

The Commission has acknowledged that in principle the J.S.E.A. should end, and seems to accept the grounds put forward by the public as contained in paragraph 2.10 of the report. It has also recommended a package of measures under paragraph 2.38 to be taken to lead up to and follow from the termination of the J.S.E.A.

I support these recommendations as the long term solution to the problem. However I feel not enough urgency is being attached to the issue. After all we are talking about 75 000 15-year-olds being subject to pressures of a public examination and examination it is, and by calling it a test or assessment exercise will not diminish its undesirable effect and it is a public examination for administrative rather than educational reasons for another six years. To date I have not met one teacher, principal or educationalist who feels that the J.S.E.A. has any educational merit, or who has not preferred the early termination of the J.S.E.A. In the face of such opinion shared, I must add, not only by pressure groups and those who might have profit motives, but also by professionals in the educational field as well as parents, it is certainly worth our exploring other ways, and even to pay a small price, in order that we are rid of this unwanted hurdle in the school career as soon as possible.

To bring about the early phasing out of the J.S.E.A. there are other measures that could be taken.

According to published figures, for the past two years around 75 000 third formers have taken the J.S.E.A. However by July, third formers are numbered at around 73 000. If we work on the official drop out rate of 5 per cent after Form III, then there will be a remaining 70 000 youths who would carry on to Form IV. Presently the percentage of students remaining in school after Form III is only 85 per cent, but one can of course argue that with subsidised places available to all those who want it, the figure could rise to 75 per cent. Subsidised places stand at 53 000 for grammar school and 2 000 for the Technical Institutes, making a total of 55 000. In other words the number of additional subsidised Form IV places required to accommodate the estimated 95 per cent of third formers continuing on to Form IV is no more than 15 000 if the J.S.E.A. were to end immediately. As the 1985 J.S.E.A. has already been conducted, the earliest possible date for its phasing out is from 1986 onwards, which means that 15 000 subsidised places are needed from the 1986-87 academic year.

If Stages V and VI of the school building programme are to be maintained at the rate recommended in paragraph 2.29 then the only other way open to Government is to buy in the interim 15 000 places in private schools, some of which may be unsatisfactory according to government standards, but are nevertheless already providing at the moment unsubsidised places to fourth formers who have hitherto failed the J.S.E.A. This means by doing so, that is by buying these places, the Government does not in any way worsen the existing situation in terms of downgrading the standard of education. What is achieved is the lifting up the pressure of the J.S.E.A. for all the 15-year-olds. Assuming such places are bought in Form IV starting in the 1986-87 academic year, the funds required for the first year will be \$33 million for the first year, and \$66 million for the next two years. Starting 1989 as the newly built schools come on stream, the number of places in private schools will be phased down, leading to a drop in expenditure. This additional expenditure can be partly offset by an adjustment in fees students pay to Form IV and V subsidised places which is now \$60 per month. It would not be unreasonable to increase this fee to \$90 per month, as one is at the moment paying at least twice that for kindergarten education. This increase will bring in an additional \$21 million a year to partially offset the above expenditure.

Government argues against this move of buying Form IV and V places in private schools for two reasons: (1) that there are not enough places to be bought in the more satisfactory private schools, and Government is unprepared to sacrifice quality by buying from unsatisfactory private schools; and (2) that public funds are likely to be transferred to profits by school operators rather than to upgrade the standard and facilities of such private institutions.

On the question of quality, we are presently buying a total of 70 000 Form I to III places from private schools. If we could buy for Form I to III as an interim measure while the school building programme is being implemented, we can equally buy for Forms IV and V as an interim measure. As for the question of profits, Government could exercise stricter control and supervision to ensure that subsidies will be used in service and facilities.

The alternative is to advance the school building programme slightly so that the interim measure of buying places in Forms IV and V is reduced to three year period rather than four, thereby saving one year expenditure. If the Government finds it absolutely unacceptable to buy places as suggested above, then the entire school building programme should be rescheduled to enable the phasing out of the J.S.E.A. in 1988. There are three and three quarter years between now and the opening of the 1988 school term. I cannot be convinced that with typical Hong Kong efficiency we cannot meet the deadline. It took the Government three years after its announcement in 1978 to implement to J.S.E.A. in 1981. To take twice that time to phase it out would be hardly reasonable.

I would like to refer briefly to other points of the report.

I consider the recommendation on language as particularly sensible. While the medium of instruction in the mother tongue should be encouraged and assisted, I agree that the schools should be allowed the choice, giving due consideration and emphasis to tradition and achievement.

On the issue of open education, I would like to see much more thought and action on expanding the educational function of the mass media. Previous experience in Hong Kong that Hong Kong had in instructional television was highly successful and financially self-sufficient. The broadcasting media should be developed much further for the purpose of open and extended education. Such a development would be particularly suited to Hong Kong. Apart from the fact that the electronic media enjoys maximum acceptance and penetration, it offers cost-effectiveness, and economy of scale and space, while our compact geography provides the best opportunity for contact between students and instructors as and when the need arises for dialogue and communication. This is certainly one aspect that deserves a closer look by the Broadcasting Review Board.

MISS TAM:—Sir, the timing of the phasing out of the Junior Secondary Education Assessment (J.S.E.A.) is an issue of great concern in the community of Hong Kong. As a member of the Education Commission, I wish to make use of this opportunity to look into some of the main criticisms which I read about in press report in England and put them in proper perspective.

The first criticism is that we should abolish the J.S.E.A. as soon as possible by buying Form IV places from private schools. In order to achieve this, a large sum of money will be required for the purchase of Form IV and V places from private schools and which can be better and more effectively used to improve the quality of education. If we were to buy Form IV and V places from both the satisfactory and unsatisfactory private secondary schools now, the only benefit would be students in these schools would have their fees paid by tax-payers. the community at large, however, will not benefit nor will there necessarily be any improvement in the quality of post-Form III education. In view of this, the Education Commission has recommended that funds should be used to build more good quality secondary schools, improve teacher quality and the quality of technical and vocational education.

