



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Wednesday, April 25, 1973

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DEBATE ON CROWN LEASES BILL RESUMES

Government Urged To Reconsider Crown Rent Formula

Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council today called on the Government to reconsider the formula for the re-assessment of new Crown rents.

The appeal was made during the resumed debate on the Crown Leases Bill 1973 in the Legislative Council.

The Unofficials said they were unable to vote in favour of the Bill as at present drafted.

Addressing the Council, the Senior Unofficial Member, the Hon. P.C. Woo, said that the Chinese Manufacturers Association of Hong Kong and 575 associations had joined together to oppose what they regarded as the "unjust and unreasonable formula" for fixing re-assessed Crown rents.

At their request, he said, the Unofficial Members had listened to their further representations against proceeding on the present basis.

On behalf of his Unofficial Colleagues, he called upon the Government to "think again before going ahead on the present basis of renewal."

Mr. Woo recalled that there had been an "unprecedented increase" in land values since the beginning of 1971.

What the Government should do, he said, was to think of a "completely different formula which will break away from the relationship between Crown rents and the extraordinarily high market value of land experienced during recent years."

/Mr. Woo

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Mr. Woo pointed out that the present market was an artificially restricted market because of the small amount of land becoming available for sale.

"In tying Crown rents to these high and uncontrolled market values the Government is being illogical in the sense that the domestic rents paid by tenants of those premises subject to rent increase control are paying only one-third of the current market price," he said.

Mr. Woo said: "Many thousands of people will be affected by the new Crown rents because of the subdivision of properties."

Increased Cost

"Those who have bought their homes without realising the effect upon themselves of the forthcoming revision of Crown rents may find themselves totally unable to bear the increased cost of home ownership.

"Those who have not yet been able to buy their own homes may find it impossible to contemplate doing so."

It was the owner-occupier who would be most heavily hit, he said.

But, he added, the ownership of a dwelling place by the ordinary man in the street was now contemplated as a possible future act of Government policy.

As the Housing Authority was about to consider extension of house ownership to units of Government low cost housing, surely "special consideration must be given to those who, through their own savings and without the benefit of any subsidy from Government, wish to acquire their own homes," Mr. Woo said.

He recalled that in May last year he challenged at length the application of the Privy Council ruling to expiring leases in general under present-day Hong Kong circumstances.

/Mr. Woo said

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Mr. Woo said then that many of relevant factors had not been placed before the Privy Council and that their ruling was related to the circumstances of the particular case on which they gave their judgment.

He said that his arguments put forward at that time had since remained unanswered.

Mr. Woo suggested that the arguments, or all the relevant argumentation for and against the present policy, should be referred to that body for further advice.

"This is far too vital a matter to be allowed to stand upon the ruling given in an isolated case," he added.

Lessees

Speaking on the same Bill, the Hon. Wilfred Wong concentrated on the plight and hardship which the lessees of domestic premises would face upon the expiration of the leases.

He said that many lease holders, estimated to be about 70,000 in Kowloon, bought their property in recent years and in fact they paid a heavy premium on the leases unwittingly as the leases were already close to their expiry date.

He said: "This is partly due to the fact that the clerks in solicitors' office have been telling them that Crown rents are nominal and partly due to the fact that they have no idea that Crown rents could be increased between three hundred and a few thousand times."

Surely, he said, a fair and reasonable formula could be found and he thought that the rent should be assessed on an average of the last ten years or the 1969 market whichever was lower.

/Mr. Wong pointed

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Mr. Wong pointed out that "a lower Crown rent would set Government up as a good example of a landlord and help in stabilising the extraordinarily inflated price of land."

The Hon. James Wu, said a compromise solution should and must be found, if Hong Kong were to forge ahead in greater harmony and prosperity.

He said for many years, people in Hong Kong had been led to believe, by a proviso in the renewable Crown leases, that upon expiry, renewal would be granted with a new Crown rent similar to the prevailing Zone Crown Rent but "without payment of any fine or premium" as was clearly printed in the Crown leases.

