



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2, 1978

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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2, 1978

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TAX EXEMPTION FOR RETIREMENT BENEFITS SUGGESTED
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THE SENIOR UNOFFICIAL MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, THE HON. SIR SZE-YUEN CHUNG, ASKED THE GOVERNMENT TO EXEMPT FROM TAX THE RETIREMENT BENEFITS RECEIVED BY WORKERS, WHETHER OR NOT THE RETIREMENT SCHEMES COVERING THEM ARE APPROVED BY THE COMMISSIONER OF INLAND REVENUE.

AT PRESENT ONLY THOSE BENEFITS GIVEN OUT UNDER APPROVED SCHEMES ARE TAX FREE.

SIR SZE-YUEN RAISED THIS SUBJECT AT AN ADJOURNMENT DEBATE TODAY AND WAS SUPPORTED IN HIS REQUEST BY FOUR OTHER UNOFFICIALS.

APPROVAL GIVEN TO RETIREMENT SCHEMES HAS CONSEQUENCES FOR EMPLOYERS. THEY ARE GIVEN BASIC TAX RELIEF ON ANNUAL CONTRIBUTIONS MADE TO THE SCHEMES, SUBJECT TO A MAXIMUM OF 15 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL EMOLUMENTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEES CONCERNED.

SIR SZE-YUEN SAID THAT WHILE THE INLAND REVENUE (RETIREMENT SCHEME) RULES GOVERNING THE APPROVAL OF RETIREMENT SCHEMES WERE VERY FAIR, +THE COMMISSIONER OF INLAND REVENUE HAS IMPOSED, ON TOP OF THESE RULES, CERTAIN ADMINISTRATIVE CONDITIONS, ONE OF WHICH HAS CAUSED TREMENDOUSLY UNFAIR SUFFERING TO EMPLOYEES. +

+THE RULES, AS APPROVED BY THIS COUNCIL, DO NOT STIPULATE THAT AN APPROVED RETIREMENT SCHEME MUST BE FUNDED AND ADMINISTERED BY TRUSTEES OR A TRUSTEE CORPORATION. NEVERTHELESS, WHERE THE FUNDS OF A SELF-ADMINISTERED SCHEME ARE INVESTED BY THE MANAGEMENT IN THE COMPANY'S OWN BUSINESS, APPROVAL OF THE SCHEME WILL, AS THE DEPARTMENT'S OWN INFORMATION PAMPHLET PUTS IT, 'ALMOST INVARIABLY BE WITHHELD'. +

HE SAID IT WAS THIS ADMINISTRATIVE AND DISCRIMINATORY DECISION OF THE COMMISSIONER THAT HE WISHES TO SEE ABOLISHED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. +WHETHER OR NOT AN EMPLOYER OR MANAGEMENT IS RELIABLE OR TRUSTWORTHY AND WHETHER OR NOT A COMPANY HAS ADEQUATE FINANCIAL MEANS TO MEET THE LIABILITY OF ITS EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT BENEFITS HAS NO RELEVANCE WHATSOEVER TO GRANTING EMPLOYEES EXEMPTION FROM SALARIES TAX ON SUMS PAID TO THEM UNDER A RETIREMENT SCHEME. +

HE THEREFORE SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT ALLOWS TWO TYPES OF APPROVED RETIREMENT SCHEMES, BOTH OF WHICH MUST, FIRST OF ALL, CONFORM WITH THE INLAND REVENUE (RETIREMENT SCHEME) RULES.

THE FIRST TYPE WOULD BE FOR THOSE THAT ARE SEPARATELY FUNDED AND ADMINISTERED BY TRUSTEES OR TRUSTEE CORPORATIONS.

UNDER THIS TYPE, EMPLOYERS WOULD BE GIVEN RELIEF ON ANNUAL AND SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS MADE TO THE SCHEME AS PERMITTED AT PRESENT, AND EMPLOYEES WOULD NOT BE LIABLE FOR SALARIES TAX ON SUMS PAID TO THEM.

THE SECOND AND NEW TYPE WOULD BE FOR THOSE IN WHICH THE FUNDS ARE NOT HELD SEPARATELY, ARE SELF-ADMINISTERED BY MANAGEMENT AND ARE INVESTED IN THE COMPANIES' OWN BUSINESS.

UNDER THIS TYPE, EMPLOYEES WOULD NOT BE GIVEN TAX RELIEF ON NOTIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS OR PROVISIONS MADE TO FINANCE THE SCHEME AND THEY WOULD HAVE TO WAIT FOR SUCH RELIEF UNTIL THE ACTUAL PAYMENTS WERE MADE TO EMPLOYEES ON RETIREMENT.

+HOWEVER, EMPLOYEES PARTAKING IN THIS TYPE, LIKE THOSE IN THE FIRST TYPE, SHOULD ALSO NOT BE LIABLE FOR SALARIES TAX ON SUMS PAID TO THEM UNDER THE SCHEME,+ SIR SZE-YUEN SAID.

HE SAID THIS CHANGE IS LONG OVERDUE AND WILL REMOVE A MAJOR INJUSTICE TO WAGE EARNERS.

HE COMMENDED THE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS EFFORTS IN IMPROVING THE WELFARE OF THE WORKERS THROUGH LABOUR LEGISLATION IN RECENT YEARS.

HOWEVER, HE SAID, ALL THE WELFARE AND FRINGE BENEFITS SO FAR PROVIDED ARE SHORT-TERM IN THEIR EFFECT, AND EVEN REDUNDANCY PAY, WHICH IS THE EXCEPTION, CANNOT REALLY BE CLASSIFIED AS A LONG-TERM BENEFIT.

A NATIONAL CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME HE PROPOSED FOUR YEARS AGO WAS VERY ENTHUSIASTICALLY SUPPORTED BY THE INDUSTRIAL WORKFORCE. DESPITE GOVERNMENT APATHY TOWARDS THE PROPOSAL, THERE IS AN INCREASING NUMBER OF INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYERS ESTABLISHING RETIREMENTS SCHEMES.

+THIS IS, OF COURSE, A VERY WELCOME DEVELOPMENT AND I URGE THE GOVERNMENT ACTIVELY TO ENCOURAGE AND PROMOTE SUCH PROGRESS IN THE PROVISION OF SOCIAL BENEFITS,+ HE SAID.

THE HON. LEUNG TAT-SHING, THE REV. THE HON. PATRICK MCGOVERN THE HON. WONG LAM AND THE HON. JAMES WU SPOKE IN SUPPORT OF SIR SZE-YUEN'S PROPOSAL TO INTRODUCE A NEW TYPE OF APPROVED RETIREMENT SCHEME TO BENEFIT WORKERS.

MR. LEUNG SAID HONG KONG'S WORKFORCE HAS BEEN ONE OF THE LESS FORTUNATE GROUPS OF THE COMMUNITY.

OVER THE PAST DECADES OUR WORKERS HAVE UNSELFISHLY CONTRIBUTED THEIR SHARE TOWARDS PROGRESS AND ECONOMIC SUCCESS AND NOW THAT THESE GOALS HAVE BEEN REACHED, THEY DESERVE TO SHARE SOME OF THE FRUITS OF THEIR HARD WORK, HE ADDED.

MR. LEUNG AND FATHER MCGOVERN URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO RECONSIDER THE INTRODUCTION OF A CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME.

FATHER MCGOVERN DREW ATTENTION TO A CHAPTER ON OLD AGE PROTECTION IN AN INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING PARTY REPORT PUBLISHED IN APRIL 1967 WHICH HE WANTED THE GOVERNMENT TO LOOK AT AGAIN AND UPDATE.

ALTHOUGH THE REPORT CAME OUT IN FAVOUR OF A PENSION INSURANCE SCHEME, HE FOUND THAT ITS ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF A PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME WERE MORE COGENT THAN ITS ARGUMENTS AGAINST IT.

HE ALSO AGREED WITH THE MAIN THESIS OF THE REPORT, THAT THE PROPORTION OF OLD PEOPLE IN THE POPULATION WILL INCREASE SIGNIFICANTLY YEAR BY YEAR AND THAT +THE TIME HAS COME WHEN THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE SHOULD BE PERSUADED AND, IF NECESSARY, COMPELLED TO BEGIN ASSISTING ITSELF IN MAKING PROVISION FOR ITS OWN OLD AGE.+

FATHER MCGOVERN POINTED OUT THAT THE REFERENCE TO 'THE TIME HAS COME' IS NOW OVER ELEVEN YEARS AGO. +THE YOUNG AND MIDDLE AGED WORKERS OF THAT TIME ARE NOW ELEVEN YEARS NEARER THE DAY WHEN THEY WILL BE DEPENDENT ON THE COMMUNITY FOR THEIR LIVELIHOOD AND DRAWING ON SOME OTHER FUNDS INSTEAD OF THE FUNDS TO WHICH THEY AND THEIR EMPLOYERS COULD HAVE BEEN CONTRIBUTING FOR THE PAST 11 YEARS.+

MR. WONG LAM SAID THAT WITHOUT A CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND AND WITH ONLY LIMITED ASSISTANCE UNDER THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM FOR THOSE WHO RETIRE, RETIREMENT BENEFITS CONSTITUTE THE MOST IMPORTANT SECURITY FOR THE OLD AGE OF MOST EMPLOYEES.

IT IS A SERIOUS BLOW TO THESE EMPLOYEES IF, FOR SOME REASON WHICH DOES NOT CONCERN THEM, PART OF THEIR RETIREMENT BENEFITS IS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT AS TAX.

MR. WONG THOUGHT THE TWO SUGGESTED TYPES OF APPROVED RETIREMENT SCHEMES COULD BE ADOPTED IN THE SAME COMPANY. IF THE EMPLOYEES HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN THE COMPANY'S OWN SCHEME, THEY CAN OPT TO JOIN A SCHEME ADMINISTERED BY A TRUSTEE CORPORATION.

+IN ANY CASE, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD GRANT TAX EXEMPTION TO THESE TWO DIFFERENT TYPES OF SCHEME, IN ORDER TO PROTECT THIS LONG-TERM BENEFIT OF THE WORKING CLASS AND TO PROVIDE THEM WITH BETTER SECURITY,+ HE SAID.

MR. JAMES WU SAID IN THE INTEREST OF SOCIAL STABILITY AND PROGRESS, THE MOVES BY MOST CHINESE EMPLOYERS IN SMALL BUSINESS TO GIVE RETIREMENT BENEFITS, NORMALLY IN A LUMP SUM, UPON THE RETIREMENT OF AN EMPLOYEE SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED.

HE AGREED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD ELIMINATE THE INJUSTICE TO EMPLOYEES WHO RECEIVE RETIREMENT BENEFITS UNDER NON-APPROVED SCHEMES. HE SAID FOR REASONS THAT ARE EVIDENT, SMALL EMPLOYERS WHO CONSTITUTE OVER 90 PER CENT OF EMPLOYERS IN HONG KONG, ARE NORMALLY SHORT IN CASH CAPITAL AND PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS AND WERE PARTICULARLY SCEPTICAL OF GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT.

+THE NECESSITY TO HAVE SUMS OF MONEY TIED UP, COUPLED WITH BUREAUCRATIC FORMALITY AND INFLEXIBILITY HAVE DETERRED THE SMALL BUSINESSES TO MAKE A MOVE TOWARDS SCHEMES THAT COULD MEET GOVERNMENT APPROVAL,+ HE ADDED.

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INTEREST OF WORKERS PREVENTS
APPROVAL FOR SELF-ADMINISTERED RETIREMENT SCHEMES

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THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON. PHILIP HADDON-CAVE, SAID TODAY THAT IT WAS GOVERNMENT'S STAND NOT TO GRANT APPROVAL TO SELF-ADMINISTERED RETIREMENT SCHEMES IN ORDER TO SAFEGUARD THE INTERESTS OF WORKERS.

REPLYING TO POINTS RAISED BY SOME UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ON +TAXATION OF RETIREMENT BENEFITS+ DURING THE COUNCIL'S ADJOURNMENT DEBATE, MR. HADDON-CAVE SAID HE WAS SURPRISED THAT THIS STAND IS OBJECTED TO BY THEM.

MR. HADDON-CAVE SAID THAT THE INLAND REVENUE (RETIREMENT SCHEME) RULES PROVIDED THAT +THE RETIREMENT SCHEME SHALL BE EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE EMPLOYEE AND OF THE WIDOW, CHILDREN, SURVIVING DEPENDENTS, OR LEGAL PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVES OF AN EMPLOYEE+ AND THAT +EACH EMPLOYEE CONCERNED SHALL BE ENTITLED TO DEFINED BENEFITS+.

+SEPARATELY FUNDED RETIREMENT SCHEMES GIVE WORKERS SOME ASSURANCE THAT WHEN THE DATE OF RETIREMENT FINALLY ARRIVES, THE FINANCIAL BENEFITS DUE TO THEM ARE ACTUALLY AVAILABLE TO THEM,+ MR. HADDON-CAVE EMPHASISED.

+FURTHERMORE, AS THE SCHEMES MUST ALSO BE PROPERLY FUNDED THE FUNDS CONCERNED ARE USUALLY INVESTED IN A MIXTURE OF LOCAL AND OVERSEAS STOCKS, BANK DEPOSITS AND BONDS, RISKS ARE SPREAD AND A STEADY RETURN ACHIEVED,+ HE ADDED.

ON THE OTHER HAND, MR. HADDON-CAVE NOTED THAT IN THE CASE OF SELF-ADMINISTERED RETIREMENT SCHEMES, FUNDS ARE INVESTED BY EMPLOYERS IN THEIR OWN BUSINESSES.

+SUCH SCHEMES GIVE A LESSER DEGREE OF PROTECTION TO WORKERS IN THAT PAYMENTS ARE LESS ASSURED IF THE EMPLOYER'S BUSINESS RUNS INTO DIFFICULTY OR IF IT IS LIQUIDATED= AND, EVEN WHEN THIS IS NOT THE CASE, THE RETURN ACHIEVED IS MUCH LESS CERTAIN,+ MR. HADDON-CAVE EXPLAINED.