Between now and 1991 when the J.S.E.A. is to be phased out, there will be improvements in the quality and quantity of post-Form III school education year by year, briefly:

<i>year</i>	<i>places</i>
1987	640
1988	1 120
1989	2 200
1990	6 080
1991	640
	10 680

The phasing out of the J.S.E.A. in 1991 is related to the completion dates of the 35 additional schools which are drawn up having regard to the normal leadtime required for school construction, training of properly qualified teachers to teach in them and the geographical distribution of students in the urban area and in particular the New Territories where there is hardly any private schools to provide for bought places.

The second point of criticism is that the Government should buy more places from these schools so that their standards can be improved. The Llewellyn Report recommended assistance to private secondary schools but the Commission's report in fact made no reference to this point.

The fact is that the purchase of Form IV and V places from the unsatisfactory private schools will not automatically result in the improvement of the standard of education in these schools. For example, in junior secondary education where the purchase scheme has not led to a general improvement of the standard of Form I to III education in private unsatisfactory schools with bought places. On the other hand, the satisfactory private schools are at liberty to apply and become subsidised ones. I think they should be encouraged to take up this option.

The aim of post-Form III education is to further the personal development of students, to groom them for their responsibilities in society, to prepare them for higher education and for employment, and not just to and I quote the South China Morning Post, 'keep them out of the streets'.

Because of the difference in standard between government/aided schools and the majority of private schools, the pressure upon students is unlikely to ease much by the purchase of Form IV and V places from the private sector because parents and students would still wish to gain a place in a satisfactory school.

The third point of criticism raised is that the cost required to purchase places from private secondary schools is estimated at \$70 million per year, an insignificant amount compared with the current annual expenditure on education.

The fact is this \$70 million per year estimate is based on the assumption that 30 000 Form IV and V places will need to be bought each year. But if you look into the population projection produced by Census and Statistics, the number of places required to be bought in the future between 1985 and 1991 will be, and I read quickly:

1985-86	21 010	\$ 59.5 million
1986-87	40 480	\$114.6million
1987-88	36 960	\$104.6 million
1988-89	33 240	\$ 94.1 million
1989-90	28 215	\$ 79.9 million
1990-91	16 275	\$ 46.1 million
1991-92	3 810	\$10.8million
		<hr/>
		\$509.6 million

The fourth point is that the introduction of another means to allocate children to Form IV/craft places upon the abolition of the J.S.E.A. will cause unnecessary strain to students.

The fact is some means of allocation is needed if only to ensure educational compatibility. A working group, consisting of Education Department staff, secondary school heads and educators, will be set up in the near future to study what means of allocation to adopt in 1991 and how to lighten the burden of the J.S.E.A. Whatever the outcome, it is important to stress that the new means of allocation in 1991 will not and should not be like the J.S.E.A. Since subsidised places will be available for all who wish to continue their education, parents and students need not worry about the prospects of further study. The Llewellyn Report also accepts the need for some kind of assessment upon the phasing out of the J.S.E.A.

The Curriculum Development Committee will also be looking into the feasibility of introducing more interesting and less academic studies in the secondary school curriculum.

Finally there may be doubts about the completion of the 35 additional schools on schedule, as slippage always occurs in the Secondary Schools Construction Programme. To this end I understand that sites for 11 of the 35 schools have already been identified and construction will commence within the year.

Sir, no doubt it is a deep passion of the Chinese people to educate our younger generation the best we can, and the Education Commission has very much in mind the aspirations of the community. I believe the approach recommended is sound both in education and economic terms and I hope the recommendations and the school building programme will be supported by my colleagues in this Council.

4.00 p.m.

HIS HONOUR THE PRESIDENT:—Before I call upon Dr. Ip to speak, Members might appreciate a cup of tea. I therefore suspend the sitting for 15 minutes.

4.15 p.m.

HIS HONOUR THE PRESIDENT:—Council will resume.

DR. IP:—Sir, I welcome the publication of the Education Commission Report No. 1 and support the proposals made. I look forward to the increase in subsidised post-Form III educational opportunities comprising vocational and general education for some 95.2 per cent of the 15-year-old population such that the J.S.E.A. could effectively be phased out in 1991. Buying Form IV places in private schools irrespective of the quality may bring forward that date, but I prefer the rational and cost-effective approach by the Commission in its steady quality long-term approach. We must convince parents that vocational education are comparable and are equally important and meaningful for the community and particularly for the individuals. It can be outright harmful and a waste of time and money to pressurise a child to pursue a general stream when his inclination and ability is towards vocational education. Without such active public relations and promotion of vocational training, whatever a new means of placement to be devised to substitute the J.S.E.A. would continue to be pathologically competitive.

As regards the open university, although I am disappointed with the conclusion of the Commission, I am convinced that the alternative proposal of open education will satisfy the aspiration of those who want to learn but have missed the opportunity. The large number of current open education programmes that exist in Hong Kong now needs co-ordination, and I look forward to the Commission's future proposal of a co-ordinating body. Logically it should also serve as an accrediting body for courses it co-ordinates.

In particular there should be a unified publication each term giving information on the types of open education available throughout Hong Kong. It must also be made possible for the accomplishment of accredited courses to result in the grant of some recognised diplomas or the like.

I am grateful to the members of the Commission for the thoroughly hard work put in and I look forward eagerly to the second report.

MRS. FAN:—Sir, I believe most people in Hong Kong welcome the remarks in the Education Commission Report No. 1 when it stated:—

‘human resources have been, and will remain, a principal asset of Hong Kong, and that education is the key to their development.’

and

‘within the resources available, the needs of the community must first be considered, though in a free society, the wishes of the individual should, within this constraint, be accommodated as far as possible.’

Accepting this approach, there can be a very wide range of methods, using combination of different means, to achieve the end. It is therefore not surprising that diverse views are expressed with regard to this Report, and to these, Sir, I shall add mine.

