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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, No. 1.

TUESDAY, 25TH JANUARY, 1898.

PRESENT:

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

(Sir WILLIAM ROBINSON, G.C.M.G.).

His Excellency the General Officer Commanding (Major-General WILSONE BLACK, C.B.).

The Honourable the Colonial Secretary and Registrar General, (JAMES HALDANE STEWART LOCKHART).

„ the Attorney General, (WILLIAM MEIGH GOODMAN).

„ the Harbour Master, (ROBERT MURRAY RUMSEY, R.N.).

„ the Captain Superintendent of Police, (FRANCIS HENRY MAY, C.M.G.).

„ the Colonial Treasurer, (THOMAS SERCOMBE SMITH).

„ the Director of Public Works, (ROBERT DALY ORMSBY).

„ CATCHICK PAUL CHATER, C.M.G.

„ HO KAI, M.B., C.M.

„ EMANUEL RAPHAEL BELILIOS, C.M.G.

„ JAMES JARDINE BELL-IRVING.

„ WEI YUK.

ABSENT:

The Honourable THOMAS HENDERSON WHITEHEAD (with leave from His Excellency the Governor).

The Council met pursuant to summons.

The Minutes of the last Meeting, held on the 20th December, 1897, were read and confirmed.

PAPERS.—The Colonial Secretary, by command of His Excellency the Governor, laid on the table the following papers, viz.:—

1. Report of the Head Master of Queen's College.
2. Further Papers respecting the proposed New Government Offices.
3. Supreme Court Revenue Returns, &c. for 1897.

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE.—The Director of Public Works laid on the table the report of the Public Works Committee, dated the 11th January, 1898, (No. 1), and moved its adoption.

The Colonial Secretary seconded.

Question—put and agreed to.

His Excellency the Governor then addressed the Council as follows :—

GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

My principal object in calling a meeting of Council this afternoon was that I might have an opportunity of announcing to you officially a fact with which you are already acquainted privately, that I am leaving this Colony on the 1st of February and that my successor will be Sir Henry Blake. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, to whom I telegraphed a few days ago, is unable to inform me of the exact date upon which my successor will arrive in Hongkong, but I assume that after eight or nine years' hard work in Jamaica he will probably apply for several months' leave of absence. In the meantime, His Excellency General Black will administer the affairs of this Government, a duty for which he is eminently qualified. I have to thank you all, Gentlemen, for the kindness and consideration which you have extended to me during the past six years and two months—a term of office which, uninterrupted by any leave of absence, I do not think has ever been exceeded by a Governor of any one of Her Majesty's Colonies. To Mr. Chater, the senior unofficial member, my thanks are especially due. From you, Gentlemen, I have received valuable advice, and I think I may fairly say on some occasions even unanimous support. I can assure you that I shall always look back with great pleasure upon our meetings here—and if I should ever recall any serious difference of opinion which may have occurred between the Executive and the Unofficial Members of Council I shall not forget that we one and all, according to our own lights, although we differed, were solely animated by a desire to do what we individually thought was best for the interests of this progressive Colony. Gentlemen, I bid you farewell and may every success attend you in the future, both in your public and private capacities.

Mr. CHATER addressed the Council as follows :—

Your Excellency, we have listened with much interest to the announcement you have just made, which, although not unexpected, when thus officially spoken emphasises its reality. Speaking on my own behalf and, I trust, on behalf of my unofficial colleagues present, I desire to express my sincere appreciation of the able manner in which you have for the past six years presided over this Council, and of the unfailing courtesy and forbearance shown by you to all. During your Excellency's administration many important Ordinances have been added to the Statute Book and many important public works accomplished and others inaugurated. This Council, as well as the Executive Council, has been enlarged, and the Colony thereby afforded more voice in the control of its affairs. Your Excellency arrived in this Colony at a time of deep depression. You will leave it in a condition of renewed prosperity with everything on a sounder basis; and this has come to pass in spite of some adverse conditions, namely, the continued dullness of trade and two outbreaks of plague. Under your auspices most important sanitary legislation has been carried through, greatly to the benefit of public health, though in the face of a good deal of opposition; and the city now is in a far better position to grapple with epidemics than it has ever been before. Naturally, there has been some friction occasionally and our debates at times have been very warm indeed, but your Excellency has held the reins with tact and impartiality, and now in laying them down you have the great satisfaction of knowing that you will leave the Colony better in every respect than you found it. I feel only too conscious that I am unable to do justice to the occasion, but I trust that my unofficial colleagues, some of whom will no doubt address you themselves, will supplement my feeble attempt at expressing the general appreciation of your Excellency's successful and popular administration, which has also been the longest since the founding of this Colony. And now, Sir, in bidding you officially farewell I have only to say that although we may not meet at this table or in this Council Chamber again, yet we shall cherish with deep and lively recollection the urbanity with which you have always presided over our deliberations. In the best sense of the term I am sure we all join in wishing you, Sir, good-bye.