HE ALSO SAID THAT THE INLAND REVENUE (RETIREMENT SCHEME) RULES IMPLIED THAT A SCHEME IS NOT TO BE USED AS AN INSTRUMENT OF DISCIPLINE BY THE EMPLOYER.

+SELF-ADMINISTERED SCHEMES, WHEREBY FUNDS ARE INVESTED IN THE EMPLOYER'S OWN BUSINESS, COULD BE USED BY THE EMPLOYER TO ENFORCE DISCIPLINE AND LOW WAGES,+ HE SAID.

/MR. HADDON-CAVE

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MR. HADDON-CAVE ALSO BROUGHT OUT TWO ASPECTS OF THE RULES AND THE TAXATION TREATMENT BENEFITS UNDER THE INLAND REVENUE ORDINANCE. THESE ARE: TO ENSURE PROPERLY CONSTITUTED RETIREMENT SCHEMES IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKERS; AND TO ENCOURAGE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SUCH SCHEMES BY WAY OF GRANTING TAX RELIEF TO EMPLOYEES AND, TO A SOMEWHAT LESSER EXTENT, EMPLOYERS.

MR. HADDON-CAVE OBSERVED THAT THERE HAVE BEEN VERY FEW CASES IN THE PAST WHERE APPROVAL FOR SCHEMES SUBMITTED HAS HAD TO BE WITHHELD BECAUSE THE SCHEME WAS NOT PROPERLY FUNDED, NOR HAS THE REQUIREMENT FOR PROPER FUNDING PROVED TO BE AN OBSTACLE TO NEW SCHEMES BEING SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

IN FACT, HE SAID, THE NUMBER OF APPROVALS WAS RISING EVERY YEAR FROM 56 IN 1973-74 TO 154 IN 1975-76 AND TO 192 IN 1977-78.

MR. HADDON-CAVE ADDED, HOWEVER, HE WOULD CONSIDER FURTHER THE PROPOSITION OF UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS ON THE MATTER.

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**TOPLEY LINKS EDUCATION PLANNING WITH DEMAND
FOR PLACES AND MANPOWER NEEDS**

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THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, THE HON. KENNETH TOPLEY, TODAY SPELLED OUT THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE PLANNING OF SENIOR SECONDARY AND TERTIARY EDUCATION PROVISION TOOK INTO ACCOUNT THE DEMAND FOR PLACES BY STUDENTS AND PARENTS, AND HONG KONG'S PROJECTED MANPOWER NEEDS.

MR. TOPLEY WAS REPLYING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TO COMMENTS MADE LAST MONTH BY MEMBERS OF THE UMELCO AD-HOC GROUP ON THE GREEN PAPER ON SENIOR SECONDARY AND TERTIARY EDUCATION.

HE SAID THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PLANNING AND MANPOWER NEEDS WAS AN ISSUE THAT CAUSED LONG DEBATE AND REVEALED CONSIDERABLE VARIATIONS IN OPINION AMONG THE WORKING PARTY THAT PRODUCED THE GREEN PAPER.

+ON THE ONE HAND THERE IS THE SCHOOL OF THOUGHT WHICH BELIEVES THAT PROVISION SHOULD BE MADE TO ENABLE ALL TO ACHIEVE THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF WHICH THEY ARE CAPABLE REGARDLESS OF THE ECONOMIC NEEDS OF SOCIETY,+ MR. TOPLEY SAID.

/+AT THE OTHER END

AT THE OTHER END OF THE SPECTRUM IS THE BELIEF THAT UNLESS PROVISION OF PLACES AT THE VARIOUS LEVELS OF OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM IS GEARED TO MANPOWER NEEDS, SERIOUS SOCIAL PROBLEMS WILL ARISE FROM THE INABILITY OF THE COMMUNITY TO MATCH EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES WITH EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT.

+THE PROVISION RATES AT THE VARIOUS LEVELS — FORM 4, FORM 6 AND TERTIARY — PROPOSED IN THE GREEN PAPER RECOGNISED MANPOWER NEEDS BUT TRIED TO MAKE SUFFICIENT PROVISION TO MEET THE DEMAND FROM THOSE ESTIMATED TO BE ABLE TO BENEFIT FROM THE COURSES OFFERED.

+MOST OF THE MEMBERS OF THE AD HOC GROUP APPEAR TO HAVE ACCEPTED THE GREEN PAPER APPROACH. AT LEAST THEY ACCEPT IT AS REASONABLE PROVIDED IT CAN BE REVIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE, AND WITH THEIR PROVISIO THAT UNIVERSAL SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION UP TO FORM 5 SHOULD BE OUR LONG-TERM AIM.

+THE VIEW HAS BEEN EXPRESSED BY MR. FRANCIS TIEN AND MR. S.L. CHEN THAT TOO LARGE A PROVISION OF SENIOR SECONDARY PLACES WILL SERIOUSLY DISRUPT THE MANPOWER SUPPLY TO INDUSTRY AT THE CRAFT AND OPERATIVE LEVELS.

+THIS IS A SITUATION WHICH WILL REQUIRE CAREFUL WATCHING, BUT, AS MR. Q.W. LEE HAS POINTED OUT, IF SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION CONTINUES TO AFFECT EARNING POWER, PUBLIC PRESSURE FOR IT WILL CONTINUE.

+IF THIS PRESSURE IS NOT CATERED FOR IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR, THE PUBLIC WILL TURN TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR. THE SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM, THEREFORE, LIES NOT ONLY WITH THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR EDUCATIONAL PROVISION, BUT WITH THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE AND WITH INDUSTRY IN PARTICULAR.

+THE LOGIC OF THE SITUATION IS THAT EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING IN INDUSTRY WILL HAVE TO BECOME MORE ATTRACTIVE IN REWARDS AND IN CONDITIONS OF WORK. ANOTHER WAY OF ENCOURAGING AN ADEQUATE FLOW OF YOUNG PEOPLE INTO THE CRAFT LEVELS OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE IS, AS MR. TIEN HAS PROPOSED, TO EXPAND THE PRE-VOCATIONAL STREAM.

+THIS POSSIBILITY, TOGETHER WITH WAYS OF MAINTAINING A HIGH QUALITY OF INTAKE TO THE PRE-VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS, PERHAPS THROUGH A LIMITED INTRODUCTION OF SENIOR SECONDARY CLASSES IN THESE SCHOOLS, IS BEING SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED.

+MR. Q.W. LEE ALSO POSES THE QUESTION : WHAT KIND OF TRAINING SHOULD WE PLAN FOR OUR FUTURE MANPOWER?

+THE REQUIREMENTS OF TOMORROW ARE NOT EASY TO FORECAST WITH ANY CONFIDENCE. THIS, TOGETHER WITH THE EVER-INCREASING RAPIDITY OF CHANGE IN A TECHNOLOGICAL WORLD, WAS APPARENTLY FULLY APPRECIATED BY A NUMBER OF THE SPEAKERS AT THE SITTING IN JULY.

/+HENCE THE BELIEF

ENCE THE BELIEF THAT THE BASIS FOR A WORK-FORCE ABLE TO COPE WITH THE TASKS AHEAD IS A FULL, ALL-ROUND SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR ALL OUR YOUNG PEOPLE. WITHOUT THIS WE SHALL NOT HAVE IN OUR WORK-FORCE THE ADAPTABILITY, THE FLEXIBILITY AND THE INNOVATIVENESS TO SECURE OUR ECONOMIC SURVIVAL.

+TO THIS DEBATE THERE IS NO ABSOLUTE 'BOOK' ANSWER. ALL WE CAN STRIVE TO DO IS TO FIND A FORMULA - THE MIXTURE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING, OF INDUCEMENTS IN THE VARIOUS SECTORS OF OUR ECONOMY AND OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR SATISFYING LEISURE PURSUITS - WHICH WORKS FOR OUR SOCIETY.

+THIS FORMULA WILL EMERGE ONLY FROM PRACTICAL TRIALS. THE GREEN PAPER, IN EFFECT, MADE CERTAIN PROPOSALS TO THIS END. A NUMBER OF MEMBERS HAVE MADE SUGGESTIONS INVOLVING AN EVEN RICHER MIXTURE OF INGREDIENTS THAN ENVISAGED IN THE GREEN PAPER TO SATISFY THE ASPIRATIONS OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR PARENTS AND THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY.

+THESE, TOGETHER WITH OTHER COMMENTS ARISING FROM THE PUBLIC DEBATE ON THE GREEN PAPER, ARE BEING GIVEN THE FULLEST CONSIDERATION IN DRAWING UP THE WHITE PAPER.+

COMMENTING ON THE MORE SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS MADE IN LAST MONTH'S SPEECHES ABOUT SENIOR SECONDARY, TEACHER TRAINING, TECHNICAL INSTITUTES, THE UNIVERSITIES AND POLYTECHNIC, THE POST-SECONDARY COLLEGES AND ADULT EDUCATION, MR. TOPLEY SAID :
+THE 50 PER CENT RATE OF PROVISION OF FORM 4 TO 5 SENIOR SECONDARY PLACES APPEARS TO BE SUPPORTED BY THE MAJORITY - EVEN IF ONLY AS A FIRST STEP.

+PUBLIC DEMAND, HOWEVER, AS EXPRESSED IN SUBMISSIONS TO THE SECRETARY FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND IN THE MEDIA, WAS STRONGLY IN FAVOUR OF A GREATER PROVISION.

+BEFORE REACHING A FINAL DECISION ON THIS MATTER, OTHER FACTORS WILL HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED. FOR EXAMPLE, THE GREEN PAPER PROPOSALS ENVISAGED A FAIRLY SEVERE DEGREE OF ASYMMETRY IN THE NEW SCHOOLS TO BE BUILT IN THE NEW TOWNS AND OTHER DEVELOPING AREAS.

+THERE IS A FEELING, THAT THIS ASYMMETRY SHOULD BE REDUCED. COMPLETE SYMMETRY IN OUR SYSTEM, HOWEVER, MEANS THE SAME AS FULL SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR ALL. AND THERE ARE CONSTRAINTS - PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL - WHICH WOULD DETERMINE THE SPEED AT WHICH WE COULD PROVIDE FOR THIS.

+WE MUST REMEMBER, TOO, THAT THE CALL FOR A BROADENING AND ENRICHMENT OF THE CURRICULA WILL REQUIRE A CONSIDERABLE PROGRAMME OF EXTENSIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS IN FACILITIES.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE 'PACKAGE' THAT WILL BE PRESENTED IN THE WHITE PAPER WILL ALLOW FOR A RATE OF PROVISION OF PLACES ACCEPTABLE TO THE MAJORITY.

+I CAN ASSURE MEMBERS THAT THIS RATE WILL NOT BE LESS THAN 50 PER CENT - AND I SHOULD LIKE TO ASSURE DR. HUANG THAT THE CHANGES IN POPULATION PROJECTIONS AND ESTIMATED LEVELS OF DEMAND AND THE NEED FOR CAREFUL AND CONSTANT MONITORING ARE FULLY REALISED. SOME FLEXIBILITY WILL BE BUILT INTO OUR PLANS.+

COMMENTING ON A QUESTION PUT BY DR. HUANG ON THE PROVISION OF SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR DISABLED STUDENTS, MR. TOPLEY SAID: +EDUCATION FOR HANDICAPPED PUPILS AT THIS LEVEL IS COVERED IN THE WHITE PAPER ON REHABILITATION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH WHICH PROVISION WILL BE MADE IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS FOR SEVERELY HANDICAPPED PUPILS UNABLE TO ATTEND NORMAL SCHOOLS.

+THE LESS SEVERELY HANDICAPPED WILL BE INTEGRATED INTO ORDINARY SCHOOLS OR TECHNICAL INSTITUTES WHEREVER POSSIBLE.

+THERE ARE ALREADY SOME ORDINARY SCHOOLS PARTIALLY ACCESSIBLE TO THE HANDICAPPED. DISCUSSIONS ARE NOW BEING HELD WITH THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT ON DESIGNING SOME NEW SCHOOLS AND ADAPTING SOME EXISTING SCHOOLS TO MAKE THEM ACCESSIBLE TO THE MORE SEVERELY HANDICAPPED. THE KOWLOON TONG TECHNICAL INSTITUTE HAS ALREADY BEEN PLANNED TO BE MADE ACCESSIBLE TO THE HANDICAPPED.+

SPEAKING BRIEFLY ON THE PROVISION OF FORM 6 EDUCATION, MR. TOPLEY SAID : +PRESENT PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS SECTOR OF OUR SYSTEM IS STILL AT A VERY EARLY STAGE.

+THE BOARD OF EDUCATION HAS SET UP A COMMITTEE TO STUDY THE REPORT PRODUCED BY MY WORKING COMMITTEE. AN INTERIM REPORT WILL BE MADE BY THE BOARD'S COMMITTEE TOWARDS THE END OF THIS YEAR, AND ITS FINAL REPORT SHOULD BE READY NEXT SPRING.

+IF SOME MEMBERS SHOULD THINK THAT WE ARE MOVING RATHER SLOWLY, I WOULD POINT OUT THAT THE PROBLEM OF FORM 6 EDUCATION HAS BEEN A MATTER OF INTENSE DEBATE AND DISCUSSION IN BRITAIN FOR THE PAST 10 YEARS AND THAT THE PROPOSALS WHICH HAVE FINALLY BEEN FORMULATED (BUT BY NO MEANS ARE FINDING GENERAL ACCEPTANCE) ARE LIKELY TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN 1986.

+THE COMMENTS MADE BY MEMBERS ON FORM 6 EDUCATION, IN PARTICULAR THOSE BY MISS KO AND MISS BENNETT, WILL BE PASSED ON TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION FOR DELIBERATION. IN THE MEANTIME, HOWEVER, IT WOULD APPEAR REASONABLE TO CONTINUE WITH THE PRESENT RATE OF PROVISION IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR - ONE-THIRD OF THOSE ENTERING FORM 4.

/+THE AD HOC GROUP

THE AD HOC GROUP HAS EXPRESSED SATISFACTION THAT THERE WILL NOT BE A PUBLIC EXAMINATION AT THE END OF FORM 3 BUT, ALTHOUGH ACCEPTING THE NEED FOR SOME SYSTEM OF ALLOCATION, ARE AFRAID THAT THE APTITUDE TESTS IN CHINESE, ENGLISH AND MATHEMATICS WILL LEAD TO DISTORTION OF THE CURRICULUM AND DEFEAT THE PURPOSE OF GENERAL EDUCATION.