Contravention

"The belated 'Consolidated Statement' by the Government in 1969 requiring the payment of a lump sum or decapitalised premium in the form of greatly increased Crown rents," he added, "was considered to be in direct contravention of this proviso and there appeared to be a credibility gap on the part of Government."

Mr. Wu said: "The New Kowloon area, where some 5,000 leases are due for renewal soon, is a low-income residential and industrial area and contrary to the remarks made by the Financial Secretary last May."

Referring to the concessions made by the Government in May last year and also last month, he said they were "grossly inadequate" bearing in mind the greatly inflated land prices in the last few years.

On the unchecked high land prices and high rental on Hong Kong's industry and commerce, Mr. Wu said people in all walks of life were wondering "if Hong Kong had not been allowed to price itself out of today's competitive world markets and into self-destruction."

/He hoped

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He hoped that a less painful (to the lease-holders) and less inflationary formula could be worked out based on a multiple of prevailing Zone Crown Rent or related to rates but avoiding any direct relationship to prevailing land prices.

The Hon. P.G. Williams, also speaking on the Bill, said thousands and thousands of holders of renewable Crown leases genuinely believed that their lease was altogether different from a normal commercial lease.

He said: "There is a strong sense of ownership of their land and the Crown rent is not regarded as a true rent, but more akin to a modest rate or tax."

History

"History has fashioned this concept; the wording of the terms of renewal of the Crown lease gives force to it and the failure of Government to raise Crown rents progressively over the years has contributed to it."

Mr. Williams favoured the suggestion of his Unofficial colleague, the Hon. Szeto Wai, that Crown rents might be reassessed as a proportion of the rateable value of the property.

He said the Government had consistently reassessed rates over the years and this was a far more realistic and rational base than an arguable, even illusory, market value modified by arbitrary percentage reductions.

"This basis would," he believed, "be more palatable to lease-holders and much reduce the charge of unfairness levelled against the Government today."

/Turning

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Turning to the social aspect of the problem, he said: "The proposals under the Bill must be another inflationary element in this situation and could well create obstacles in any plans the Government may have to alleviate the recent burden for which almost everyone in Hong Kong is suffering."

After the Unofficials had spoken, the Colonial Secretary, Sir Hugh Norman-Walker, moved that the debate on the motion be adjourned.

He thanked the Unofficial Members for their advice and said that clearly they were greatly concerned about the effect that the payment of a reassessed rent for renewal of expiring 75-year renewable leases would have on small property owners.

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PAID HOLIDAYS AND SICKNESS ALLOWANCE FOR WORKERS

Benefits To Be Extended To More People

The Commissioner of Labour, the Hon. Paul Tsui today proposed that all workers earning up to \$1,500 a month, whether employed in an industrial undertaking or not, should be given sickness allowance and six holidays a year.

In introducing the Employment (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 1973 in the Legislative Council today, he pointed out that the six holidays should be in addition to the one rest day a week for women and young persons employed in industry.

The six holidays will, as before, be designated, but the holiday on Winter Solstice will be replaced by New Year's Day.

Mr. Tsui said that under the present law, some 600,000 out of the total working population of 1.6 million did not have the right to claim the six statutory holidays or sickness allowance.

The Bill also seeks to increase the sickness allowance benefits for workers by raising the entitlement up to 24 days in two years. As present, workers are entitled only up to 12 days in one year.

Mr. Tsui said that sickness allowance would be paid for the first three days the worker was sick if he had fallen sick for four or more days.

Under the present ordinance, a worker will be paid sickness allowance only as from the fourth day if he has fallen sick for less than seven days.

/The rates

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The rates for payment for holiday pay and sickness allowance will remain the same; for a paid holiday the same wages as the worker would have earned if he had worked on that day; and half of that sum for sickness allowance.

