



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

SUNDAY, JUNE 27, 1976

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL - ITS WORK AND HISTORY *****

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WILL WIND UP ITS CURRENT SESSION IN JUST OVER A MONTH WHEN IT GOES INTO RECESS AFTER ITS MEETING ON AUGUST 4.

A TOTAL OF 24 MEETINGS HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED FOR THE SESSION BEGINNING ON OCTOBER 1, 1975. DURING THE PAST 21 MEETINGS OF THIS SESSION, THE COUNCIL HAS TAKEN NUMEROUS DECISIONS ON MATTERS WHICH WILL HAVE LONG LASTING EFFECTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF HONG KONG AND THE WAYS OF LIFE OF THE PEOPLE HERE. SO FAR, 79 BILLS HAVE BEEN ENACTED AS LAWS OF HONG KONG COMPARED WITH A TOTAL OF 77 IN THE LAST SESSION, AND 42 MOTIONS ON A VARIETY OF SUBJECTS HAVE BEEN PASSED. OF THE BILLS PASSED, THE MORE IMPORTANT ONES ARE THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION (AMENDMENT) BILL, THE INDUSTRIAL ESTATES PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY BILL, THE DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES BILL, THE COUNTRY PARKS BILL AND THE APPRENTICESHIP BILL.

THE MOTIONS PASSED INCLUDED THOSE WHICH PAVED THE WAY FOR THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF HONG KONG: THE SETTING OF A RATE OF LEVY ON THE F.O.B. VALUE OF THE CLOTHING ITEMS EXPORTED= AND THE GUARANTEES IN RESPECT OF RE-PAYMENT OF LOANS MADE TO THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY CORPORATION UNDER SPECIFIED FACILITIES.

THE NUMBER OF QUESTIONS RAISED BY UNOFFICIALS SO FAR REACHED 140. AGAIN, THEY WERE ON WIDE-RANGING TOPICS CONCERNING EDUCATION, HOUSING, TRANSPORT, SOCIAL SERVICES, RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND MANY OTHERS. THE UNOFFICIALS ALSO BROUGHT UP A NUMBER OF DIVERSE SUBJECTS OF PUBLIC CONCERN DURING ADJOURNMENT DEBATES.

AMONG THE ISSUES DISCUSSED WERE SOCIAL PLANNING AND POPULATION GROWTH, THE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY VOLTAGE TO CONSUMERS, LICENSED AREAS AND METRICATION.

THE PRIMARY FUNCTIONS OF THE COUNCIL ARE TO ENACT LEGISLATION AND CONTROL EXPENDITURE OF PUBLIC FUNDS. THE PROCEDURE IN THE COUNCIL IS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME AS THAT OF A PARLIAMENT WITH PROVISION FOR PUBLIC DEBATES AND QUESTIONS. ALL BILLS HAVE TO PASS THE FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD READINGS AT THE COUNCIL BEFORE THEY CAN BECOME LAW. DEBATE ON THE GENERAL MERITS AND PRINCIPLES OF A BILL MAY TAKE PLACE WHEN IT IS MOVED FOR ITS SECOND READING AT THE COUNCIL MEETING. HOWEVER, AMENDMENTS MAY BE MADE IN THE COMMITTEE STAGE BEFORE A BILL COMPLETES ITS PASSAGE AT ITS THIRD READING. A BILL PASSED BY THE COUNCIL DOES NOT BECOME LAW UNTIL THE GOVERNOR GIVES HIS ASSENT TO IT.

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DURING EACH ANNUAL SESSION, THERE ARE TWO OCCASIONS FOR GENERAL DEBATE. ONE IS THE DEBATE ON FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS IN FEBRUARY-MARCH DURING THE SECOND READING OF THE APPROPRIATION BILL AND THE OTHER IS THE DEBATE ON SOCIAL PROGRESS AND GOVERNMENT POLICY IN GENERAL WHEN THE GOVERNOR REVIEWS THE AFFAIRS OF HONG KONG AT THE OPENING OF THE COUNCIL SESSION IN OCTOBER.

UNDER THE EXISTING STANDING ORDERS, THE COUNCIL MEETS IN PUBLIC ONCE EVERY ALTERNATE WEDNESDAY EXCEPT DURING THE ANNUAL RECESS BETWEEN AUGUST AND OCTOBER.