Junior Secondary Education Assessment System (J.S.E.A.)

This area attracted most attention. The pressure that this system has brought on to the junior secondary school students, their parents and their teachers, is intense to say the least. Virtually every one agreed that J.S.E.A. should be phased out. The question rests with the method used and the timing. This area has already received extensive coverage in the media and has been commented on by those who are enthusiastic about education and widely covered this morning I therefore do not propose to reiterate the pros and cons, except to say that I see 1991 as the latest possible date for phasing out of J.S.E.A. and would welcome an earlier date if at all possible. Indeed, I would welcome a firm commitment by Government that the J.S.E.A. will disappear by 1991 at the latest. Furthermore, I hope that the Education Department and the relevant authorities would make every conscious effort to reduce pressure for junior secondary students during the interim period leading up to 1991.

The Commission recommended that subsidised post—Form III education opportunities should comprise vocational education opportunities and Form IV places in secondary schools. This is a sensible approach as students do possess different aptitudes. Furthermore, vocational education is no less attractive than any other route. At present, there are quite a large number of graduates from technical institutes furthering their education in the Hong Kong Polytechnic, on either part-time or full-time basis. There is also very close liaison between the Hong Kong Polytechnic, the Technical Education and Industrial Training Department and the Technical Institutes via the Director’s Liaison Committee, the Hong Kong Polytechnic/Technical Institutes Joint Consultative Committee, plus another 13 liaison sub-committees under the purview of the latter Committee. The City Polytechnic has also joined some of these liaison bodies since its establishment. One of the topics frequently discussed and continuously dealt with by these bodies is the admission of graduates of Technical Institutes into the Polytechnic. These facts have clearly indicated that deserving students in vocational education do enjoy comparable opportunities as their counterparts in general education, in moving up the qualification ladder.

Putonghua

The Commission recommended that more schools should be encouraged to teach Putonghua either during school hours or as an extra-curricula activity. As I hope to see Putonghua being widely used and universally understood in Hong Kong by the end of the next decade, I feel that the present recommendation is insufficient to achieve this objective. The majority of Chinese societies except Hong Kong use Putonghua, and this has become their common language. Cantonese, though an extremely lively and expressive language, is nevertheless a dialect. Our next generation should be equipped to communicate with Chinese all over the world, and in particular with those residing in China, hence, to master Putonghua, the common language, is a necessity. Every student going through our school system should have an opportunity of learning Putonghua. While I note the Commission's concern that there is a real problem in finding more qualified teachers to teach the subject, and their suggestion to overcome this shortage by pre-service and increasing in-service training, I feel that as an interim measure the possibility of using audio-visual methods including videotapes to acquaint students with Putonghua should be explored and pursued. In order to give every student a fair chance to learn Putonghua, I suggest that there should be Putonghua lessons in every school as part of the formal curriculum.

Teachers

The single most important element in education is the quality and devotion of the teachers. Even when the education system is intrinsically weak, a committed and conscientious teacher can do wonders with his students. There is nothing more discouraging than to witness a disinterested teacher mechanically prodding on with his lessons, simply because he has to earn a living. This seems to be a waste of time for the teacher and his students. The way to counteract this is to find appropriate methods of arousing and preserving teacher's zeal and devotion towards his work. The Education Commission report recommended more teacher's participation in decision making in the school, in curriculum development, the setting up of a regional teachers centre, etc. I support these proposals. In particular I strongly support the recommendation that teachers of craft and technical subjects should be encouraged to update themselves on the latest technical development. Indeed I would venture a step further to suggest consideration be given to systematic updating of the technical know-how of technical teachers by placement in industry or other means. This can ensure that our students receive instructions on the latest technology. The latter is necessary because we are living in a world of rapid technological changes and developments.

The Report pointed out that in-service training activities for teachers and heads of schools are being undertaken by the Education Department. Such activities will be further strengthened when the recommendation of a new college of education is implemented. Leadership at the primary school level will also be strengthened by the implementation of a bachelor degree course in

primary education. All these are very encouraging and should be pursued. However, the training and improvement for kindergarten teachers receive only minimal mention in the present Report. I understand that this will be one of the issues to be considered in the next phase of the Commission's work. I would therefore take this opportunity to stress that kindergarten teachers should receive no less attention and consideration than teachers at other levels, if not for any other reasons but the fact that kindergarten teachers influence our children during their formative years.

Open education

As the Education Commission will be examining this subject in their next phase of work, I only wish to reiterate a suggestion I made on 27 October 1983 in this Chamber for their consideration:—

‘I propose that consideration should also be given to the possibility of Government subsidising suitably qualified students on “approved” training courses. These courses offer training for professional qualifications, updating of professional knowledge and modern technology, which are required to assist Hong Kong to improve both productivity and efficiency in industry and commerce. The contents and standards of these courses must be endorsed by the Government before the “approved” status could be given. The subsidy should go to individual student rather than the organisations in the form of reimbursement of a certain portion of the fees after a student has successfully completed an “approved” course. This method of subsidy may prove to be less costly than other alternatives in the short term, and Government has the flexibility of gearing its support to specific areas of need for economical purposes.’

Sir, we all appreciate that it is not an easy nor simple task to improve the education system. Each individual has his own ideas on this, yet at the same time one must also be realistic and pragmatic in one's approach. I welcome the Education Commission Report No. 1 as it has demonstrated an exceptional amount of common sense and realism in resolving problems of our existing education system. Though the Report cannot satisfy every one, I firmly believe that as time goes by, we shall benefit from further experience, we can make use of these experiences to make even better improvements, and that our ultimate objective can be achieved.