The Bill, if approved, will be enforced in two stages. The first part, dealing with sickness allowance, will come into force as from July 1, 1973; and the second part, dealing with paid holidays, will be effective from January 1, 1974.

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GREATERT SAFETY FOR WORKING IN CONFINED SPACES

New Regulations Prescribe Precautionary Measures

A set of new regulations to ensure greater safety for those required to work in confined spaces was today approved by the Legislative Council.

The regulations, entitled the Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Confined Spaces) Regulations 1973, prescribe certain safety measures to be observed by both proprietors and workers. Details of the regulations will be published in Friday's Government Gazette.

Speaking in the Legislative Council today, the Commissioner of Labour, Mr. Paul Tsui, said that working in confined spaces such as chambers, tanks, wells, vats pits, tunnels, pipes, flues, boilers and pressure receivers was hazardous because workers were known to have been overcome by dangerous fumes in such places.

He said that during the period January 1968 to February 1973, officers of the Labour Department had investigated 16 such accidents in which 14 workers were killed.

"Such sad incidents might have been reduced, if not totally avoided, had precautionary measures, such as those which are now prescribed in these regulations, been taken," he said.

Under the regulations, every confined space in an industrial undertaking, unless there are other exits, must be provided with a manhole of adequate size.

Anyone entering a confined space must be authorized by the proprietor and must wear an approved breathing apparatus. Where practicable, he should also wear a belt with a rope securely attached.

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These requirements do not apply if a confined space has been certified safe for entry without breathing apparatus by the proprietor who, before making such a certification, must take steps to test for, and to prevent, the presence of dangerous fumes.

Proprietors are also required to keep a sufficient supply of approved breathing apparatus, suitable reviving apparatus, vessels containing oxygen, belts and ropes. These items must always be maintained in a satisfactory condition.

The regulations further stipulate that proprietors must not permit any person to enter or remain in any boiler-furnace or boiler-flue until it has been cooled by ventilation.

The regulations will come into effect in six months.

Mr. Tsui said this was to allow sufficient time for proprietors to make alterations, where necessary, to ensure that manholes in their industrial establishments were of adequate size.

Contravention of the regulations will result in fines up to \$2,000 for proprietors and \$500 for any person other than proprietor.

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ROAD TESTS FOR OVERSEAS LICENCE HOLDERS

Requirement Upheld By Financial Secretary

A holder of overseas driving licences can usually drive in Hong Kong without interruption from the time of arrival until he passes the road test and receive a Hong Kong licence, as long as he applies in good time for his test.

This was stated by the Financial Secretary, the Hon. C.P. Haddon-Cave, in reply to a question by Mrs. Ellen Li in the Legislative Council this afternoon. She had asked if the Government would drop the road test requirement for overseas licence holders in view of the large backlog of driving tests.

Mr. Haddon-Cave said there were about 7,000 applicants a year who were holders of overseas licences.

"This," he said, "does add to the backlog of driving tests, but it is not a serious burden and there are good reasons for not issuing a Hong Kong driving licence direct without a test."

He said the Commissioner for Transport was anxious not to place his licensing staff in the difficult position of having to check the validity of overseas licences.

He added that the Transport Advisory Committee had advised against waiving the road test requirement for holders of overseas licences.

But he said he would ask the Commissioner of Transport "to examine the whole question again" and to seek confirmation of their previous advice from the T.A.C.

/Under the

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Under the present system, holders of overseas driving licences are required to pass a Hong Kong driving test before being issued with a Hong Kong licence. They can drive in Hong Kong for up to one year provided his overseas licence is valid for that period.

Mr. Haddon-Cave said it was "at least arguable" that when a overseas licence holder became a resident after one year, he should be exempted from all local requirements.

He said it was far from easy for the Transport Department to decide whether the possession of any particular overseas driving licence indicated driving skill and experience of a standard comparable to that required of an applicant for a Hong Kong licence.

