



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1982

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WARM WELCOME FOR SIR EDWARD AT LEGCO
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THE GOVERNOR, SIR EDWARD YOUDE, PRESIDING OVER HIS FIRST LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING, TOLD MEMBERS HE LOOKED FORWARD TO PARTICIPATING IN THEIR WORK AND LISTENING TO THE DEBATES +WHICH I AM SURE WILL BE BOTH LIVELY AND INSTRUCTIVE+.

LADY YOUDE ALSO ATTENDED THE MEETING, LISTENING TO THE PROCEEDINGS FROM THE PUBLIC GALLERY.

SENIOR UNOFFICIAL MEMBER, THE HON ROGER LOBO, WELCOMED SIR EDWARD AND LADY YOUDE TO THE COUNCIL ON BEHALF OF THE UNOFFICIALS.

+THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG ARE INDEED GREATLY ENCOURAGED BY YOUR EXCELLENCY'S UNEQUIVOCAL COMMITMENT TO THE INTERESTS OF HONG KONG AND OUR FUTURE,+ MR LOBO SAID. +WE SHARE THIS SAME COMMITMENT AND TO THAT END MY COLLEAGUES AND I PLEDGE OUR FULL AND WHOLE HEARTED SUPPORT.+

FOLLOWING IS THE FULL TEXT OF THE GOVERNOR'S OPENING REMARKS IN COUNCIL:

+OF THIS, THE FIRST MEETING OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SINCE MY ARRIVAL IN HONG KONG, I SHOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT IT IS FOR ME BOTH A PLEASURE AND A PRIVILEGE TO BE ABLE TO PRESIDE OVER YOUR PROCEEDINGS. IN DOING SO I AM VERY CONSCIOUS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THOSE PROCEEDINGS FOR THE WELL-BEING OF THIS TERRITORY AND OF THE TIME, CARE AND EFFORT WHICH MEMBERS PUT INTO THE WORK NOT ONLY OF THE COUNCIL ITSELF BUT OF THE UMELCO, THE FINANCE COMMITTEE AND ITS SUB-COMMITTEES - ALL OF WHICH PERFORM AN ESSENTIAL ROLE IN THE GOOD GOVERNMENT OF HONG KONG. MY PREDECESSORS HAVE IN THEIR OPENING ADDRESSES TO THIS COUNCIL THANKED HONOURABLE MEMBERS FOR THIS CONTRIBUTION AND I SHOULD LIKE, IN ALL SINCERITY, TO DO THE SAME.

+I LOOK FORWARD TO PARTICIPATING IN YOUR WORK AND TO PRESIDING OVER YOUR DEBATES WHICH I AM SURE WILL BE BOTH LIVELY AND INSTRUCTIVE. THANK YOU.+

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1982.

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MOTOR VEHICLE RESTRAINTS APPROVED
AFTER LONG DEBATE
* * * *

THE CONTROVERSIAL BILLS AIMED AT STOPPING GROWING CONGESTION ON THE ROADS OF HONG KONG COMPLETED ITS PASSAGE THROUGH THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY, DESPITE OPPOSITION FROM SEVERAL UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS.

THE BILLS WERE THE MOTOR VEHICLES (FIRST REGISTRATION TAX) (AMENDMENT) BILL, THE ROAD TRAFFIC (REGISTRATION AND LICENSING OF VEHICLES REGULATIONS) (AMENDMENT) BILL AND THE DUTIABLE COMMODITIES (AMENDMENT OF DUTY OF LIGHT OILS) BILL.

SIXTEEN UNOFFICIALS SPOKE ON THE BILLS DURING THEIR SECOND READING DEBATE - TEN IN SUPPORT, SOME OF THEM WITH RESERVATIONS, AND SIX AGAINST.

LEADING THE DEBATE WAS THE HON LYDIA DUNN, CONVENOR OF THE UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS' COMMUNITY SERVICE GROUP WHICH EXAMINED THE BILLS.

MISS DUNN, SUPPORTING THE BILLS, AGREED THAT THE PROBLEM OF CONGESTION COULD NOT BE SOLVED BY ROAD-BUILDING AND IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMMES AND THE INTRODUCTION OF MORE SOPHISTICATED TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS ALONE.

SHE NOTED THE REASONING BEHIND THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO INVOKE, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, THE PRICE MECHANISM AS AN ANTI-CONGESTION WEAPON.

+I WOULD ADD THAT I DO NOT THINK IT IS VERY HELPFUL FOR CRITICS TO DISMISS THIS WEAPON ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT IS FISCALLY INEQUITABLE- IT IS, BUT ONE CANNOT IGNORE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SOCIAL BENEFITS THAT WILL FLOW FROM A SPEEDING UP OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT MOVEMENTS,+ SHE SAID.

HOWEVER, MISS DUNN QUESTIONED WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT ALSO IMPOSE SOME FORM OF DIRECT LIMITATION ON NUMBERS AND ON USAGE.

REFERRING TO THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT'S REMARKS THAT IT IS CONSIDERED UNDESIRABLE TO DENY ASPIRATIONS OF OWNERSHIP COMPLETELY, AND GOVERNMENT CONSIDERS, THEREFORE, THAT OTHER MEASURES SHOULD BE TESTED BEFORE DIRECT RESTRAINT ON OWNERSHIP IS RESORTED TO, MISS DUNN SAID: +THIS STATEMENT TYPIFIES AN ATTITUDE OF MIND WHICH PREVAILS IN THE GOVERNMENT ON TRANSPORT MATTERS, THAT IS TO SAY, A RELUCTANCE TO GET TO THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM LEADING TO A RETREAT INTO PIECEMEAL AND HALF MEASURES..

+SUCH AN ATTITUDE OF MIND HAS BEEN AT LEAST, IN PART, RESPONSIBLE FOR THE STATE OF THE ROADS TODAY.

/+IT IS ARGUABLE,

+IT IS ARGUABLE, IN ANY CASE, WHETHER ASPIRATIONS OF OWNERSHIP WOULD BE FRUSTRATED MORE BY LIMITATIONS ON NUMBERS THAN BY REALLY SEVERE FISCAL MEASURES- AND, IF THE INCREASES PROPOSED IN FIRST REGISTRATION TAX, ANNUAL LICENCE FEES AND DUTY ON PETROL ARE NOT SEVERE ENOUGH TO BE EFFECTIVE, TIME WILL BE LOST, SPENDING PATTERNS WILL BE UNNECESSARILY DISTORTED AND THE ONLY BENEFICIARY WILL BE THE TREASURY.+

EVEN A COMPREHENSIVE PACKAGE OF FISCAL MEASURES AND DIRECT LIMITATION, SHE POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, WAS UNLIKELY TO REDUCE CONGESTION SIGNIFICANTLY UNLESS THE PROBLEMS OF TAXIS, LIGHT GOODS VEHICLES AND PARKING FACILITIES WERE ALSO TACKLED.

IN THIS RESPECT, SHE WONDERED WHY SOME OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORT STUDY COMPLETED IN 1976 HAD NOT BEEN ACTED UPON LONG BEFORE.

MISS DUNN BELIEVED THAT THE TIME HAD COME TO CONFER ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE OPERATIONAL SERVICES AN ABSOLUTE PRIORITY IN TERMS OF BOTH ADMINISTRATIVE ATTENTION AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES.

ONLY WHEN THE GOVERNMENT CONVINCES THE PUBLIC THAT TRANSPORT HAS SUCH A PRIORITY CAN WE EXPECT THE PUBLIC TO HAVE PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING, SHE ADDED.

+I AM NOT UNAWARE OF THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE LAST FEW YEARS TO IMPROVE OUR TRANSPORT SITUATION.

+THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE MTR AND THE ELECTRIFICATION OF THE KCR ARE JUST TWO EXAMPLES OF MANY.

+BUT IN THIS DECADE, TRANSPORT SHOULD BE ACCORDED A HIGHER PRIORITY THAN HITHERTO,+ MISS DUNN SAID.

DR THE HON HARRY FANG WELCOMED THE GOVERNMENT'S DETERMINATION TO RELIEVE ROAD CONGESTION BY DRASTIC MEASURES.

HOWEVER, HE EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS ON THE MOTOR VEHICLES (FIRST REGISTRATION) (AMENDMENT) BILL BECAUSE OF ITS IMPACT ON PROSPECTIVE DISABLED DRIVER CAR OWNERS.

HE NOTED THAT THERE ARE AT PRESENT SOME 316 LICENSED DISABLED DRIVERS, OVER HALF OF WHOM OWNED CARS OR OTHER TYPES OF VEHICLES, AND MORE THAN 400 DISABLED PERSONS ARE HOLDING PROVISIONAL DRIVING LICENCES.

+IT REQUIRES LITTLE IMAGINATION TO UNDERSTAND THAT IN THE ABSENCE OF ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRAVELLING WITH FACILITIES SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO SUIT THE NEEDS OF THESE PERSONS, A CAR IS THE ONLY MEANS OF TRANSPORT AND INDEED TO SOME OF OUR DISABLED WORKERS AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY.

+THE IMPACT OF THE PRESENT BILL ON DISABLED DRIVERS THUS REQUIRED NO ELABORATION.

+I AM SURE MANY WILL AGREE WITH ME THAT IT WOULD BE BLATANTLY UNJUST NOT TO OFFER SOME FORM OF CONCESSION FOR SUCH PERSONS AS REGARDS FIRST REGISTRATION TAX,+ SAID DR FANG.

THE HON PETER C. WONG SAID THE PACKAGE PROPOSED BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT +IS CERTAINLY NOT A PANACEA, NOR IS IT WITHOUT SHORTCOMINGS+.

HOWEVER, HE AGREED THAT IT WAS RELATIVELY SIMPLE TO ADMINISTER AND AT LEAST IN THE SHORT TERM WOULD HAVE SOME DETERRENT EFFECT.

+OTHER OPTIONS MUST CONTINUE TO BE EXAMINED AND, MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, GREATER EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO IMPROVE THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM.

+THESE TASKS WOULD REQUIRE NOT ONLY EXPERTISE BUT ALSO IMAGINATION AND FIRM ACTION.

+AS WITH THE FORMULATION OF OTHER POLICIES, GOVERNMENT WILL NO DOUBT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT VIEWS EXPRESSED BY THE PUBLIC,+ HE SAID.

THE HON WONG LAM AGREED, BUT WITH RESERVATIONS, THAT THE PROPOSAL TO RESTRAIN THE GROWTH RATE OF PRIVATE CARS SHOULD BE ADOPTED AS AN EXPEDIENT MEASURE.

HOWEVER, HE CONSIDERED THAT THE CURRENT PROPOSALS WERE, STRICTLY SPEAKING, DIRECTED AT RESTRAINING OWNERSHIP RATHER THAN USAGE.

+BASICALLY, INCREASES IN FIRST REGISTRATION TAX AND ANNUAL LICENCE FEES ARE NOT RELATED TO USAGE.

+ONLY THE INCREASE IN THE DUTY ON LIGHT OILS DIRECTLY AFFECTS USAGE BUT, AS A RESTRAINT, IT IS LESS EFFECTIVE IN TERMS OF INCREASING THE FINANCIAL BURDEN OF CAR OWNERS.

+THIS IS THE MAIN REASON FOR MY RESERVATIONS ON GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS FOR RESTRAINING THE GROWTH OF PRIVATE CARS,+ SAID MR WONG.

HE URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE TO LOOK FOR FAIRER AND MORE EFFECTIVE MEANS WHICH SHOULD BE DIRECTED AT CURBING USAGE RATHER THAN OWNERSHIP.

+MEASURES LIKE MORE EFFICIENT CONTROL OF ROAD TRAFFIC, DEVELOPMENT OF OFF-ROAD PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEMS AND BETTER OPERATION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT ON THE ROADS WILL CERTAINLY ACHIEVE POSITIVE RESULTS.

+THESE MEASURES ALONE MAY NOT PRODUCE MUCH EFFECT, AND THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT IS NOT VERY OPTIMISTIC EITHER, BUT COUPLED WITH THE TAX INCREASES, THEY COULD ACHIEVE RESULTS BETTER THAN THE GOVERNMENT WOULD EXPECT,+ HE ADDED.

DR THE HON HO KAM-FAI SUGGESTED THAT MORE POSITIVE AND BETTER CO-ORDINATED MEASURES SHOULD BE PUT INTO OPERATION SIMULTANEOUSLY IN ORDER TO MAXIMISE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CONGESTION-REDUCING EFFORTS.

THE FIRST AND FOREMOST CONSIDERATION, HE SAID, SHOULD BE TO IMPROVE THE STANDARD AND TO EXPAND THE SERVICES OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

DR HO NOTED THAT IF ONLY 25 PER CENT OF THE NUMBER OF PRIVATE MOTORISTS WERE TO GIVE UP USING THEIR VEHICLES, IT WOULD MEAN AN ADDITION OF AT LEAST 54 000 PEOPLE USING VARIOUS MEANS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

+THIS SUDDEN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF COMMUTERS CALLS FOR THE NEED FOR AT LEAST 500 MORE BUSES, AND I WONDER WHETHER THE TWO FRANCHISED BUS COMPANIES CAN BE PROMPT ENOUGH TO RESPOND TO THIS TRANSPORT DEMAND, ESPECIALLY AT THIS TIME WHEN ONE OF THE BUS COMPANIES IS NOW IN THE DILEMMA OF MAKING FORWARD PLANS TO ROUTE DEVELOPMENT IN ANTICIPATION OF THE CHANGING TRANSPORT PATTERNS OF THE COMMUTERS SUBSEQUENT TO THE OPERATION OF THE MTR ISLAND LINE IN 1986,+ HE SAID.

AS FOR THE ELECTRIFIED KCR, HE FELT IT HAD ONLY MADE A MARGINAL CONTRIBUTION TO REDUCING ROAD USE IN URBAN AREAS AND THE FEEDER SERVICES LINKING UP THE KCR STATIONS WITH MAJOR TRANSPORT INTERCHANGES LEFT MUCH TO BE DESIRED.

DR HO ALSO URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO REVIEW ITS POLICY GOVERNING THE OPERATION OF NEW TERRITORIES TAXIS SO THAT THEY COULD FUNCTION AS A MORE EFFICIENT MODE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

HE SUGGESTED THAT THE OPERATION BOUNDARIES OF NEW TERRITORIES TAXIS SHOULD BE EXTENDED TO TSUEN WAN FERRY PIER IN TSUEN WAN, TO THE KCR STATION IN SHA TIN AND TO THE MTR STATION AT CHOI HUNG.

AS FOR THE DISABLED DRIVERS, DR HO FELT THAT CONCESSIONS IN RESPECT OF FIRST REGISTRATION TAX AND ANNUAL LICENCE FEES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED SINCE IT IS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE, UNDER THE PRESENT TRANSPORT CONDITIONS, TO EXPECT THEM TO FREELY USE PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

THE HON CHAN KAM-CHUEN SAID ALTHOUGH +PROHIBITION BY TAXATION+ IS A PHILOSOPHY ACCEPTED BOTH IN THE ORIENT AND THE OCCIDENT, HE HAD SOME DOUBTS IN APPLYING FISCAL CONTROL AS A SOLE MEANS FOR REDUCING CONGESTION.

TO SUPPORT HIS ARGUMENT, HE GAVE AN ANALYSIS ON THE PRIVATE CAR REGISTRATION STATISTICS OVER THE PAST 15 YEARS.