+THESE DANGERS WERE FULLY REALISED AND THOROUGHLY DISCUSSED BY THE WORKING PARTY WHICH PRODUCED THE REPORT ON WHICH THE NEW SYSTEM IS BASED.

+NO ONE INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND FAMILIAR WITH THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS ENTRANCE EXAMINATION COULD FAIL TO KNOW THESE DANGERS. IN FACT, THE DECISION TO LIMIT THE TESTS TO CHINESE, ENGLISH AND MATHEMATICS WAS MADE IN THE BELIEF THAT THIS WOULD BE THE BEST WAY TO AVOID DISTORTION OF THE CURRICULUM.

+IN MOST OTHER SUBJECTS THE CONTENT IS LESS IMPORTANT THAN THE METHODS OF STUDY, THE STUDY SKILLS AND ATTITUDES FOSTERED AND THE INTEREST AROUSED. PUBLIC TESTS, HOWEVER WELL CONSTRUCTED, INEVITABLY INTRODUCE RIGIDITY INTO THE COURSE AND PRESSURE TO PERFORM WELL. THE EFFECT, THEREFORE, OF INTRODUCING TESTS FOR ALL SUBJECTS WOULD BE TO DESTROY THE SPIRIT OF THE NEW JUNIOR SECONDARY CURRICULUM. THE MAIN AIM IN THE TEACHING OF CHINESE, ENGLISH AND MATHEMATICS IS TO MAKE POSSIBLE THE USE OF THESE SKILLS IMPARTED, PROVIDED THE PUBLIC TESTS CONCENTRATE ON THE USE OF THESE TOOLS, THEY WILL ENCOURAGE PROPER LEARNING.

+THE JUNIOR SECONDARY CURRICULUM IS THE PLATFORM FOR STUDY IN FORM 4 AND 5. NO SENSIBLE SCHOOL WILL SO DISTORT ITS TEACHING THAT IT FAILS TO PROVIDE ITS PUPILS WITH THIS NECESSARY BASIS FOR THE SENIOR SECONDARY COURSE.

+I REALISE, HOWEVER, THAT THE NEW SYSTEM WILL HAVE TO BE CAREFULLY MONITORED AND, IN TIME, REVIEWED. IT IS MY INTENTION TO PROVIDE FOR THIS MONITORING BY INCREASING THE RESEARCH CAPABILITY WITH THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT. TO BE EFFECTIVE, WE MUST BEGIN OUR MONITORING PROGRAMME IMMEDIATELY. WITHOUT A 'PHOTOGRAPH' TAKEN OF THE SITUATION IN OUR FORM 1 TO 3 TEACHING NOW, HOW CAN WE ASSESS THE EFFECT OF THE NEW SYSTEM? THIS RESEARCH WILL BECOME A JOINT FUNCTION OF MY ADVISORY INSPECTORATE AND THE EDUCATION RESEARCH ESTABLISHMENT AND WILL REQUIRE THE ALLOCATION OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO THESE SECTIONS.

+ANOTHER MAIN ISSUE RAISED BY THE AD HOC GROUP AND FURTHER STRESSED BY INDIVIDUAL SPEAKERS IS THAT OF UNIFORMITY OF STANDARDS IN OUR PROVISION OF PUBLIC SECTOR PLACES.

+SPECIFIC POINTS MENTIONED WERE THE NEED TO BRING THE CAPUT SCHOOLS ON TO FULL AID, REDUCING RELIANCE ON BOUGHT PLACES IN THE PRIVATE INDEPENDENT SECTOR AND GREATER CONTROL OF THAT SECTOR.

+THE LAST TWO POINTS ARE ALREADY CATERED FOR IN PRESENT PROPOSALS, WHICH I CANNOT SEE BEING ALTERED IN THE WHITE PAPER.

/+BY THESE,

+BY THESE, THE NUMBER OF FORM 1 TO 3 BOUGHT PLACES IN PRIVATE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS WILL HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO SOME 17,000 BY THE MID-1980S. THERE IS NO INTENTION TO BUY FORM 4 TO 5 PLACES IN THE PRIVATE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS. IN THE MEANTIME SUPERVISION OF SCHOOLS OFFERING BOUGHT PLACES WILL CONTINUE AND, IF NECESSARY, BE INCREASED TO ENSURE THE MAINTENANCE OF ADEQUATE STANDARDS.+

REITERATING HIS AWARENESS OF THE NEED FOR GREATER UNIFORMITY OF STANDARDS IN THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC SECTOR PLACES, MR. TOPLEY SAID : +THIS OF COURSE, IS NOT LIMITED TO SENIOR SECONDARY PLACES, BUT COVERS ALL SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVELS. THE UNIFORMITY SOUGHT WILL BE ACHIEVED ONLY BY BRINGING ON TO FULL SUBSIDY ALL THE NON-PROFIT-MAKING SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING IN THE CAPUT GRANT SCHEME.

+THE GREEN PAPER, BEING CONCERNED WITH SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION, REFERRED ONLY TO THE BUYING OF FORM 4 TO 5 PLACES IN THESE SCHOOLS AND TO THE NEED FOR A REVIEW OF THE LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE TO THEM.

+THIS WAS DISCUSSED RECENTLY WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT AND PROPOSALS ARE NOW BEING CONSIDERED WHICH COULD ACHIEVE UNIFORMITY OF ASSISTANCE IN ALL PUBLIC SECTOR SCHOOLS WITHIN THREE TO FIVE YEARS OF THE PUBLICATION OF THE WHITE PAPER. WHATEVER THE TIME-SCALE FINALLY AGREED, IT IS HOPED THAT THE FIRST STEPS WILL BE TAKEN IN SEPTEMBER, 1979.+

IN AN EFFORT TO CLEAR UP A MISCONCEPTION HELD BY MR. S.L. CHEN, MR. TOPLEY SAID : +THE 1965 WHITE PAPER LAID DOWN THAT EXPANSION, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, SHOULD BE THROUGH THE AIDED SECTOR, AND THIS POLICY HAS BEEN FOLLOWED.

+THIS, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN NO REFLECTION ON THE STANDARDS OF GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS, WHOSE REPUTATION WITHIN THE COMMUNITY STANDS VERY HIGH.+

TURNING TO MEMBERS' SUPPORT FOR THE IDEA OF BROADENING THE CURRICULUM AT THE SENIOR SECONDARY LEVEL AND, IN PARTICULAR, TO THE INTRODUCTION OF A GREATER PRACTICAL AND TECHNICAL CONTENT, MR. TOPLEY ASSURED MEMBERS THAT THEIR WISHES WOULD BE CATERED FOR IN THE WHITE PAPER AND, MORE IMPORTANT, BE IMPLEMENTED IN SCHOOL COURSES.

+I MUST ADVISE MEMBERS, HOWEVER, THAT TO INTRODUCE A GREATER PRACTICAL AND TECHNICAL ELEMENT WILL NOT BE WITHOUT ITS DIFFICULTIES,+ HE SAID.

+A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF ADAPTING AND EXTENDING OF PREMISES WILL BE REQUIRED. THE FLOATING CLASS SYSTEM, UPON WHICH WE SHALL HAVE TO RELY FOR QUITE SOME TIME DOES MAKE IT DIFFICULT BECAUSE THE SPECIALIST ROOMS QUICKLY BECOME OVERLOADED.

/+CENTRAL WORKSHOPS

+CENTRAL WORKSHOPS HAVE BEEN PROPOSED AND SUPPORTED. BUT THEY, TOO, RAISE PROBLEMS BOTH OF INTERNAL MANAGEMENT AND PROBLEMS ALSO FOR THE SCHOOLS THEY SERVE. TIME-TABLING BECOMES MORE COMPLICATED, MORE DIFFICULT. WE SHALL NEED TO INTRODUCE OUR CENTRAL WORKSHOPS GRADUALLY AND CAREFULLY.

+I APOLOGISE TO MR. ALEX WU IF THE GREEN PAPER GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE AUTHORS', AND THEREFORE THE GOVERNMENT'S, INTERESTS WERE TOO UTILITARIAN - MORE CONCERNED ABOUT TRAINING A WORK-FORCE THAN GIVING OUR CHILDREN AN ALL-ROUND EDUCATION.

+IT IS TRUE THAT WE WERE CONCERNED THAT WE SHOULD NOT CREATE A SYSTEM OF EDUCATION WHICH WOULD IN TIME, AS HAS HAPPENED ELSEWHERE, DAMAGE THE FABRIC OF OUR SOCIETY.

+AND, AS I HAVE ALREADY MENTIONED, SOME MEMBERS STILL HAVE WORRIES ON THIS. PERHAPS THIS CONCERN DID LEAD TO TOO STRONG AN EMPHASIS ON OUR ECONOMIC NEEDS. I AM SURE THAT THE WHITE PAPER WILL REDRESS THE BALANCE.+

MR. TOPLEY SAID MR. ALEX WU AND MISS BENNETT HAD BOTH MADE STRONG PLEAS FOR MORE EMPHASIS ON THE CULTURAL SUBJECTS IN SCHOOLS, PARTICULARLY FOR MUSIC.

+I CAN ASSURE THEM THAT SCHOOLS WILL CONTINUE TO BE GIVEN EVERY ENCOURAGEMENT TO GIVE THE CULTURAL SUBJECTS THEIR DUE PLACES,+ HE SAID, +MUSIC IS ALREADY ENCOURAGED AS A GENERAL SUBJECT AND IS BEING INCLUDED IN THE RECOMMENDED FORM 4 TO 5 CURRICULUM FOR ALL STUDENTS. ART AND DESIGN WILL ALSO BE MORE WIDELY OFFERED. THE NEW INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC SCHEME IS CERTAIN TO CREATE WIDER INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION IN MUSIC.

+ON THIS QUESTION OF THE CULTURAL SUBJECTS, HOWEVER, I THINK WE SHOULD REMEMBER JUST HOW MUCH THEY HAVE BURGEONED OVER THE PAST 15 YEARS.

+I KNOW THAT SOME WILL CHARGE THAT THIS HAS OCCURRED MAINLY THROUGH OUR EXTRA-CURRICULAR PROGRAMMES. THE FACT IS, THE BURGEONING HAS HAPPENED. AND LET'S NOT OVER-STRESS THE 'EXTRA' PART. THEY ARE STILL SCHOOL-BASED ACTIVITIES, THE SUCCESS OF WHICH HAS COME FROM DEDICATION AND TIME FREELY GIVEN BY OUR TEACHERS. PERHAPS MORE DEFINITE INCLUSION IN THE SCHOOL'S TIME-TABLES A LITTLE MORE 'COMPULSION' WILL BE BENEFICIAL, BUT WE MUST NOT OVERDO IT.+

COMMENTING ON MR. ALEX WU'S SUGGESTION THAT CHINESE TRADITION MADE IT POSSIBLE TO INTRODUCE MORAL TRAINING AS A SPECIFIC SUBJECT INTO SCHOOL TIME-TABLE, MR. TOPLEY SAID, +THIS VIEW IS RESPECTED AND PROVISION HAS BEEN MADE FOR THE INCLUSION OF RELIGIOUS/ETHICAL TEACHING IN THE NEW FORM 4 TO 5 CURRICULUM. MORAL ISSUES ARE ALSO INTRODUCED INTO GENERAL SUBJECTS.

/+HOWEVER, THE

+HOWEVER, THE TEACHING OF MORALITY OR ETHICS IS NO EASY TASK. WE ENTER AREAS OF DEEP CONTROVERSY AND IF TEACHERS ARE TO TEACH EFFECTIVE MORAL STANDARDS TO QUESTIONING PUPILS THEY MUST BE GIVEN A SOUND KNOWLEDGE OF THE CONFLICTING VIEWS AND BE PREPARED TO DEAL WITH SUCH QUESTIONS AS : 'ARE THERE ANY ABSOLUTE VALUES OR ARE ALL VALUES RELATIVE?'

+THIS VERY QUESTION IS AT THE HEART OF THE CRISIS IN OTHER COUNTRIES WHICH DO NOT APPEAR TO HAVE SO COMPLETELY ABANDONED THE ATTEMPT TO INSTIL MORAL VALUES AS MR. ALEX WU SUGGESTS.

+INDEED, THERE IS REAL CONCERN IN BRITAIN OVER THIS ISSUE AND VALUABLE WORK HAS BEEN DONE IN CONSTRUCTING SYLLABUSES WHICH ATTEMPT TO ENCOURAGE PUPILS TO THINK SERIOUSLY ABOUT MORAL VALUES WITHOUT INDOCTRINATION.+

TURNING TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE TWO LANGUAGES, MR. TOPLEY SAID THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HAD BEEN AWARE OF THIS FOR A LONG TIME.

+THE IDEA OF CONCENTRATING ON EITHER CHINESE OR ENGLISH, AS SUGGESTED BY MR. YEUNG, IS ATTRACTIVE. HOWEVER, I CANNOT REALLY SEE HOW WE COULD EVER BE JUSTIFIED IN CONCENTRATING ON ENGLISH WITH CHILDREN WHOSE FIRST LANGUAGE IS CHINESE.

+TO ADOPT THE ALTERNATIVE - TO USE CHINESE ONLY - WOULD BE SEEN BY MANY AS A RETROGRADE STEP. HONG KONG IS AN INTERNATIONAL CITY WHOSE VERY SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON TRADE AND COMMUNICATION WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD.

+ENGLISH IS ITS MEANS OF DOING SO. I BELIEVE, THEREFORE, THAT WE SHALL HAVE TO GO ON LIVING WITH OUR TWO-LANGUAGE PROBLEM.

+WHAT WE CAN DO, AND ARE DOING, IS TO STUDY INTENSIVELY THE PROBLEM OF ENGLISH TEACHING TO FIND THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND LEAST BURDENSOME METHODS FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE.

+FINALLY, AND NOT ENTIRELY UNRELATED, IS THE QUESTION OF TEXTBOOKS IN CHINESE RAISED BY MR. HILTON CHEONG-LEEN.