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FOUR BILLS BECOME LAW

Four bills passed their committee stage and third readings in the Legislative Council this afternoon and became law.

They were the Crown Rent and Premium (Apportionment) (Amendment) Bill 1973; the Public Transport Services (Hong Kong Island) (Amendment) Bill 1973; the Public Transport Services (Kowloon and New Territories) (Amendment) Bill 1973; and the Crown Lands Resumption (Amendment) Bill 1973.

Four bills had their first and second readings.

They were the Registration of Persons (Amendment) Bill 1973; the Inland Revenue (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 1973; the Marine Fish (Marketing) (Amendment) Bill 1973; and the Employment (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 1973. Debate on them was adjourned.

Debate on the second readings of six other bills was resumed. They were the Crown Leases Bill 1973; the Crown Rent and Premium (Apportionment) (Amendment) Bill 1973; the Public Transport Services (Hong Kong Island) (Amendment) Bill 1973; the Public Transport Services (Kowloon and New Territories) (Amendment) Bill 1973; Crown Lands Resumption (Amendment) Bill 1973; and the Employment (Amendment) Bill 1973.

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SECONDARY SCHOOL ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

The Education Department confirms that the Secondary School Entrance Examination will be held on Thursday afternoon, May 3, 1973, as announced to participating schools in circulars dated December 11, 1972 and February 9, 1973.

The examination centres are generally unchanged. Minor exceptions, if any, will be notified individually to the schools and pupils concerned.

So far as candidates are concerned, therefore, the examination will proceed in the usual manner.

There are, however, three important changes in the arrangements:-

- (a) Participating schools will not have any classes on May 3, 1973, so their entire staff will be available to assist with invigilation and with conducting the children to the examination centres;
- (b) Each group of children will be accompanied by at least one teacher from their own school, not only on the way from their own school to the centre but also during the examination; and
- (c) In addition to the teachers specifically nominated as responsible for groups of children from their own school, other teachers from the same school will normally be required to assist with invigilation.

The main effects of these changes will be:-

- (a) The total number of teachers invigilating, or otherwise assisting, is greatly increased;
- (b) Each child will find at least one familiar teacher present throughout the afternoon, in addition to those from other schools; and

(c) Responsibility

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- (c) Responsibility for the proper examination of each school's candidates will rest primarily on teachers of that school.

These arrangements apply generally to the urban districts.

Those for the New Territories are slightly different.

Letters have been despatched to presiding invigilators explaining the arrangements in detail and inviting them to pre-examination conferences.

A spokesman for the Education Department said: "It is expected that these arrangements will help the children by enabling them to take the examination in a calm atmosphere in the presence of a familiar teacher. They will also assist the teacher-invigilators, by increasing their number.

"The success of the examination will depend, both generally and for each particular school, on the teachers concerned responding in a thoroughly professional manner."

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STAFFING PLAN FOR PRINCESS MARGARET HOSPITAL

A team consisting of a Medical Administrator, a Senior Nursing Officer and a Senior Hospital Secretary has been appointed to prepare for the commissioning of the Princess Margaret Hospital.

The Director of Medical and Health Services, Dr. the Hon. G.H. Choa, in reply to a question by the Hon. Mrs. Ellen Li, said: "The 1973-74 Estimates provide 56 posts of medical officer and 642 posts in nursing and other grades, including 204 at the present Lai Chi Kok Hospital, for the new hospital."

He said training for the medical and nursing staff in major hospitals was in progress.

"The Commissioning Team will review staff requirements from time to time," he added.

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PRINT-MAKING COMPETITION FOR STUDENTS

To Publicise Road Safety Campaign

The Education Department is organising a competition for primary and secondary school students to select suitable prints for use in a bilingual calendar to publicise the Road Safety Campaign.

The calendar will contain 12 road safety pictures selected from prints made by students and will be issued free to schools to remind the public of the importance of road safety throughout the year.