THE COUNCIL MAY, IN EACH SESSION, APPOINT ONE OR MORE SELECT COMMITTEES TO CONSIDER MATTERS OR BILLS OF PUBLIC INTEREST, AND EACH COMMITTEE IS REQUIRED TO SUBMIT A REPORT OF ITS STUDY TO THE COUNCIL.

ALL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE MUST BE APPROVED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL. IN PRACTICE, PROPOSED ITEMS ARE CONSIDERED FIRST BY THE FINANCE COMMITTEE -- A STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE COUNCIL. THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETS ONCE A FORTNIGHT IN PRIVATE AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CONSIDERING ALL REQUESTS FOR PUBLIC EXPENDITURE AND THE SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS OF FUNDS. ITS MEMBERS ARE THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (CHAIRMAN), THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS AND ALL THE UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL.

TO FACILITATE ITS WORK, THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HAS SET UP TWO SUB-COMMITTEES -- THE PUBLIC WORKS SUB-COMMITTEE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT SUB-COMMITTEE.

THE FIRST SUB-COMMITTEE IS CHAIRED BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY. THE OTHER MEMBERS ARE SIX UNOFFICIALS AND ONE OFFICIAL -- THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS. ITS FUNCTION IS TO REVIEW THE PROGRAMME OF PUBLIC WORKS PRESENTED BY THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT AND THE FINANCE BRANCH AND TO DECIDE ON THE PRIORITY OF PUBLIC WORKS ITEMS.

THE ESTABLISHMENT SUB-COMMITTEE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ADVISING THE GOVERNMENT ON PROPOSALS CONCERNING THE CREATION OF NEW POSTS, STAFF INCREASES AND THE REGRADING OF EXISTING POSTS. IT IS MADE UP OF FIVE UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS, ONE OF WHOM IS THE CHAIRMAN, AND TWO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

ACCORDING TO REPORTS, THE HISTORY OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BEGAN AS EARLY AS 1844. ONE INTERESTING POINT IS THAT UNDER THE OLD STANDING ORDERS, THE FIRST SESSION OF THE COUNCIL LASTED 124 YEARS UNTIL 1968. DURING THIS PERIOD, THE COUNCIL CONTINUED ITS MEETINGS YEAR AFTER YEAR WITH NO RECESS UNTIL 1968 WHEN THE STANDING ORDERS WERE REVISED TO ALLOW FOR AN ANNUAL BREAK.

AS A RESULT OF THIS CHANGE, THE SECOND COUNCIL SESSION BEGAN IN OCTOBER, 1969 AND SO THE CURRENT 1975-76 SESSION IS ONLY THE EIGHTH ONE IN THE COUNCIL RECORDS. THE INTRODUCTION OF AN ANNUAL RECESS FROM AUGUST TO OCTOBER PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE COUNCIL TO TAKE STOCK OF ITS WORK, TO REVIEW THE PAST AND CONSIDER THE FUTURE.

WHEN THE COUNCIL FIRST MET IN 1844, THERE WERE ONLY FOUR OFFICIAL MEMBERS, INCLUDING THE THEN GOVERNOR, SIR HENRY POTTINGER. DURING THE FIRST FOUR MONTHS OF ITS FORMATION, THE COUNCIL PASSED AN AVERAGE OF ONE ORDINANCE A WEEK.

IT WAS IN 1850 THAT THE FIRST ENLARGEMENT OF THE COUNCIL TOOK PLACE. TWO UNOFFICIALS WERE APPOINTED, BRINGING THE TOTAL MEMBERSHIP TO SIX. THESE TWO MEMBERS WERE ELECTED BY THE JUSTICES OF THE PEACE THEMSELVES AT THE INVITATION OF THE GOVERNOR. THEY WERE MR. DAVID JARDINE AND MR. J.F. EDGER.

THE PUBLICATION OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNCIL AND THE OPENING OF ITS MEETING TO THE PUBLIC IN 1858 MARKED A MILESTONE IN THE HISTORY OF THE COUNCIL.

THIS LED TO GREATER PUBLIC INTEREST IN WHAT THE COUNCIL DID AND TO MORE CRITICISM TOO. IN THE SAME YEAR, THE POWERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WERE INCREASED SO THAT MEMBERS WERE PERMITTED TO VOTE THE BUDGET. BEFORE THAT THEY WERE ONLY ABLE TO VOTE ON TAXES, BUT NOT THE BUDGET ITSELF.