MRS. NG delivered her speech in Cantonese:—

代理港督閣下：教育統籌委員會第一號報告書所檢討的範圍相當廣泛，對多項受社會人士關注的問題都有作出許多具體的建議。這些建議對本港未來十多年在教育方面的發展將會有很深遠的影響。

在中英簽署有關香港前途的聯合聲明後，我們已明確知道香港在十二年之後要面對重大的政治改變。所以，我們要在這十二年的過渡期內為這個轉變作好準備。本人非常贊同教育統籌委員會在第一號報告書裏所提及有關「教育」在過渡期間所扮演的重要角色：「在未來的歲月中，香港會有重要的改變，本委員會相信屆時應把教育作最優先事項處理，因為

憑藉教育，香港人才可以爭取經濟繁榮，社會進步以及實現個人理想。」既然「人力」是本港最主要的資源，「人力的投資」是非常重要的。

在第一號報告書所提及的各項問題中，最受社會人士關注和評論的要算是「初中成績評核辦法」。教育統籌委員會建議政府在今後六年間，透過興建三十多間新中學及職業先修學校，修訂現有學校的結構以及向辦理完善的私立中學購買中四學位，到一九九一年便可以取消中三評核試。這個構想原則上很正確，但步伐方面卻稍慢了一點。其實，教育統籌委員會第一號報告書第二·一〇段已明確地指出在中三評核試還未在一九八一年實施之前，已有許多社會人士對這個甄選和派位辦法抱有極大的懷疑態度，要求把這個考試制度取消。故此，政府應早在幾年前便考慮到中三評核試對學生所做成的不良影響以及社會對高中教育的需求，因而作出長遠的安排，例如：在制訂建校計劃中作適當的配合。但是政府未能夠做到這一點，表示政府一方面沒有適當地接納民意，而另一方面則對於資助高中（中四、中五及職業先修）教育缺乏長遠計劃。以現時的情況看來，本人認為擴建新中學和職業先修學校是逐步取消中三評核試的最長遠而有效辦法，本人謹此要求政府加速興建報告書中所建議的廿四間學校，將第五期（第二段）的十間學校提前到一九八九年完成。務求盡速減輕中三評核試為學童帶來的壓力。

最後本人非常關注報告書第九章「未來的工作」中所提及有關「公民教育」的問題。本港將來要面對的政治改變將會由今日的青少年一代來承擔，所以向他們灌輸正確的公民意識是今日的當前急務。本人希望教育統籌委員會能夠優先考慮這項問題，及早作出全盤計劃，作為中小學校推行「公民教育」的指引。

(The following is the interpretation of what Mrs. NG said.)

Sir, the Education Commission Report No. 1 has covered a wide range of educational issues and made many concrete recommendations regarding issues of public concern. These recommendations would have far-reaching effects on the development of the education system in Hong Kong in the next ten years or so.

With the signing of the Joint Declaration on the future of Hong Kong, we know for sure that we will have to face great political change 12 years later. So during the 12 years running up to 1997, we have to prepare ourselves for this change. I fully endorse the view of the Education Commission as stated in its Report No. 1 that education is to play a very important role in the transition period:

‘In the years ahead when important changes will taken place in Hong Kong, we believe that the highest priority should be given to education as it is the means whereby the people of Hong Kong can strive for economic prosperity, social well-being as well as personal fulfilment.’

In view of the fact that ‘human resources’ is Hong Kong’s principal asset, ‘investment in human resources’ is of utmost importance.

Among the various issues mentioned in the Education Commission Report No. 1, the J.S.E.A. is the most controversial one and has roused intense public concern. The Commission recommends the phasing out of the J.S.E.A. in 1991 through the building of more than thirty new secondary and pre-vocational

schools, the modification of the class pattern of the existing schools and the purchase of Form IV places in the satisfactory private secondary schools over the next six years. This concept is sound in principle, but the pace is slightly slow. In fact, it is clearly stated in paragraph 2.10 of the Education Commission Report No. 1 that before the introduction of the J.S.E.A. system in 1981, many people were sceptical about this system of selection and allocation of Form IV places and suggested to have it abolished. In view of the adverse effects that J.S.E.A. would have on students and the need for senior secondary education in our society, the Government should have made long-term arrangements years ago, for instance, adopting corresponding measures in the school building programme. The Government's failure to do so indicates that it has not taken public opinion into consideration properly on the one hand, and on the other hand, it lacks long-term planning for subsidising senior secondary (Form IV, Form V and prevocational) education. Judging from the present situation, I think that to build new secondary schools and pre-vocational schools is the most effective long-term measure to phase out the J.S.E.A. I hereby urge the Government to speed up the building of the 24 schools proposed in the Report and to bring forward the date of completion of the ten schools under Stage V (Phase II) of the Secondary Schools Building Programme to 1989 so as to alleviate the pressure that has been imposed on the pupils by the J.S.E.A. as soon as possible.

The issue of civic education, mentioned in Chapter IX: 'Tasks Ahead' of the Report, is of great concern to me. As the younger generation in Hong Kong today will have to face the political change which is to come, it is a matter of foremost importance and urgency that they should be properly instilled with a sense of civic awareness. I hope that the Commission would give priority to this issue and draw up a comprehensive plan as soon as possible so that it will serve as a guide-line for the promotion of civic education in primary and secondary schools.

MR. YEUNG delivered his speech in Cantonese:—

代理港督閣下：作為一個教育工作者，本人很高興見到教育統籌委員會發表第一號報告書，並且感到榮幸能有機會參與制訂這份報告書。作為委員會的成員，本人支持報告書中的建議。

從來沒有人敢誇稱任何一種制度是十全十美的，每個人必有他的長處及短處；每件事情必有它的優點及缺點。取捨的決定就在於清楚了解每件事情的整體發展情況，並加以不偏不倚的分析及考慮現存條件的限制及能力負擔，而作出一個較均衡及有利各方面的解決方法。

教育是一件「十年樹木，百年樹人」的長遠事工。要提高教育水準就必須首先奠定良好的教育基礎。培訓人才以配合整個社會的需要是教育長遠的目標，不能單因一個環節所產生的問題而影響社會整體的發展。