+LOWER DEMAND FOR TEXTBOOKS IN CHINESE AT THE SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL HAS KEPT THE QUALITY OF THESE BOOKS INFERIOR TO THEIR ENGLISH COUNTERPARTS AND LESS CHOICE IS AVAILABLE.

+AGAIN THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT IS AWARE OF THE PROBLEM AND IS DOING ALL IT CAN TO IMPROVE MATTERS IN DISCUSSION WITH PUBLISHERS.+

MR. TOPLEY SAID THE DESIRE FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF SECONDARY EDUCATION WAS ALSO REFLECTED IN MEMBERS' COMMENTS ON TEACHER TRAINING.

+THERE IS OBVIOUSLY GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT IF WE ARE TO PROVIDE A BROADER GENERAL EDUCATION TO A GREATER NUMBER OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE, WE SHALL REQUIRE NOT ONLY MORE TEACHERS, BUT ALSO HIGHLY EDUCATED AND WELL-TRAINED TEACHERS,+ HE SAID.

/+MEMBERS HAVE,

+MEMBERS HAVE, THEREFORE, SUPPORTED THE GREEN PAPER PROPOSAL TO RAISE THE ENTRY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION. I THINK I DETECT, HOWEVER, LESS CERTAINLY ON WHETHER OR NOT THE PRESENT TWO-YEAR COURSE OF TRAINING SHOULD BE LENGTHENED. IT COULD WELL BE THAT TO DO BOTH IS NOT REQUIRED IN ALL CASES. IF SO, I WOULD CONSIDER IT MORE EFFECTIVE TO ENSURE GREATER CONTENT OF KNOWLEDGE IN OUR TRAINEE TEACHERS ON ENTRY.

+A FULL SCALE REVIEW OF NON-GRADUATE TEACHER EDUCATION IS BEING CONDUCTED BY THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCES TO THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION AND THE TECHNICAL TEACHERS' COLLEGE.

+THE REVIEW WILL COVER LENGTH AND CONTENT OF INITIAL COURSES OF TRAINING, ENTRY REQUIREMENTS, PRIORITIES FOR REFRESHER/RE-TRAINING PROGRAMMES AND COLLEGE STAFFING REQUIREMENTS.

+THE WORKING PARTIES CARRYING OUT THIS REVIEW WILL CERTAINLY TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE POINTS WHICH MEMBERS HAVE MADE.+

COMMENTING BRIEFLY ON THESE, MR. TOPLEY CONTINUED: +MISS BENNETT HAS CRITICISED THE PRESENT STAFFING OF THE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION: TOO MANY NON-GRADUATES AND NOT ENOUGH USE MADE OF OVERSEAS-TRAINED STAFF.

+THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HAS RECOGNISED FOR SOME TIME THAT OUR STAFF STRUCTURE IN THE COLLEGES NEEDED REVIEW. THIS HAS BEEN DONE AND A NEW ESTABLISHMENT IS, I HOPE, ABOUT TO BE APPROVED.

+A FEATURE OF THE NEW ESTABLISHMENT IS THAT THE NUMBER OF GRADUATE OR GRADUATE-EQUIVALENT POSTS HAS BEEN INCREASED TO ABOUT 63 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL TO STRENGTHEN THE ACADEMIC CONTENT OF THE COURSES AND TO REFLECT THE FACT THAT JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW TEACHERS LIE MAINLY IN THE SECONDARY SECTOR.

+HOWEVER, OUR COLLEGES ALSO TRAIN TEACHERS FOR OUR PRIMARY SCHOOLS, SO THAT THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A NEED FOR NON-GRADUATE LECTURERS WITH PRIMARY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE.

+THE NEW STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS ARE ALSO EXPECTED TO ENSURE GREATER STABILITY. THERE IS A CASE FOR A SYSTEM WHICH ALLOWS SHORT-TERM TRANSFER FROM CLASSROOM TEACHING TO OTHER AREAS OF EDUCATION (INCLUDING TEACHER TRAINING) AND VICE VERSA.

+FINALLY, ON THE QUESTION OF STAFFING, THE NEW STRUCTURE IN THE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION WILL HAVE MORE POSTS TO WHICH LECTURERS HOLDING OVERSEAS GRADUATE QUALIFICATIONS CAN BE APPOINTED.

+THE EFFECT OF THIS CHANGE WILL BE GREATEST IN ART, HOME ECONOMICS, MUSIC AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION, IN WHICH FOR THE FIRST TIME IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO APPOINT GRADUATES OR GRADUATE EQUIVALENTS.+

/MR. TOPLEY SAID

MR. TOPLEY SAID BOTH MR. Q.W. LEE AND DR. HUANG HAD STRESSED THE NEED TO ENSURE AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF TEACHERS TO MEET OUR SECONDARY EDUCATION EXPANSION.

+THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HAS RECENTLY COMPLETED A VERY THOROUGH SURVEY OF NON-GRADUATE TEACHER REQUIREMENT UP TO 1987 AND THE PROJECTIONS FROM THIS ARE BEING USED IN OUR FORWARD PLANNING FOR THE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION,+ HE SAID,+A SIMILAR SURVEY IS BEING UNDERTAKEN FOR GRADUATE TEACHERS WHICH, I HOPE, WILL BE COMPLETED BY THE AUTUMN. I WILL THEN CONSULT THE TWO SCHOOLS OF EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITIES.+

MR. TOPLEY SAID THE MAIN TASK OF WORKING PARTIES REVIEWING NON-GRADUATE FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMMES WAS THE CONTENT OF THE TRAINING COURSES IN WHICH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND STUDENT GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING WOULD BE TOPICS OF INCREASING IMPORTANCE.

MR. TOPLEY ALSO ASSURED MR. ALEX WU THAT CULTURAL SUBJECTS WOULD RECEIVE THOROUGH TREATMENT IN THE REVIEW.

+FROM HIS REMARKS, HOWEVER, I AM CONCERNED THAT MR. WU UNDER-ESTIMATES THE ATTENTION AT PRESENT GIVEN TO CULTURAL SUBJECTS, IN PARTICULAR MUSIC, IN OUR COLLEGES OF EDUCATION,+ HE SAID.

+ALL STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO SPEND SOME TIME EACH WEEK IN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES TO HELP EXTEND THEIR OUTLOOK AND INTERESTS. MUSIC IN THIS CONTEXT IS AN ACTIVITY AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS OTHER THAN THOSE WHO HAVE ELECTED TO STUDY MUSIC WITH A VIEW TO TEACHING MUSIC IN SCHOOLS.

+THOSE WISHING TO TEACH MUSIC IN SCHOOLS UNDERGO A FULL, PROPERLY-STRUCTURED COURSE IN JUST THE SAME WAY AS THOSE STUDYING ANY OTHER TEACHING SUBJECT IN THE CURRICULUM.+

TURNING TO A SUGGESTION MADE BY MR. JAMES WU THAT THE TECHNICAL TEACHERS' COLLEGE SHOULD TAKE INTO ITS COURSES HIGHER CERTIFICATE OR HIGHER DIPLOMA HOLDERS FROM THE POLYTECHNIC IN AN EFFORT TO RAISE THE STANDARD OF TEACHERS OF TECHNICAL SUBJECTS, MR. TOPLEY SAID: +EVER SINCE THE TECHNICAL TEACHER COURSES BEGAN IN 1969, WE HAVE BEEN ADMITTING ORDINARY DIPLOMA AND HIGHER CERTIFICATE HOLDERS TO THE ONE-YEAR COURSE.

+THERE ARE, HOWEVER, OTHER APPARENTLY MORE ATTRACTIVE AVENUES OPEN TO THOSE WITH SUCH QUALIFICATIONS. WE HAVE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO ATTRACT HIGHER DIPLOMA HOLDERS.

+TEACHER TRAINING IS UNDOUBTEDLY ONE OF THE KEY AREAS IN THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE SECURE A WELL-TRAINED, WELL-MOTIVATED TEACHING FORCE TO STAFF OUR SCHOOLS. THIS WILL ONLY BE ACHIEVED THROUGH AN ATTRACTIVE CAREER STRUCTURE AND A RESPECTED PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY FOR OUR TEACHERS.+

/MR. TOPLEY SAID ALTHOUGH ...

MR. TOPLEY SAID ALTHOUGH THE GREEN PAPER DID NOT PROPOSE ANY MAJOR CHANGE IN THE ROLE OF TECHNICAL INSTITUTES, THEY WOULD BE EXPANDED TO MEET DEMAND AND A CREDIT UNIT SYSTEM WOULD BE INTRODUCED TO FACILITATE GREATER MOBILITY FROM COURSE TO COURSE AND TO ALLOW PROGRESSION TO THE POLYTECHNIC. THE MAIN EMPHASIS IN THE INSTITUTES WOULD CONTINUE TO BE ON THE PROVISION OF PART-TIME DAY RELEASE CRAFT COURSES WITH A LESSER PROVISION OF TECHNICIAN COURSES.

+THIS IS VERY MUCH IN LINE WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HONG KONG TRAINING COUNCIL,+ HE SAID. +THROUGH THE PART-TIME DAY RELEASE MODE OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION - WHICH IS MORE COMPREHENSIVE THAN THE EVENING MODE - STUDENTS ARE BETTER ABLE TO RELATE THEIR FORMAL TRAINING TO THEIR ACTUAL TASKS AT WORK.

+BUT IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE AD HOC GROUP WOULD PREFER TO SEE GREATER EMPHASIS ON FULL-TIME AND EVENING CLASS COURSES, AND AN EVALUATION OF THE WHOLE SYSTEM HAS BEEN RECOMMENDED.

+I THINK THIS SUGGESTION SHOULD BE TAKEN UP, BUT I WOULD REMIND MEMBERS OF THE VIEWS OF THE HONG KONG TRAINING COUNCIL. I MUST ALSO POINT OUT THAT PART-TIME DAY-RELEASE PLACES MAKE UP ONLY ABOUT 30 PER CENT OF THE WHOLE AND THAT THESE COURSES ALREADY REQUIRE ATTENDANCE TWO EVENINGS A WEEK. THE GREEN PAPER HAS, IN FACT, PROPOSED A CONSIDERABLE INCREASE IN EVENING-ONLY COURSES.+

MR. TOPLEY SAID HE WAS PUZZLED BY THE SUGGESTION THAT THERE SHOULD BE CENTRAL WORKSHOPS FOR THE TECHNICAL INSTITUTES.

+ALL OUR INSTITUTES ARE ALREADY WELL EQUIPPED TO PROVIDE TRAINING IN THE FIELDS IN WHICH THEY OFFER COURSES,+ HE SAID.

+THE COST OF EQUIPPING A TECHNICAL INSTITUTE IS IN THE REGION OF \$10 MILLION. WE MUST ALSO REMEMBER THAT INDUSTRIAL TRAINING IS ALSO PROVIDED WITHIN INDUSTRY ITSELF.

+TWO INDUSTRIES HAVE ALREADY SET UP WELL-ORGANISED INDUSTRIAL TRAINING CENTRES AND OTHERS ARE PLANNED. I SUGGEST THAT THIS IS HOW WE SHOULD PROCEED, NOT WITH CENTRAL WORKSHOPS.+

MR. TOPLEY SAID THE AD HOC GROUP ALSO BELIEVED THE LEVEL OF TEACHING IN THE INSTITUTES WAS TOO LOW AND THAT MORE HIGHLY-QUALIFIED STAFF SHOULD BE EMPLOYED.

+I TAKE IT THAT THIS IS NOT MEANT TO BE A CRITICISM OF THE PRESENT STAFF OR OF THEIR PERFORMANCE,+ HE SAID. +RATHER IT IS A STATEMENT OF THE AD HOC GROUP'S BELIEF THAT EMPHASIS IN THE INSTITUTES SHOULD BE CHANGED FROM CRAFT TO TECHNICIAN LEVEL.

+MR. ALEX WU WOULD, I BELIEVE, WISH TO GO EVEN FURTHER AND INJECT A GREATER DEGREE OF LIBERAL STUDIES INTO THE COURSES. THIS CHANGE IS, OF COURSE, FEASIBLE.

+BEFORE WE DECIDE ON SUCH CHANGES, WE SHOULD BE VERY CLEAR IN OUR MINDS WHAT NEW TARGETS WE ARE AIMING AT. THE NEEDS WE INTEND TO MEET SHOULD BE AS REAL AND AT LEAST AS IMPORTANT AS THE ONES WE ARE NOW MEETING.

/+I SHOULD NOT LIKE

+I SHOULD NOT LIKE TO SEE OUR TECHNICAL INSTITUTES SUFFER A SEA-CHANGE TO PERFORM VAGUE, ILL-DEFINED ROLES IN OUR COMMUNITY. SOME INCREASES, HOWEVER, IN THE TECHNICIAN COURSES MIGHT WELL BE POSSIBLE.+

TURNING TO THE UNIVERSITIES AND THE POLYTECHNIC, MR. TOPLEY SAID THAT BECAUSE THE AD HOC GROUP HAD MADE NO JOINT STATEMENT ON THE PROPOSED RATES OF EXPANSION IN THE THREE INSTITUTIONS, THE PROPOSAL APPEARED TO MEET WITH THE SATISFACTION OF THE MAJORITY.

+INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS HAVE PROPOSED CHANGES IN THE RATES OF PROVISION AND THE METHODS BY WHICH THESE SHOULD BE ACHIEVED,+ HE SAID. +MR. LO AND MR. YEUNG HAVE PROPOSED THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF MORE DEGREE GRANTING INSTITUTIONS.

+MR. LO HAS, IN EFFECT, RECOMMENDED COMPLETE RELAXATION, INDEED ABANDONMENT, OF THE RULES CONTROLLING THE GRANTING OF DEGREES TO ENSURE THAT ASPIRATIONAL DEMAND IS FULLY MET. HE IS CONFIDENT THAT STANDARDS COULD BE PROTECTED BY AN ACCREDITING SYSTEM.

+I SHOULD IMAGINE, HOWEVER, THAT MOST MEMBERS WOULD NOT LIKE DECISIONS MADE ON SUCH AN EXTREME PROPOSAL WITHOUT MUCH FULLER DISCUSSION.