FROM THE ANALYSIS, MR CHAN NOTED, IT APPEARED THAT IF THE PREVAILING EXPORT AND SPECULATIVE MARKETS REMAINED RECESSIONARY, THE PRESENT FISCAL CONTROL WOULD PROBABLY ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVE OF CUTTING PRIVATE CARS DOWN TO FIVE PER CENT OR MIGHT EVEN ACHIEVE AN OVERKILL.

+BUT IF THE REVERSE IS TRUE, THOSE WHO COULD MAKE EASY MONEY IN SPECULATION WOULD BE ABLE TO BRUSH ASIDE THOSE INCREASES AS TRIFLES.+

AND IF THE PROPOSED MEASURES WERE SCUTTLED BY AN UPTURN IN THE ECONOMY, MR CHAN ADDED, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD TRY QUANTITATIVE CONTROL INSTEAD OF FURTHER TAX INCREASE +WHICH MIGHT BE MORE SUCCESSFUL WITHOUT AROUSING THE DISCONTENT OF THE MOTORING PUBLIC AND GENERATING INFLATION+.

IN THIS RESPECT, HE SUGGESTED THE FOLLOWING COURSES OF ACTION:

- * THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD DETERMINE THE NUMBER OF NEW REGISTRATION PERMITTED IN ANY ONE YEAR=
- * OLD PRIVATE CARS MAY BE REPLACED BY NEW ONES ON A ONE-TO-ONE BASIS=
- * A PRIORITY LIST FOR APPLICANTS, BASED ON NEEDS, SHOULD BE COMPILED= AND
- * AFTER SATISFYING THOSE IN THE PRIORITY LIST, THE BALANCE SHOULD THEN BE ALLOCATED BY BALLOTING TO NON-ESSENTIAL USER-APPLICANTS WITHOUT PRIVATE CARS.

THE HON STEPHEN CHEONG SUGGESTED THAT IF FURTHER RESTRAINT MEASURES WERE NECESSARY, THEY SHOULD BE IN THE FORM OF DIRECT RESTRAINTS RATHER THAN FISCAL DEVICES.

HE NOTED THAT CAR OWNERSHIP WAS SOMETHING HONG KONG'S EMERGING AND INCREASINGLY AFFLUENT MIDDLE-CLASS ASPIRED TO.

+BECAUSE OF THIS I HAVE RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE WISDOM OF FURTHER TAXING VEHICLE OWNERSHIP,+ HE SAID.

+IT IS, I FEEL, A MEASURE THAT THE GOVERNMENT CAN AFFORD TO DO ONCE, BUT IT IS NOT A MEASURE THAT THE GOVERNMENT COULD AFFORD TO REPEAT -- GIVEN THE PRESENT STATE OF THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE.+

HE BELIEVED THAT THE ONLY TRULY EFFECTIVE WAY OF CONTAINING THE PROBLEM WAS TO PLACE A LIMIT ON FUTURE GROWTH.

+WHILST I HASTEN TO AGREE THAT THE PROBLEMS OF ALLOCATION WOULD PRESENT GREAT DIFFICULTIES, I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A SUGGESTION TO GOVERNMENT THAT PRIORITY BE GIVEN IMMEDIATELY TO ADDRESSING THESE DIFFICULTIES.+

TURNING TO THE ARGUMENT THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD NOT SPENT ENOUGH TO IMPROVE THE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE, MR CHEONG POINTED OUT THAT OVER \$30 BILLION HAD BEEN EARMARKED FOR OFF-THE-ROAD IMPROVEMENTS TO THE TRANSPORT SYSTEMS FOR 1982-83.

HE ALSO NOTED THAT IN THE FIVE-YEAR PERIOD FROM 1976-77 TO 1980-81, THE GOVERNMENT HAD SPENT AN AVERAGE OF \$66 000 ON ONE PUBLIC HOUSING UNIT, COMPARED WITH \$37 000 FOR EVERY ADDITIONAL VEHICLE REGISTERED IN THE SAME PERIOD.

+THESE FIGURES SEEM TO SUGGEST THAT FOR EACH ADDITIONAL VEHICLE REGISTERED WE HAVE SPENT ON ROAD CONSTRUCTION ALONE AN AMOUNT THAT IS HALF THE COST OF CONSTRUCTING A FLAT IN PUBLIC HOUSING.

+ARE WE JUSTIFIED TO OPT FOR EVEN MORE EXPENDITURE ON ROADS, ESPECIALLY IN THE LIGHT OF THE FACT THAT THE MAIN USERS OF OUR ROADS ARE OWNERS OF PRIVATE VEHICLES, WHO NOW ACCOUNT FOR MERELY 17 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS?+ MR CHEONG ASKED.

THE HON BENTON CHEUNG NOTED THAT THE PROPOSED MEASURES WERE DESIGNED TO STOP THE GROWTH OF CONGESTION ON THE ROADS OF HONG KONG, PARTICULARLY IN URBAN AREAS.

IN HIS OPINION, WHAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD DO IS STOP CONGESTION ITSELF, THROUGH RESTRAINT OF OWNERSHIP TOGETHER WITH A PROGRAMMED ANNUAL REDUCTION OF THE NUMBER OF VEHICLES ON OUR ROADS.

+TO AN EXTENT, WE ARE MISDIRECTING OUR ARROW AIMING AT THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE PROBLEM INSTEAD OF THE HEART- FOR EVEN IF THE THREE BILLS SUCCEED IN REDUCING THE GROWTH OF CONGESTION, THE EXISTING ROAD CONGESTION HAS ALREADY REACHED THE CRISIS STAGE.+

HE AGREED THAT RESTRAINT ON OWNERSHIP MAY BE DIFFICULT TO ENFORCE, BUT IT WOULD TACKLE THE PROBLEM OF ROAD CONGESTION AT ROOT LEVEL.

+WHY NOT RESTRAIN OWNERSHIP NOW AND CURB THE GROWTH OF CONGESTION REALISTICALLY?+ HE ASKED.

MR CHEUNG ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE EXPECTED ANNUAL REVENUE OF \$1 BILLION SHOULD BE USED TO FINANCE THE EXPANSION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE MTR AND KCR SYSTEM TO THE OTHER PARTS OF THE TERRITORY.

+THIS MUST BE DONE IF WE EXPECT THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG TO TRAVEL WILLINGLY BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT,+ HE SAID.

THE HON MARIA TAM ACCEPTED THE PROPOSED PACKAGE ON THE GROUND THAT, BY THE PROCESS OF ELIMINATION, IT WAS THE ONLY FEASIBLE PROPOSAL AT THE PRESENT TIME.

BUT, SHE STRESSED, PLENTY MORE REMAINED TO BE DONE IN ORDER TO ALLEVIATE OUR TRAFFIC CONGESTION PROBLEMS.

IN HER VIEW, IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO PERMIT AND ENCOURAGE THE GROWTH OF RESIDENTIAL COACHES AND MAXICAB SERVICES TO REMOTE AREAS OF THE NEW TERRITORIES AND TO IMPROVE EXISTING PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES.

SAID MISS TAM: +WHETHER THE PROPOSED MEASURES WILL BE EFFECTIVE TO RESTRAIN THE GROWTH OF PRIVATE CARS REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

+WHAT IS CERTAIN IS THAT THIS IS NOT THE ONLY ANSWER TO OUR TRANSPORT PROBLEM.

+IN FACT THE NEED IS FOR OVERALL IMPROVEMENT.+

THE HON T.S. LO, CHAIRMAN OF THE TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE, WAS THE LAST UNOFFICIAL MEMBER TO COMMENT ON THE BILLS.

HE SAID: +I FULLY IF SADLY ACCEPT THAT WE NEED TO ADOPT MEASURES TO REDUCE THE GROWTH RATE OF PRIVATE CARS.

+I RECOGNISE THAT OTHER METHODS THAN THOSE PROPOSED MIGHT BE MORE POLITICALLY ACCEPTABLE SUCH AS THROUGH DIRECT RESTRAINT METHODS THEREBY GIVING EXISTING MOTORISTS AN ADVANTAGE OVER THE MOTORISTS OF TOMORROW. THIS WOULD OF COURSE ULTIMATELY CREATE A MARKET FOR LICENCES.

+IN ANY EVENT, I WOULD ONLY SAY THIS, NO MATTER WHAT METHOD OF RESTRAINT WE USE, CAR OWNERSHIP WILL HENCEFORTH BE A LUXURY AND IT IS AN UNHAPPY NECESSITY FOR THOSE AFFECTED TO ADJUST TO THIS HARD FACT OF LIFE.

+IT WOULD SEEM LESS UNFAIR TO THEM IF THE RESTRAINTS APPLY EQUALLY TO CIVIL SERVANTS AND ON THIS LAST POINT I WOULD WELCOME ANY SUGGESTION THAT THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT MAY HAVE TO REDUCE CAR USE BY THAT PRIVILEGED CLASS OF CIVIL SERVANTS WHOSE USE OF CARS IS AT PRESENT SUBJECTED TO NO FISCAL RESTRAINT.+

EARLIER, MR LO SAID IT WAS NOT SURPRISING THAT OUR ROADS WERE DANGEROUSLY OVER-CONGESTED.

WE HAVE SIMPLY NOT BEEN SPENDING ENOUGH ON THEM, HE SAID.

HE RECALLED THAT TWO YEARS AGO, HE DREW THE ATTENTION OF THE COUNCIL TO THE FACT THAT OVER A PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS FROM 1975 TO 1980 THE RELATIVE CAPITAL EXPENDITURE ON ROADS WAS HALVED.

EXPENDITURE ON ROADS WAS 17.8 PER CENT OF TOTAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE IN 1975 BUT THIS WAS STEADILY REDUCED UNTIL 1980 WHEN IT STOOD AT 8.2 PER CENT, HE NOTED.

+ALTHOUGH WE HAVE BUILT AN MTR AND HAVE MODIFIED THE KCR, THESE HAVE NOT HELPED THE MOVEMENT OF GOODS AROUND HONG KONG, AND TO THE EXTENT THAT THE MOVING OF GOODS HAS BEEN INCREASED THIS HAS HAD TO BE ACCOMMODATED EXCLUSIVELY BY THE ROAD SYSTEM.+

MR LO ALSO SHARED FATHER MCGOVERN'S STRICTURE ON THE BUREAUCRACY.

+INDEED,+ HE POINTED OUT, +IT WAS ONLY LAST YEAR THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD, EN PASSANT, ACCEDED TO THE CONCEPT OF CREATING A TRANSPORT BRANCH, THUS GIVING RISE ULTIMATELY TO ITS ESTABLISHMENT AND DISTANT HOPE OF THE FOUNDING OF A COHESIVE TRANSPORT POLICY.

+THIS, I HOPE WILL MAKE BETTER USE OF THE SEA AND THROUGH PROPER PLANNING AS WELL AS INDUSTRIOUS ENFORCEMENT MEASURES, BETTER USE OF THE ROAD SYSTEM.+

SIX OPPOSE MOTOR VEHICLE RESTRAINT PROPOSALS

* * * *

SIX UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS SPOKE AGAINST THE PROPOSED PACKAGE TO CURB THE GROWTH OF MOTOR VEHICLES IN HONG KONG.

THEY WERE THE REV THE HON PATRICK MCGOVERN, THE HON ALEX WU, THE REV THE HON JOYCE BENNETT, THE HON S.L. CHEN, THE HON CHARLES YEUNG, AND THE HON SELINA CHOW.

FATHER MCGOVERN DESCRIBED THE PACKAGE OF PROPOSALS AS THE +PERSECUTION OF THE PRIVATE MOTORIST PACKAGE+.

HE CONTENDED THAT THE PRINCIPAL REASON FOR CONGESTION ON OUR ROADS WAS THAT HONG KONG HAD SUFFERED FROM ABOUT THREE DECADES OF BUREAUCRATIC BLUNDERING BY THE GOVERNMENT.

+THIS BLUNDERING HAS BEEN CHARACTERISED BY A LACK OF IMAGINATION, LACK OF FORESIGHT, UNECONOMIC USE OF MONEY BY THE HOLDING BACK OF PROJECTS WHICH GOT DEARER EVERY YEAR THEY WERE POSTPONED.

+IT WAS CHIEFLY CHARACTERISED BY A LACK OF COORDINATED PLANNING BETWEEN DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS,+ HE SAID.

QUOTING EXAMPLES OF THE LACK OF COORDINATED PLANNING, FATHER MCGOVERN CONSIDERED IT WAS UNJUST TO PENALISE ONE SECTION OF ROAD USERS FOR THIS BUREAUCRATIC MESS, +ESPECIALLY AS THEY ARE THE ONES WHO PAY VEHICLE AND LICENCE TAXES AND DRIVE LIGHT VEHICLES WHICH DO LEAST DAMAGE TO ROADS+.

+THE WHOLE PACKET IS AN EXPERIMENT,+ HE ARGUED. +THAT SUCH A PROBABLY UNSUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENT SHOULD BE MADE AT A COST OF MAY BE A BILLION DOLLARS OUT OF THE POCKETS OF PRIVATE MOTORISTS IS NOT ONLY EXTRAVAGANT, BUT MANIFESTLY UNJUST.

+THERE ARE TOO MANY OTHER THINGS WHICH NEED TO BE DONE FIRST, SUCH AS THE COORDINATED PLANNING MENTIONED EARLIER.

+ONE OTHER IMPORTANT THING WHICH NEED TO BE DONE IS TO DROP THE NEGATIVE THINKING WHICH SEEMS TO BE AT THE ROOT OF GOVERNMENT PLANNING - NEGATIVE THINKING SHOWN FOR EXAMPLE IN THE UNREALISTIC AMOUNT OF CAR PARKING SPACE ALLOWED FOR PLOT RATIO PURPOSES IN PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS,+ FR MCGOVERN SAID.

IN HIS SPEECH, MR ALEX WU WARNED THAT THE PROPOSALS +PUT US ON A SLIPPERY SLOPE+.

QUOTING SINGAPORE AS AN EXAMPLE, HE NOTED THAT SIMILAR PUNITIVE TAXATION HAD BEEN EMPLOYED THERE FOR SOME TEN YEARS WITH THE SAME PURPOSE. SINCE 1972, SINGAPORE IMPOSED A 45 PER CENT IMPORT DUTY ON THE VALUE OF A PRIVATE CAR. AND WHEN THIS DID NOT HAVE THE DESIRED EFFECT, THE SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT RAISED THE ADDITIONAL REGISTRATION FEE FROM 55 PER CENT TO 100 PER CENT IN 1975, TO 125 PER CENT IN 1978 AND TO 150 PER CENT IN 1980.

THE EFFECT WAS A 4.6 PER CENT REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF CARS IN 1976 AND A 0.4 PER CENT REDUCTION IN 1977. +ONCE THE INITIAL SHOCK WAS OVER THE NUMBER BEGAN TO INCREASE AGAIN: BY 1.7 PER CENT IN 1978, 4.5 PER CENT IN 1979, 6.3 PER CENT IN 1980 AND 5.97 PER CENT IN 1981.+

AND MR WU NOTED THAT A REPORT COMMISSIONED BY THE SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT AND PUBLISHED ONLY FOUR WEEKS AGO INDICATED THAT REGISTRATION FEES AND ROAD TAXES WOULD HAVE TO BE RAISED ANOTHER 50 PER CENT BY 1990 AND FROM THAT ASTRONOMICAL FIGURE BY ANOTHER 80 PER CENT IN THE FOLLOWING TEN YEARS.