中三評核試所帶來的影響是有目共睹，所以第一號報告書提出廢除中三評核試的計劃正顯示出政府的決心及態度，而這個正確路向是無所置疑的。國際教育顧問團認為「政府應儘快取消初中成績評核辦法」，委員會亦沿著這個路向反覆思考，務求在照顧到社會需要及整體教育事業發展的情況下向政府提供儘快解決問題的方法。政府希望透過循序漸進方

式於一九九一年完成逐漸廢除初中成績評核辦法。六年時間不算太長，也不算太短。一個小學可完成六年級，而一個大學生亦可能在這段時間內考取一個或兩個學位。但是六年級只是人學過程的一段短暫時期，而一九九一年亦應視為達致最終目標的一個保守年期。若將來能出現更佳條件，希望目標可提早完成。在「逐步廢除」及「立刻廢除」初中成績評核辦法中提出取捨，決定於是否兼顧到整個教育的各方面計劃。當然，能夠在可能範圍內以最短的時間，最高效率獲得最佳的成果是最理想的，但事實上，這種可能性有多少？我們必須自問是否已經對這個問題採取一種不偏不倚的態度作出忠實的評價？

爲了配合香港未來政治、社會及經濟發展，培養擅長中英文的年青一代是教育大計中重要的一環。香港如要維持國際財經與工商業領導中心的地位，必須實地推行雙語制。政府在政策上已清楚表明中文地位日益重要，而英文的重要性更不容忽視。由於香港的中學有中英文之分而絕大部份教師的語言造詣及學生的傳授程度跟應有標準仍有距離，這樣便不期然會影響師生的溝通及知識的傳授。這種久已存在的弱點是應該避免及摒除的。學校必須以學生利益爲前提並考慮到教師本身在課室內的語文應用能力，面對現實在語文教學方面作出明智的決定，不應採取「打腫面子充胖子」的政策。學校作爲教育機構，在政府支援下，必須負起引導市民改變對中文授課所持一貫態度的責任，而這種鼓勵個別中學採用中文作爲教學語言的政策必須配合高水準中文教科書的供應，充足的教師語文應用訓練，英文教學資源的提供及校內、校外考試的形式始能收到預期的效果。

「名師出高徒」一句說話正顯示出教師與學生在知識傳授中相互間的關係及達致的成果。一位肯負責，有上進心的教師必能以身作則培養出良好的下一代。所以師資培訓工作是必須加強。

一九八五年是實施代議政制的第一年，而爲了配合未來「港人治港」的政策，人才培養實爲新形勢所必需。良好的人才建基於良好教育基礎。爲了應付未來社會不斷轉變，「教育研究」工作的價值是有它肯定的一面。革新香港的教育，全港官民均有責任。最顯明的例子，就是公民教育的推廣必須倚賴全體市民的通力合作始能收取事半功倍之效。教育統籌委員會只根據職權範圍而致力於提供改善教育制度的指標。現在只是完成接力賽中交棒的第一段，在面對第二、第三對段的跑道上，仍會本着奧林匹克「努力面前，向(着標桿直跑)」的一貫精神，繼續完成餘下的路程，以期獲得理想的成績。

(The following is the interpretation of what Mr. YEUNG PO-kwan said.)

Sir, as an educationist, I am very pleased to see the publication of the Education Commission Report No. 1 and am honoured to have been able to participate in its preparation. As a member of the Commission, I support the proposals made in the Report.

No one has ever dared to describe any system as 'perfect'. Everyone has his own good qualities and shortcomings and there are always two sides to a coin. The making of a wise choice depends on a thorough understanding of the development of an issue. A balanced solution which can benefit all concerned can only be reached when the constraints of existing conditions and available resources have been analysed and considered impartially.

Education is a long-term task. 'It takes ten years to grow trees but a hundred years to educate people.' In order to raise the standard of education, it is necessary to lay a firm foundation first. To train people to meet community needs is the long-term objective of education. We cannot let a single problem impede the overall development of the community.

The effects of the J.S.E.A. are obvious to all. The proposal of the Education Commission Report No. 1 to abolish the J.S.E.A. is an indication of the

Government's attitude and determination in this matter, and it is, without doubt, a step in the right direction. The Visiting Panel considered that 'the Junior Secondary Education Assessment system should be abolished as quickly as possible'. The Education Commission has carefully considered this recommendation. In view of the social demand and the development of the education system, the Commission wishes to provide the Government with an early solution to the problem. It is the Government's intention to gradually phase out the J.S.E.A. system by 1991. Six years is not a very long time. Nor is it too short. It is long enough for a primary school student to complete his primary education while an undergraduate may obtain his first or even second degree within the same period. However, viewed against the entire learning process of one's lifetime, six years is but a short while. To put the finger on 1991 as the year when the phasing out of the J.S.E.A. would be achieved should be viewed as a somewhat conservative move. Should conditions become more favourable in the future, it is hoped that the phasing out of the system may be advanced to an earlier date. In deciding on whether to opt for 'gradual abolition' of the J.S.E.A. or an 'immediate abolition' of the system, we should consider which approach would go in line with the other programmes of our education system. It would be ideal, of course, to be able to achieve the best results within the shortest possible time with the greatest efficiency. But would it really be possible to do so? We must ask ourselves whether we have assessed the question honestly and impartially.

In order to cope with Hong Kong's political, social and economic developments in future, our education system should aim to educate our younger generation to be competent in both Chinese and English. If Hong Kong is to maintain its international position as a leading trade and financial centre, bilingualism is essential. The Government has clearly demonstrated in its policies the increasingly important status of the Chinese language, while the importance of the English language should not be overlooked. However, as Hong Kong's secondary schools are categorised into Anglo-Chinese and Chinese middle schools and as the language proficiency of most teachers and students are not yet up to standard, the use of English as the teaching medium has inevitably created a communication barrier between teachers and students as well as becoming an obstacle in the learning process. This long-standing defect should, in fact, be removed. The interests of the students should be given prime consideration and schools should make a realistic and sensible decision on the question of teaching medium after taking into account the teachers' language proficiency in the classroom, instead of trying to 'keep up appearances'. As educational institutions, schools should, with support from the Government, shoulder the responsibility of changing the public's attitude towards using Chinese as the medium of instruction. However, the policy of promoting the use of Chinese as the teaching medium in secondary schools can only be effective if it is accompanied by the provision of high-standard textbooks written in Chinese, sufficient language training for teachers, the

provision of teaching resources in English and an appropriate system of both internal and external examinations.