+I WOULD SUGGEST, THEREFORE, THAT WHILE THIS IS AN ISSUE DESERVING OF FURTHER DELIBERATION, THIS SHOULD NOT BE DONE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FORTHCOMING WHITE PAPER.

+A NUMBER OF MEMBERS ARE CONCERNED THAT THERE SHOULD BE AN INCREASE IN THE GENERAL OPPORTUNITIES TO PURSUE TERTIARY EDUCATION, IN PARTICULAR PART-TIME DEGREE COURSES.

+THEY SEE SUCH AN INCREASE AS A MEANS OF AVOIDING THE UNDESIRABLE SOCIAL DISRUPTION WHICH COMES FROM THE FRUSTRATION OF ASPIRATIONS AND AS A WAY TO REDUCE HONG KONG'S NEED TO RECRUIT SPECIALIST SKILLS FROM OVERSEAS. THESE ARE VALID POINTS WHICH MUST BE CONSIDERED IN DRAFTING THE WHITE PAPER.+

MR. TOPLEY SAID THAT, FROM MR. Q.W. LEE'S SUMMARY OF THE AD HOC GROUP'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND FROM INDIVIDUAL SPEECHES, STRONG SUPPORT WAS EVIDENT FOR ACCORDING THE POST-SECONDARY COLLEGES A CLEARLY DEFINED AND FINANCIALLY ASSISTED ROLE IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM. HE SAID: +THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES THE SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY WHICH THESE COLLEGES ARE PROVIDING AND CONSIDERATION IS NOW BEING GIVEN TO AN APPROPRIATE FORM OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE WHICH COULD BE OFFERED TO THE COLLEGES IN RETURN FOR WHAT MR. LEE HAS DESCRIBED AS 'FINANCIAL, QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE CONTROL BY THE GOVERNMENT, BOTH IN REGARD TO THE CONTENT OF THEIR COURSES AND THE NUMBERS OF THEIR STUDENTS'.

+DISCUSSIONS ARE CURRENTLY BEING HELD WITH THE COLLEGE AUTHORITIES WITH A VIEW TO REACHING A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE ROLE FOR THEM WHICH WILL ACCORD WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S APPROVED GROWTH TARGETS FOR POST-FORM 5 EDUCATION.

MR. HUANG'S PROPOSALS FOR A TWO-TIERED STRUCTURE OF COURSES IN THE POST-SECONDARY COLLEGES FOLLOWING ON FROM OUR FIVE-YEAR SECONDARY COURSE WHICH LEADS TO THE CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION HAVE VERY REAL POSSIBILITIES.

+THE QUESTION OF DEGREE GRANTING, I HAVE ALREADY SAID, SHOULD BE A MATTER FOR MUCH WIDER DELIBERATION IN THE FUTURE.+

MR. TOPLEY NOTED THAT AD HOC GROUP HAD ADVOCATED GREATER EMPHASIS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ADULT EDUCATION.

+THEY RIGHTLY SEE OUR ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES AS AN ESSENTIAL SAFETY VALVE IN OUR SYSTEM IN THE OPPORTUNITIES THEY OFFER FOR RETRIEVAL, + HE SAID. +AS SOME MEMBERS HAVE ALSO POINTED OUT, ADULT EDUCATION CAN, THROUGH PROVISION OF PRACTICAL AND VOCATIONAL COURSES, ASSIST IN OUR BUILDING UP OF A SKILLED, ADAPTABLE LABOUR FORCE. IT CAN ALSO PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART IN REDUCING THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS WHICH CAN GROW AMONG THE UNOCCUPIED.

+THE CASE, THEREFORE, FOR CENTRAL CONTROL OR, AT LEAST, CLOSE LIAISON AMONG THE MANY DIFFERENT BODIES (PUBLIC AND PRIVATE) INVOLVED IN ADULT OR CONTINUING EDUCATION IS A STRONG ONE.

+THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HAS ALREADY ESTABLISHED A LIAISON COMMITTEE ON PART-TIME EDUCATION, WITH REPRESENTATION OF THE TWO UNIVERSITIES AND THE POLYTECHNIC.+

MR. TOPLEY DISAGREED WITH MISS KO SIU-WAH'S SUGGESTION THAT THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR HAD AGAIN BEEN NEGLECTED IN THE GREEN PAPER.

+THE GREEN PAPER STATES THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONSIDER THE NEED TO ASSIST THE VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS WITH SELECTED ACTIVITIES NOT ALREADY COVERED BY THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT'S OWN SERVICES, + HE SAID.

+IN DECIDING WHICH SERVICES THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR IS BEST PLACED TO CARRY OUT, ACCOUNT WILL BE TAKEN OF THE SPECIFIC TRADITIONS, INTERESTS, AND OPERATING STANDARDS OF THE ORGANISATIONS WISHING TO PARTICIPATE.

+AN IMPORTANT CRITERION WILL BE THEIR ABILITY TO MEET REAL COMMUNITY NEEDS IN THE FIELD OF ADULT OR CONTINUING EDUCATION.+

COMMENTING ON A PROPOSAL BY MR. CHARLES YEUNG THAT THE BOARD OF EDUCATION BE ENLARGED IN SIZE AND SCOPE TO DEAL WITH THE FULL SPECTRUM OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FROM NURSERY TO UNIVERSITY AND THAT AN OVERALL REVIEW OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM BE CARRIED OUT, MR. TOPLEY SAID: +THE LATTER SUGGESTION IS ONE TO WHICH CONSIDERATION IS ALREADY BEING GIVEN IN THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND IN THE GOVERNMENT.

/+IF THIS IS FINALLY

+ IF THIS IS FINALLY AGREED, THEN MR. YEUNG'S PROPOSED CHANGE IN THE ROLE OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION MIGHT PROPERLY BE TAKEN UP AS PART OF THE REVIEW.+

ON BEHALF OF HIS UNOFFICIAL COLLEAGUES, THE HON. Q.W. LEE THIS AFTERNOON EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION TO MR. TOPLEY, FOR HIS REPLY TO THE POINTS RAISED BY THE UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS.

MR. LEE WAS ALSO PLEASED TO NOTE THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAD ACCEPTED SOME OF THE PROPOSALS MADE BY THE UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS.

+ THIS IS VERY ENCOURAGING, + HE SAID, + BUT EVEN MORE ENCOURAGING IS HIS ASSURANCE THAT THE FULLEST CONSIDERATION WILL BE GIVEN TO THE VARIOUS POINTS RAISED BY UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS IN THE FORMULATION OF THE FORTHCOMING WHITE PAPER.+

HE SAID HIS COLLEAGUES AGREED WITH MR. TOPLEY THAT SOME OF THE MORE IMPORTANT ISSUES SUCH AS THE QUESTION OF DEGREE GRANTING SHOULD BE MATTERS FOR FURTHER, MUCH WIDER DELIBERATION OUTSIDE THE CONTEXT OF THE WHITE PAPER.

SINCE EDUCATION IS SO CLOSELY LINKED TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS, THE UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS LOOK FORWARD EAGERLY TO THE PUBLICATION OF THE WHITE PAPER WHICH WILL OFFER THE COMMUNITY FOR THE FIRST TIME A FULLY INTEGRATED SYSTEM OF EDUCATION FROM SECONDARY TO TERTIARY LEVEL, HE ADDED.

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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2, 1978

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EVENTS LEADING TO SCHOOL CLOSURE EXPLAINED

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THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, THE HON. KENNETH TOPLEY, EXPLAINED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY THE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE CLOSURE OF THE SHA TIN LUTHERAN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND THE CAUSES OF DISCONTENT AMONG STUDENTS AND PARENTS.

HE WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON. LYDIA DUNN.

MR. TOPLEY SAID THE SCHOOL, ALONG WITH THE SHA TIN MARKET, WAS DUE TO BE CLEARED SHORTLY AFTER THE LUNAR NEW YEAR IN 1979 TO MAKE WAY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW TOWN CENTRE.

+TO MINIMISE DISRUPTION OF THE CHILDREN'S EDUCATION, AFTER CONSULTING THE SCHOOL SUPERVISOR AND THE SPONSORING BODY, IT WAS DECIDED THAT THE CHILDREN SHOULD BE PLACED IN OTHER NEW SCHOOLS IN THE AREA IN SEPTEMBER 1978, THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR,+ HE SAID.

+THIS TIMING WOULD ALSO ENABLE THE TEACHERS TO FIND ALTERNATIVE POSTS THROUGH THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT'S PLACEMENT SERVICE.

+ONCE ASSURED THAT BOTH THESE AIMS COULD BE ACHIEVED, THE GOVERNMENT INFORMED THE SCHOOL SUPERVISOR IN MARCH THAT THE SUBSIDY FOR ITS 10 AIDED CLASSES WOULD CEASE AT THE END OF AUGUST, 1978.

+NO CLOSURE ORDER HAS, IN FACT, BEEN SERVED ON THE SCHOOL.

+A GROUP OF PARENTS STATED DISSATISFACTION THAT THE PRESENT SCHOOL WOULD NOT CONTINUE.

+THEY ASKED FOR A NEW SCHOOL BUILDING TO WHICH THE PRESENT PUPILS AND STAFF COULD MOVE WHEN THEIR PRESENT PREMISES WERE DEMOLISHED, OR FOR MONETARY COMPENSATION FOR EXPENSES INCURRED IN BUYING NEW SCHOOL UNIFORMS.+

IN REPLY TO MISS DUNN'S ANOTHER QUESTION, MR. TOPLEY SAID: +THE ARRANGEMENTS TO PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE POSTS FOR TEACHERS AND PLACES FOR THE CHILDREN IN NEIGHBOURING SCHOOLS WERE THOUGHT TO BE REASONABLE AND FAIR AND ACCEPTABLE TO NEARLY EVERYONE, INCLUDING THE SCHOOL'S SPONSORING BODY.

/+HOWEVER,

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+HOWEVER, BY MID-MAY, URGED TO DO SO BY SOME PARENTS, THE SPONSORING BODY MADE AN APPLICATION TO BE ALLOCATED ONE OF THE TWO NEW SCHOOLS TO BE OPENED IN WO CHE, BUT THERE APPEARED TO BE NO SUFFICIENTLY STRONG REASON TO ADVANCE THE PLANNED DATE OF THE OPENING OF ONE OF THE NEW SCHOOLS - SEPTEMBER 1979.

+THE MAJORITY OF PARENTS APPEARED TO HAVE ACCEPTED THE PLACEMENT OF THEIR CHILDREN AND IT WAS NOT OBVIOUS THAT THE SPONSORING BODY -- THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH -- SHOULD BE THE SUBJECT OF IMMEDIATE SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS.

+A PETITION WAS PRESENTED TO THE GOVERNOR ON THE OCCASION OF HIS VISIT TO SHA TIN IN LATE MAY BY A SMALL NUMBER OF PARENTS, BUT IT WAS NOT APPRECIATED HOW MUCH SUPPORT THEY HAD COME TO COMMAND UNTIL EARLY JULY WHEN THEY RESORTED TO DEMONSTRATIONS.

+RECOGNISING THE STRENGTH OF THE RESISTANCE TO THE EARLIER ARRANGEMENTS WHICH HAD NOW DEVELOPED AND THE SENTIMENT OF LOYALTY TO THE SCHOOL AND ITS STAFF WHICH WAS NOW BEING EXPRESSED, THE GOVERNMENT DECIDED TO OFFER TO THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH THE PREMISES WHICH COULD BE MADE AVAILABLE AHEAD OF THE SCHEDULED DATE.+

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MAGISTRATES (AMENDMENT) BILL PASSED
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THE MAGISTRATES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1978, MAINLY DESIGNED TO ENABLE THE APPOINTMENT OF CANTONESE-SPEAKING MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO SIT WITH MAGISTRATES IN AN ADVISORY CAPACITY, WAS PASSED INTO LAW IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

THE AMENDED LEGISLATION ALSO CHANGES TWO ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPAL ORDINANCE DEALING WITH COMMITMENT PROCEEDINGS.

REPLYING TO POINTS RAISED BY UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE BILL, THE SOLICITOR GENERAL, THE HON. GARTH THORNTON, AGREED THAT THE CHOICE OF ASSESSORS MUST ENSURE THAT THEY ARE +MEN OF INTEGRITY+ AND THAT THEY MUST BE READY TO SPEAK THEIR MINDS FREELY AND OPENLY.

+UNLESS THEY DO, THEIR ADVICE WILL BE OF NO VALUE AND THE EXPERIMENT WILL BE A FAILURE,+ MR. THORNTON SAID.

ON THE SUGGESTION THAT A MAGISTRATE SHOULD BE OBLIGED TO RECORD ANY ADVICE WHICH HE DOES NOT ACCEPT, MR. THORNTON SAID SUCH A COURSE WOULD HAVE THE DISADVANTAGES OF SLOWING THINGS DOWN AND TENDING TO FORMALISE, PERHAPS POLARISE, WHAT IS INTENDED TO BE A FLEXIBLE AND CO-OPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP.

MR. THORNTON ALSO THOUGHT THAT THE SUGGESTION THAT LOCAL PERSONS WHO ARE NOT LAWYERS BE APPOINTED AS MAGISTRATES AND BE ASSISTED BY LEGALLY QUALIFIED ASSESSORS IS NEITHER A PRACTICAL NOR DESIRABLE SOLUTION.

+THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG ARE MUCH BETTER SERVED BY THE MORE EFFICIENT AND PROFESSIONAL ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE WHICH IS POSSIBLE UNDER OUR PRESENT SYSTEM OF PROFESSIONAL MAGISTRATES,+ MR. THORNTON SAID.

MOREOVER, MR. THORNTON THOUGHT IT IS PREMATURE TO CONSIDER LEGISLATION AT THIS STAGE TO COMPEL EMPLOYERS TO RELEASE THEIR EMPLOYEES ON THE OCCASIONS WHEN THEY MAY BE SCHEDULED TO SERVE AS ASSESSORS, AND HE HOPED THAT, IN THE INTERESTS OF THE COMMUNITY, EMPLOYERS WILL SHOW THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE SCHEME.

