

GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION.—No. 748.

The following Correspondence on the Intermittent System of Water Supply, which was laid before the Legislative Council on the 5th instant, is published.

By Command,

J. H. STEWART LOCKHART,
Colonial Secretary.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Hongkong, 6th December, 1901.

Registrar General to Colonial Secretary.

No. $\frac{28}{01}$ M.

REGISTRAR GENERAL'S OFFICE,
HONGKONG, 19th November, 1901.

SIR,

The cutting off of the water supply for the greater part of the day causes, as His Excellency is no doubt aware, serious inconvenience to very many persons.

2. From 1897 to 1900 I lived in Caine Road, and the crowds of Chinese who obtained water from a hydrant placed at the corner of Peel Street and Caine Road shewed that the inhabitants of the houses in the neighbourhood did not receive enough water through the pipes laid on to their houses. When there was no water to be obtained from the hydrant the Chinese used to draw it from the drain which runs down Peel Street. I do not know where the water in the drain came from, but it was very dirty.

3. On one occasion no water reached the house in which I was living for 48 hours, and a house in the near neighbourhood was frequently without water for longer periods.

4. There are many four-storeyed houses inhabited by Chinese in which the water never reaches the top storey, and the people living there are dependent upon the complaisance of their neighbours for water.

5. It is hardly to be expected that the improvement in the water supply will keep pace with the increase of population, and I submit that the inconvenience caused by these recurrent water-famines, which may reasonably be regarded as inevitable, is so great and so wide-spread that permanent measures should be taken to reduce it as far as possible.

6. I venture to suggest, but with all deference as I have no expert knowledge of the subject, that an increase in the number of street hydrants would be of some effect in procuring a fairer distribution of the water available.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

A. W. BREWIN,
Registrar General.

The Honourable COLONIAL SECRETARY,

&c., &c., &c.

Minute by the Colonial Secretary.

Honourable DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS,
For consideration and report.

22-11-01.

J. H. S. L.

Minute by the Director of Public Works.

Honourable COLONIAL SECRETARY,

It is undoubtedly the case that many top floors of houses do not obtain a supply of water under the intermittent system, being deprived of it by their neighbours on the lower floors, who draw it all off before it can rise to the top floors. The same thing happens as regards the houses situated on the upper levels being deprived of water by those on the lower levels, and it is well-nigh impossible to prevent this.

To provide street fountains in considerable numbers, in addition to having water laid on to the houses, would mean a greater consumption and waste, and would almost inevitably cause a more frequent or more prolonged application of the intermittent system than at present.

Given the rainfall, our waterworks are about adequate for the wants of the City.

The rainfalls of the past four years have formed an exceptionally low series:—

	1898.	1899.	1900.	1901 to date.
inches	57	$72\frac{2}{3}$	$73\frac{3}{4}$	54

but, notwithstanding this, the intermittent supply has only been in force for 52 days in 1899 and 13 days in 1900. The rainfall this year is no less than 30 inches below the average and but little has fallen since August 19th.

I do not, therefore, consider it advisable to adopt extensive temporary measures such as are proposed by the Honourable Registrar General.

W. C.

22-11-01.

Minute by the Colonial Secretary.

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

Submitted for information. So inform the Registrar General?

J. H. S. L.

23-11-01.

Minute by the Governor.

Honourable COLONIAL SECRETARY,

I should like to know from the D. P. W. if there are any means by which the grave inconveniences caused by the intermittent supply can be lessened, without unduly increasing the danger of exhausting our water supply before the next rainy season.

H. A. B.

26-11-01.

Minute by the Colonial Secretary.

Honourable DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS,

To note and report.

J. H. S. L.

26-11-01.

Minute by the Director of Public Works.

Honourable COLONIAL SECRETARY,

In reply to His Excellency's query, I would point out that the difficulties in the way of ensuring a supply of water to *all* houses in a City such as this, under the intermittent system, are very great.

To begin with, the houses in the City vary in level to the extent of 600 feet and at the Peak 800 feet. The mains are of comparatively small diameter, being designed for a constant supply, and the result is that the houses on a lower level are able to draw off the whole supply and thus prevent water reaching those on a higher level.

The water, in passing to the low-level zone of the City is employed in working motors to pump up the supply to the high-level zone. When the constant system of supply is in force, practically the whole of the water supplied to the lower level zone is used in working the motors, but, when the intermittent system is in force, the bulk of the water has to be allowed to flow through bye-passes, without working the motors, which are too slow in their action to allow the large quantity required to pass through them. Consequently, the motors can only pump a very limited quantity under existing conditions.

Fortunately, the steam pumping engine, which is used for the Peak supply, can be utilized instead, otherwise the High Levels would be practically without water.

From what I have stated, it will be gathered that the intermittent system involves much arrangement and trouble to get it into proper working order, and this has been the greater on this occasion on account of the personnel of the staff employed in connection with waterworks having been entirely changed within the past two years. There is also the fact that enormous extensions of the City have recently been made both on the high and low levels.

Every endeavour has been made to ensure a supply to all houses, with, I believe, large, though evidently not complete, success.

The case of Mr. C. S. SHARP, which recently appeared in the newspapers, well illustrates the difficulties I have represented, as a neighbour of his, whose house is closely adjoining and at a higher level, has, I am informed, received a share of water daily.

With regard to Belilios and other Terraces, from which complaints have also appeared in the papers, the difficulties I have referred to are aggravated by the fact that, in most cases, all the houses are supplied through one service, the result being that those served first obtain all the available supply and prevent it reaching their neighbours. I have given instructions for a fountain to be fixed in this case in order to enable the upper houses to obtain some water.

In the case of tenement houses, the landlords should insist upon the ground-floor tenants contenting themselves with a reasonable allowance of water so that the upper-floor tenants may stand a chance of obtaining some.

Judging from the diminution in the number of complaints reaching me, I infer that the arrangements are now working well. I regret that I should have appeared to treat complaints with indifference or discourtesy, but it would have been impossible for me to reply to them without almost entirely neglecting my numerous other duties.

W. C.

28-11-01.