‘Brilliant students come from great masters’. This saying illustrates the relation between teachers and students, as well as the results that may be achieved in the learning process. A responsible teacher who strives to do better will definitely succeed in grooming an excellent batch of students by dint of his good example. It is, therefore, essential to strengthen teacher training.

1985 marks the first year in the implementation of representative government in Hong Kong. The new situation calls for the training of suitable leaders in line with the future policy of ‘Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong’. Good leadership depends on sound education. ‘Education research’ work should have some positive value in preparing for the future changes of our society. Both the Government and the public have the duty to reform Hong Kong’s educational system. As an obvious example, to promotion of civic education would be much more effective with the enthusiastic support of the Hong Kong people. The Education Commission has according to its terms of reference work out a set of guidelines for improving our educational system. It has now just completed the first leg of the relay race. Nevertheless, bearing in mind the Olympic spirit of ‘running hard and straight towards the finishing pole’, the Commission will continue to finish the race in the hope of obtaining more satisfactory results.

MR. PETER C. WONG:—Sir, I strongly support the proposal of the Education Commission to phase out the J.S.E.A. by 1991. I do so not just because I am a member of the Commission, but because I know for a fact that the Commission has examined every aspect of the J.S.E.A. issue in the most careful and objective way.

Allow me, Sir, to quote from paragraph 10 of the opening chapter of the Commission’s Report:—

‘Underlying our deliberations have been the fundamental issues which have confronted education planners and policy-makers in most parts of the world at one time or another. Some of these are: how do we meet the challenges of mass education up to the senior secondary level at a time of rapid technological and other changes; how do we resolve the problem of the competing demands of, and for, general education on the one hand and technical and vocational education on the other; how do we strike a balance between quantity and quality in education; how should we apportion investment among school buildings, curriculum development and teachers; how can we achieve greater equity and efficiency in the education system; and above all, how do we harmonise the needs of the community and the wishes of the individual within the resources available?’

In deciding on its recommendations on the further expansion of post-Form III education to enable the J.S.E.A. to be phased out, the Commission took into account all the points contained in the paragraph I have just quoted. While it

was apparent that there was much social demand for general education at the senior secondary level, the Commission had to ensure that the needs of industry would also be met: hence the need for the provision of additional technical and vocational places. While it was apparent that there was much demand for quantity, the Commission had to ensure that this was achieved not at the expense of quality: hence the need to build more aided schools and to buy Form IV and V places only from the more satisfactory private schools. While it was apparent that there was much demand for provision of places either through building or buying, the Commission had to ensure that physical expansion is not unaccompanied by the provision of an appropriate language policy, adequate trained teachers and a broadened curriculum to cater for the needs of the academically less able pupils: hence all the relevant recommendations on these matters. While it was apparent that indiscriminate buying of Form IV and V places from private schools might enable the J.S.E.A. to be phased out quickly, the Commission had to pay regard to the fact that equity and efficiency in the education system as a whole need to be enhanced rather than diminished.

Thus, in its view, the Commission has honestly tried to harmonise the needs of the community and the wishes of the individual within the resources available. It is now for educationalists and other members of the public to ponder upon the considerations which I have mentioned and decide in their own minds whether, as a result of the Commission's recommendations, the education system of Hong Kong would not be much better off in the long run than if we had adopted a more opportunistic and, in my view, a less responsible approach.

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER:—Sir, I am grateful to Dr. Ho Kam-fai for proposing this adjournment debate and to all Members who have given their views this afternoon. Members who have spoken have, in one voice, given due recognition to the Education Commission for the full and careful deliberation given to the issues discussed in its Report No. 1. To this, I must also add the Government's appreciation to the Honourable Q. W. LEE, the Commission's Chairman, and all members of the Commission, for producing such sound and practical recommendations within a very limited time.

It is perhaps worth reminding ourselves initially what the Education Commission was asked to do in its first report. The Commission's remit from the Governor in Council when it was set up in April 1984 was to consider the major observations in the designated priority areas in the report of the Panel (of Visitors) and to report back within six months of its commencement. It is important to recall that the Panel of Visitors' report, called a 'Perspective on Education in Hong Kong', did not make specific recommendations as such but referred to their observations as 'desirable directions' in co-ordinated educational policy planning. The Education Commission has approached its specific initial task in the context of the overall preamble to its terms of reference, that is 'to give consolidated advice on the education system as a whole

in the light of the needs of the community' and in the light of its own specific terms of reference 'to ... formulate education policy and recommend priorities for implementation having regard to resources available' and also 'to coordinate and monitor the planning and development of education'. It is therefore to be understood that the report puts forward co-ordinated planning in the 'desirable directions' indicated by the Panel of Visitors and with due regard for what is capable of accomplishment, balancing community needs and resources; in Dr. Ho Kam-fai's words, 'recommendations (which) are practicable and congruent with the social and economic realities of Hong Kong'. If this has resulted in a report that is 'less dramatic' than some would have hoped or less magnificent than some would have wished, I for one make no apology, for what was necessary at this time was a decisive planning approach capable of implementation in a reasonable time-frame without undue disruption to policies that have been unfolding through the various White Papers on Education. I am pleased to note that Mr. Peter WONG shares this view.

Not unexpectedly, the recommendations in the Commission's first report which have caused most comment are those related to the future of the Junior Secondary Education Assessment.