ON TOP OF THESE MEASURES, HE ADDED, SINGAPORE OPERATES A SCHEME WHICH OFFERS A RELIEF FROM SOME OF THE REGISTRATION FEES FOR A NEW CAR TO THOSE WHO TURN IN AN OLD CAR FOR SCRAP. OTHER MEASURES EMPLOYED INCLUDE A DISINCENTIVE TAX WHEN ONE SELLS HIS CAR, AND DOUBLE ANNUAL LICENCE FEES FOR COMPANY CARS.

+FROM WHAT THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT SAID IN THIS COUNCIL ON MAY 5, IT IS CLEAR THAT HE IS PREPARED TO GO DOWN THAT SLIPPERY SLOPE,+ SAID MR WU.

+THIS, HE TELLS US, IS NOT THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION. THE MEASURES PROPOSED TODAY CAN BE ACCENTUATED, MORE CAN BE ADDED.

+THEY CAN BE INDEED AS WE CAN SEE FROM THE EXAMPLE OF SINGAPORE. BUT WHAT IS THE POINT OF FOLLOWING AN EXAMPLE WHICH, DESPITE EVER INCREASING SEVERITY, HAS STILL PRODUCED A GROWTH RATE HIGHER THAN THE 'MANAGEABLE' FIVE PER CENT TO WHICH THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT ASPIRES?+ HE ASKED.

EARLIER, MR WU SAID THAT AS FAR AS HE KNEW, IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT THE COUNCIL WAS BEING ASKED TO ENDORSE THE USE OF TAXATION OTHER THAN FOR THE PURPOSE OF RAISING REVENUE.

+DID NOT THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, SITTING THEN AS ONE OF US, SAY THAT HE REJECTED THIS FORM OF TAXATION ON GROUNDS OF 'EQUITY AND LOGIC' AND TELL US THAT HE HAD NEVER FORGOTTEN THE SENSE OF FREEDOM HE ACQUIRED WITH HIS FIRST MOTOR CAR?

+AND HAS NOT THE CHIEF SECRETARY WHEN HE WAS FINANCIAL SECRETARY IMPLIED ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION HIS RELUCTANCE TO DO WHAT IS NOW PROPOSED?+ MR WU QUERIED.

HE NOTED THAT THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, IN HIS SPEECH ON THE FIRST READING, SIMPLY SAID HE HAD BEEN PERSUADED TO ABANDON HIS PRINCIPLE.

+DESPITE HIS REFERENCES TO ANNUALITY, MACRO-ECONOMICS, PRUDENCE, EMPIRICISM (WHICH HE COMMENDED) AND HYPOTHECATION (WHICH HE REJECTED), HE DID NOT REALLY EXPLAIN WHY.

+I MUST TELL HIM THAT FIRM ADHERENCE TO PRINCIPLE HAS BEEN THE MAJOR STRENGTH OF THIS GOVERNMENT'S SUCCESSFUL MANAGEMENT OF THE ECONOMY AND THERE WILL BE A DISTINCT SENSE OF UNEASE IF WE SEEM TO BE DEPARTING FROM THAT GENERAL PRINCIPLE OR IF HE HIMSELF IS SEEN TOO OFTEN TO BE MODIFYING THE PHILOSOPHIES AND POLICIES HE LAID OUT SO COGENTLY IN HIS FIRST BUDGET,+ SAID MR WU.

THE REV JOYCE BENNETT TOOK THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT TO TASK FOR FOLLOWING THE METHODS OF RESTRAINT WHICH SHE SAID HAD BEEN USED IN HONG KONG PREVIOUSLY AND ALREADY FOUND TO BE INEFFECTIVE.

+I CONSIDER MR SCOTT'S METHODS TO BE INFLATIONARY AND I MUST OPPOSE THEM ON THOSE GROUNDS,+ SHE SAID, ADDING THAT THE EXTRA COST OF OWNING A CAR WOULD BE ABSORBED BY CAR OWNERS WITH A SHRUG AND A DETERMINATION TO GET A BIGGER MONTHLY PAY PACKET TO COPE WITH THE RISING COSTS.

SAID MISS BENNETT: +MR SCOTT HIMSELF ADMITTED THAT HIS INCREASE IN THE DUTY ON LIGHT OILS 'DOES NO MORE THAN BRING IT UP TO THE LEVEL OF INCIDENCE OF 1976'.

+CLEARLY IT HAS ALREADY BEEN ACCEPTED IN THAT LIGHT.

+I BELIEVE IN THE LONG TERM THE INCREASE IN THE FIRST REGISTRATION TAX AND THE ANNUAL LICENCE FEES WILL BE SIMILARLY REGARDED.+

MISS BENNETT STRESSED THAT THE NUMBER OF CARS ON THE ROADS MUST BE REDUCED OR AT THE VERY LEAST KEPT AT A NIL GROWTH RATE.

SHE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT CONSIDERED THAT THERE WOULD BE INSURMOUNTABLE DIFFICULTIES IN LIMITING THE NUMBER OF VEHICLES.

BUT MISS BENNETT THOUGHT HIS +GREAT DIFFICULTIES+ COULD SURELY BE OVERCOME BY DRACONIAN METHODS IF HE REALLY GAVE HIS MIND TO THE PROBLEM.

IN SINGAPORE, SHE POINTED OUT, THE NUMBER OF VEHICLES ARE LIMITED BY INSISTING THAT AS ONE NEW VEHICLE IS LICENSED, ONE OLD VEHICLE MUST BE DESTROYED.

+I DO NOT THINK THAT THE EXAMPLE OF SINGAPORE SHOULD BE SO LIGHTLY DISMISSED AS UNWORKABLE,+ SHE SAID. +I CONSIDER HONG KONG ADMINISTRATORS ARE JUST AS CAPABLE AS THOSE IN SINGAPORE OF DEVISING PRACTICAL METHODS.+

MISS BENNETT ALSO SUGGESTED THAT IF THE OWNERSHIP OF A NEW CAR DEPENDED ON A LOTTERY SYSTEM, PERHAPS CARS WOULD NO LONGER BE A STATUS SYMBOL AND FEW PEOPLE WOULD SEE THE NEED FOR POSSESSING ONE.

AS MR S.L. CHEN SAW IT, A MORE SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE AND CERTAINLY MORE EFFECTIVE MEANS TO EASE ROAD CONGESTION WOULD BE TO PUT A LIMIT ON THE NUMBER OF VEHICLES ALLOWED ON THE ROAD.

+ONE POSSIBLE METHOD OF DISTRIBUTION IS TO ALLOCATE THE ADDITIONAL VEHICLES ONLY TO GENUINE FIRST-TIME OWNERS WHO ARE IN NEED OF A CAR AND HAVE THE MEANS TO AFFORD IT,+ HE SAID.

+TO MAINTAIN FAIRNESS AND THE PREDETERMINED CEILING, ANY EXISTING CAR OWNER WISHING TO ACQUIRE A NEW CAR CAN DO SO ONLY IF HE SURRENDERS AN OLD CAR FOR DE-REGISTRATION ON A ONE-FOR-ONE BASIS.+

HE STRONGLY FAVOURED THIS ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION FOR THREE REASONS:

- * IT REMOVES ANY CRITICISM THAT THE FISCAL MEASURES ARE BEING INTRODUCED IN ORDER TO RAISE REVENUE=
- * THE SOCIAL ASPIRATIONS OF THE WOULD-BE FIRST-TIME CAR OWNER CAN BE SATISFIED= AND
- * EXISTING OWNERS CAN CONTINUE TO ENJOY THE CONVENIENCE WITHOUT BEING PENALISED BY HEFTY LICENCE FEES.

+IF AFTER A CAREFUL STUDY OF THE ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL GOVERNMENT FINDS THAT IT IS IMPRACTICABLE, ONLY THEN I WOULD BE HAPPY TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSALS BEFORE COUNCIL,+ MR CHEN SAID.

MR CHARLES YEUNG WAS CONCERNED OVER THE USE OF THE THREE PUBLIC REVENUE PROTECTION ORDERS TO INCREASE THE FIRST REGISTRATION TAX, ANNUAL LICENCE FEES FOR VEHICLES AND DUTY ON LIGHT OILS.

HE SAID HE WAS NOT CHALLENGING THE VALIDITY OF SUCH ORDERS AS THEY WERE WELL WITHIN THE AMBIT OF THE PUBLIC REVENUE PROTECTION ORDINANCE.

+WHAT I AM SAYING IS THAT THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY IN HIS SPEECH MADE ON MAY 5 HAS DECLARED THAT THE MEASURES PROPOSED IN THE THREE BILLS WERE 'DESIGNED NOT TO RAISE REVENUE BUT RATHER TO ACT AS RESTRAINTS DIRECTED AT VEHICLE USAGE', HE SAID.

+AND THEREFORE I HAVE MISGIVINGS OF THE ADMINISTRATION EMPLOYING THE POWER OF THE PUBLIC REVENUE PROTECTION ORDINANCE TO CURB THE POSSIBLE DELUGE OF THE PEOPLE BUYING NEW CARS AND RENEWING THE ANNUAL VEHICLE LICENCES BEFORE THE BILLS PASS THROUGH THIS COUNCIL.

+I CANNOT HELP ENTERTAINING THE DOUBT WHETHER THE ADMINISTRATION, IN ITS ZEAL TO ACHIEVE APPARENT RESULTS, HAS TRAVELLED TOO FAST AND TOO FAR BEYOND THE SPIRIT AND INTENTMENT OF THE ORDINANCE.+

TO SUPPORT HIS ARGUMENT, MR YEUNG REPEATED AN ASSURANCE GIVEN BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL IN DECEMBER 1974 THAT +... THE ORDINANCE WILL NOT BE USED EXCEPT FOR ITS TRUE PURPOSE OF PROTECTING THE REVENUE ...+.

COMMENTING ON THE EFFECT OF THE THREE BILLS, MR YEUNG FELT THAT THEY DISCRIMINATED BETWEEN THE +RICH AND POOR+, THE +HAVE+ AND THE +HAVE-NOTS+.

THE WORST HIT, HE SAID, ARE THOSE IN THE SANDWICHED CLASS AS THEY HAVE BEEN WORKING HARD TO SAVE ENOUGH TO FULFIL THEIR ASPIRATIONS, PRIDE OR NECESSITY OF OWNING A CAR AND NOW FIND IT OUT OF THEIR REACH.

AS FOR NEW TERRITORIES RESIDENTS, PRIVATE CARS ARE A NECESSITY OF LIFE AND TO DEPRIVE THEM OF OWNING A PRIVATE CAR IS SIMPLY TO IMMOBILIZE THEM WHICH WILL SERIOUSLY AFFECT THEIR WAY OF LIFE, THEIR EARNING CAPABILITY AND STANDARD OF LIVING.

MR YEUNG ALSO CRITICISED THE DIFFERENTIAL RATES OF FIRST REGISTRATION TAX.

HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THE HIGHER THE VALUE OF A VEHICLE, THE HIGHER THE RATE OF TAX, AND SAID +WE MUST BEAR IN MIND THAT EVEN IF THE SAME RATE OF INCREASE OF TAX IS LEVIED ON ALL CARS, A BRITISH MADE JAGUAR WILL HAVE TO PAY FOUR TIMES MORE TAX THAN A COMPARABLE SIZED JAPANESE MADE TOYOTA, THOUGH THEY USE THE SAME ROAD SPACE AND SHARE EQUAL BLAME FOR CONGESTION.+

THE INCREASE OF TAX ON CAR FUEL ALSO WORKED VERY UNFAIRLY ON NEW TERRITORIES RESIDENTS, SAID MR YEUNG.

HE POINTED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH THESE PEOPLE -- FARMERS, FISHERMEN, TRADESMEN, HOUSEWIVES AND WORKERS ALIKE -- AS THE FAMILIES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE USA, NEEDED A CAR TO JOURNEY FAR TO RUN THEIR DAILY BUSINESS, THEY DID NOT CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE CONGESTION OF URBAN ROADS.

+THIS BILL HAS THEREFORE FAILED TO RECOGNISE THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS OF THE NEW TERRITORIES RESIDENTS AND ATTEMPTED TO RESORT TO A MEASURE WHICH CAN NEITHER BY ITSELF DETER ROAD USAGE NOR DO JUSTICE TO THE PEOPLE WHO DEPEND UPON CARS AS THE ESSENTIAL MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

+UNLESS THE TRAFFIC PROBLEM IS TACKLED AS A WHOLE FROM ALL ANGLES AND PROGRAMMES ARE CARRIED OUT AS PLANNED, THIS MINI-PACKAGE DIRECTING SOLELY AT PRIVATE CAR OWNERS CAN NEITHER SOLVE THE PROBLEM NOR DO JUSTICE TO OUR CONCEPT OF EQUITY+, SAID MR YEUNG.

ARGUING AGAINST THE BILLS, MRS SELINA CHOW EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT OVER THE WAY IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAD CHOSEN TO ARRIVE AT THE MEASURES PROPOSED.

WHILE AGREEING THAT ABSOLUTE CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE PROPOSED PACKAGE WAS NECESSARY TO AVOID AN ONSLAUGHT OF REGISTRATION AND RENEWAL OF LICENCES, SHE CRITICISED THE GOVERNMENT FOR FAILING TO INVOLVE MOTORISTS IN THE BROAD DISCUSSION OF WHICH MEASURES THEY WOULD PREFER, SHOULD CONTROL BE NECESSARY.

+THERE HAS BEEN TOO LITTLE PUBLIC DEBATE ON THE ISSUE, AND GOVERNMENT HAS CERTAINLY NOT ENCOURAGED IT,+ SHE SAID.

+CONSULTATION ACROSS THE BOARD SHOULD HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED. AFTER ALL, WE ARE NOT JUST LOOKING AT THE FUTURE. THERE ARE ALREADY 217 000 CAR OWNERS IN OUR COMMUNITY.

+I SUSPECT A LARGE PROPORTION OF THESE ARE QUITE PREPARED TO ACCEPT MEASURES OTHER THAN FISCAL ONES PROVIDED THEY ARE FAIR AND EASY TO COMPLY WITH.+

ON THE PROPOSED MEASURES, MRS CHOW BELIEVED THEY WERE +NOT ONLY SOCIALLY DISCRIMINATING AND ECONOMICALLY INFLATIONARY BUT ALSO ARBITRARY AND STOP-GAP+.

BUT PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, SHE ADDED, WAS THE UNCERTAINTY THAT SURROUNDED THESE MEASURES AND THE LACK OF ASSURANCE THAT THEY WOULD BE EFFECTIVE.

IN HER VIEW, IT WAS BY FAR SAFER WITH THE MORE DIRECT AND EFFECTIVE MEASURES OF LIMITATION ON THE NUMBER OF VEHICLES.

+IN FACT I FAIL TO SEE WHY A BALLOT SYSTEM CANNOT BE ADOPTED,+ SHE SAID.