Dr. HO KAI addressed the Council as follows :—

Sir, I fully concur with the remarks that have fallen from the lips of the Honourable the Senior Unofficial Member. I have been with him in the sentiments he has expressed in regard to your Excellency. For the past six years your Excellency has most successfully presided over this Council and during that long period your consummate tact, your wise discretion, and your unfailing courtesy have promoted good feeling and harmony amongst Honourable Members and increased the usefulness of their deliberations. Whether we agreed or disagreed upon a measure or a subject, whether we engaged in heated discussion or pleasant banter, the decorum and dignity of the Council have always been maintained. During the six years of your administration we have passed many useful measures and have revised and improved a great many old Ordinances, but I venture to say that in no instance has any harassing or embarrassing legislation been passed. So far as the public works of the Colony are concerned, when your Excellency assumed office there were many useful works in progress and in point

of completion, but your Excellency has inaugurated many useful works and when they are completed—such as the Peak roads the road leading from Plantation Road to Magazine Gap, the new houses that are to be built in Taipingshan, and other new works which your Excellency has caused to be inaugurated—all these, when completed, I say, will remind the Colony of your energetic and what I might call sanitary government. The financial position of the Colony has steadily improved from year to year under your Excellency's administration, and now I venture to think that the colonial finances are so much improved as to be placed on a sound and healthy basis, pessimistic views to the contrary notwithstanding. Now, Sir, in bidding you farewell to-day I wish to tender you my personal thanks for unvarying kind assistance I have received at your hands as the senior representative of the Chinese community. I have on more than one occasion—in fact, on many occasions—made representations on behalf of the Chinese to your Excellency. You have always received such representations most kindly and subjected them to your kindest consideration. You have granted a great number of requests, and the few occasions on which you have found refusal necessary you have carefully explained the reason why the requests could not be granted. I wish to thank you further for the interest you have always taken in Chinese affairs and most especially for the increased representation which you have given to them on this Council. The honourable member whom you have so happily nominated to be the junior member of this Council will represent the Chinese in many ways much better than I, and will render the greatest assistance in looking after and protecting their interests. Now, I am sure that my honourable friend, Mr. WEI A YUK, will join with me in assuring your Excellency that by this act alone you have won the lasting gratitude of the Chinese community of this Colony. Now, Sir, as probably this is the last time you will preside over us in this Council I, as a member of this Council, wish you good-bye and all future happiness and prosperity.

Mr. WEI A YUK addressed the Council as follows :—

Your Excellency, my honourable friend and honourable colleague has so well and fully expressed my own views and sentiments with regard to your Excellency that he has left me nothing more to add than to express my entire concurrence with his remarks. I join with him in wishing your Excellency health, happiness, and prosperity.

Mr. BELL-IRVING addressed the Council as follows :—

I have listened with interest and with great pleasure to the remarks made by the senior unofficial member and by the two unofficial members representing the Chinese community, and with all of them I fully concur. The Honourable Dr. Ho Kai has referred to the great consideration which you have shown to all questions affecting the welfare of the Chinese community, and I would like also to mention the support you have always taken in all matters in connection with the commercial progress and prosperity of this Colony during the past six years. During that period you have warmly supported the many new industrial undertakings started in this Colony and in many other ways helped the mercantile community, who, I consider, have good cause to be most grateful to you. I also desire to wish you long life and every happiness in the future.

Mr. BELLIOS addressed the Council as follows :—

Your Excellency, the honourable members who have just spoken have actually taken the wind out of my sails and I have very little to add to the remarks which have been made. As the oldest member of the Jewish community in Hongkong I can endorse every word of praise that has been spoken. To be brief, I can only say that by your departure we shall lose a kind friend, a good associate, and an able colleague, and I can only trust that those who succeed you will follow the example you have set in your career, which I am certain will result in the happiness of the inhabitants generally of this Island. With these words, Sir, I wish you farewell and happy meetings with friends in the old country.

His Excellency the Governor again addressed the Council as follows :—

Gentlemen, it only remains for me to reiterate my hearty thanks to you for the kindness you have shown me and for the handsome tribute you have just paid to my administration. It is certainly gratifying to me to know that I leave the Colony in a very good position and that I have given satisfaction not only to the public generally but to the Chinese, who form an important part of the community. I can only claim to have done my duty honestly and without fear, favour, affection, or ill-will, and I am quite sure that my successor will follow in my steps.

ADJOURNMENT.—The Council adjourned *sine die*.

WILSONE BLACK,
Officer Administering the Government.

Read and confirmed, this 23rd day of February, 1898.

J. G. T. BUCKLE,
Clerk of Councils.