The approach of the Commission to this problem has been consistent with its overall remit: it has aimed to improve the secondary education system as a whole in quality and quantity. The J.S.E.A. itself has been seen as the symptom *not* the cause of the present deficiencies in the system. Contrary to the impression created by the reaction of the various interested parties, the Education Commission did *not* recommend as such the abolition of the J.S.E.A. in 1991 or in any other year, but as a consequence of their proposals to improve education that it should be phased out in that year. In other words the removal of the J.S.E.A. from the educational scene is a by-product of the Commission's recommendations on post-Form III education rather than the objective behind them.

The specific recommendations involve the construction of a further 35 secondary schools, the introduction of a more symmetrical class structure in existing secondary schools to enable more Form III leavers to proceed to Forms IV and V without having to change school, the use of bought places in Forms IV and V of those private profit-making schools which can offer a satisfactory standard of education, the provision of additional full-time craft places, and as highlighted by Miss Maria TAM, a broadening of the curriculum to cater for the full range of student ability.

Because there is a physical limit to the number of secondary schools that can be built annually, the full effects of this expansion programme will not be felt until 1991 at which time the Commission's proposals would allow J.S.E.A. to be phased out. However during the period up to 1991 the provision of post-Form III public sector places will show a steady expansion, so that the pressure which the J.S.E.A. puts on students, parents and school authorities will steadily lessen.

In addition, the Education Department will, in the next few months, conduct a formal operational review of J.S.E.A. with a view to lightening the administrative burden of J.S.E.A. on the participating schools.

It has been suggested by some interest groups, including the Hong Kong Private Schools Association, that the J.S.E.A. could be abolished immediately if the administration were to buy sufficient Form IV and V places from the private, profit-making schools, as happened when it was decided to make junior secondary education both free and compulsory. Mrs. Selina CHOW has also advocated this approach as she wishes to remove the J.S.E.A. as quickly as possible.

On the present number of Form III students, Mrs. CHOW suggests that 15 000 Form IV places should be bought by the Government in 1986-87, increasing to 30 000 places for Forms IV and V for the following two years, and scaling down in 1989 and thereafter when new Government and aided secondary schools come on stream. I would only wish to say that the number of Form III leavers will from now on correspond more and more closely to the 15-year-old age group because repetition in Forms I and II will be reduced, because more and more students will be attending the class level appropriate to their age and because the promise of a subsidised post-Form III place for every student who wishes to proceed with full-time education should result in a higher Form III enrolment ratio than in the past. Hence we have used the projected 15-year-old population for the years 1985 to 1991 to calculate the number of private places required to be bought to achieve the immediate phasing out of the J.S.E.A. On this basis, we estimate that some 179 000 Form IV and V places will need to be bought between the years 1985-86 to 1991-92, or 137 000 places if September 1986 is taken as the date.

Until now, Government has only bought places in Forms I to III from this sector and has been steadily phasing out its use of bought places in the less satisfactory schools as new public sector schools come on stream. This policy stems directly from the 1978 White Paper on 'The Development of Senior Secondary and Tertiary Education', and the present timetable aim at complete elimination of these Form I bought places in 1988. When this is achieved, there will only remain bought places in private independent schools whose 'facilities and operating standard are satisfactory and that their places are required to meet approved targets'. These words are taken from the 1978 White Paper (paragraph 4.5).

In its considerations the Commission felt that to start buying places again that were less satisfactory would be a retrograde step educationally—and indeed—in effect—a reversal of present policy as set out in the White Paper. While the buying of less satisfactory places was perhaps tolerable for a limited period in Forms I to III to achieve universal junior secondary education, the same cannot be justified educationally at the much more demanding level of Forms IV and V which require a sufficiently broad curriculum to cater for the

full range of student ability. The less satisfactory schools are not in position to provide the standard of education required.

For those who advocate the early abolition of J.S.E.A., there are some practical facts to be pondered. Although numerically it is just possible to buy the required number of Form IV and V places from the private sector to meet the anticipated student demand, the great majority of places will have to be bought from the less satisfactory private schools including even those in which Form I to III places are not bought at present. It has been argued that since the equivalent of about 20 per cent of the 15-year-old age group who fail to secure subsidised full-time post-Form III places on the basis of their J.S.E.A. results are currently continuing their education in these schools at their own expense, the situation would be no worse if Government were to buy these places. But neither would it be any better. I share Miss TAM's view that there is a lack of justification for the Government to spend some \$500 million, which is what it will cost the community if these places were bought by the Government immediately or about \$400 million if taken from September 1986. It is as well to bear in mind that the total capital costs for all the recommendations in the Commission's Report which will bring about long-term educational progress and improve the quality of education is some \$430 million.

But regardless of the size of the bill, it is difficult to see what educational benefits will accrue by the immediate abolition of the J.S.E.A. As there are insufficient satisfactory places for all Form III leavers, it would still be necessary to retain an allocation system to decide who gets a satisfactory place and who does not. In other words, the J.S.E.A. would have to be retained and the easing of pressure which Mrs. Selina CHOW has so hoped for would not necessarily materialise.

Where the private schools can offer a satisfactory standard of education it is the Education Commission's recommendation, accepted by Government, that Form IV and V places should be bought. This is part of the package of recommendations designed to produce a significant increase in the quantity of post-Form III education without sacrificing quality and this package can only be seen as sensible, reasonable and, above all, achievable. It will enable the J.S.E.A. to be phased out in 1991.

Mrs. Pauline NG may wish to know that one possibility of advancing this date would be if the satisfactory private schools were to expand their capacity or if the unsatisfactory private schools were to improve their standards to an acceptable level. In either event this would enable Government to buy more Form IV and V places from the private sector and possibly permit the J.S.E.A. to be phased out at an earlier date. Government will explore the possibility of encouraging private secondary schools to do so. Finally, Mrs. FAN has asked for a commitment by Government—J.S.E.A. will disappear by 1991 at the latest. I can assure her this is Government's firm intention subject to the acceptance of its financial implications by the Finance Committee of this Council.