+SOCIALLY SPEAKING, IT IS INFINITELY FAIRER THAN THE FISCAL MEASURES, FOR THE CHANCE IS EQUAL FOR EVERY APPLICANT.+

MRS CHOW ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE ONE METHOD THAT SEEMS EXTREMELY SENSIBLE AND SUITABLE FOR HONG KONG IS THE +ODD-EVEN-DAY RESTRICTED USAGE+ FOR CERTAIN SERIOUSLY CONGESTED ZONES SUCH AS CENTRAL, KING'S ROAD AND WATERLOO ROAD.

THE MOST PRACTICABLE WAY TO ENFORCE THIS IS TO USE THE LAST DIGIT ON THE CAR REGISTRATION NUMBER TO CORRESPOND TO THE ODD AND EVEN DAYS OF THE WEEK, LEAVING SUNDAYS AND HOLIDAYS OPEN FOR ALL VEHICLES.

+SUCH A METHOD WILL NOT INCONVENIENCE USERS OF NON-CONGESTED AREAS.

+AS FOR IT BEING A POSSIBLE ENCOURAGEMENT TOWARDS PURCHASE OF MORE VEHICLES, THIS CAN BE EASILY DETERRED BY THE MEASURE OF LIMITED GROWTH,+ SHE ADDED.

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CAR RESTRAINTS NOT AIMED AT RAISING REVENUE

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THE MEASURES TO RESTRAIN VEHICLE OWNERSHIP AND USAGE, ALTHOUGH FISCAL IN NATURE, ARE NOT BEING INTRODUCED FOR THE SPECIFIC PURPOSE OF RAISING REVENUE, THE ACTING FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HENRY CHING SAID IN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN RESPONSE TO POINTS RAISED BY UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS, MR CHING SAID NO ARGUMENTS HAD BEEN ADVANCED TO JUSTIFY THE PROPOSALS ON REVENUE-RAISING GROUNDS.

+THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION IS THAT THE PROPOSALS MUST STAND OR FALL ON THE ARGUMENTS WHICH HAVE BEEN ADVANCED ON OTHER GROUNDS BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT,+ HE SAID.

MR CHING SAID AT LEAST ONE MEMBER THOUGHT HE DETECTED AN INCONSISTENCY IN THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY'S APPROACH, AND REFERRED TO AN ABANDONMENT OF PRINCIPLE.

+I CAN FIND NO EVIDENCE OF THIS,+ MR CHING SAID. +THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID THAT HE WAS OPPOSED 'AS A GENERAL RULE TO THE CONCEPT OF TAXATION FOR NON-FISCAL ENDS'.

+THE FACT THAT HE WAS PERSUADED THAT FISCAL MEASURES WERE NECESSARY, DESIGNED TO ACT AS RESTRAINTS DIRECTED AT VEHICLE OWNERSHIP AND USAGE, DID NOT INVOLVE THE ABANDONMENT OF ANY PRINCIPLE.

+INDEED, THE POSSIBLE NEED, IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES, TO ACHIEVE POLICY OBJECTIVES VIA FISCAL MEASURES HAS FOR LONG BEEN RECOGNISED, AND HAS BEEN REFERRED TO IN A SUCCESSION OF BUDGET SPEECHES SINCE AT LEAST 1973.

+THE PROPOSALS NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION ARE NOT THE FIRST TIME THAT FISCAL MEASURES HAVE BEEN USED TO ACHIEVE CERTAIN NON-FISCAL OBJECTIVES= THERE ARE MANY OTHER EXAMPLES.+

THE ACTING FINANCIAL SECRETARY THEN SET OUT TO REMOVE SOME MISCONCEPTIONS AS REGARDS THE BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS OF THESE PROPOSALS.

HE SAID THE BUDGET FOR THE CURRENT YEAR ENVISAGED A SURPLUS OF OVER \$5 000 MILLION, TAKING THE GENERAL REVENUE ACCOUNT WITH THE CAPITAL WORKS RESERVE FUND.

+AND THIS IS THE BUDGETED FOR SURPLUS AFTER A NUMBER OF TAX CONCESSIONS AMOUNTING TO NEARLY \$1 400 MILLION,+ HE ADDED.

+IT IS TOO EARLY IN THE YEAR TO SAY WHAT THE ACTUAL OUTTURN IS LIKELY TO BE. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE ACTUAL SURPLUS MAY BE SOMEWHAT LESS, HAVING REGARD TO INCREASED EXPENDITURE NOT BUDGETED FOR, BUT SUBSEQUENTLY APPROVED BY THE FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THIS COUNCIL, AND HAVING REGARD TO POSSIBLE LOWER YIELDS IN CERTAIN REVENUE ITEMS, IN PARTICULAR LAND SALES.

+BUT WHATEVER THE EVENTUAL OUTCOME, THERE IS NO REASON TO THINK THAT A SURPLUS WILL NOT BE ACHIEVED. IN OTHER WORDS, THERE IS NO NEED TO RAISE TAXES FOR FISCAL PURPOSES IN THE CURRENT YEAR.+

MR CHING SAID ANY CONSTRAINT ON PUBLIC SECTOR EXPENDITURE IN THE CURRENT YEAR, AS THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY HAD EXPLAINED IN DETAIL IN HIS BUDGET SPEECH, WAS NOT THE RESULT OF A LACK OF FUNDS.

+WE HAVE BUDGETED FOR A SURPLUS, AND WE HAVE A VERY HEALTHY LEVEL OF FREE FISCAL RESERVES.

+OUR CONCERN, SHARED BY A NUMBER OF UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS OF THIS COUNCIL, HAS BEEN WITH THE RELATIVE SIZE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR, AND WITH THE GROWTH RATE OF PUBLIC SECTOR WHICH, FOR 1982-83, IS STILL HIGHER THAN THE FORECAST GROWTH RATE OF G.D.P.+

MR CHING STRESSED THAT THE ADDITIONAL REVENUE WHICH MIGHT ARISE FROM THESE PROPOSALS WOULD BE +AN UNEXPECTED WINDFALL WHICH WILL BE TREATED WITH OUR USUAL PRUDENCE.+

+THERE CAN BE NO QUESTION OF ADDING TO THE RELATIVE SIZE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR, AND TO THE GROWTH RATE OF PUBLIC SECTOR EXPENDITURE, BY LOOKING FOR PROJECTS ON WHICH TO SPEND THIS WINDFALL.

+THE ESTIMATED SIZE OF THIS WINDFALL IS, IN ANY EVENT, IN DOUBT. THE FIGURE OF \$1 000 MILLION WHICH HAS BEEN MENTIONED WAS CALCULATED ON THE SAME ASSUMPTIONS AS WERE USED IN THE ORIGINAL ESTIMATE FOR THE BUDGET, AS TO THE NUMBER OF NEW VEHICLES TO BE REGISTERED, THE NUMBER OF LICENCES TO BE ISSUED AND THE CONSUMPTION OF LIGHT OILS.

+TO THE EXTENT THAT THE PROPOSED MEASURES ARE EFFECTIVE, AS I HOPE THEY WILL BE, THE AMOUNT OF ADDITIONAL REVENUE WILL BE LOWER THAN THE \$1 000 MILLION FIGURE,+ MR CHING SAID.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON JOHN GRIFFITHS, REPLYING TO POINTS RAISED BY THE HON CHARLES YEUNG AND THE HON ALEX WU, STRESSED THAT THE PUBLIC REVENUE PROTECTION ORDERS WERE MADE FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROTECTING THE PUBLIC REVENUE.

+THE OBJECTIVE OF THE LEGISLATION, NAMELY TO ASSIST THE CONTROL OF TRAFFIC, IS ONE THING. THE MEANS TO ACHIEVE THAT OBJECTIVE REQUIRES THE RAISING OF VARIOUS TAXES AND DUTIES,+ HE SAID.

+THERE CAN SURELY BE NO DOUBT THAT HAD THESE ORDERS NOT BEEN MADE THERE WOULD INEVITABLY HAVE BEEN A LOSS TO THE PUBLIC REVENUE.+

MR GRIFFITHS SAID IT WAS BEYOND ARGUMENT THAT MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WOULD HAVE TAKEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO PURCHASE VEHICLES BETWEEN THE DATE OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE PROPOSALS AND THEIR ENACTMENT, IN ORDER TO AVOID THE HIGHER FIRST REGISTRATION TAX.

SIMILARLY, THEY WOULD HAVE RE-LICENSED THEIR CARS AT THE LOWER RATE, AND NO DOUBT AS MUCH PETROL AS POSSIBLE WOULD HAVE BEEN DRAWN FROM BOND AND PUT INTO CARS IN THE SAME PERIOD BEFORE THE PRICES ROSE.

+THIS WOULD HAVE RESULTED IN A LOSS TO THE PUBLIC REVENUE WHICH THESE ORDERS WERE DESIGNED TO PREVENT,+ HE SAID.

MR GRIFFITHS ALSO SAID THAT THE ORDERS WERE EQUITABLE BECAUSE THEY ENSURED THAT NO MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY WAS ABLE TO STEAL A MARCH OVER OTHERS.

WHEN THE PUBLIC REVENUE PROTECTION ORDINANCE WAS INTRODUCED IN 1927, IT WAS EXPLAINED THAT THE GOVERNOR'S ORDER (PROTECTING THE PUBLIC REVENUE) WAS NOT PERMANENT. IT IS PROVISIONAL AND TEMPORARY BUT BEFORE IT CEASES TO HAVE EFFECT THERE IS AMPLE TIME FOR FULL DISCUSSION AMONG THE COMMUNITY, IN THE PRESS AND AMONGST INDIVIDUALS OF THE NEW PROPOSALS.

+THAT UNDERLYING PURPOSE REMAINS AS NECESSARY TODAY AT IT WAS IN 1927, SO AS TO ALLOW THIS COUNCIL AND THE PUBLIC TO HAVE AMPLE TIME TO DEBATE AND CONSIDER THE PROPOSALS,+ MR GRIFFITHS SAID.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1982

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GENERAL AGREEMENT ON NEED TO CURB VEHICLE GROWTH

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THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON ALAN SCOTT, IN CONCLUDING THE DEBATE ON THE THREE BILLS AIMED AT REDUCING THE GROWTH OF PRIVATE CARS, NOTED THAT THERE WAS ALMOST COMPLETE AGREEMENT BY THE UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ON THE NEED TO ACT TO RESTRAIN THE GROWTH RATE.

+THERE HAS BEEN STRONG SUPPORT FROM SEVERAL MEMBERS FOR THE PROPOSALS AS PUT FORWARD, AS WELL AS STRONG DISAGREEMENT FROM OTHERS. THERE IS ALSO A RANGE OF QUALIFIED SUPPORT,+ HE SAID.

AFTER A DEBATE WHICH HAS REVEALED SUCH STRONG OPINIONS, THE PASSAGE OF THE BILLS WILL BE REGARDED AS A SOBER REALISATION THAT THESE UNPALATABLE MEASURES ARE NECESSARY TO PREVENT FURTHER DETERIORATION OF THE TRAFFIC SITUATION WHILE WE PRESS FORWARD WITH LONGER TERM PROGRAMMES, HE SAID.

MR SCOTT REPLIED AT LENGTH TO THE VARIOUS POINTS RAISED BY THE UNOFFICIALS.

DISCRIMINATORY EFFECT

SEVERAL UNOFFICIALS HAVE SPOKEN WITH CONSIDERABLE FEELING OF THE EFFECT ON THE ASPIRATIONS OF WOULD-BE CAR OWNERS -- DESCRIBING THE PROPOSALS AS DISCRIMINATORY, AND FAVOURING THE RICH. SOME SUGGESTED DIRECT RESTRAINT ON OWNERSHIP AS A MORE EQUITABLE SYSTEM.

IN REPLY, MR SCOTT SAID THE ADMINISTRATION BELIEVED THAT IT WAS IN PRINCIPLE UNDESIRABLE TO MOVE NOW TO DENY ASPIRATIONS OF OWNERSHIP COMPLETELY AND THAT OTHER MEASURES SHOULD BE TESTED BEFORE DIRECT RESTRAINT ON OWNERSHIP WAS RESORTED TO.

+NO SYSTEM THAT WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO THINK OF, OR THAT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED, CAN BE PERFECTLY FAIR= EACH HAS INEQUITIES AND DISADVANTAGES, EITHER FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED OR OF THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE.

+BUT THE SITUATION REQUIRED ACTION, AND IT WAS CONCLUDED THAT AS A FIRST STEP, THE PROPOSALS ARE THE LEAST INEQUITABLE, AND BROADLY SPEAKING LEAVE INDIVIDUALS TO DECIDE ON THE DISPOSITION OF THEIR BUDGETS WHETHER TO CONTINUE TO RUN A MOTOR VEHICLE, OR WHETHER TO ACQUIRE ONE. IT IS INDEED UNDESIRABLE, BUT IT IS UNAVOIDABLE, REGRETTABLY, THAT ASPIRING OWNERS WILL HAVE TO REVIEW THEIR POSITION, AND SOME WILL AS A RESULT DEFER THEIR ASPIRATIONS,+ MR SCOTT SAID.

HOWEVER, HE ACKNOWLEDGED THE SUPPORT OF THOSE UNOFFICIALS WHO HAVE SUGGESTED DIRECT LIMITATION OF THE GROWTH OF VEHICLES AND LOOKED FORWARD TO THEIR ADVICE ON HOW TO RUN SUCH A SYSTEM IF IT HAD TO BE INTRODUCED.

/INFLATIONARY EFFECT

INFLATIONARY EFFECT

IN REPLY TO THE CLAIM BY TWO UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS THAT THERE IS AN INFLATIONARY EFFECT IN THE PROPOSALS, MR SCOTT CONCEDED THAT TO A PERSON CONTINUING TO OWN A CAR OR IN FUTURE ACQUIRE ONE, THE COST OF MOTORING WILL HAVE GONE UP.

+WE MUST HOWEVER LOOK TO THE OVERALL ECONOMIC EFFECT OF REDUCING THE RATE OF GROWTH IN VEHICLES AT THE SAME TIME AS WE FURTHER IMPROVE ROAD CAPACITY AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT. CONGESTION WILL BE EASED, AND GOODS VEHICLES AND PUBLIC ON-ROAD TRANSPORT WILL BE ABLE TO MOVE MORE EASILY, AND HENCE MORE ECONOMICALLY,+ HE SAID.

TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

RESPONDING TO COMMENTS, MOST NOTABLY BY MISS LYDIA DUNN, ON THE INADEQUACY OF TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES OF PREVIOUS YEARS, MR SCOTT REFERRED TO THE ACCOUNT OF GOVERNMENT SPENDING ON TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING THE MTR AND THE MODERNISATION OF THE KCR, GIVEN BY MR STEPHEN CHEONG EARLIER IN THE DEBATE.

IN ADDITION TO WHAT MR CHEONG HAD MENTIONED, MR SCOTT POINTED TO THE EXPANSION IN CARRYING CAPACITY OF THE TWO MAJOR BUS COMPANIES BY 50 PER CENT OVER THE LAST 3-1/2 YEARS, AND TO LESS DRAMATIC IMPROVEMENTS IN OTHER FORMS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

+THESE IMPROVEMENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS WILL CONTINUE, WITH THE ACTIVE DIRECTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF GOVERNMENT,+ HE SAID. HE ALSO GAVE THE ASSURANCE THAT CONTINUING EFFORT WAS BEING PUT INTO INCREASING RESIDENTIAL COACH SERVICES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MAXICAB ROUTES AND ADDED THAT A PRIVATE HIRE CAR SYSTEM WAS INSTITUTED LAST YEAR.