The theme of the competition is "How to Prevent Traffic Accidents". Students are free to convey the message in any style.

Direct, simple and positive approaches are preferred, but gruesome scenes should be avoided.

Slogans or titles should not be included in the prints.

Entries must be in the form of prints. They can be monochrome or coloured. The size of each print should be approximately 11½ inches and 14½ inches.

Prizes for the primary section are \$200 for each of the six first prizes and \$25 for each of the 24 consolation prizes.

In the Secondary section, there will be six first prizes of \$200 each and 12 consolation prizes of \$25 each.

All entries should reach the Inspector of Art and Craft, Cultural Crafts Centre, No. 4 Pak Fuk Road, 5th floor, Hong Kong, before June 30.

The layout of the calendar will be designed separately by experts.

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MRS. F.K. LI TO VISIT DAY CARE CENTRE

And Home For Aged Women

Mrs. Li Fook-kow, wife of the Director of Social Welfare, will visit two voluntary agencies tomorrow (Thursday).

The two agencies are the Wang Tau Hom Day Centre at Block 26, Wang Tau Hom Estate and the Poh Yeh Home for the Aged Women in Sha Tin.

The Wang Tau Hom Day Centre is one of the two centres run by the Save the Children Fund for mentally retarded children. It has been in operation since 1964.

The centre, which aims at providing day care and training to children between six and 14, operates from 9.30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Children attending the centre are provided with transport, free lunches and refreshments.

The Poh Yeh Home for the Aged Women is a Buddhist home run by a board of directors. The Home, opened in 1955, provides free vegetarian food and lodging for 104 elderly women.

Mrs. Li will be accompanied on these visits by Mrs. Rose Goodstadt, Acting Principal Social Welfare Officer (Rehabilitation). She will arrive at the Wang Tau Hom Day Centre at 10.30 a.m. and the Poh Yeh Home for Aged Women at 11.45 a.m.

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Note to Editors: You are cordially invited to send a reporter and/or photographer to cover the visits.

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FORTY-THREE BUILDING PLANS APPROVED IN FEBRUARY

The Hong Kong Cricket Club's new club house in Wong Nei Chung Gap Road was one of the 43 building plans approved by the Building Authority in February.

Also approved were building plans for four 28-storey blocks of apartment buildings in Repulse Bay Road and a 30-storey cinema and apartment/commercial building.

During the month, 57 buildings were certified for occupation. The declared total construction cost of these buildings was more than \$400 million.

The Building Authority gave permission for work to start on 29 building projects.

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NEW TELEPHONE LINES FOR PRESS ENQUIRIES

Note to Editors: You are reminded that there are now two direct line telephones to the G.I.S. inquiry desk.

The numbers are: 5-227662

5-232721

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SQUATTER CLEARANCE PROGRAMME UNDER CONSTANT REVIEW

The Government will keep the clearance programme for squatter areas "under constant review" to ensure as far as possible that planned developments are not held up.

This was stated by the Secretary for Housing, the Hon. I.M. Lightbody, in the Legislative Council today in reply to a question by the Hon. Wilfred Wong.

About 60,000 people living in squatter areas might have to be cleared this year as a result of the decisions to proceed with the Mass Transit Railway scheme and to bring forward the new town development plans, he said.

Mr. Lightbody explained: "These clearance demands amount to a bringing forward of clearance plans, because our new town development time-tables have advanced these schemes by 5 to 10 years, and similarly our public housing building programme, which generates significant demands for clearances, is expanding."

He said that in recent years the clearance programme for land required for all types of development had involved the clearance of around 20,000 persons a year.

He said: "there has always been a close matching of clearance time-tables with the availability of public housing; this because of our longstanding custom of rehousing all occupants of tolerated structures in the clearance areas."

"In short," he said, "clearance demands are building up so rapidly that we will have to weigh them against each other to determine priorities."