I thank Dr. Ho Kam-fai and Dr. Henrietta Ip for drawing our attention again to the importance of vocational and technical education. The Government is determined to provide a balanced development of general and vocational education at the post-Form III level to meet different student aptitude as well as the community's needs for different educated talents, and to make these two equally important forms of education attractive to Form III leavers. The Government is obliged to the Vocational Training Council, chaired by Mr. Francis TIEN, for its proposal to introduce full-time bridging courses in the technical institutes to enable selected capable graduates of one-year full-time craft-level courses to be admitted to technician courses. The first bridging course will be offered as a pilot scheme in the academic year 1985-86 and the Administration will study the results of this pilot scheme to determine whether it should be implemented on a wider scale.

To attract students to the vocational and technical stream of education, Dr. Ho Kam-fai has called for better linkages between the technical institutes run by the Vocational Training Council and the polytechnics funded under the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee. Some forms of linkage already exist: for example, those diploma holders from technical institutes who are admitted to the three-year higher diploma courses run by the polytechnics are exempted from the first year. Also a large percentage of diploma graduates continue their studies in higher certificate courses at the polytechnics.

I should also add that the functioning of the interface between the technical institutes and the polytechnics is kept under regular review by a well-established structure of joint committees. I have no doubt that Dr. Ho's sensible suggestion will be given due regard by the Commission which is ideally placed to examine whether better interfacing is necessary or can be achieved.

I am grateful to Mrs. Rita FAN for her support of the Commission's recommendations concerning the qualitative improvement of the teaching service and for her suggestion that teachers of craft and technical subjects should be encouraged to update themselves on the latest technological developments. The Vocational Training Council has already taken a number of steps to help staff keep in touch with recent developments in their field. These include a substantial on-going staff development scheme involving both local and overseas industrial attachments and staff visits to some large and progressive local companies. The Hong Kong Technical Teachers' College offers a variety of courses for practising teachers and instructors, the course content of which includes attachments of participants for a number of weeks to various sectors of industry so that they have direct contact with and experience of the latest technology used in industry.

I thank Mr. Alex WU for his support of the Commission's recommendations on language in education. Since language is crucial to the advancement of our intellect and our economic life, we must, as Mr. WU pointed out, continue to improve the standard of Chinese and English in our schools. This will be achieved by strengthening the teaching staff of Chinese in secondary schools

and by providing more teachers of English and other resources to secondary schools which use Chinese as the medium of instruction.

Sir, subject to the advice of the Executive Council on the setting up of the Chinese Language Foundation which I confirm will be sought very shortly, I hope a start can be made this year to the preparation of textbooks and teaching materials written in Chinese for use by schools as soon as possible.

The Government is not, as has been suggested, indifferent to the question of the medium of instruction in secondary schools, nor is it reluctant to provide direction for the future. Indeed, the opposite is the case for subject to the outcome of the various research studies on the effect of different media of instruction on students, the Government has accepted various positive recommendations by the Commission to encourage secondary schools to teach their junior students in the mother tongue. This is a practical and pragmatic approach, advocated by the Panel of Visitors, and supported by Mrs. Selina CHOW and Mr. YEUNG Po-kwan.

Mr. Alex WU supported the teaching of Putonghua in schools. Mrs. Rita FAN suggested that Putonghua lessons should be included in every school as part of the formal school curriculum. The Government will certainly encourage this but, in line with traditional policy of curriculum freedom, will leave the decision to individual schools. As the Director of Education said in this Council on 19 December 1984, it is feasible to include Putonghua in the primary curriculum as an optional subject. Further study is now being undertaken on the teaching of Putonghua as an independent and optional subject in secondary schools. Putonghua training courses are now offered to in-service teachers by the Adult Education Section, the Advisory Inspectorate and the Institute of Language in Education. Putonghua is also taught in the pre-service teacher training courses run by the Colleges of Education, as part of the complementary studies programme.

I am pleased that Dr. Ho Kam-fai and Mrs. Rita FAN supported the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee and the Commission's recommendation that it may be inadvisable to set up an open university in Hong Kong modelled on the U.K. Open University. I would like to assure Members that Government acceptance of this finding should not be interpreted as rejection of the idea of open education. The Government considers open education at all levels to be an important facet of our education system and evidence for this must surely be the variety of open education courses provided by the Education Department, the universities and polytechnics, the training centres and technical institutes and by a large number of subsidised bodies. The Commission is currently embarking upon a very rigorous analysis of the different options for open education with a view to formulating definitive views on how the demand should best be met. I am sure the Commission would seriously consider Dr. HO Kam-fai and Dr. Henrietta IP's various suggestions, including the establishment of a co-ordinating body to bring together

institutions involved for planning and collaboration purposes. Mrs. Rita FAN's idea of Government subsidising suitably qualified students on 'approved' training courses is certainly worth consideration too.

I am grateful to Mrs. Pauline NG and Mr. YEUNG Po-kwan for their remarks on the development of civic education. This is a matter taken seriously by the Government and the Commission, which has indicated its intention to pursue the matter in the second phase of its deliberations.

Finally, I am grateful to all Members for their suggestions which I will ensure are made available to the Commission for consideration and just in case Mr. Alex WU thinks I have forgotten him, that includes the arts in education. No one is more conscious that more remains to be done, but our first task had to be discharged. The 'great educational debate' cannot remain a debate indefinitely. At some stage practical planning measures must be decided on within the 'desirable directions' that have been sign-posted. I must however emphasise yet again that the Commission is a standing commission and as I said in this Chamber on the 8 November 1984 on the occasion of your opening address, Sir, 'The Commission is very conscious of its continuing role and the vast amount of work that remains to be done in further refining its own recommendations, if accepted, and tackling a large number of problems that were not covered in the first report.'

Question put and agreed to.

Next sitting

HIS HONOUR THE PRESIDENT:—In accordance with Standing Orders I now adjourn the Council until 2.30 p.m. on 6 February 1985.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes past five o'clock.