MISS DUNN HAD IN HER SPEECH SAID SHE BELIEVED THE TIME HAD COME TO CONFER AN ABSOLUTE PRIORITY TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE OPERATIONAL SERVICES.

MR SCOTT SAID HE WARMED TO HER PROPOSAL BUT NOTED THAT IT SPRANG FROM THE EFFECTS IN THE LATER 1970S ON TRANSPORT OF HAVING GIVEN AN ABSOLUTE PRIORITY TO HOUSING.

+THE ADMINISTRATION BELIEVES THAT THE RECENT CHANGES IN THE CONDUCT OF TRANSPORT POLICY -- TO STRENGTHEN THE FUNCTION AND TO ENABLE BETTER COORDINATION -- ARE THE WAY TO GET THE BALANCE OF PRIORITIES RIGHT,+ HE SAID.

NEW TERRITORIES CAR OWNERS

ON THE PARTICULAR PROBLEMS OF NT RESIDENTS, MR SCOTT SAID IT WAS TRUE THAT THE MEASURES, BROAD-BRUSH AS THEY WERE, COULD NOT TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE FACT THAT CONGESTION WAS NOT, SO FAR, A PROBLEM IN THE NEW TERRITORIES.

HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WERE DIFFICULTIES, OUTLINED IN HIS EARLIER SPEECH, IN IMPLEMENTING A PEAK HOUR LICENSING OR AREA LICENSING SYSTEM WHICH DID NOT APPLY TERRITORY-WIDE. HE REGRETTED THAT EVEN AFTER FURTHER EXAMINATION, SUCH SYSTEMS WERE NOT FEASIBLE IN HONG KONG'S PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES.

A FITTING PROBLEM ON MR ALEX WU'S GENERAL DISAGREEMENT WITH THE PROPOSALS, WHO REFERRED TO THEM AS '+TRIMMING ONE'S TOES TO FIT ONE'S SHOES+', MR SCOTT SAID MR WU OFFERED NO ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS AND SO HE HAD TO ASSUME THAT HE BELIEVED THERE WAS NO PROBLEM OR THE SITUATION WAS HOPELESS.

+I SUGGEST TO HIM THAT WE MUST FACE FACTS AND 'CUT OUR COAT ACCORDING TO OUR CLOTH',+ MR SCOTT SAID.

CONCESSION FOR DISABLED DRIVERS

IN REPLY TO DR HARRY FANG'S RECOMMENDATION FOR A FURTHER CONCESSION FOR DISABLED DRIVERS IN RESPECT OF FIRST REGISTRATION TAX, MR SCOTT SAID THE SECRETARY FOR SOCIAL SERVICES HAD ASKED HIM TO SAY THAT THE PROPOSAL WOULD BE EXAMINED.

MR SCOTT EXPLAINED THAT DISABLED DRIVERS COULD AT PRESENT CLAIM EXEMPTION FROM PAYMENT OF THE DRIVING TEST FEE, THE PROVISIONAL DRIVING LICENCE FEE, THE DRIVING LICENCE FEE, AND THE VEHICLE LICENCE FEE OF A VEHICLE BELOW 1 000 CC, TO BE RAISED TO 1 500 CC UNDER THE PROPOSALS.

+IT APPEARED RATHER DIFFICULT AT FIRST, BUT WE THINK WE NOW HAVE A POSSIBLE SYSTEM WHEREBY A CONCESSION OF FIRST REGISTRATION TAX COULD BE MANAGED,+ HE SAID.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF RESTRAINT MEASURES

MR SCOTT REFERRED TO MRS SELINA CHOW'S ACCUSATION THAT THE GOVERNMENT FAILED TO INVOLVE MOTORISTS IN A BROAD DISCUSSION OF THE MEASURES OR INDEED OF ANY MEASURES WHICH THEY MIGHT PREFER, +WHILE ACCEPTING THE NEED FOR CONFIDENTIALITY+.

HE DID NOT ACCEPT THIS ACCUSATION. +THE REASONS AND BACKGROUND FOR THE PROPOSALS HAVE BEEN THOROUGHLY AIRED= AND IT WAS AGREED WITH UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS THAT THIS DEBATE SHOULD NOT BE RESUMED UNTIL FOUR WEEKS AFTER THE BILLS WERE INTRODUCED, SO THAT PUBLIC OPINION COULD BE EXPRESSED, AND MADE KNOWN TO UNOFFICIALS IN THE USUAL WAY,+ HE SAID.

GOVERNMENT VEHICLES

ON THE USE OF GOVERNMENT VEHICLES BY CIVIL SERVANTS, MR SCOTT SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD TWO ROLES WHICH WERE TO SOME EXTENT CONFLICTING.

+IT IS A LARGE EMPLOYER WITH A POLICY, BROADLY SPEAKING, OF BEING A GOOD EMPLOYER AND TAKING ACCOUNT OF PRACTICE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR. AT THE SAME TIME, IT HAS TO ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT TRANSPORT POLICIES AS A WHOLE,+ HE SAID.

IN RESPONSE TO CONCERN EXPRESSED BY MR T.S. LO AND MRS SELINA CHOW, MR SCOTT SAID HE HAD BEEN ASKED BY THE DIRECTOR, COUNCILS AND ADMINISTRATION BRANCH IN THE GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT TO ASSURE THEM THAT A STRICT WATCH WOULD CONTINUE TO BE KEPT ON THE USE OF AND PROPOSED ADDITIONS TO THE FLEET OF SALOON CARS.

MR SCOTT ADDED THAT THE SECRETARY FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE AND HE WOULD CONSIDER THE ASPECTS RAISED BY MR LO AND ENSURE THAT THEY WERE DRAWN TO THE ATTENTION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON DIRECTORATE SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE WHICH ADVISES THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL ON SUCH MATTERS.

MR SCOTT ALSO REPLIED TO SEVERAL SPECIFIC POINTS RAISED BY THE UNOFFICIALS.

COMMENTING ON THE REV MCGOVERN'S CRITICISMS OF THE RESTRAINT MEASURES AND THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE CONGESTION PROBLEM, MR SCOTT SAID IT WAS HARD TO BELIEVE, IN THE LIGHT OF HIS PREVIOUS PRONOUNCEMENTS ON SOCIAL MATTERS, THAT FR MCGOVERN REALLY THOUGHT THAT GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE IN THE PAST, OR SHOULD IN THE FUTURE, SO ORDER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND THE ALLOCATION OF PRIORITIES THAT PRIVATE MOTOR CARS SHOULD BE ABLE TO TRAVEL IN UNRESTRICTED NUMBERS WHEREVER THEY WISH, REGARDLESS.

HE SAID HE HAD TOUCHED ON THE EFFECTS OF THIS IN HIS SPEECH ON MAY 5. +IT WOULD AMOUNT TO SOCIAL INJUSTICE ON A VERY LARGE SCALE INDEED,+ HE SAID.

MRS SELINA CHOW HAD FAVOURED THE INTRODUCTION OF ODD-AND-EVEN-DAY RESTRICTED USAGE FOR PRIVATE CARS IN CONGESTED AREAS.

+THIS IS CONCEPTUALLY A SIMPLE AND FAIR IDEA, BUT IN PRACTICE TWO-CAR OWNERS ARE AT AN IMMEDIATE ADVANTAGE OVER ONE-CAR OWNERS, AND THE DIFFICULTY IN POLICING THE USE OF FALSE PLATES MAKES IT A NON-STARTER IN THE CONDITIONS OF HONG KONG,+ MR SCOTT SAID

HE ALSO EXPLAINED TO MRS CHOW THAT THE FIGURES HE HAD GIVEN AS EXAMPLES OF THE EFFECTS OF CONGESTION ON BUS AND TRAM SERVICES HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH MAINTENANCE STANDARDS, IN THE CASE OF BUSES, AND WITH COMMUTERS TAKING OTHER MODES OF TRANSPORT, IN THE CASE OF TRAMS.

HE TOOK UP THE EXAMPLE OF FISCAL RESTRAINTS ADOPTED IN SINGAPORE AS QUOTED BY MR ALEX WU AND POINTED OUT THAT OVER THE PERIOD MR WU QUOTED, SIX YEARS FROM 1976 TO 1981 INCLUSIVE, THE GROWTH RATE APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN 13.8 PER CENT WHICH APPEARED REASONABLY SUCCESSFUL.

+BUT THERE COMES A POINT WHEN THE OVERALL ADVERSE EFFECTS OF INCREASINGLY SEVERE INCREASES ARE WORSE THAN THE BENEFICIAL EFFECTS ON VEHICLE NUMBERS. THEY SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS A FINAL SOLUTION. THE FINAL SOLUTION MUST BE MORE EQUITABLE, AS WELL AS PREFERABLY NOT REMOVING THE OPPORTUNITY OF OWNERSHIP OF A VEHICLE,+ MR SCOTT SAID.

HE SAID NO ONE, INCLUDING THE ADMINISTRATION, COULD PREDICT WITH CERTAINTY WHAT DEGREE OF EFFECT THE PRESENT PROPOSALS WOULD HAVE.

HE WAS GRATEFUL TO MR WONG LAM FOR ENDORSING THE ADMINISTRATION'S THINKING WHEN HE SAID: +IN VIEW OF THE URGENCY OF THE PROBLEM, AND THE DIFFICULTY IN DESIGNING SIMPLE AND FEASIBLE MEASURES WHICH ARE BOTH REASONABLE AND FAIR, I AGREE THAT GOVERNMENT SHOULD FIRST ADOPT THESE PROPOSALS AS EXPEDIENT MEASURES BUT CONTINUE TO LOOK FOR FAIRER AND MORE EFFECTIVE MEANS WHICH ARE DIRECTED AT CURBING USAGE RATHER THAN OWNERSHIP.+

CROSS-SUBSIDISATION OF FERRY SERVICES

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A DEGREE OF CROSS-SUBSIDISATION BETWEEN PROFITABLE AND UNPROFITABLE FERRY ROUTES MUST BE ACCEPTED, IN THE VIEW OF THE UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS' COMMUNITY SERVICES GROUP, THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WAS TOLD TODAY.

SPEAKING AS CONVENOR OF THE GROUP, WHICH CONSIDERED THE FERRY SERVICES BILL, 1982, THE HON LYDIA DUNN SAID THE GROUP NOTED CERTAIN REPRESENTATIONS MADE BY THE FERRY COMPANIES. THESE INCLUDED THE CONCERN EXPRESSED BY THE STAR FERRY COMPANY AND THE HONG KONG YAUMATI FERRY COMPANY ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S POWER OF DIRECTION PROVIDED IN THE BILL.

+IN PARTICULAR,+ SAID MISS DUNN, +THEY ARE CONCERNED THAT THEY MAY BE DIRECTED BY THE GOVERNMENT TO OPERATE ROUTES IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST WHICH MAY NOT BE PROFITABLE.

+GIVEN THAT THEIR SERVICES ARE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES OPERATED ON A MONOPOLY BASIS, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD, IN THE INTERESTS OF THE TRAVELLING PUBLIC, EXERT A DEGREE OF CONTROL OVER THE PROVISION OF SUCH SERVICES.+

THE SERVICES HAD TO BE LOOKED AT IN THE CONTEXT OF OVERALL PROFITABILITY, SHE SAID.

THE BILL, WHICH WAS PASSED WITH AMENDMENTS INTO LAW AT THE MEETING, REPLACES THE THREE EXISTING FERRY SERVICES ORDINANCES AND COVERS ALL ASPECTS OF FRANCHISED AND LICENSED FERRY SERVICES.

REFERRING TO CONCERN ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S POWER TO DIRECT THE TYPE OF VESSELS TO BE USED, SHE NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD SAID THIS WAS NECESSARY FOR REASONS OF SAFETY AND TO ENSURE THAT DEMAND IS MET, AND THAT SUCH POWER DEALT ONLY WITH THE COMPANIES' EXISTING FLEETS.

MISS DUNN NOTED ALSO THAT THE PROVISIONS OF THE BILL ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE IN OTHER ORDINANCES GOVERNING PUBLIC UTILITIES.

+AT THE END OF THE DAY, THE BASIC PHILOSOPHY OF GIVING PRIVATE ENTERPRISE THE FREEDOM TO OPERATE EFFICIENTLY AND PROFITABLY MUST PREVAIL AND I AM SURE THAT IT IS NOT THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION TO TAMPER WITH THAT FREEDOM,+ SHE SAID.

REFERRING TO PART VI OF THE BILL EMPOWERING THE COMMISSIONER FOR TRANSPORT TO GRANT FERRY LICENCES TO ENABLE NON-FRANCHISED OPERATORS TO RUN FERRY SERVICES BETWEEN SPECIFIED POINTS, SHE NOTED THAT THERE WERE NO PROVISIONS FOR COMPETITIVE TENDERING AND NO APPEAL PROCEDURES FOR AGGRIEVED APPLICANTS.

THE GROUP CONSIDERED THIS MAY PROVIDE POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITY FOR CORRUPTION AND FELT THAT TENDERING AND APPEAL PROVISIONS SHOULD BE INCLUDED. +WE ARE PLEASED THAT THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT HAS AGREED TO DO SO,+ SHE SAID.

SHE SAID, AS THERE WAS FAR LESS CONGESTION IN THE WATERS, +THE FERRY MODE OF TRANSPORT SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED+.

MISS DUNN SAID THAT SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATE AMENDMENTS TO PROVIDE FOR TENDERING AND APPEAL PROCEDURES FOR LICENSED SERVICES, SHE SUPPORTED THE BILL.

SPEAKING ALSO IN SUPPORT OF THE BILL, THE HON F.K. HU NOTED THAT PROVISION WAS MADE FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF A PROFIT CONTROL SCHEME WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL.

CROSS-SUBSIDISATION WAS NECESSARY +AS LONG AS THE OVERALL PROFIT IS WITHIN REASONABLE CONTROL,+ HE SAID.

THE HON ALEX WU WHO DECLARED HIS INTEREST AS A DIRECTOR OF ONE OF THE FERRY COMPANIES, ABSTAINED FROM VOTING BUT SAID THAT GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN EITHER THE MANAGEMENT OR FINANCIAL AFFAIRS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE TO ERODE THE CONFIDENCE OR VIABILITY OF THE COMPANIES.

HE ALSO DESCRIBED THE BILL AS REPRESENTING +YET ONE MORE ATTEMPT BY THE GOVERNMENT TO SORT OUT ITS RELATIONS WITH THE COMPANIES WHICH OPERATE PUBLIC SERVICES+.

DISCUSSING WHAT HE CALLED THE THEORY OF CROSS-SUBSIDISATION, HE SAID THIS ASSUMED EITHER THAT THERE WERE MORE PROFITABLE ROUTES THAN UNPROFITABLE ONES OR THAT THE FARES ON SOME ROUTES WERE SO HIGH AND PROFITABLE THAT THERE WAS A POOL OF MONEY TO FINANCE OTHER ROUTES.

+THIS, OF COURSE, IS NOT TRUE AND THE GOVERNMENT KNOWS IT,+ MR WU SAID.

A COMPANY UNDER A SCHEME OF CONTROL LIMITING ITS PROFITS COULD HARDLY EVER BE IN SUCH A POSITION AND COULD ONLY SUBSIDISE A NEW UNPROFITABLE ROUTE BY RAISING FARES ON OTHERS, HE SAID.

