

CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

THE RATEPAYERS' MEETING

Council Supported Throughout: No Traffic Commission:
No Band Reduction

WATERWORKS PURCHASE SANCTIONED

The annual meeting of ratepayers took place in the Town Hall on Wednesday.

There were 302 ratepayers present representing over 400 votes. On the platform were Messrs H. G. Simms, W. P. Lambe, S. Fessenden, P. L. Knight, E. F. Mackay, A. B. Lowson, S. Sakuragi and H. W. Lester, members of Council, and Messrs. N. O. Liddell and E. S. Benbow Rowe.

At the hour called for the opening of the proceedings Mr. H. G. Simms, Chairman of the Municipal Council, proposed and Mr. W. P. Lambe seconded that Sir Skinner Turner be invited to take the chair. This was unanimously carried, whereafter Mr. E. L. Allen was appointed secretary to the meeting, and the usual rules of procedure were adopted.

REPORT AND ACCOUNTS.

The next resolution, No. IV—the adoption of the report and accounts—was proposed by Mr. Simms who referred to the Council's cooperation with the French Concession. The various neighbouring Chinese authorities continued to act independently instead of cooperating with the Council so that road planning and construction beyond Settlement limits was becoming more and more difficult. The only course open to the Council was to press for a Settlement extension whereby the development of Greater Shanghai could be carried out on a uniform plan acceptable to both foreign and Chinese. He appealed to the younger generation of Chinese to cooperate with the Council to make this one of the greatest cities of the world instead of concerning themselves about China's sovereign rights which the Council always had respected and always would respect.

Turning to other matters, Mr. Simms said that as far as capital outlay was concerned they had turned the corner in regard to the electricity works and had now inaugurated an active programme of road planning and bridge building. Regarding traffic in the central district a great relief for the congestion would be to connect the eastern and western districts by one or more arterial thoroughfares, but to do this they must have the cooperation of the Chinese authorities. In connexion with traffic he referred to the Race Course, and alluded to the benefits to traffic which would accrue if it could be turned into a park and so enable Foochow Road to be widened and joined up with Weihaiwei Road. He hoped for an early start with railless tram extensions. Mr. Simms then dealt with education and child labour,

mentioning the appointment of commissions to go into both subjects, and turning to finance emphasized that efforts must be made to effect economies.

Mr. W. P. Lambe seconded and the resolution was carried without discussion.

THE BUDGET.

Proposing Resolution V—the adoption of the budget for 1923 and authorization of a loan issue of Tls. 6,000,000—Mr. Simms went over the heads of the proposed expenditure and mentioned that the plans were now passed for the new Bund jetty and that work would commence shortly. It would interest them to know that the central drainage scheme would be in operation before the end of this month. Turning to the question of the pensioning off of some of the older officials of the Council he explained the modified scheme and mentioned as regards employees who joined after July 1, 1921, that the maximum pension would be £200, while the average pension would work out at well under £100. He would ask Mr. Burkill to address the meeting on electricity matters.

Mr. Burkill said that the report and accounts showed the Electricity Department to be in a sound state and the result of the year's working could be considered extremely satisfactory, the net profit being Tls. 70,000 more than the estimate. While the result of the year's working might be considered satisfactory, the department was undoubtedly feeling the effect of the industrial depression so prevalent in Shanghai. The estimates of profit for the present year had been on a conservative basis, namely, Tls. 1,398,591. Every care was taken to effect economies, and unless there was an absolute collapse in Shanghai industries, he thought that they could make this profit. If not, the equalization fund could be called upon to help their contribution to Municipal funds. They had now sufficient plant to meet all demands and when the plant was completely installed, he hoped that consumers would not have to suffer again from any temporary breakdowns.

Mr. Simms then proposed the adoption of the budget, and Mr. Lambe seconded.

THE MUNICIPAL ORCHESTRA.

Mr. Gilbert E. Peet proposed as an amendment that the estimated expenditure on the Municipal Orchestra and band be reduced from Tls. 133,790 to Tls. 132,790. He stated that he purposely made the

amount a nominal one, so as not to embarrass the Council but at the same time to obtain an expression of opinion. By voting for the amendment the ratepayers could indicate to the Council that they were spending more money on the Band than was desirable.

Mr. V. J. S. Rumble seconded the amendment, pointing out that the expenses of the Band were increasing at an alarming rate. The Orchestra was an expensive luxury: it was giving them good music which was appreciated by a very small section of the ratepayers. Mr. Rumble brought up the matter of the proportion which ought to be borne by the French Municipal Council, pointing out that a large proportion of the audience at the Symphony Concerts were residents of the French Concession. Could they afford increased expenditure on luxuries when necessities were vitally needing their money? He asked them to remember that they were not cutting out the Orchestra and Band but simply asking whether they intended to call a halt or not. Shanghai was cursed at present with a wave of suicidal extravagance.

