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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING.

Colonial Treasurer's Report For 1929.

Fire-Arms Ordinance.

Bills Become Law.

A Meeting of the Legislative Council was held in the Council Chamber yesterday morning when His Excellency the Governor presided. The members present were the Hon. J.M. Ellis (Colonial Secretary), the Hon. M.C. Craigie-Halkett (Colonial Treasurer), the Hon. J.I. Moir (Principal Medical Officer), the Hon. G. Roberts (Colonial Engineer), the Hon. G.J. Felton and the Hon. L.W.H. Young with Mr. G.R.L. Brown (Acting Clerk to the Council.)

The Hon. Colonial Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement for the year ending 31st December, 1929 was laid on the table. The report showed that the total revenue collected from all sources in the Falkland Islands during the year amounted to £73,598-19-5, the amount collected in ordinary revenue being £66,649-19-8, Land Sales £6,842-19-9 and Marine Insurance Fund £106. The total expenditure incurred during the year amounted to £59,041-9-5, Ordinary expenditure accounting for £46,000-2-10 and Extraordinary expenditure £13,041-6-7. The total revenue exceeded the total expenditure by £14,557-10-0 thereby increasing the Surplus Balances from £241,849-3-8 on the 1st of January 1929 to £256,406-13-8 on the 31st December 1929.

The Ordinary revenue of the Dependencies, exclusive of the Research and Development Fund, amounted, during the year, to £122,813-19-11. It exceeded the Dependencies expenditure for the year by the sum of £83,428-13-3 which was transferred from the Dependencies Account to the credit of the Research and Development Fund. The ordinary revenue exceeded the original estimate by the sum of £30,768-19-11 but was £71,339-10-0 less than in 1928.

Other papers laid on the table were 'Regulations amending Sections 7 and 11 of the Consolidated Leave and Passage Regulations of the 23rd September, 1929' and the 'Hospital and Medical Fees Regulations 1930.'

In introducing a Bill to legalise certain payments for the year 1929 in excess of the expenditure incurred by the Ordinance No. 13 of 1928, the Hon. Colonial Secretary, explained that the amount involved was £20,739-11-6 of which £15,096 was on account of the Dependencies.

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The Hon. Colonial Secretary then introduced a Bill for the Registration of Fire-arms. Hitherto in the Colony, he said, there had been no registration of fire-arms and the Government had no knowledge or check as to the fire-arms in the Colony or imported into the Colony. He thought the Falkland Islands must be the only Colony and almost the only country where the Administration had not some similar check. It was only to be wondered at that powers had not been provided earlier. The Bill was primarily introduced for administrative purposes and secondarily only for financial reasons. The financial object was not to increase the revenue but to simplify its collection. In the past, particularly in the Camp, the Treasury had no means of checking the number of persons carrying guns or taking out licences. The matter had been left to the discretion of the Camp managers or shepherds. But, as a result of the Bill, collection would become automatic.

It was not intended to increase the revenue and therefore the sole fee to be paid for the possession and use of a gun had been reduced from 10/- to 7/6 for the year. Since the publication of the Bill it had been represented that this might hit hard a number of persons in the Colony, and particularly shepherds in the Camp, namely men with more than one gun, and he, the Colonial Secretary, proposed to bring forward an amendment when the clauses of the Bill were brought before the Council in committee that the fee should be further reduced from 7/6 to 5/-. The ordinary man would therefore still be able to have two guns for the payment of the same amount of 10/-. In many cases the Ordinance should prove to be a positive benefit for, instead of paying 10/- for carrying a licence a man would only have to pay 5/- for the possession of a gun and be free to use it where-ever and whenever he pleased.

Mr. Ellis went on to say that other representations had been made and when the Council went into Committee he would move further additions to the saving clause so as to exempt from the operation of the Ordinance rifles which were the private property of members of the Defence Force Rifle Association and which were used for the sole purpose of target practice. Though the owners would be exempt from the Ordinance and the payment of the annual fee, they would have to register their rifles with the Commanding Officer of the Defence Force. Furthermore he would propose that exemption from the provisions of the Ordinance should be made in the case of guns kept for bona-fide sale by recognised dealers in fire-arms.

The Amendments were duly passed in the Committee stage of the Bill. An amendment proposing that the taxation should be personal and irrespective of the number of guns, introduced by the Hon. G.J. Felton, was not adopted.

A Bill providing for the better control of dogs in the Colony was enacted. The Hon. Colonial Secretary remarked that the Bill had been brought before the Council on the motion of the Hon. G.J. Felton and with the support of the Hon. W.H. Luxton. It was intended to protect ewes during the breeding season from attacks by dogs crossing the Camp and through the paddocks where such ewes are kept. The concluding business of the Council was to pass a Bill amending the Post Office Ordinance 1898 bringing the local practice in this connection into line with the International practice under the provisions of the Stockholm Convention in order to prevent counterfeiture of stamps et cetera and the traffic in illicit drugs.)