+IS THAT WHAT THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS AND WOULD THE COMMISSIONER DIRECT A FRANCHISED COMPANY TO DO SO?+ HE ASKED.

MR WU ALSO SAID THAT THE WATERWAYS WERE BEING USED BY HALF A MILLION PEOPLE AND THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS TYPE OF TRANSPORT.

IN MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON ALAN SCOTT THANKED MISS DUNN AND MR HU FOR THEIR SUPPORTING SPEECHES AND SAID NEW SUBCLAUSES 28 (6) AND 28 (7) WOULD BE PROPOSED AT COMMITTEE STAGE ON THE SUGGESTIONS MADE BY UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS, TOGETHER WITH SOME OTHER AMENDMENTS TO MAKE CERTAIN CLAUSES CLEARER AND MORE PRECISE.

+THE FIRST REQUIRES THE COMMISSIONER FOR TRANSPORT TO DEAL WITH APPLICATIONS FOR FERRY LICENCES BY WAY OF PUBLIC TENDER IN CASES WHERE TWO OR MORE PERSONS APPLY, OR ARE LIKELY TO APPLY, SEPARATELY FOR A LICENCE TO OPERATE SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME FERRY SERVICES BETWEEN THE SAME POINTS.

+THE SECOND MAKES PROVISION FOR APPEAL BY ANY PERSON WHOSE APPLICATION FOR A LICENCE IS NOT GRANTED BY THE COMMISSIONER,+ HE SAID.

MR SCOTT ALSO REFERRED TO CONCERN EXPRESSED BY MISS DUNN ABOUT THE NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED IN THE OPERATION OF FERRIES, AND GAVE ASSURANCE THAT THESE WERE KEPT TO THE MINIMUM.

REFERRING TO A POINT RAISED BY MR WU THAT THE HONG KONG AND YAUMATI FERRY COMPANY WOULD NOT HAVE A DIRECT INTEREST IN THE LEGISLATION UNTIL OR UNLESS IT APPLIED FOR AND RECEIVED A NEW FRANCHISE, MR SCOTT POINTED OUT THAT THE COMPANY WAS NOW IN THE FINAL STAGES OF DISCUSSION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OVER THE DETAILED PROVISIONS OF A NEW FRANCHISE, TO BE OPERATED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE LEGISLATION.

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TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENT PLANS FOR CENTRAL

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THE GOVERNMENT PLANS TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL ROADS, MAXIMISE THE USE OF NEW FACILITIES AND CONTROL THEIR USE IF DEMAND SEEMS LIKELY TO OVERRUN CAPACITY IN CENTRAL, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON A.J. SCOTT, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

QUESTIONED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BY THE HON HENRY HU ON GOVERNMENT PLANS TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC FLOW IN CENTRAL ON COMPLETION OF THE EASTERN CORRIDOR, MR SCOTT SAID PLANNING FOR THE NEW CENTRAL ROUTE WAS BASED ON THE 1976 COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORT STUDY FORECAST THAT THE EXISTING ROAD SYSTEM COULD CATER FOR ONLY TWO-THIRDS OF THE TRAFFIC DEMAND BY 1991, EVEN IF MEASURES WERE TAKEN TO RESTRICT THE RATE OF GROWTH OF VEHICLE OWNERSHIP TO FIVE PER CENT PER ANNUM.

BUT THE GROWTH RATE HAS SUBSTANTIALLY EXCEEDED THAT LEVEL OVER THE FIVE YEARS SINCE THE STUDY WAS COMPLETED, MR SCOTT NOTED.

HE SAID THE CTS RECOMMENDED THAT AN ELEVATED ROAD BE CONSTRUCTED FROM HARCOURT ROAD TO HILL ROAD, ASSOCIATED WITH THE WIDENING AND IMPROVEMENT OF ROADS AT GROUND LEVEL.

THE PROPOSED ELEVATED ROAD WAS SHOWN ON THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OUTLINE ZONING PLAN, TO WHICH A NUMBER OF OBJECTIONS ON ENVIRONMENTAL GROUNDS WERE LODGED WITH THE TOWN PLANNING BOARD.

+IN THIS CONNECTION, AND WITH THE AIM OF FINDING A SOLUTION BOTH ENVIRONMENTALLY ACCEPTABLE AND ADEQUATE IN TRAFFIC CAPACITY TERMS TO SERVE THE FURTHER TRANSPORT NEEDS OF THE AREA, A SPECIAL STUDY OF TRAFFIC ON THE ISLAND'S NORTHERN SHORE IS TO BE CARRIED OUT.

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+THE STUDY WILL BE CONDUCTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE STUDY FOR THE MID-LEVEL AREAS, AS THE TRAFFIC PROBLEMS ARE INTERRELATED,+ HE ADDED.

OTHER PROJECTS TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC CONDITIONS IN CENTRAL INCLUDE WIDENING THE UPPER SECTION OF GARDEN ROAD AND A GRADE-SEPARATED INTERCHANGE TO LINK THE VICTORIA BARRACKS DEVELOPMENT WITH QUEENSWAY BY 1984.

MR SCOTT ALSO NOTED THAT PROJECTS TO IMPROVE THE WESTERN APPROACHES TO CENTRAL HAVE LARGELY BEEN COMPLETED, WITH THE WIDENING OF POK FU LAM ROAD AND THE HILL ROAD FLYOVER.

+THE TECHNICALLY DIFFICULT LAST LINK, BETWEEN HONG KONG UNIVERSITY AND THE ELLIOTT WATER PUMPING STATION, IS DUE FOR COMPLETION IN 1985,+ MR SCOTT SAID.

MEANWHILE, INVESTIGATIONS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN INTO THE FEASIBILITY OF A NEW MAJOR COASTAL ROUTE WESTWARDS THROUGH KENNEDY TOWN TO ABERDEEN.

HE SAID THE NECESSARY TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT MEASURES WOULD BE INCORPORATED IN ALL THESE DEVELOPMENTS, AND DETAILS WOULD BE DECIDED ACCORDING TO TRAFFIC PATTERNS AND DEMAND.

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FINAL READING OF ROADS BILL ADJOURNED

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BILLS THAT ARE LIKELY TO BE CONTROVERSIAL SHOULD IN FUTURE BE PUBLISHED FOR GENERAL INFORMATION TO ENABLE MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO MAKE REPRESENTATIONS AND TO ENSURE THAT SUFFICIENT CONSULTATION TAKES PLACE BEFORE THEY ARE INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

UNOFFICIAL MEMBER THE HON S.L. CHEN ADVOCATED THIS TODAY DURING THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE ROADS (WORKS, USE AND COMPENSATION) BILL.

+THIS WOULD OBTIATE THE NECESSITY TO MAKE SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENTS DURING THE COMMITTEE STAGE,+ HE SAID.

THE BILL IS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE CODE, SELF-CONTAINED IN ONE ORDINANCE, AND TO DEAL WITH ALL MATTERS IN CONNECTION WITH NEW ROADWORKS OF ALL KINDS.

MR CHEN, CONVENOR OF AN AD HOC GROUP OF UNOFFICIALS FORMED TO STUDY THE BILL, SAID HIS GROUP CONSIDERED THE PROVISIONS IN RESPECT OF COMPENSATION WERE GENERALLY FAIR AND JUST.

+OUR FIRST TASK AS MEMBERS OF THE AD HOC GROUP WAS TO GRASP THE NETTLE OF THE COMPENSATION PRINCIPLES EMBODIED IN THE BILL,+ SAID MR CHEN.

+THIS ISSUE HAS BEEN EXTREMELY CONTROVERSIAL AND MANY REPRESENTATIONS ON IT HAVE BEEN MADE.+

THE GROUP HAD FINALLY ACCEPTED THESE PRINCIPLES FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:-

- * THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT BE IN A WORSE POSITION REGARDING CLAIMS FOR COMPENSATION THAN A PRIVATE DEVELOPER SINCE THE LATTER IS NOT REQUIRED TO COMPENSATE THE OWNERS AND OCCUPIERS OF PROPERTY IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD WHOSE VIEW HIS NEW BLOCK OBSTRUCTS.
- * HAVING STUDIED THE PROVISIONS OF THE UK LAND COMPENSATION ACT 1973, THE GROUP NOTED THAT COMPENSATION AWARDED FOR 'INJURIOUS AFFECTATION' WAS ON AN EXTREMELY LIMITED SCALE AND PROVIDED NO REAL LEGAL PRECEDENT FOR THE WIDE-RANGING COMPENSATION PROPOSALS WHICH HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED TO THEM.
- * THE GROUP CONSIDERED THE PROVISIONS IN THE BILL EMPOWERING THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL TO IMPOSE CONDITIONS WHICH WILL AMELIORATE THE EFFECTS OF ROAD-WORKS ON THE OWNERS AND OCCUPIERS OF NEIGHBOURING PREMISES TO BE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT IN THAT THEY PROVIDE THE MOST EQUITABLE COMPROMISE BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INTERESTS WHICH IS AVAILABLE IN THE HONG KONG SITUATION.

MR CHEN ALSO SPELLED OUT THE KEY CHANGES WHICH HAVE THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE UNOFFICIALS. THESE WERE:

- * TO MAKE THE DATE OF ENACTMENT AS THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE BILL-
- * TO MAKE EXPLICIT THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL'S POWER TO REFER ANY EXTENSIVE ROADWORKS SCHEME TO THE TOWN PLANNING BOARD WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A TOWN PLAN IN EXISTENCE FOR THAT AREA-
- * TO DELETE THE PROVISION WHICH STATES THAT +WHERE LAND VALUE IN THAT AREA RISES AS A RESULT OF THE ROADWORKS, ANY COMPENSATION FOR RESUMPTION WOULD BE REDUCED BY THE AMOUNT THE REMAINING LAND HAD INCREASED IN VALUE+-
- * TO COMMIT THE CROWN TO GIVING +PROPER CONSIDERATION+ TO OFFERING LAND WHICH HAD BEEN RESUMED BUT SUBSEQUENTLY NOT USED FOR A ROADWORKS SCHEME BACK TO THE PERSON FROM WHOM IT WAS RESUMED- AND
- * TO AMEND THE PROVISION WHICH +PERMITS THE BUILDING AUTHORITY TO PREVENT BUILDING WORKS ON A SITE FOR A PERIOD OF UP TO THREE YEARS IF SUCH WORKS ARE INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE ROAD WORKS+ SO AS TO ALLOW ANY PERSON WITH A COMPENSATABLE INTEREST IN LAND SO AFFECTED TO APPLY TO THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL TO HAVE HIS LAND RESUMED.

ANOTHER UNOFFICIAL MEMBER, THE HON CHARLES YEUNG, URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE THE PRACTICE OF EX-GRATIA PAYMENT IN RESUMING LAND.

HE SAID ASSESSMENT OF COMPENSATION FOR LAND RESUMED UNDER THE BILL WAS BASED ON PROVISIONS OF THE CROWN LANDS RESUMPTION ORDINANCE AND COMPENSATION WAS PAYABLE TO SUCH PERSONS AS WERE ENTITLED TO CLAIM UNDER THAT ORDINANCE.

+THERE HAS, HOWEVER, BEEN A LONG-DRAWN DISPUTE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND OWNERS OF AGRICULTURAL LAND OVER THE CONTROVERSIAL SECTION 12(C) OF THAT ORDINANCE WHICH PROVIDES NO COMPENSATION 'IN RESPECT OF ANY EXPECTANCY OR PROBABILITY OF THE GRANT OR RENEWAL OR CONTINUANCE, BY THE CROWN OR BY ANY PERSON, IF ANY LICENCE, PERMISSION, LEASE OR PERMIT WHATSOEVER'.

+HOWEVER, IN ORDER TO SOFTEN THE FULL IMPACT OF SECTION 12(C), GOVERNMENT HAS, BY ADMINISTRATIVE MEANS, BEEN PAYING EX-GRATIA PAYMENTS TO OWNERS AND OCCUPIERS OF AGRICULTURAL LAND SO RESUMED,+ HE SAID.

MR YEUNG ALSO URGED THAT THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS SHOULD, AS A MATTER OF POLICY, AND ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTIVE, CONSULT LOCAL PEOPLE SUCH AS THE DISTRICT BOARD AND RURAL COMMITTEE BEFORE AUTHORIZING A PERMANENT ROAD CLOSURE IN CARRYING OUT MINOR WORKS.

THE HON JOHN SWAINE, IN HIS SPEECH, COMMENTED ON THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE BILL.

HE SAID THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL'S POWER TO REFER THE PLAN AND THE OBJECTIONS TO THE TOWN PLANNING BOARD WAS AN IMPORTANT PROVISION BECAUSE IT WOULD ENSURE A PROPER HEARING OF OBJECTIONS.

+IT IS NOTE-WORTHY THAT THE POWER OF REFERRAL APPLIES EVEN WHERE THERE IS NO TOWN PLAN, AND THE CHANGE THEREFORE GOES FURTHER THAN THE TOWN PLANNING ORDINANCE ITSELF ENVISAGES,+ HE SAID.

ON THE PROPOSAL TO DELETE THE PROVISION (CLAUSE 3 OF THE SCHEDULE) WHICH WOULD HAVE REDUCED THE AMOUNT OF COMPENSATION PAYABLE IF THE CLAIMANT OWNED OTHER LAND WHICH APPRECIATED IN VALUE BECAUSE OF THE PROPOSED ROAD WORKS, MR SWAINE SAID OBJECTION WAS TAKEN TO THIS CLAUSE BECAUSE NO CORRESPONDING PROVISION WAS MADE FOR INCREASING RESUMPTION COMPENSATION WHERE THE CLAIMANT'S OTHER LAND HAD DEPRECIATED IN VALUE.

HE ADDED THAT IN THE ABSENCE OF A GENERAL SCHEME FOR IMPOSING A LEVY ON OWNERS WHOSE LAND APPRECIATED AS A RESULT OF ROAD WORKS, THE EFFECT OF THE CLAUSE WOULD HAVE BEEN TO IMPOSE AN INDIRECT LEVY ON THE OWNER WHOSE LAND HAD BEEN RESUMED.

THE COMMITTEE STAGE AND THE THIRD READING OF THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED TO THE NEXT MEETING.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1982

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SEVEN BILLS PASSED

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SEVEN BILLS WERE PASSED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THEY ARE THE ESTATE DUTY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1982, THE INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT)(NO. 2) BILL 1982, THE FERRY SERVICES BILL 1982, THE MOTOR VEHICLES (FIRST REGISTRATION TAX)(AMENDMENT) BILL 1982, THE ROAD TRAFFIC (REGISTRATION AND LICENSING OF VEHICLES) REGULATIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1982, THE DUTIABLE COMMODITIES (AMENDMENT OF DUTY ON LIGHT OILS) BILL 1982 AND THE DUTIABLE COMMODITIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1982.

THE COMMITTEE STAGE AND THIRD READING OF THE ROADS (WORKS, USE AND COMPENSATION) BILL 1982 WAS ADJOURNED TILL THE NEXT MEETING.