MR. THORNTON AGREED THAT THE ROLE OF THE MAGISTRATES IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE CANNOT BE EXAGGERATED AND THAT THE MAGISTRACIES MUST BE BOTH CLOSE AND RESPONSIVE TO THE PEOPLE.

+SUFFICE TO SAY THAT MAGISTRATES WILL CERTAINLY BENEFIT FROM ADVICE ON THE COMMUNITY'S VIEWS ON SENTENCING AS EXPRESSED TO THEM BY ASSESSORS,+ HE SAID.

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T.S. LO COMMENTS ON MAGISTRATES (AMENDMENT) BILL

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FOR THE PROPER ADMINISTRATION OF THE CRIMINAL LAW, THE JUDICIARY MUST HAVE, IN ADDITION TO A SURE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAW, THE ABILITY TO TELL TRUTH FROM FALSEHOOD, AND THE EXPERTISE TO PLACE A PARTICULAR CASE ACCURATELY WITHIN THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF A COHESIVE SENTENCING POLICY.

THE HON. T.S. LO SAID AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE MAGISTRATES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1978 IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY THAT THIS WOULD RESULT IN PUBLIC RESPECT AND CONFIDENCE.

MR. LO ADDED THAT OVER 90 PER CENT OF COURT CASES ARE DEALT WITH BY MAGISTRACIES AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR ROLE CANNOT BE EXAGGERATED. +ANY LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN THEM BY THE PEOPLE MUST LEAD TO A GENERAL DISRESPECT OF THE RULE OF LAW,+ HE SAID.

MR. LO TABLED AN EDITED VERSION OF A BRIEF HE PREPARED IN 1976 ON THE U.K. PRINCIPLES OF SENTENCING, WHICH SOUGHT TO ANALYSE AND COMPARE LOCAL SENTENCES IN 1974 AND 1975 IN THE SUPREME COURT AND THE DISTRICT COURT.

IN ITS CONCLUSION, MR. LO GAVE A FEW POSSIBLE CAUSES FOR A LOWER AND LESS CONSISTENT SCALE OF SENTENCES IN HONG KONG.

HE ALSO SAID THAT THE DIFFERENCE IN THE RANGE OF TARIFF SENTENCING (PRIMARILY AIMED AT DETERRENCE AND RETRIBUTION) BETWEEN HONG KONG AND THE U.K. WAS SO GREAT AS REGARDS ROBBERY, BLACKMAIL AND RAPE THAT ONE SHOULD ONLY CONCLUDE THAT U.K. PRINCIPLES OF SENTENCING HAD NOT FOUND FAVOUR IN HONG KONG. WHAT PRINCIPLES WERE IN FACT ADOPTED HERE WAS NOT EASILY DISCOVERABLE.

HE THOUGHT THE BRIEF PROVIDED A SOUND STARTING POINT FROM WHICH AN OVERALL POLICY CAN BE STRUCTURED IN HONG KONG.

REFERRING TO THE PRESENT BILL, MR. LO SAID IT IS DESIGNED TO STRENGTHEN THE ABILITY OF THE BENCH +TO ARRIVE AT THE TRUTH, TO PASS PROPER SENTENCES AND THEREBY TO INCREASE THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PEOPLE IN THE LAW THAT IS ADMINISTERED.+

HE SAID FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, HE HAD SPOKEN OF THE NEED FOR THE BENCH TO BE FLUENT IN THE LOCAL LANGUAGE AND TO BE KNOWLEDGEABLE IN LOCAL CUSTOMS.

THE INTERPRETATION IN THE MAGISTRACIES IS NOT ALWAYS ACCURATE AND SOMETIMES CAN BE QUITE MISLEADING OR SIMPLY WRONG. +TO SEEK TO ARRIVE AT THE TRUTH THROUGH THAT KIND OF FILTER WILL DEFEAT THE ABLEST OF MEN,+ HE SAID.

KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL CUSTOMS IS NECESSARY TO GET AN INSIGHT INTO THE TRUTH AND ALSO FOR THE PASSING OF A PROPER SENTENCE. IN HIS RESEARCH, HE CAME ACROSS A VERY OLD CASE WHERE THE PRIVY COUNCIL EXCUSED A SELF-CONFESSED MURDERER, WHO WAS CHINESE AND WHOSE FATHER HAD BEEN KILLED BY THE VICTIM, ON THE GROUND THAT HE HAD COMMITTED THE MURDER TO AVENGE HIS FATHER IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CHINESE PRECEPTS OF FILIAL PIETY.

MR. LO SAID HE DID NOT SUGGEST THAT TODAY IT WILL BE QUITE AS EASY TO ESTABLISH A PERSON'S BELIEF IN FILIAL PIETY.

+I MAKE THE POINT MERELY TO ILLUSTRATE THE NECESSITY TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE MORES OF A PEOPLE, THEIR CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS BEFORE A SENTENCE CAN BE PROPERLY PASSED. HOWEVER, SUCH CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS SHOULD ONLY BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE LAW AND HENCE WITHIN THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF A COHESIVE SENTENCING POLICY,+ HE SAID.

HE AGREED WITH THE OTHER UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS WHO REFERRED TO THE BILL AS A COMPROMISE. IT IS NONETHELESS, HE SAID, A SOLUTION.

HE THOUGHT THE ROLE OF THE ASSESSORS WOULD HAVE TO BE CAREFULLY DEFINED, AND SAID THAT IT REMAINS THE FUNCTION OF THE MAGISTRATE TO SET OUT THE LAW WHICH INCLUDES THE PROPER RANGE OF THE SENTENCE FOR A PARTICULAR CASE.

+THIS IS AN IMPORTANT POINT BECAUSE WHILST IT IS DESIRABLE TO HAVE THE LAW MORE FINELY TUNED BY KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL MORES, IT WOULD BE DISASTROUS IF THE LAW IS SUPPLANTED BY THEM OR BY THE TEACHINGS OF CONFUCIUS,+ HE SAID.

HE HOPED THE MAGISTRACIES WOULD SOON BE ABLE TO DO WITHOUT INTERPRETERS. THIS WOULD BE WELCOMED BY THE BULK OF THOSE WHO GO BEFORE OUR COURTS AND WOULD SHORTEN COURT PROCEEDINGS DRAMATICALLY AND THUS REDUCE THE ENORMOUS PRESSURE OF WORK.

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INCREASE IN PAYMENT TO PENSIONERS
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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY ADOPTED TWO MOTIONS WHICH ENABLE THE PENSIONS, INCLUDING PREVIOUS INCREASES ALREADY APPROVED, OF ELIGIBLE PENSIONERS TO BE INCREASED BY FIVE PER CENT WITH EFFECT FROM OCTOBER 1, THIS YEAR.

MOVING THE TWO MOTIONS UNDER THE PENSIONS (INCREASE) ORDINANCE AND THE WIDOWS AND ORPHANS PENSION (INCREASE) ORDINANCE, THE SECRETARY FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE, THE HON. MARTIN ROWLANDS NOTED THAT THE INCREASE WAS DUE TO THE RISE OF 5.8 POINTS, OR 5.05 PER CENT ON THE MOVING ANNUAL AVERAGE OF THE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX (A) DURING THE PERIOD FROM JULY 1, 1977 TO JUNE 30, THIS YEAR.

+THE COST OF THE INCREASE IS ESTIMATED TO BE \$3.6 MILLION FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR AND \$7.2 MILLION IN A FULL YEAR,+ HE SAID.

MR. ROWLANDS ALSO NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT IN DECEMBER, 1975 UNDERTOOK TO MAINTAIN THE ORIGINAL PURCHASING POWER OF CIVIL SERVICE PENSIONS, INCLUDING WIDOWS AND ORPHANS PENSION, BY MAKING PERIODIC ADJUSTMENTS TO REFLECT CHANGES IN THE COST OF LIVING.

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PROBATE AND ADMINISTRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

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A BILL INTENDED TO REGULATE THE DISPOSAL OF INTEREST ON ESTATE ACCOUNTS OPERATED BY THE OFFICIAL ADMINISTRATOR WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE PROBATE AND ADMINISTRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1978, THE SOLICITOR GENERAL, THE HON. GARTH THORNTON, SAID THE DUTIES OF THE OFFICIAL ADMINISTRATOR, WHOSE FUNCTIONS ARE PERFORMED BY THE REGISTRAR OF THE SUPREME COURT, ARE TO ADMINISTER THE ESTATES IN HONG KONG OF PERSONS WHO DIE WITHOUT LEAVING A WILL AND WHERE THERE IS NO NEXT OF KIN IN HONG KONG READY AND ABLE TO ACT.

THE OFFICIAL ADMINISTRATOR ADMINISTERS SUMMARILY AND QUICKLY VERY SMALL ESTATES UNDER \$20,000 IN VALUE. LAST YEAR 840 ESTATES WERE ADMINISTERED IN THIS WAY.

MR. THORNTON SAID THAT OVER THE LAST 30 YEARS, AN ACCUMULATION HAS ARISEN OF SMALL AMOUNTS OF INTEREST WHICH WERE NOT APPORTIONED TO PARTICULAR ESTATES AND AS A RESULT OF AUDIT QUERIES AND THE DIRECTOR OF AUDIT'S ADVICE THAT SUCH MONEY SHOULD BE PAID TO GENERAL REVENUE, THE AMENDING LEGISLATION IS INTENDED TO REGULATE THE DISPOSAL OF INTEREST FAIRLY AND CLEARLY.

MR. THORNTON SAID THE AMENDMENT BILL EMPOWERS THE CHIEF JUSTICE TO MAKE RULES REGULATING THE PAYMENT OF INTEREST ON MONEYS IN ANY OF THE ACCOUNTS OF THE OFFICIAL ADMINISTRATOR.

MR. THORNTON ADDED THAT IF THE BILL IS ENACTED, THE CHIEF JUSTICE INTENDS TO MAKE RULES REQUIRING ALL INTEREST ACCRUING TO BE CREDITED TO THE ESTATES IN THE CASE OF ESTATES OF OVER \$20,000 IN VALUE.

IN THE CASE OF ESTATES UNDER \$20,000 IN VALUE WHERE ADMINISTRATION IS COMPLETED WITHIN THREE MONTHS, NO INTEREST SHALL BE CREDITED TO THE ESTATE. IF ADMINISTRATION IS NOT COMPLETED WITHIN THREE MONTHS THEN INTEREST SHALL BE CREDITED ON MONEYS IN THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S POSSESSION AT THE CURRENT SAVINGS BANK RATE, MR. THORNTON ADDED.

A NEW SECTION HAS ALSO BEEN PROPOSED TO PROVIDE THAT IF INTEREST IS NOT REQUIRED TO BE CREDITED OR PAID TO ANY ESTATE UNDER THE PROPOSED RULES MADE BY THE CHIEF JUSTICE, IT SHALL BE TRANSFERRED TO GENERAL REVENUE.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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NEW SAFETY REGULATIONS ON LIFTING APPLIANCES INTRODUCED IN LEGCO
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NEW SAFETY REQUIREMENTS IN THE OPERATION OF LIFTING APPLIANCES AND LIFTING GEAR IN INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS, SUCH AS DOCKS, QUAYS, WHARFS ON WAREHOUSES WERE INTRODUCED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

THE PROPOSED NEW REGULATIONS ARE DESIGNED TO ENSURE THAT OPERATORS OF LIFTING APPLIANCES ARE TRAINED PERSONS OR PERSONS UNDERGOING TRAINING AND UNDER SUPERVISION= THAT SIGNALLING ARRANGEMENTS MUST BE USED WHEN A LIFT IS IN OPERATION= THAT STEAM EMANATING FROM A CRANE MUST NOT OBSCURE A WORKPLACE WHERE WORKMEN ARE EMPLOYED= AND THAT CHAINS, ROPES AND LIFTING GEAR MUST BE INSPECTED BEFORE USE BY COMPETENT PERSONS.

ADDITIONAL DETAIL IS ALSO ADDED TO THE PROCEDURE FOR TESTING SHEAVE PULLEY BLOCKS.

IN MOVING THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (LIFTING APPLIANCES AND LIFTING GEAR)(AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 1978, THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR, THE HON. NEIL HENDERSON, SAID THE REGULATIONS WERE INTENDED TO PROVIDE FOR THE SAFE OPERATION OF LIFTING APPLIANCES AND LIFTING GEAR USED FOR LOADING, UNLOADING OR HANDLING OF GOODS OR CARGO IN INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS OTHER THAN CONSTRUCTION WORK.

THE USE OF SIMILAR APPLIANCES AND GEAR ON CONSTRUCTION SITES IS ALREADY COVERED BY LAW WHICH WAS PASSED IN 1973.

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MORE SMALL COINS ON THE WAY

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THE SHORTAGE OF 10 CENT AND 20 CENT COINS WILL SOON BE IMPROVED WHEN THE ROYAL MINT MAKES ITS FIRST DELIVERIES LATER THIS MONTH, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON. PHILIP HADDON-CAVE TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON. PETER C. WONG, MR. HADDON-CAVE NOTED THAT THE SHORTAGE HAS OCCURRED ALTHOUGH THE VALUE OF COINS OF THESE DENOMINATIONS PUT INTO CIRCULATION IN 1977 WAS MUCH LARGER THAN IN 1976.

THE SHORTAGE OF 10 CENT COINS SEEMED TO DEVELOP LAST YEAR AND IT WAS THOUGHT THAT THIS WAS A SOMEWHAT TEMPORARY PHENOMENON.

MR. HADDON-CAVE SAID THE SITUATION WAS FURTHER AGGRAVATED BY THE FACT THAT THE NORMAL FLOW OF SMALL DENOMINATION COINS BACK INTO BANKS AFTER THE LUNAR NEW YEAR DID NOT MATERIALISE THIS YEAR.

THE ROYAL MINT WAS THEN ASKED TO GIVE ABSOLUTE PRIORITY TO THE MANUFACTURE AND SUPPLY OF THESE COINS OVER ORDERS FOR OTHER HONG KONG COINS WHICH THE MINT HAD IN HAND, HE TOLD THE COUNCIL.