THE FIRST CHINESE UNOFFICIAL WAS APPOINTED IN 1880, 36 YEARS AFTER THE COUNCIL CAME INTO BEING. HE WAS MR. NG CHOY (OR BETTER KNOWN AS DR. WU TING-FANG), A BARRISTER-AT-LAW. THREE YEARS LATER, THE HONG KONG GENERAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND THE JUSTICES OF THE PEACE WERE INVITED TO NOMINATE ONE MEMBER EACH TO THE COUNCIL. AT THE SAME TIME, CHINESE MEMBERSHIP ALSO BECAME A PERMANENT FEATURE OF THE COUNCIL.

AS THE YEARS PASSED, CHANGES WERE INTRODUCED TO MAKE THE COUNCIL MORE REPRESENTATIVE OF DIFFERENT SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY. BY 1955, THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL HAD BEEN FURTHER ENLARGED TO NINE OFFICIALS, INCLUDING THE GOVERNOR AND EIGHT UNOFFICIALS (TWO OF THEM CHINESE).

THE FIRST WOMAN TO SERVE IN THE COUNCIL WAS MRS. ELLEN LI SHU-PUI, WHO WAS APPOINTED IN 1966. TO DATE, THERE ARE TWO WOMEN MEMBERS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL. THEY ARE MRS. JOYCE SYMONS AND MRS. KWAN KO SIU-WAH.

THE INTRODUCTION OF SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION AT COUNCIL MEETINGS IN THE 1972-73 SESSION WAS ANOTHER MILESTONE IN THE HISTORY OF THE COUNCIL. THIS ENABLES MEMBERS TO SPEAK IN EITHER ENGLISH OR CHINESE, AND SO HELPS TO OPEN UP THE MEETINGS TO MORE PEOPLE INTERESTED IN LISTENING TO THE PROCEEDINGS IN THE PUBLIC GALLERY OF THE COUNCIL CHAMBER OR ON THE RADIO.

FROM ITS SMALL BEGINNING IN 1844, THE COUNCIL IS NOW EXPANDED TO COMPRISE THE GOVERNOR, WHO IS BOTH THE PRESIDENT AND A MEMBER, FOUR EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS -- THE COLONIAL SECRETARY, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS -- TEN OFFICIAL MEMBERS AND 15 NONIMATED UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS, ALL MEMBERS ARE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR ON THE INSTRUCTIONS OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

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WHEN THE GOVERNOR, SIR MURRAY MACLEHOSE, REVIEWED THE AFFAIRS OF HONG KONG AT THE OPENING OF THE CURRENT SESSION, HE SAID THAT GIVEN TIME AND THE RIGHT PEOPLE AND THE WILL, THERE WAS PLENTY OF ROOM FOR CHANGE WHILE RETAINING THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

HE ALSO STRESSED THAT LACKING, AS WAS UNAVOIDABLE ANY ELECTORAL MANDATE, MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL WERE REQUIRED TO TRY TO THINK AND PLAN AND SPEAK FOR THE INTERESTS OF THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE AS THEY SAW IT, AND NOT, AS WOULD BE SO MUCH EASIER, FOR THE NARROW INTERESTS OF A PARTY, A GROUP, A PROFESSION, AN AREA OR A CLASS.

+BUT I BELIEVE IT ASSISTS THIS GENERAL REQUIREMENT IF MEMBERS ARE ABLE TO SPEAK FROM AS WIDE A SPREAD AS POSSIBLE NOT ONLY OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE, BUT ALSO OF SOCIAL BACKGROUND,+ HE ADDED.

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WATER CUT

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SALT WATER SUPPLY TO A NUMBER OF PREMISES IN NORTH POINT WILL BE TURNED OFF FOR FIVE HOURS FROM 1 A.M. ON TUESDAY (JUNE 29) TO ALLOW THE WATERWORKS OFFICE TO CARRY OUT A LEAKAGE TEST.

THE AREA AFFECTED IS BOUNDED BY ELECTRIC ROAD, JAVA ROAD FROM LAU SIN STREET TO TIN CHIU STREET, NORTH POINT ROAD, CHUN YEUNG STREET, TONG SHUI ROAD, SHU KUK STREET AND KAM HONG STREET.

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FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS REGULATIONS EFFECTIVE JULY 1

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THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (SPRAYING OF FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS) REGULATIONS, 1976 APPROVED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THREE MONTHS AGO COME INTO FORCE ON JULY 1.