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WARNING ABOUT UNREGISTERED COMMODITY DEALERS

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THE DANGER TO THE PUBLIC OF TRADING THROUGH UNREGISTERED COMMODITY DEALERS WAS EXPRESSED BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON J.C. GRIFFITHS AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

SPEAKING IN MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE COMMODITIES TRADING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1982, WHICH PROVIDES FOR HEAVIER PENALTIES FOR VARIOUS OFFENCES, MR GRIFFITHS ALSO EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE MASS MEDIA WOULD PUBLICISE THIS DANGER MORE WIDELY.

+I BELIEVE THAT IF THIS BILL IS ENACTED AND PASSED INTO LAW IT WILL MAKE MUCH EASIER THE TASK OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES OF PREVENTING THE ACTIVITIES OF UNREGISTERED OR FRAUDULENT DEALERS.

+I AM SURE THAT THE COURTS, IF THIS BILL IS PASSED, WILL WISH TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT, IN FUTURE CASES, THE VIEW OF THIS COUNCIL (WHICH IS MANIFESTED BY THE VERY SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN THE MAXIMUM PENALTIES PROVIDED) THAT A SERIOUS SOCIAL PROBLEM EXISTS IN HONG KONG IN THIS FIELD,+ MR GRIFFITHS SAID.

HE SAID ALSO THAT A REVIEW OF THE OPERATION OF VARIOUS SECTIONS OF THE ORDINANCE WAS UNDERWAY AND THAT, DEPENDING ON THE RESULTS OF THE REVIEW, IT MIGHT BE NECESSARY TO PROPOSE ALTERATIONS TO VARIOUS SUBSTANTIVE SECTIONS OF THE ORDINANCE.

MR GRIFFITHS EARLIER POINTED OUT THAT THE INTENTION BEHIND THE COMMODITIES TRADING ORDINANCE, WHICH CAME INTO FORCE EARLY IN 1977, WAS TO RESTRICT DEALING TO REGISTERED DEALERS ONLY, AND TO CONTROL THOSE DEALERS BY SUITABLE AUDITING AND OTHER RULES.

HOWEVER, A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS HAD SINCE ARISEN, AND THE GROWTH IN COMMODITIES TRADING LED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MANY UNREGISTERED DEALERS, ESTIMATED BY THE COMMERCIAL CRIME BUREAU AT BETWEEN 100 AND 150 OF THEM.

/+EXPERIENCE HAS

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+EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN THAT IN A LARGE NUMBER OF CASES WHEN DEALING WITH THESE UNREGISTERED DEALERS THE CUSTOMER LOSES A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF HIS INVESTMENT, AND SOMETIMES ALL OF IT,+ HE SAID.

IT WAS DIFFICULT TO PROVE WITH THE NECESSARY CERTAINTY IN A COURT OF LAW THAT AN UNREGISTERED DEALER HAD BEEN FRAUDULENT.

HE BELIEVED, TOGETHER WITH THE COMMODITIES TRADING COMMISSION, THE COMMISSIONER FOR SECURITIES AND THE STANDING LIAISON COMMITTEE ON COMMERCIAL CRIME, OF WHICH HE WAS CHAIRMAN, THAT THIS PROBLEM COULD BEST BE TACKLED BY DISCOURAGING UNREGISTERED DEALERS FROM TRADING BY THE IMPOSITION OF HEAVY PENALTIES UPON THEM.

+IT IS SIMPLE AND QUICK TO PROVE IN COURT THAT A DEALER IS UNREGISTERED,+ HE SAID.

WHEREAS THE PRESENT MAXIMUM PENALTY CONSISTS ONLY OF A FINE OF \$50 000, THE PROPOSED PENALTY FOR UNREGISTERED DEALING WOULD BE A MAXIMUM FINE OF \$500 000, TOGETHER WITH A DAILY PENALTY OF \$10 000, AND IMPRISONMENT FOR FIVE YEARS FOR CONVICTION ON INDICTMENT, AND A MAXIMUM FINE OF \$50 000 AND A DAILY PENALTY OF \$1 000 AND IMPRISONMENT FOR ONE YEAR FOR CONVICTION BEFORE A MAGISTRATE.

HEAVIER PENALTIES, INCLUDING IMPRISONMENT, ARE ALSO PROVIDED FOR CARRYING ON BUSINESS AS AN UNREGISTERED DEALER'S REPRESENTATIVE, FOR FRAUDULENT TRADING, AND OTHER OFFENCES.

DEBATE ON THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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GAS LEAKAGE GROUP FORMED

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TO ENSURE THE QUICKEST REMEDIAL TREATMENT FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN AFFECTED BY GAS LEAKAGE, A MONITORING COMMITTEE COMPRISING REPRESENTATIVES FROM 10 GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED IN JUNE 1980 TO CO-ORDINATE EFFORTS AND INVESTIGATIONS INTO SUCH INCIDENTS, THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, THE HON DENIS BRAY, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE SAID THE COMMITTEE HAD ALSO PRODUCED DETAILED PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING SUCH INCIDENTS AND THAT OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES WERE CONSTANTLY REVIEWED AND CO-ORDINATED BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.

MR BRAY WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON SELINA CHOW IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ON GAS LEAKAGE AFFECTING SCHOOL CHILDREN AND WHAT WAS THE GOVERNMENT DOING TO PREVENT FUTURE OCCURRENCES.

THERE WERE 13 CASES OF ALLEGED GAS LEAKAGES AFFECTING SCHOOL CHILDREN DURING THE PAST 18 MONTHS, MR BRAY SAID.

ALTHOUGH, THERE WAS NO GUARANTEE THAT FUTURE CASES WOULD NOT OCCUR, THE PRESENT SYSTEM WAS CONSIDERED ADEQUATE FOR MONITORING ANY SUCH INCIDENT AND ENSURING THAT PROMPT REMEDIAL ACTION WAS TAKEN IN EACH CASE.

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1982

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HELP FOR DISCHARGED MENTAL PATIENTS
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A RANGE OF REHABILITATION SERVICES IS PROVIDED TO INTEGRATE PATIENTS DISCHARGED FROM MENTAL HOSPITALS BACK INTO THE COMMUNITY, THE SECRETARY FOR SOCIAL SERVICES, THE HON E.P. HO SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON HO KAM-FAI IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR HO SAID THESE PATIENTS WERE NORMALLY ASKED TO ATTEND PSYCHIATRIC OUT-PATIENT CLINICS FOR FOLLOW-UP TREATMENT AND OBSERVATION, UNLESS OTHER ARRANGEMENTS HAD BEEN MADE FOR MONITORING THEIR PROGRESS.

+THUS THE COMMUNITY WORK AND AFTER-CARE UNIT OF CASTLE PEAK HOSPITAL WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1977 TO FOLLOW UP ON SELECTED PATIENTS DISCHARGED, UNTIL THEY BECAME STABLE IN THE COMMUNITY.+ WITH THE OPENING OF THE KWAI CHUNG HOSPITAL, MR HO SAID, A PSYCHIATRIC COMMUNITY NURSING SERVICE, BASED ON THE HOSPITAL, BEGAN WORK IN APRIL 1982 TO PROVIDE AFTER-CARE FOR DISCHARGED PATIENTS REFERRED BY DOCTORS.

+THE ESTIMATED REQUIREMENT FOR PSYCHIATRIC CONSULTING ROOMS IS 42 AND THE EXISTING PROVISION IS 29= THIS SHORTFALL OF 13 SHOULD BE CLEARED BY 1984,+ HE ADDED.

MR HO SAID HALF-WAY HOUSES WERE ALSO PROVIDED TO HELP PATIENTS ADJUST.

A SOCIAL WORK COUNSELLING SERVICE WAS PROVIDED TO ASSIST A PATIENT DISCHARGED HOME, OR TO A HALF-WAY HOUSE TO COPE WITH EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS.

AND TWO SOCIAL CLUBS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED IN TEMPORARY PREMISES FOR THE FORMER PATIENTS TO PREPARE THEM FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAMMES AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC IN COMMUNITY CENTRES.

SOCIAL WORKERS LOOKING AFTER FORMER PATIENTS ABLE TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY, BUT UNABLE TO RETURN TO THEIR FAMILY HOME, WOULD SEEK TO HAVE THEM ACCOMMODATED IN PUBLIC HOUSING, WITHIN THE COMPASSIONATE REHOUSING SCHEME, MR HO SAID.

MR HO SAID ALSO THAT JOB PLACEMENTS WERE ARRANGED FOR FORMER PATIENTS IN OPEN EMPLOYMENT WHERE POSSIBLE. THOSE WHO NEEDED A TEMPORARY PERIOD OF WORK ADJUSTMENT WERE PLACED IN SHELTERED WORKSHOPS.

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240 FAKE DENTISTS PROSECUTED

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TWO-HUNDRED AND FORTY PERSONS WERE PROSECUTED SINCE 1979 FOR PRETENDING TO BE DENTISTS, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON JOHN GRIFFITHS SAID TODAY.

THE AVERAGE FINE IMPOSED WAS \$750, ALTHOUGH SUSPENDED SENTENCES OF IMPRISONMENT OF ABOUT THREE MONTHS WERE IMPOSED IN A FEW CASES, HE ADDED.

MR GRIFFITHS WAS REPLYING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON HARRY FANG.

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PROPOSED REVIEW ON DEBT LAW

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A DRAFT REPORT IS BEING SENT TO MEMBERS OF A WORKING GROUP APPOINTED IN JANUARY 1981, FOR COMMENTS ON A PROPOSAL TO REVIEW THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF COMMITTING A CIVIL DEBTOR TO PRISON BEFORE HIS MEANS AND BACKGROUND WERE INVESTIGATED, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON JOHN GRIFFITHS SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE WORKING GROUP COMPRISED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE, THE HONG KONG BAR ASSOCIATION, THE LAW SOCIETY, THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AID, THE COMMISSIONER OF PRISONS (AS HE WAS THEN CALLED) AND THE COMMISSIONER FOR INLAND REVENUE.

MR GRIFFITHS, QUESTIONED BY THE HON PETER C. WONG ON THE OUTCOME OF THE PROPOSED REVIEW, SAID THE CHIEF JUSTICE HAD ALREADY OBTAINED THE VIEWS OF THE JUDICIARY EARLIER IN SEPTEMBER 1980 AND THE OUTCOME WAS THAT THEY WERE OPPOSED TO ANY CHANGE IN THE EXISTING LAW AND PROCEDURES.

MR GRIFFITHS ALSO SAID THERE WERE 25 CIVIL DEBTORS CONFINED IN PRISON AS AT MAY 28 AND THAT BETWEEN JULY 4, 1979 AND MAY 28 THIS YEAR 529 PEOPLE WERE IMPRISONED FOR DEBT.

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1982

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NO RULING ON REFRIGERANTS
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THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT, ON PRESENT EVIDENCE, REGULATE OR PROHIBIT THE USE OF REFRIGERANTS IN REFRIGERATORS, THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, THE HON DAVID JEAFFRESON SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE WAS ANSWERING A QUESTION BY THE HON MARIA TAM IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WHO SAID THAT SINCE CERTAIN REFRIGERANTS (SUCH AS SULPHUR DIOXIDE AND AMMONIA) COMMONLY USED IN REFRIGERATORS, HOUSEHOLD AND VEHICLE AIR-CONDITIONERS +ARE HIGHLY TOXIC AND LETHAL IN CASE OF LEAKAGE, PARTICULARLY IN CONFINED SPACE+ AND ASKED WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT WOULD REGULATE OR PROHIBIT THE USE OF SUCH POISONOUS REFRIGERANTS IN SUCH APPLIANCES.

MR JEAFFRESON ADDED THAT NEITHER THE ECONOMIC SERVICES BRANCH NOR OTHER BRANCHES OR DEPARTMENTS HAVE RECEIVED ANY COMPLAINTS ABOUT REFRIGERANTS.

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DUTIES GO METRIC
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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) APPROVED A MOTION TO BASE DUTIES, PAYABLE ON DUTIABLE COMMODITIES, ON METRIC UNITS.

THE ACTING FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HENRY CHING, SAID THE NEW RATES HAD BEEN CALCULATED SO AS TO BE NEUTRAL IN THEIR EFFECT ON THE REVENUE.

+THE CONVERSIONS HAVE BEEN ROUNDED OFF TO THE NEAREST FIVE CENTS, FOR CONVENIENCE, AND THE INCREASE OR DECREASE ON ANY SINGLE CATEGORY IS GENERALLY LESS THAN 0.5 PER CENT,+ HE SAID.

MR CHING SAID IT WAS INTENDED THAT ALL REFERENCES IN THE DUTIABLE COMMODITIES ORDINANCE TO NON-METRIC UNITS SHOULD BE REPLACED WITH METRIC UNITS.

+REFERENCES TO IMPERIAL UNITS OF MEASUREMENT IN THE ORDINANCE WILL BE REPLACED BY BROADLY EQUIVALENT OR, WHERE THIS WOULD CLEARLY BE IMPRACTICAL, CONVENIENT METRIC UNITS,+ HE ADDED.

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1982

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MORE THAN 300 000 JPC MEMBERS
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MORE THAN 300 000 BOYS AND GIRLS AGED BETWEEN NINE AND 17 YEARS OF AGE ARE MEMBERS OF THE JUNIOR POLICE CALL, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON LEWIS DAVIES, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE WAS REPLYING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TO A QUESTION BY THE HON SELINA CHOW.

MR DAVIES SAID THE JPC WAS LAUNCHED IN JULY 1974 TO ENCOURAGE CLOSER RELATIONS BETWEEN YOUTH AND THE POLICE FORCE, AND TO PROVIDE A MEANS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE FROM ALL STRATA OF SOCIETY TO PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CRIME.

THE SCHEME HAS SINCE BEEN EXPANDED TO PROVIDE FACILITIES FOR A WIDE RANGE OF SPORTS, HOBBIES AND TRAINING FROM WHICH MEMBERS MAY ACQUIRE USEFUL KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE COMMUNITY.

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ASSISTANCE TO DB MEMBERS
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THE SECRETARY FOR CITY AND NEW TERRITORIES ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DAVID AKERS-JONES, SAID TODAY THAT HE WAS MOST ANXIOUS TO HELP IN ANY PRACTICABLE WAY TO MAKE THE DISTRICT BOARDS AS EFFECTIVE AS POSSIBLE.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON WONG LAM AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, HE SAID THAT STAFF OF THE DISTRICT OFFICES WERE AVAILABLE TO ASSIST AND TO SUPPLY INFORMATION TO UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS ON DISTRICT BOARD MATTERS.

WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ROOMS IN CITY DISTRICT OFFICES WERE SET ASIDE FOR USE BY THE UNOFFICIALS FOR THEIR WORK.

CONFERENCE ROOMS AND FACILITIES, AND SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION EQUIPMENT WOULD ALSO BE PROVIDED.

PLANS WERE ALSO BEING MADE TO PROVIDE UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS WITH A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF GOVERNMENT PROCEDURES AND POLICIES IN AREAS SUCH AS HOUSING, TRANSPORT, SOCIAL SERVICES, TOWN PLANNING AND SO FORTH.

IN ADDITION, UNOFFICIAL DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS COULD CLAIM \$2 000 A MONTH FOR TRAVELLING AND OTHER OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENSES.