+THERE IS, HOWEVER,+ THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY EXPLAINED, +A LIMIT TO WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THIS RESPECT AS SMALL COINS ARE NOT PRODUCED BY THE SAME EQUIPMENT AS COINS OF HIGHER DENOMINATIONS AND OUTPUT CANNOT BE INCREASED SIMPLY BY SACRIFICING EARLY DELIVERY OF OTHER COINS.+

+NEVERTHELESS, THE MINT HAS BEEN ABLE TO REPROGRAMME PRODUCTION WITH GREATER EMPHASIS ON 10 CENT AND 20 CENT COINS AND THE FIRST DELIVERIES ARE EXPECTED LATER THIS MONTH,+ HE ADDED.

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PLANS TO IMPROVE ELECTRICAL INSTALLATIONS
AT OLDER PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES

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THE HOUSING AUTHORITY HAS, WITH THE AGREEMENT OF THE POWER COMPANIES CONCERNED, COMMISSIONED WORK TO UPGRADE ELECTRICAL INSTALLATIONS IN TWO OLDER ESTATES, THE SECRETARY FOR HOUSING, THE HON. ALAN SCOTT, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON. WONG LAM.

IF THESE SCHEMES PROVE SATISFACTORY, SIMILAR IMPROVEMENTS CAN BE EXTENDED TO OTHER ESTATES IF DEMAND WARRANTS IT, MR. SCOTT ADDED.

HE SAID ELECTRIC CAPACITY IN NEW ESTATES WAS DESIGNED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT ONE IN THREE TENANTS WOULD AT SOME STAGE WISH TO INSTALL ONE AIR-CONDITIONER OF ABOUT 1 H.P.

+IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO INCREASE THIS CAPACITY LATER ON, IF DEMAND SO REQUIRED,+ HE SAID.

HE NOTED THAT THE LEVEL OF APPLICATIONS FOR THE INSTALLATION OF AIR-CONDITIONERS HAD BEEN BELOW SIX PER CENT OF HOUSEHOLDS IN ESTATES, WITH ONE NOTABLE EXCEPTION.

+THE AUTHORITY,+ HE SAID, +WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON APPLICATIONS IN ORDER TO ASSESS FUTURE DEMAND AND MEASURES NEEDED.+

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GOVERNMENT'S POLICY ON STREET LIGHTING

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THE ACTING DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS, THE HON. WILLIAM BELL, TODAY OUTLINED THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY ON THE PROVISION OF STREET LIGHTING.

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON. MRS. KWAN KO SIU-WAH AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, HE SAID: +WHILE THE GOVERNMENT ENDEAVOURS TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE LIGHTING FOR OLD AND ESTABLISHED VILLAGES, THIS POLICY DOES NOT COVER SQUATTER AREAS BECAUSE OF THEIR TEMPORARY NATURE AND A HISTORY OF ILLEGAL TAMPERING WITH ELECTRICITY IN SUCH AREAS.+

REFERRING TO HOI PONG VILLAGE AT THE NORTHERN SLOPE OF VICTORIA ROAD IN THE WESTERN DISTRICT, MR. BELL SAID: +THE GOVERNMENT IS AWARE THAT THERE IS NO STREET LIGHTING IN THE VILLAGE ITSELF ALTHOUGH VICTORIA ROAD IS FULLY LIT, AS IS A 400 METRE LENGTH OF AN 'OCCUPATION ROAD' WHICH RUNS ROUGHLY PARALLEL WITH VICTORIA ROAD ON THE SEAWARD SIDE.+

HE POINTED OUT THAT HOI PONG WAS NOT AN ESTABLISHED VILLAGE, BUT RATHER A SQUATTER AREA COMPRISING SOME 750 HUTS IN FIVE GROUPS SPREAD OVER A DISTANCE OF ABOUT 800 METRES BETWEEN WESTERN BUS TERMINUS AND MOUNT DAVIS ROAD.

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GOVERNMENT IS CONSIDERING AIR-CONDITIONING
GENERAL HOSPITAL WARDS AND AMBULANCES
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THE GOVERNMENT IS CONSIDERING AIR-CONDITIONING GENERAL WARDS
IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS AS WELL AS ITS FLEET OF AMBULANCES.

THIS WAS REVEALED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SOCIAL SERVICES, THE HON.
E.P. HO IN REPLY TO TWO SEPARATE QUESTIONS FROM THE HON. PETER C.
WONG AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

IN REPLY TO ANOTHER QUESTION FROM DR. THE HON. HARRY FANG, MR.
HO SAID AN ESTIMATE FOR THE WORK IS BEING PREPARED TO AIR-CONDITION
THE THREE MEDICAL AND ONE SURGICAL WARDS AT LOWER GROUND LEVEL AT
PRINCESS MARGARET HOSPITAL WHERE THE TEMPERATURE MAY BE SLIGHTLY
HIGHER THAN ELSEWHERE IN THE HOSPITAL.

MR. HO SAID THE HIGHER TEMPERATURE IN THESE WARDS IS DUE TO
THE LOCATION OF THE BOILER, AUTOCLAVE AND INCINERATORS ON THE FLOOR
IMMEDIATELY BELOW, COUPLED WITH THE EXISTENCE OF A RETAINING WALL
WHICH REDUCES THROUGH VENTILATION.

HE NOTED THAT AN ADDITIONAL INSULATED CEILING OVER THE HEAT
GENERATING AREA WAS BUILT WHEN THE CONDITION WAS NOTED IN 1977 AFTER
THE WARDS WERE BROUGHT INTO USE.

MR. HO SAID THE REMEDIAL WORK WAS COMPLETED IN MARCH THIS YEAR,
BUT EXPERIENCE THIS SUMMER HAS SHOWN THAT ANY IMPROVEMENT IN THE
SITUATION HAS ONLY BEEN MARGINAL, AND THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL AND
HEALTH SERVICES CONSIDERS THAT THE ONLY EFFECTIVE REMEDY IS TO AIR-
CONDITION THESE WARDS.

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WAITING TIME FOR CIVIL SERVANTS SEEKING MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS
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THE GOVERNMENT IS GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH THE WAITING PERIOD FOR CIVIL SERVANTS TO OBTAIN MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS AND IMMEDIATE CONSULTATION IS ALWAYS AVAILABLE TO THEM IN EMERGENCY CASES.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE, THE HON. MARTIN ROWLANDS IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON. T.S. LO IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

HOWEVER, MR. ROWLANDS SAID THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES IS CONSIDERING WAYS OF REDUCING THE WAITING TIME AT QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL, POSSIBLY BY AUGMENTING THE FACILITIES ELSEWHERE.

HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THE PRESENT WAITING PERIODS FOR CIVIL SERVANTS TO OBTAIN APPOINTMENTS TO SEE MEDICAL CONSULTANTS IN NON-EMERGENCY SPECIALTIES RANGE FROM THREE DAYS FOR PAEDIATRICS IN QUEEN MARY HOSPITAL TO 5-12 WEEKS FOR MEDICAL IN QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL. FOR MOST OTHER SPECIALTY APPOINTMENTS THE AVERAGE WAITING TIME IS ABOUT ONE WEEK.

MR. ROWLANDS SAID THE PRESENT WAITING TIME OF 6-7 MONTHS FOR DENTAL APPOINTMENTS IS ACCEPTABLE FOR ROUTINE CHECKS AND SCALING, BUT THERE ARE SOME NON-EMERGENCY CASES WHERE QUICKER TREATMENT WOULD BE DESIRABLE.

+THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES IS MONITORING THE SITUATION CLOSELY AND IT IS HOPED THAT THE RECENTLY OPENED EVENING DENTAL CLINICS WILL LEAD TO AN IMPROVEMENT,+ HE SAID.

MR. ROWLANDS ALSO NOTED THAT THE WAITING TIME FOR DENTAL PROSTHESES IS ABOUT 18 MONTHS AND IT IS FAR FROM SATISFACTORY. HE SAID IT IS PROPOSED TO LET OUT SOME OF THE WORK TO PRIVATE DENTAL LABORATORIES IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE BACKLOG.

STEPS ARE ALSO BEING TAKEN TO INCREASE OUTPUT FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S OWN DENTAL LABORATORIES, MR. ROWLANDS SAID.

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PROPOSAL TO MAKE TWO NT MAIN ROUTES ONE-WAY BOUND NOT FEASIBLE

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THE GOVERNMENT TODAY REJECTED A PROPOSAL FOR MAKING TUEN MUN ROAD STAGE 1 ONE WAY EAST BOUND AND CASTLE PEAK ROAD ONE WAY WEST BOUND.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON. T.S. LO IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY, THE ACTING DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS, THE HON. WILLIAM BELL, SAID THAT THE PROPOSAL IMPLIED THAT TUEN MUN ROAD WAS INHERENTLY UNSAFE.

+THIS IS CERTAINLY NOT THE CASE, AS THE ROAD HAS BEEN DESIGNED AND CONSTRUCTED TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS,+ HE SAID.

MR. BELL POINTED OUT THAT THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE ACCIDENTS ON TUEN MUN ROAD WERE IN THE MAIN ATTRIBUTABLE TO EXCESSIVE SPEEDING AND A BLATANT DISREGARD OF THE SIMPLE RULE OF NOT CROSSING THE DOUBLE WHITE LINE WHEN OVER-TAKING.

+ALTHOUGH THE INTRODUCTION OF A ONE WAY SYSTEM WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY ELIMINATE ACCIDENTS INVOLVING HEAD-ON COLLISIONS, THERE ARE MANY DISADVANTAGES TO THE PROPOSAL,+ HE ADDED.

MR. BELL CITED THE MORE IMPORTANT DISADVANTAGES AS FOLLOWS:

- * PUBLIC TRANSPORT WOULD BE UNABLE TO SERVE EXISTING DEVELOPMENT AND RECREATIONAL AREAS ALONG CASTLE PEAK ROAD EXCEPT IN A WESTERLY DIRECTION.
- * SINCE THE INTER-CHANGE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CASTLE PEAK ROAD AND TUEN MUN ROAD ARE OVER FIVE KILOMETRES APART, DETOURS OF UP TO 10 KILOMETRES WOULD BE NECESSARY FOR THOSE REQUIRING ACCESS TO PREMISES IN CASTLE PEAK ROAD.
- * EMERGENCY SERVICES WOULD ALSO BE INVOLVED IN SIMILAR DETOURS.

MR. BELL SAID THAT ON BALANCE THEREFORE THE GOVERNMENT CONSIDERED THAT THE PROPOSAL SHOULD NOT BE ADOPTED.

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BUS SERVICES TO CENTRAL DISTRICT
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THE GOVERNMENT IS SATISFIED THAT THE CHINA MOTOR BUS COMPANY IS DOING ALL IT CAN TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE SERVICES TO AND FROM CENTRAL DISTRICT IN PEAK HOURS, THE SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, THE HON. DEREK JONES TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON. CHARLES YEUNG, MR. JONES SAID THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT IS IN CONTINUOUS TOUCH WITH THE BUS COMPANIES ABOUT THE ROUTING AND FREQUENCY OF THEIR SERVICES AND THE COMMISSIONER FOR TRANSPORT HAS POWERS TO REQUIRE CHANGES TO BE MADE.

HOWEVER, MR. JONES SAID THE HEAVY DEMAND FOR BUSES AND OTHER PUBLIC TRANSPORT DURING PEAK HOURS IS ALWAYS DIFFICULT TO MEET AND WAITING TIMES FOR PASSENGERS IN THESE PERIODS MUST INEVITABLY BE LONGER.

HE ADDED THAT IN THE SHORT RUN, TO DIRECT YET MORE BUSES TO CENTRAL DURING EVENING HOURS WILL ONLY LEAD TO SHORTAGES IN OTHER ROUTES.

MR. JONES POINTED OUT THAT OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS THE CMB'S FLEET OF BUSES HAS INCREASED FROM 708 TO 759 AND THEIR CARRYING CAPACITY HAS RISEN FROM ABOUT 68,000 TO 75,000. A FURTHER 127 NEW BUSES ARE ON ORDER AND SOME OLDER BUSES ARE BEING REBUILT AND MODERNISED.

+ALL OF THE NEW BUSES ON ORDER ARE HIGH CAPACITY, AND ARE CAPABLE OF CARRYING UP TO 120 PASSENGERS,+ MR. JONES SAID.

+AS THEY ARRIVE THE NEW VEHICLES WILL BE USED TO IMPROVE FREQUENCIES AND CAPACITY ON THOSE ROUTES WITH THE GREATEST DEMAND, INCLUDING THOSE SERVING CENTRAL DISTRICT,+ HE ADDED.

IN REPLY TO A SEPARATE QUESTION FROM THE HON. MRS. KWAN KO SIU-WAH ON BUS SERVICE, MR. JONES REITERATED THAT STANDING ON THE UPPER DECK IS AN OFFENCE UNDER THE ROAD TRAFFIC ORDINANCE.

HOWEVER, MR. JONES SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAS NO EVIDENCE THAT THERE HAS BEEN ANY NOTICEABLE INCREASES IN THE NUMBERS OF PASSENGERS STANDING ON THE UPPER DECKS OF BUSES.

+IF STANDING OCCURS, IT IS MAINLY DURING PEAK HOURS, WHEN THE DRIVER OF A ONE-MAN BUS IS VERY FULLY OCCUPIED WITH CHECKING FARES,+ MR. JONES SAID.

+THE POLICE ALSO TAKE ACTION AGAINST THE OVER-CROWDING OF BUSES, BUT THEY VERY OFTEN FIND IT DIFFICULT TO PERSUADE PASSENGERS WHO HAVE PAID THEIR FARES TO LEAVE THE BUS,+ HE ADDED.

QUERY ON REDEVELOPMENT OF INDUSTRIAL SITES

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THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONSIDER THE EFFECT ON EMPLOYMENT IN AN AREA BEFORE GRANTING PERMISSION FOR A REDEVELOPMENT OF AN INDUSTRIAL SITE.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, THE HON. DEREK JONES IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY IN REPLY TO QUESTIONS FROM THE HON. LEUNG TAK-SHING.

MR. JONES SAID THE GOVERNMENT IS AWARE OF THE PUBLIC CONCERN OVER REDEVELOPMENT OF FACTORY SITES INTO MULTI-STOREY DOMESTIC TENEMENTS AND THE REDUNDANCIES WHICH THEY CAUSE.