ANNOUNCING THIS TODAY, ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR, MRS. SOO MOK SAU-HA STRESSED THE NEED FOR PROPRIETORS TO OBSERVE THESE REGULATIONS STRICTLY BECAUSE THE RAPID VAPOURIZATION OF FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS IN THE SPRAYING PROCESS COULD CREATE A POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE CONCENTRATION OF GASES IN THE ATMOSPHERE.

UNCONTROLLED SPRAYING OF FLAMMABLE LIQUID WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR ABOUT 300 ACCIDENTS - 22 FATAL - IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS, SHE SAID, AND THERE WERE FIVE LARGE FIRES RESULTING FROM SPRAYING OF FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS DURING THE LAST FIVE MONTHS OF 1975.

TO HELP PROPRIETORS COMPLY WITH THEIR NEW OBLIGATIONS THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT HAS ISSUED A FREE GUIDE TO THESE REGULATIONS WHICH ARE DESIGNED TO PROVIDE A SAFER WORKING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE WORKERS.

THE REGULATIONS COVER NOT ONLY THE SPRAYING OF PAINT BUT ALSO THE SPRAYING OF OTHER FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS SUCH AS THINNERS, VARNISHES, LACQUERS, SEALING COMPOUNDS AND PETROLEUM BASED ADHESIVES.

THE CONTROLS SET OUT IN THEM INCLUDED:

- * THE SEGREGATION OF THE SPRAYING AREA FROM OTHER PARTS OF AN INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKING=
- * THE PROVISION OF AN EFFICIENT VENTILATION SYSTEM TO REDUCE THE CONCENTRATION OF FLAMMABLE VAPOURS IN THE SPRAYING AREA=
- * THE PROHIBITION OF SMOKING OR THE USE OF A NAKED FLAME WITHIN 20 FEET OF ANY SPRAYING AREA= AND
- * THE IMPOSITION OF STANDARDS OF ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT TO AVOID SPARKS IGNITING A FLAMMABLE ATMOSPHERE.

THERE ARE ALSO PROVISIONS GOVERNING CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS ARE STORED.

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OPENING OF YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAMP

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SOME 120 YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY (SUNDAY) BEGIN THREE WEEKS OF INTENSIVE TRAINING AT A YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAMP AT RAF KAI TAK SPORT FIELD.

ORGANISED JOINTLY BY THE ARMY AND THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT, THE CAMP HAS BEEN HELD ANNUALLY SINCE 1971, AND IN THE PAST TWO YEARS HAS AIMED AT DEVELOPING THE POTENTIAL, SELF-RELIANCE AND LEADERSHIP QUALITIES OF THE PARTICIPANTS.

AT A BRIEF WELCOMING CEREMONY THIS EVENING, THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE, MR. THOMAS LEE TOLD THE YOUNGSTERS THAT HE HOPED THEY WOULD MAKE THE BEST OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACQUIRE EXPERIENCE AND TO BETTER EQUIP THEMSELVES IN ORDER TO SERVE THE COMMUNITY IN FUTURE.

MR. LEE NOTED THAT THE KEEN INTEREST SHOWN BY YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LEADERSHIP CAMP OVER THE PAST SIX YEARS WAS REFLECTED BY THE LARGE NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED EACH YEAR.

HE URGED THEM TO SUCCEED WITH DETERMINATION, INITIATIVE AND A CO-OPERATIVE SPIRIT.

+MENCIUS ONCE SAID: +THUS, WHEN HEAVEN IS ABOUT TO CONFER A GREAT OFFICE ON ANY MAN, IT FIRST EXERCISES HIS MIND WITH SUFFERING, AND HIS SINews AND BONES WITH TOIL. IT EXPOSES HIS BODY TO HUNGER, AND SUBJECTS HIM TO EXTREME POVERTY. IT CONFOUNDS HIS UNDERTAKINGS. BY ALL THESE MATTERS, IT STIMULATES HIS MIND, HARDENS HIS NATURE, AND SUPPLIES HIS INCOMPETENCIES.

+THESE WORDS, I BELIEVE, ARE ALSO APPLICABLE TO YOU,+ HE SAID.

THE CAMP DIRECTOR, CAPTAIN ROBERT COX OF THE FIRST BATTALION LIGHT INFANTRY, WAS ALSO PRESENT AT THE WELCOMING CEREMONY.

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