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1982

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EEC URGED BY HK TO HONOUR MFA OBLIGATIONS

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+HONG KONG HAS URGED THE EEC TO HONOUR FULLY ITS OBLIGATION ARISING FROM THE MFA, + THE COMMISSIONER OF TRADE, MR LAWRENCE MILLS, SAID IN BRUSSELS, FOLLOWING THE OPENING ON TUESDAY (JUNE 1) OF THE NEGOTIATIONS ON RENEWAL OF THE HONG KONG/EEC BILATERAL AGREEMENT ON TEXTILES.

+HONG KONG MUST ENSURE THAT THE RIGHTS IT ACQUIRED IN THE MFA RENEWAL NEGOTIATIONS ARE EFFECTIVELY PRESERVED AND REFLECTED IN ANY AGREEMENT THAT IT MAY REACH WITH THE EEC.

+HONG KONG IS NOT, THEREFORE, PREPARED TO RE-OPEN ISSUES WHICH WERE EXHAUSTIVELY DISCUSSED IN GENEVA DURING THE MULTILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS AND FINALLY SETTLED IN THE PROTOCOL OF EXTENSION OF THE MFA, + HE SAID.

THESE BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS ARE BEING HELD UNDER ARTICLE 4 OF THE MULTIFIBRE ARRANGEMENT (MFA) AS EXTENDED BY THE PROTOCOL OF DECEMBER 22, 1981, AND HAVING REGARD TO THE EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN DR H. KRENZLER, THE EEC'S CHIEF TEXTILE NEGOTIATOR, AND MR MILLS IN GENEVA ON DECEMBER 21, 1981.

MR MILLS POINTED OUT THAT THERE APPEARED TO BE A MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE PURPOSE AND CONTENT OF THESE LETTERS. HONG KONG HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT IT COULD NOT ACCEPT CUTBACKS ON ITS QUOTAS.

+NEVERTHELESS, + MR MILLS SAID, +HONG KONG IS READY TO SHOW GOODWILL IN FINDING A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE ARRANGEMENT LEADING TO SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS WHICH THE EEC CAN SHOW TO HONG KONG'S SATISFACTION DO EXIST, AND WHERE IT CAN DEMONSTRATE THAT SUCH PROBLEMS ARE CAUSED BY HONG KONG.

+BUT, + MR MILLS WENT ON, +NEITHER THIS EXPRESSION OF GOODWILL, NOR THE WORDING OF PARAGRAPH 6 OF THE PROTOCOL IN ANY WAY IMPLY THAT THE SOLUTIONS ENVISAGED BY THE EEC IPSO FACTO HAVE TO BE ACCEPTED OR, INDEED, THAT SOLUTIONS HAVE TO CONFORM WITH ANY PARTICULAR FORMAT, OTHER THAN FULL COMPLIANCE WITH THE MFA.+

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PLB CLEARWAY ON CHAI WAN ROAD

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FROM 10 AM ON FRIDAY (JUNE 4), THE SECTION OF THE SOUTHBOUND CARRIAGEWAY OF CHAI WAN ROAD NEAR LOK MAN ROAD WILL BE DESIGNATED AS A PUBLIC LIGHT BUS CLEARWAY.

PUBLIC LIGHT BUSES WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO STOP FOR PASSENGERS OR GOODS WITHIN THE SECTION FROM 7 AM TO 12 MIDNIGHT DAILY.

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FUTURE OF HONG KONG IS BRIGHT, SAYS AKERS-JONES

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A POSITIVE AND CONFIDENT FUTURE FOR HONG KONG WAS INDICATED TODAY BY THE SECRETARY FOR THE CITY AND NEW TERRITORIES ADMINISTRATION, MR DAVID AKERS-JONES.

HE WAS SPEAKING ON THE SUBJECT, +THE FUTURE INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE NEW TERRITORIES+ AT A LUNCHEON MEETING TO MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

IT WAS AN OFT-REPEATED TRUISM THAT THE FUTURE OF THE NEW TERRITORIES WAS INDIVISIBLE FROM THE FUTURE OF THE REST OF HONG KONG, HE SAID.

+SIMILARLY ITS INFRASTRUCTURE AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT IS INSEPARABLY LINKED WITH THAT OF HONG KONG AND INDEED, THE REGION AS A WHOLE,+ HE SAID.

MR AKERS-JONES SAID THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE FUTURE INFRASTRUCTURE WERE NOW BEING LAID, AND OUTLINED SOME OF THE MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THIS.

EACH NEW TOWN, HE SAID, HAD INDUSTRIAL LAND TO SUPPORT ITS OWN WORKFORCE, AND ON BOTH THE EAST AND WEST OF THE NEW TERRITORIES THERE WERE INDUSTRIAL ESTATES TO ATTRACT OVERSEAS INVESTMENT AND NEW INDUSTRIES TO HONG KONG.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HOUSING POLICY AIMED AT PROVIDING EVERY FAMILY IN HONG KONG WITH SELF-CONTAINED ACCOMMODATION.

BY THIS RECKONING, IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO BUILD HOMES FOR 2.6 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS, AND THIS SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE TASK COULD BE DONE IF THE PRESENT MOMENTUM CONTINUED.

+IF WE CAN PRODUCE AN ANNUAL JOINT OUTPUT OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HOUSING OF ABOUT 65 000 FLATS EACH YEAR, WHICH IS THE CASE AT PRESENT, WE WOULD MORE THAN MEET THIS TARGET,+ HE SAID.

MR AKERS-JONES CONTINUED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD TAKEN OTHER DECISIONS WHICH POINTED THE WAY TO THE MORE DISTANT FUTURE.

AT SHA TIN, THE NEW TOWN WOULD BE SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETE WITH A POPULATION OF ABOUT 350 000 BY THE END OF 1985, AND IT WAS BEING EXTENDED TO THE NORTH AND EAST TO CREATE A CITY OF 750 000 IN ABOUT 10 YEARS.

AND AT JUNK BAY, WORK ON DEVELOPMENT COULD LEAD TO A TOWN WITH A POPULATION OF ABOUT 300 000.

HE SAID THAT SO FAR AS PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE WAS CONCERNED, IT WAS NO LONGER APPROPRIATE TO THINK IN TERMS OF SEPARATE GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS.

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COUPLED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE BUT NO LESS IMPORTANT IN SIGNIFICANT INSOFAR AS THE WELFARE OF THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE WAS CONCERNED, A NEW SYSTEM OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND DISCUSSION - THE DISTRICT BOARDS - HAD BEEN INTRODUCED.

+IT OFFERS EVERYONE IN HONG KONG OVER THE AGE OF 21 AND WITH SEVEN YEARS OF RESIDENCE A CHANCE TO PARTICIPATE, THROUGH ELECTIONS, IN THE DECISION OF THEIR LOCAL DISTRICTS, AND NEARLY ONE MILLION PEOPLE ARE NOW ON THE ELECTORAL ROLL.+

AND HONG KONG, HE SAID, WAS ALSO BECOMING MORE AND MORE INTIMATELY LINKED WITH SOUTH CHINA.

+WE ARE NOW LINKED WITH THE SHENZHEN SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE BY ROAD, RAIL AND FERRY, AND BY WATER AND ELECTRICITY SUPPLY LINES.

+RESIDENTIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE WILL COMPLEMENT AND STRENGTHEN OUR OWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

+THIS THEN PROVIDES US WITH OUR BASIC STRENGTH TO FACE WHATEVER TRIALS THE WORLD ECONOMY AND BARRIERS TO TRADE MAY SET BEFORE US, AND OUR STRENGTH AND CONFIDENCE IN BUILDING THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE FUTURE IS REINFORCED BY THE ASSURANCES GIVEN BY LEADERS OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA ABOUT THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG AS A WHOLE,+ HE CONCLUDED.

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CONSORTIUM RECOMMENDED FOR EXHIBITION CENTRE BRIEF

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THE NON-STATUTORY BOARD ESTABLISHED BY THE GOVERNOR TO ADVISE ON THE SELECTION OF CONSULTANTS AND TO OVERSEE THE STAGE II CONSULTANCY FOR THE PROPOSED HONG KONG EXHIBITION CENTRE HAS RECOMMENDED TO THE GOVERNMENT THAT AN INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM TO BE CALLED +H.E.C. CONSULTANCY GROUP+ COMPRISING ARCOP ASSOCIATES, CONCORDIA MANAGEMENT LTD OF CANADA AND IGEDO AND WILKE OF F.R. GERMANY, BE APPOINTED THE STAGE II CONSULTANTS.

THE CONSULTANTS WILL BE REQUIRED TO DRAW UP A DETAILED BRIEF AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR A MULTI-STOREY DEVELOPMENT WITH EMPHASIS ON AN EXHIBITION CENTRE BUT WITH ANCILLARY FACILITIES AND MAXIMUM APPROPRIATE FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS ON THE WAN CHAI SITE.

IT WILL ALSO BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE ESTIMATES OF CAPITAL AND OPERATING COSTS TO BE INCURRED, AS WELL AS REVENUE OBTAINABLE, AND TO RECOMMEND THE MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING SYSTEMS FOR THE EXHIBITION CENTRE.

THE CONSULTANTS HAVE ESTIMATED THAT THE STAGE II CONSULTANCY WILL TAKE SIX MONTHS TO COMPLETE AFTER THEIR APPOINTMENT.

BASED ON THE FINDINGS OF THE CONSULTANCY, THE NON-STATUTORY BOARD WILL ADVISE THE GOVERNMENT WHETHER OR NOT THE EXHIBITION CENTRE SHOULD BE BUILT IN HONG KONG AND, IF SO, HOW THIS COULD BE ACHIEVED AND HOW THE CENTRE SHOULD BE MANAGED.

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\$370 000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

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MORE THAN \$370 000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS, GRANTS OR INTEREST-FREE LOANS WILL BE AWARDED THIS YEAR TO SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES FOR TWO SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS ADMINISTERED BY THE AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES DEPARTMENT.

THEY ARE THE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS SCHOLARSHIP FUND AND THE MARINE FISH SCHOLARSHIP FUND, APPLICATIONS FOR WHICH WILL CLOSE ON JULY 23.

THE AWARDS WILL BE TENABLE AT A UNIVERSITY IN HONG KONG, THE POLYTECHNIC, A TECHNICAL INSTITUTE OR AT AN ACCEPTABLE OVERSEAS ACADEMIC, TECHNOLOGICAL OR POST-GRADUATE INSTITUTE.

CANDIDATES SHOULD GENERALLY BE STUDENTS WHO MAY BE EXPECTED TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO EITHER AGRICULTURE OR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCT MARKETING INDUSTRIES OR MARINE FISHERIES OR FISH MARKETING INDUSTRIES IN HONG KONG.

THE APPLICATIONS ARE ALSO OPEN TO PEOPLE WHO ARE EMPLOYED IN PRIMARY PRODUCTION INDUSTRIES, THEIR FAMILIES AND DEPENDANTS WHO WISH TO PURSUE FURTHER EDUCATION IN ANY SUBJECT APPROVED BY THE TRUSTEE OF THE TWO SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS.

THEY SHOULD NORMALLY STUDY COURSES WHICH MAY INCLUDE AGRICULTURE, VETERINARY SCIENCE, BOTANY, ZOOLOGY, FISHERY BIOLOGY, MARINE BIOLOGY, FOOD TECHNOLOGY, ECONOMICS, MANAGEMENT OR ADMINISTRATIVE STUDIES, MARINE ENGINEERING, NAVAL ARCHITECTURE OR ANY APPLIED SCIENCES CONSIDERED RELEVANT TO THE LOCAL AGRICULTURAL OR FISHERIES INDUSTRIES.

CANDIDATES SHOULD BE UNDER THE AGE OF 30 AND PREFERABLY BETWEEN 18 AND 25 YEARS OF AGE, ALTHOUGH SUITABLE OLDER STUDENTS ARE NOT PRECLUDED FROM APPLYING.

APPLICATION FORMS MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE TWO SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS AT THE AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES DEPARTMENT ON THE 12TH FLOOR OF THE CANTON ROAD GOVERNMENT OFFICES AT 393 CANTON ROAD, KOWLOON.

DURING THIS YEAR, ANOTHER \$182 000 WILL ALSO BE AVAILABLE FOR RENEWING SCHOLARSHIPS, GRANTS OR LOANS ALREADY AWARDED TO SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES FROM PREVIOUS YEARS.

ABOUT \$500 000 HAS BEEN PAID OUT TO STUDENTS TO ASSIST THEM IN THEIR STUDIES SINCE THE FUNDS WERE ESTABLISHED IN 1978.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

PRESS CONFERENCE ON ROADS AND SLOPES
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THE ACTING DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING DEVELOPMENT, MR HAROLD BEATON, WILL CHAIR A PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE GIS THÉATRE, BEACONSFIELD HOUSE, FIFTH FLOOR, AT 10 AM TOMORROW (THURSDAY).

THE PRESS CONFERENCE WILL TOUCH ON THE WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON ROADS AND SLOPES, DURING THE CURRENT RAINSTORMS.

ALSO PRESENT WILL BE THE PRINCIPAL GOVERNMENT GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER, DR E.W. BRAND- THE PRINCIPAL GOVERNMENT HIGHWAY ENGINEER, MR T.S. NG AND THE GOVERNMENT GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER, MR BERNARD LAM.

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QC FROM ENGLAND ADMITTED
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MR DESMOND KEANE, A Q.C. FROM ENGLAND, HAS BEEN ADMITTED TO LIVE IN HONG KONG AND PRACTICE AT THE HONG KONG BAR.

MR KEANE WAS ADMITTED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) AS A FULL MEMBER OF THE HONG KONG BAR BY THE CHIEF JUSTICE, SIR DENYS ROBERTS.

HIS ADMISSION WAS PROPOSED BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, MR J.C. GRIFFITHS.

+IT GIVES ME PARTICULAR PLEASURE TO PROPOSE THE ADMISSION OF MR KEANE BOTH BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN MY PUPIL MANY YEARS AGO AND ALSO BECAUSE OF HIS CONNECTION WITH HONG KONG,+ HE SAID.

+HIS FAMILY CONNECTIONS WITH THE LAW IN HONG KONG WERE CLOSE. HIS GRANDFATHER HAD BEEN CHIEF INTERPRETER TO THE SUPREME COURT FROM 1909 UNTIL 1920 AND HIS GREAT-GRANDFATHER HAD WORKED IN THE PRISON SERVICE FROM 1863 UNTIL 1897, WHEN HE RETIRED AS CHIEF TURNKEY (THE PREDECESSOR OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR CORRECTIONAL SERVICES).+

AT THE BAR IN ENGLAND, MR KEANE'S SPECIALITY WAS BUILDING AND TOWN PLANNING LAW.

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1982

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NEW TSING YI POST OFFICE
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A NEW POST OFFICE LOCATED IN SHOP NO. 1 ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF HONG KWAI HOUSE, CHEUNG HONG ESTATE, TSING YI, WILL BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AT 9 AM ON MONDAY (JUNE 7), THE POSTMASTER GENERAL ANNOUNCED TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THIS OFFICE WILL REPLACE THE PRESENT TSING YI POST OFFICE OF THE CHEUNG CHING ESTATE WHICH WILL CLOSE FOR BUSINESS AT 1 PM ON SATURDAY (JUNE 5).

THE NEW OFFICE WILL OPERATE IN LARGER ACCOMMODATION WITH IMPROVED COUNTER FACILITIES.

THE TELEPHONE NUMBER (0-452976) AND HOURS OF BUSINESS OF THE POST OFFICE WILL BE THE SAME.

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