Mr. N. G. Maitland suggested that the expenditure on the Band was not out of the way. He referred to the vicissitudes through which the Band had passed, including the war, which practically broke it up altogether. The present new Orchestra cost more than originally anticipated but that would be no wonder to any reasonable person knowing the difference between pre and post war expenditure. He mentioned that the important question of military music for the S. V. C. was receiving attention. In Shanghai circumstances made Municipal support necessary to giving the community the refining and educating influence of music and he asked them to vote against the Amendment.

Mr. Cecil Holliday supported the amendment pointing out that since 1919 the estimate for the Band had increased 158 per cent. He thought they ought to retrench and foremost amongst luxuries undoubtedly was the band.

Mr. Simms in reply mentioned that they had approached the French Municipality for an increased contribution. The Council had an absolutely open mind but could not help feeling that it would be a step in the wrong direction to do away with the Band.

After Mr. Rumble had spoken the Chairman put the amendment to the meeting and after counting hands declared it lost.

There was no further discussion and the budget was then passed.

THE WATERWORKS RESOLUTION.

Mr. Simms next proceeded to resolution VI, the effect of which was to give the Council power to acquire the undertaking of the Shanghai Waterworks Co., Ltd. He pointed out that during the past five years the Council had been occupied with a long series of negotiations, and went on to speak of the work of

the special committee appointed to consider the desirability of purchase. Further negotiations followed, and the final conclusion of the Council was that a satisfactory agreement on points of outstanding importance was unlikely to be reached. The Council's patience having been completely exhausted the matter was referred back to the special committee which recorded its approval of the principle of Municipal control and ownership. Negotiations were accordingly entered into with a view to formal exercise of the power to purchase, and the Council had recently been informed, without prejudice, that the figure at which the directors were prepared to sell the total undertaking would be approximately Tls. 14,950,000. They had not had time to examine this statement, and he would only remark that the figure seemed like a fairy tale. The point, however, to be decided was not one of price but of policy. In the Council's opinion there was no question of the soundness of the principle that this essential public utility should be taken over by the Council. Mr. Simms then dealt with notices of amendment and mentioned that the Council would now omit the part of the motion excluding the fittings and plumbing business of the company. He proposed the resolution.

Mr. Lambe seconded.

Mr. Cecil Holliday moved an amendment to add the following words to the motion "on the general principles laid down in the Report of the Special Electricity Committee, 1915, and adopted by the ratepayers." He pointed out that the conduct of a big commercial undertaking was not quite the same thing as that of a big spending department of the municipality and in this connexion quoted the experience of the Electricity Department. He therefore urged the adoption of the same "general principles."

Mr. V. J. S. Rumble seconded.

Mr. Simms said that while the Council wanted a free hand they would accept "general principles."

The amendment having been accepted by the Council was then agreed to.

Sir Edward Pearce moved as an amendment and Mr. H. E. Arnhold seconded that the Council should not exercise its authority until it should take further directions from a further ratepayers' meeting called for its consideration.

This amendment was carried unanimously, and the original resolution with the two amendments was then put to the meeting and carried.

TRAFFIC PROBLEMS.

Mr. A. J. Hughes proposed the appointment of a commission of ratepayers to inquire into traffic conditions, this being Resolution X. He alluded to the great growth of Shanghai and said they were all agreed that something must be done quickly. This commission would serve as a clearing house for the exchange of views of those technically qualified to give them. The carefully laid plans already in-

itiated by the Council required to be incorporated in some far more comprehensive scheme and carried through to completion as quickly as possible.

Mr. Arthur Dallas seconded the appointment of a commission.

The Rev. W. Robbins moved the omission of the word "ratepayers" from Mr. Hughes's motion so as to allow of the cooperation of the authorities in other areas. Mr. Hughes seconded this, and the amendment was carried.

Mr. H. E. Arnhold suggested that it was better to leave the matter to those at present looking after their interests and not to tie their hands by a commission.

Mr. Simms opposed the appointment of a commission on the ground that it would not assist but rather hamper a solution of the traffic problem.

On a show of hands the Chairman declared the resolution lost.

THE ANNUAL APPOINTMENTS.

On the motion of Mr. Simms seconded by Mr. Lambe Mr. C. M. G. Burnie was elected Land Commissioner for the ensuing year.

Dr. E. D. Jackson, Dr. S. A. Ransom and Messrs. H. G. Simms and S. Fessenden were elected to serve on the Board of Governors of the Shanghai General Hospital.

The Rev. Dr. F. L. Hawks Pott and the Rev. A. N. Rowland were elected to the Permanent Education Committee.

The meeting concluded at 4.30 p.m. with a vote of thanks to Sir Skinner Turner for presiding.