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NEW RENT CONTROL PROPOSALS EXPECTED NEXT MONTH

Proposals for rent control have been formulated and will be tabled in the Legislative Council next month, the Colonial Secretary, Sir Hugh Norman-Walker, said today.

Sir Hugh was replying to the Hon. S.Y. Chung who asked whether Government would take steps to prevent principal tenants from overcharging sub-tenants.

The Colonial Secretary pointed out that it was an offence under the Landlord and Tenant Ordinance for the principal tenant to charge more than the permitted rent.

Sub-tenants who consider that the rent they are paying is excessive can seek the advice of the Tenancy Inquiry Bureau.

Under the Rent Increases (Domestic Premises) Control Ordinance both tenancies and sub-tenancies are protected.

If the principal tenant's rent had been increased, he said, he should apply to the Commissioner of Rating and Valuation for a certificate of increase in rent before he can raise a sub-tenant's rent by a similar percentage.

In respect of new lettings to sub-tenants of rent controlled post-war premises, the Colonial Secretary said while it might seem desirable to limit in a principal tenant to charging only a fair proportion of the controlled rent, "this would be extremely difficult to supervise and would require a considerable expansion of professional staff."

He added that generally however the existing rent control legislation had had a restraining effect and principal tenants, if their own rent was restricted, although perhaps charging more than the controlled rent, did not usually charge a full market rent to sitting sub-tenants.

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FURTHER SALES OF INDUSTRIAL LAND FOR SPECIALISED INDUSTRIES

Government To Consider Possibilities

The Government will examine in the coming months "the possibilities and criteria for further restrictive user sales of industrial land designed to introduce more technological industry" to Hong Kong.

This was stated by the Financial Secretary, the Hon. C.P. Haddon-Cave in reply to a question by the Hon. James Wu in the Legislative Council today.

He said the Government wanted "to remove an important impediment to the establishment of some types of industry which could be reckoned to be beneficial to the development of the economy as a whole."

He said that the recent sale of a five-acre site on Tsing Yi Island restricted to the automotive industry was entered into on the basis of this kind of thinking.

The ideal method, the Financial Secretary said, would be joint ventures between overseas firms with sophisticated technological knowledge and Hong Kong firms with local knowledge and backing from the resources of the local financial system.

"The Government, in conjunction with the Trade Development Council is now working to interest suitable foreign investors in the possibilities of development in Hong Kong," he said.

If propositions were made which looked promising but which could not be accommodated in high rise buildings, the Government would be prepared to consider tenders on a restrictive user basis, that is restricted to the range of industry it was desired to attract, Mr. Haddon-Cave added.

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NEW BILL TO IMPLEMENT TAX PROPOSALS

The Financial Secretary, the Hon. C.P. Haddon-Cave, today rejected a suggestion by some members of the Legislative Council to re-insert allowances for dependent parents and life insurance abolished under his tax reform proposals.

He said this was just not possible because the proposals were "interlocked to form a unified package."

The Financial Secretary was speaking in the Legislative Council this afternoon when he moved the second reading of the Inland Revenue (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 1973.

He said: "The fact is that, because of the growing inadequacy of the basic allowances over the years and the reluctance, in the uncertain circumstances of those times, to forego too much revenue, fundamental reform has not been possible until now."

Mr. Haddon-Cave said the three selective allowances of low income relief, working wife allowance and dependent parent allowance were introduced as palliatives to alleviate hardship, but at an administrative cost and with "inequitable results."

He stood firm in his belief that the relief granted since the war for insurance premia and similar payments was "quite inappropriate" in a low tax system - particularly one that was being reformed.

The Financial Secretary defended his decision to refrain from proposing that personal allowances should be retained at all levels of income charging only net chargeable income to tax.

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This, he said, would result in such a considerable reduction of tax. Consideration of reform along these lines must await an increase in the standard rate of earnings and profits tax.