BUT HE POINTED OUT THAT THE NUMBER OF JOBS LOST AS A RESULT OF THESE REDEVELOPMENTS WERE RELATIVELY FEW AND THAT AFFECTED WORKERS GENERALLY HAVE SLIGHT DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING OTHER JOBS.

+FURTHERMORE, SOME OF THE NEW DEVELOPMENTS HAVE BEEN FOR INDUSTRIAL RATHER THAN RESIDENTIAL PURPOSES AND TO THE EXTENT THE LAND RELEASED IS USED MORE EFFICIENTLY AFTER REDEVELOPMENT, THE SHIFT IS GENERALLY BENEFICIAL TO THE ECONOMY,+ HE ADDED.

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700 TEXTILE JOB VACANCIES ON REGISTER

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THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR, THE HON. NEIL HENDERSON, SAID TODAY THAT THERE ARE NOW MORE THAN 700 TEXTILE JOB VACANCIES ON THE REGISTER OF THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT'S LOCAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE AND THAT MORE SUCH JOBS MIGHT BE FOUND IF NECESSARY.

HE WAS SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN REPLY TO THE HON. LEUNG TAT-SHING, WHO ASKED WHAT THE GOVERNMENT COULD DO TO HELP FIND EMPLOYMENT FOR REDUNDANT TEXTILE WORKERS.

MR. HENDERSON SAID THAT IN VIEW OF THE RECENT LARGE REDUNDANCY OF TEXTILE WORKERS, THE LOCAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE WITH THE READY CO-OPERATION OF THE HONG KONG COTTON SPINNERS ASSOCIATION HAD MADE A SPECIAL EFFORT TO REGISTER TEXTILE INDUSTRY VACANCIES.

HOWEVER MR. HENDERSON SAID THAT SO FAR ONLY 25 REDUNDANT TEXTILE WORKERS HAD REGISTERED WITH THE SERVICE.

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ADEQUATE MEANS TO RECOVER COSTS OF DAMAGES TO
PUBLIC PROPERTY
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THE GOVERNMENT HAS ADEQUATE MEANS TO RECOVER THE COSTS OF REPAIRING DAMAGES TO PUBLIC PROPERTY CAUSED BY TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS PROVIDED THAT THE PERSON FROM WHOM THE DAMAGES ARE LEGALLY RECOVERABLE CAN BE IDENTIFIED.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON. JOHN HOBLEY, IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON. S.L. CHEN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY. MR. CHEN ASKED WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT HAD ADEQUATE MEANS TO RECOVER SUCH DAMAGES TO PUBLIC PROPERTY SUCH AS ROAD RAILINGS, ROAD PARTITIONINGS AND LAMP POSTS.

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ROAD SAFETY PROGRAMME ACHIEVES RESULT
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THE TREND IN THE NUMBER OF TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS INVOLVING CYCLISTS IS DECREASING AND THERE IS A DEFINITE DROP IN CASUALTIES AS WELL, THE SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, THE HON. DEREK JONES TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM DR. THE HON. HENRY HU, MR. JONES SAID: +THERE HAS BEEN NO INCREASE RECENTLY IN THE NUMBER OF ACCIDENTS INVOLVING CYCLISTS, NOR IN THE NUMBER OF CYCLISTS INJURED IN TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS.+

HE NOTED THAT SOME OF THE CREDIT FOR THIS MUST GO TO THE ROAD SAFETY PROGRAMME WHICH WOULD CONTINUE TO TRAIN CYCLISTS IN THE SAFE USE OF THE HIGHWAY.

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TWO BILLS BECOME LAW
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THE PREVENTION OF BRIBERY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1978 AND THE MAGISTRATES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1978 WERE PASSED INTO LAW BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2, 1978

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RTHK ORDERS MOBILE TELEVISION PRODUCTION UNIT
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RTHK AND PHILIPS HONG KONG LTD TODAY SIGNED A 500,000 POUND STERLING CONTRACT FOR A MOBILE TELEVISION PRODUCTION UNIT.

THE CONTRACT WAS SIGNED BY MR. DONALD KERR, DIRECTOR OF BROADCASTING AND MR. T. MEYER, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF PHILIPS HONG KONG LTD.

THE UNIT WILL BE BUILT BY PYE-TV AT THEIR FACTORY IN CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND, FOR DELIVERY TO HONG KONG IN LATE NOVEMBER THIS YEAR.

FURTHER ORDERS ARE TO BE PLACED FOR LIGHTWEIGHT VIDEO TAPE AND RECORDING EQUIPMENT. THE MOBILE UNIT AND RECORDING EQUIPMENT ARE TO COPE WITH THE FIRST STAGE OF THE EXPANSION OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS TELEVISION. THE NEXT STAGE IS A NEW THREE STUDIO AND PRODUCTION COMPLEX AND IS TO BE BUILT ALONGSIDE BROADCASTING HOUSE IN ORDER TO INCREASE PROGRAMME OUTPUT TO TWELVE HOURS A WEEK AND TO MAKE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY PROGRAMMES FOR ETV.

THE MOBILE PRODUCTION UNIT WHICH IS EQUIPPED WITH THREE LIGHTWEIGHT PHILIPS LDK15 CAMERAS, WILL BE USED FOR MAKING PROGRAMMES ON LOCATION. THE DESIGN IS A SECOND GENERATION VERSION OF THE LIGHTWEIGHT ELECTRONIC UNITS DESIGNED BY THE BBC WHO PIONEERED THE CHANGEOVER FROM FILM TO ELECTRONICS IN MAKING DRAMA SERIES USING REAL LOCATIONS INSTEAD OF THE STUDIO.

THE VAN IS CUSTOM BUILT TO COPE WITH HONG KONG CONGESTION AND TO BE ABLE TO REACH DIFFICULT LOCATIONS. WITH ITS 50 KVA MOBILE GENERATOR THE UNIT WILL BE ABLE TO WORK INDEPENDENTLY OF MAINS POWER SUPPLIES.

THE VAN WHICH WILL BE THE FIRST OF ITS KIND IN HONG KONG DIFFERS FROM THE CONVENTIONAL OUTSIDE BROADCAST UNIT IN THAT THE PRODUCER WILL OPERATE AWAY FROM THE VAN AND BE WITH THE ACTORS AND CAMERAMEN RATHER THAN AT THE CONTROL PANEL.

BY USING FILM TECHNIQUES WITH LIGHTWEIGHT ELECTRONIC CAMERAS AND RECORDING THE FINISHED SEQUENCES ONTO VIDEOTAPE IT IS HOPED TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY AND TO GIVE PRODUCERS GREATER CONTROL OVER THE PROGRAMME MAKING.

THE UNIT WILL BE EQUIPPED WITH MICROWAVE LINKS FOR LIVE PRODUCTION AND BECAUSE THE CAMERAS ARE OF THE SAME 'FAMILY' AS THOSE IN THE STUDIOS, NAMELY LDK25 AND ARE INTERCHANGEABLE, IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO STAGE MULTI-CAMERA OUTSIDE BROADCASTS OF SPECIAL EVENTS.

THE UNIT WHICH WILL BE IN THE TRADITIONAL RTHK COLOURS OF RED AND WHITE WILL BE ON DISPLAY AT THE INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING CONVENTION IN LONDON LATER IN THE YEAR.

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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2, 1978

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CONTRACT SIGNING FOR EASTERN CORRIDOR PROJECT
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A MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR CONTRACT IN THE STAGE ONE OF THE HONG KONG ISLAND EASTERN CORRIDOR PROJECT WILL BE SIGNED TOMORROW.

THE CONTRACT INVOLVES THE REPROVISIONING OF THE NORTH POINT VEHICULAR FERRY PIER.

THE SIGNING WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE G.I.S. THEATRE, BEACONSFIELD HOUSE, 5TH FLOOR, AT 10 A.M.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO SEND A REPRESENTATIVE TO COVER THE CONTRACT SIGNING CEREMONY.

TELEVISION CREWS ARE ASKED TO ARRIVE EARLY SO THAT THEY WILL HAVE AMPLE TIME TO SET UP THEIR CAMERAS.

AFTER THE SIGNING CEREMONY, MR. HO LAI-KUEN, SENIOR ENGINEER OF THE CONSULTANTS MANAGEMENT DIVISION OF THE HIGHWAYS OFFICE WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW IN BOTH ENGLISH AND CHINESE.

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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2, 1978

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GIANT PROMENADE CONCERT FOR 3,000

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THE VISITING COUNTY OF AVON SCHOOLS ORCHESTRA WILL JOIN THE HONG KONG YOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND THE HONG KONG YOUTH SYMPHONIC BAND IN A MASSIVE OPEN-AIR PROMENADE CONCERT AT THE POLYTECHNIC PODIUM IN KOWLOON TOMORROW (THURSDAY) EVENING.

MORE THAN 3,000 PEOPLE WILL ATTEND THE CONCERT WHICH WILL FEATURE MARCH MUSIC, POP SONGS AND ORCHESTRAL MUSIC.

THE COMBINED ORCHESTRA, CONSISTING OF SOME 400 MEMBERS, WILL BE CONDUCTED BY MR. DAVID C. STONE.

THIS IS THE FIRST ATTEMPT BY THE MUSIC ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE TO PRESENT A COMBINED PERFORMANCE OF TWO BRASS BANDS AND TWO ORCHESTRAS IN A SENSOROUND ENVIRONMENT.

TOMORROW'S PROGRAMME WILL BE DIVIDED INTO TWO PARTS. THE HONG KONG YOUTH SYMPHONIC BAND WILL START OFF THE EVENING WITH MARCH MUSIC AND LOCAL POP SONGS, FOLLOWED BY ORCHESTRAL MUSIC BY THE YOUNG ORCHESTRA.

THE HONG KONG YOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA WAS FORMED IN JANUARY THIS YEAR UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE MUSIC ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE. THE 150 MEMBERS AGED BETWEEN NINE AND 23 YEARS, COME FROM VARIOUS SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES IN HONG KONG.

ACCORDING TO ITS CONDUCTOR, THE DISTINGUISHED VIOLINIST, THOMAS Y.S. WANG, THE ORCHESTRA SERVES AS A TRAINING GROUND FOR ASPIRING INSTRUMENTALISTS IN ORCHESTRAL AND ENSEMBLE PLAYING. IN ADDITION, THE EDUCATION VALUE IS ENORMOUS. SELF CONFIDENCE AND RELIANCE, DISCIPLINE, AND SOCIAL CONTACTS ARE JUST A FEW OF THE ATTRIBUTES.

LAST MONTH, THE YOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA GAVE A PERFORMANCE FOR A PRIVATE AUDIENCE. +ALREADY, THE MEMBERS HAVE DEVELOPED A BOND WITH EACH OTHER AND GAINED TREMENDOUS CONFIDENCE THROUGH THIS EXPERIENCE.+ MR. WANG SAID.

THE ORCHESTRA'S DIARY FOR THE COMING MONTHS INCLUDES A CONCERT AT THE END OF THIS MONTH, A CONCERT TOUR OF SINGAPORE IN NOVEMBER, AND A RETURN VISIT TO ENGLAND NEXT SUMMER UNDER THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH MUSIC EXCHANGE PROGRAMME.

THE HONG KONG YOUTH SYMPHONIC BAND WAS FORMED IN MAY THIS YEAR TO PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG INSTRUMENTALISTS TO GAIN EXPERIENCE IN ENSEMBLE PLAYING. THE BAND COMPRISES THE BEST PLAYERS TRAINED UNDER THE YOUTH MUSIC SERVICE PROGRAMME -- A SYSTEMATIC AND COMPREHENSIVE INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC TRAINING SCHEME FOR STUDENTS AND YOUNG PERSONS UNDER THE AGE OF 23 RUN BY THE MUSIC ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE.

/+A WIND BAND

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2, 1978

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+A WIND BAND IS MORE FLEXIBLE,+ SAID THE YOUTH SYMPHONIC BAND'S CONDUCTOR, MR. JOHN K.C. CHENG. +IT IS EASILY MOBILISED AND CAN PLAY IN MANY SETTINGS, OPEN-AIR OR INSIDE AN AUDITORIUM. THE NUMBER OF PLAYERS CAN ALSO VARY ACCORDING TO THE SITUATION.+

FOR TOMORROW'S CONCERT, THE BAND WILL BE JOINED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUI CHING MIDDLE SCHOOL BAND AND THE DELIA MEMORIAL SCHOOL (MEI FOO) WIND BAND.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE INCLUDE PARTICIPATION IN THE BAND FESTIVAL ORGANISED BY THE MUSIC ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE IN NOVEMBER. THE YOUTH SYMPHONIC BAND WILL ALSO PLAY HOST TO VARIOUS LOCAL BANDS AND AN ALL-FEMALE BRASS BAND FROM JAPAN.

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WATER CUT

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THE WATER SUPPLIES DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED TODAY THAT FRESH WATER SUPPLY TO A NUMBER OF PREMISES NEAR JARDINE'S LOOKOUT ON THE ISLAND AND IN TSUEN WAN, THE NEW TERRITORIES WILL BE TEMPORARILY CUT OFF FOR SEVERAL HOURS ON THURSDAY (AUGUST 3) NIGHT TO FACILITATE LEAKAGE TESTS.

THE AREA TO BE AFFECTED NEAR JARDINE'S LOOKOUT, BOUNDED BY MT. BUTLER ROAD, MOORSOM ROAD, PERKINS ROAD, COOPER ROAD, WILSON ROAD INCLUDING CREASY ROAD, HENDERSON ROAD, GOLDSMITH ROAD, PURVES ROAD AND PRICE ROAD, WILL HAVE NO WATER FOR SEVEN HOURS FROM 11 P.M. ON THURSDAY.

IN TSUEN WAN, THE AREA BOUNDED BY TAI WO HAU ROAD AND BLOCK NOS. 3 TO 26 OF KWAI CHUNG ESTATE WILL BE WITHOUT WATER FOR SIX HOURS FROM MIDNIGHT ON THURSDAY TO 6 A.M. ON FRIDAY.

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