Mr. Haddon-Cave stressed that "a low standard rate of tax is fundamental to our objective of maintaining a high growth rate of the economy."

"Our ability to maintain a low standard rate of tax will depend upon the efficiency with which our present tax laws are administered," he added.

Mr. Haddon-Cave regarded the administrative resources that would be released by this tax reform package as important in this connection for there were areas of taxability within the existing tax law to be explored in more depth.

He deplored the "unjustified outcry" which occurred recently over the Commissioner of Inland Revenue's notice following upon the reference he made in the budget debate to the tax liability of habitual dealers in the market for shares.

"Without passing any judgment whatsoever on the right level of the market at any time, these references to the tax position of habitual dealers undoubtedly led, furthermore, to an irrational over-reaction by the market as reflected in the volume of activity and the movement of prices," he added.

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EMBARGOED NEWS ITEM:

Note to Editors of Newspapers,
News Agencies & Broadcasting
Stations

The following announcement is embargoed until 6 a.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

Publication is permitted in Hong Kong newspapers tomorrow (Thursday) morning, but no news agencies or overseas radio transmission of the announcement may carry the information without the embargo qualification.

On no account should local radio and television stations broadcast the item until then.

NEW APPOINTMENTS TO LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Her Majesty The Queen has been pleased to approve the appointments of Mr. Hilton Cheong-Leen, OBE, JP, and Mr. G.M. Sayer, JP, to be Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council from May 1, 1973 to June 30, 1974.

The appointments are to fill the vacancies created by the retirement of the Hon. H.J.C. Browne, OBE, JP and the death of the Hon. Mrs. Mary WONG Wing-cheung, MBE, JP.

Mr. Cheong-Leen was first elected to the Urban Council on April 1, 1957 and is currently the Council's Vice-Chairman. He is also Chairman of the Council's Local Administration and Resettlement Policy Select Committees, and a member of the Estimates, Hawker Policy, Museum and Art Gallery and Resettlement Management Select Committees. He was born in August 1922 in British Guiana (Guyana) and received his education in Georgetown, Guyana, and La Salle College, Kowloon. He was made an Unofficial Justice of the Peace in November 1964 and was awarded the Officer Order of the British Empire (OBE) in December 1971.

/Mr. Sayer

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Mr. Sayer is the Chairman of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation and Director of the Mercantile Bank Limited. He was born in London in January 1924. He was educated at the Millwead Preparatory School, Shrewsbury, and Peak School, Hong Kong. He first joined the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank in 1947 serving in London, Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, Burma and Japan. He was appointed General Manager in 1969 and Director the following year. He became Deputy Chairman in 1971 and Chairman last year. He is a member of the Exchange Fund Advisory Committee and a Board member of the Community Chest.

The Hon. H.J.C. Browne was nominated for appointment to Legislative Council by the Unofficial Justices of the Peace in April 1968.

Tradition

By a long-standing tradition the Governor has asked Justices of the Peace to nominate one of their members for the Governor's and subsequently the Secretary of State's approval to serve on the Legislative Council, although this tradition has never been embodied in the formal constitution of the Colony set out in the Royal Instructions. While the fine contribution that such members have made in the Legislative Council is fully recognised, as is that made to the community by Justices of the Peace generally, the practice of calling for a nomination from this particular group does appear to have become somewhat inappropriate and even anachronistic in the present circumstances of Hong Kong.

Since all members of both the Executive and Legislative Councils, including the two new appointees, are Justices of the Peace, the views of Justices of the Peace will obviously continue to be well represented.

/After careful

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After careful consideration of the historical and legal background the Secretary of State has approved that nominations should no longer be called for and they have not been on this occasion.

It is emphasised that this departure does not reflect any change in the Government's view of the high status of Justices of the Peace in the community, or of their fitness to serve on the Legislative and Executive Councils.

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Release time: 8.30 p.m.