

*Proceedings of the Assam Legislative Council assembled under the provisions
of the Government of India Act, 1919.*

The Council met in the Council Chamber, Shillong, on Thursday, the 1st
March 1923, at 11 A.M.

OPENING CEREMONY OF THE NEW COUNCIL CHAMBER.

His Excellency the Governor accompanied by his Private Secretary and Aide-de-Camp drove up to the main entrance on the West of the Council Chamber, where he was welcomed by the Hon'ble President and the Secretary of the Legislative Council on behalf of the members of the Legislative Council.

A guard of honour consisting of 2 officers and 50 rank and file of the 1st Battalion, 8th Gurkha Rifles, and a band were in attendance.

His Excellency after inspecting the guard of honour proceeded to the Council Chamber attended by the Hon'ble President and the Secretary of the Legislative Council, the Chief Secretary, Second Secretary, Secretary, Public Works Department, and His Excellency's Private Secretary and Aide-de-Camp.

The Hon'ble Members of the Executive Council and the Hon'ble Minister and the members of the Legislative Council awaited His Excellency's arrival in the Chamber.

After His Excellency had taken his seat in the Council Chamber, the Hon'ble President formally requested His Excellency to perform the ceremony and His Excellency then addressed the Council as follows :—

“ Mr. President and Members of the Legislative Council of Assam,—

I count it a high privilege that on this, the first occasion on which I have had the pleasure of meeting you, it should be my pleasant duty to open this new Chamber of the Legislative Council of Assam. Nearly two years ago, in April 1921, you, the Members of this Council, came to a practically unanimous decision that you should have a Council Chamber of your own, and that the Chamber should be built in Shillong. As to the wisdom of your decision, I think there can be no question. I hesitate to say much about the location of the Council, because my short experience of this province shows me how easily differences of opinion arise about the location of any sort of institution. But in the matter of the Council Chamber I think there can be no doubt that it was necessary to build it at Shillong, the headquarters of the Local Government, and a place which is, at any rate, centrally situated from the geographical point of view, although I am well aware that with our existing defective means of communication a visit to Shillong involves a long and tedious journey for a great many of you. But whatever may be said about the proper site for the building, I think there can be no question as to the necessity of the Legislative Council having a home of its own under the conditions which have arisen in connection with the reform scheme. Before 1921 the Legislative Council was definitely the Council of the Chief Commissioner. It was presided over by the Chief Commissioner and apart from legislation, its main function was to tender advice to the Chief Commissioner. But under the constitution as it now stands the Council has important functions of its own to discharge. It does much more than merely tender advice to the Governor and to the Government. On the contrary, it receives proposals from the Governor and from the Government, and for most practical purposes it is free to accept or to reject those proposals as it thinks fit. In these circumstances, the old arrangement under which the Council met in a room in Government House has become altogether inappropriate. It is not adequate to the dignity and independence of the Council, quite apart from the practical inconvenience which it must have caused both to the Governor and to the Council.

Some of you may think, indeed I know that some of you do think, that the accommodation provided in this Council Chamber is on a more lavish scale than is absolutely necessary. But to those who take this view I would point out that the requirements of a deliberative body of this character are not

met by the provision of a debating hall in which set speeches can be made. More important than oratory in guiding the deliberations of this Council or any similar body are the opportunities which Council meetings offer for friendly discussion and the contact of mind with mind in committee rooms, and perhaps even more important still are informal talks in places like the tiffin room and the smoking lounge. Hitherto the Assam Council has enjoyed none of these advantages. If any members wanted to meet together to discuss a compromise or perhaps to hatch a plot against the Government, they had to resort to the verandas or the porch of Government House. In the future you will have places in this building where you can carry on confabulations of this character in greater comfort and dignity, and I have no doubt you will make full use of them to the great advantage of public business. I am particularly glad to see that you have made provision in that box to enable the Governor to attend the Council proceedings. My predecessor Sir William Marris, I think, once expressed his regret that it was not possible for him as Governor to preside over the deliberations of this house. I have never had any ambition, Sir, to occupy the honourable but thorny chair which you so worthily fill; but during the last ten years I have been a humble member on the floor of the house in the Council of a neighbouring province, and one of my greatest regrets at leaving that province was that I should lose the opportunities which I have hitherto enjoyed for joining in the rough and tumble of debate, and thus getting to know men and making friendships with men of different training and different views, which membership of a body of this character does more than anything else to render possible. But we cannot have everything in this world and my regret that I am unable to take an active part in your proceedings is mitigated by the fact that your kindly thought will make it possible for me to slip unobtrusively into that box, and to watch your proceedings without being a nuisance to any one. I can assure you that I shall take full advantage of the opportunity which you have so thoughtfully provided for me. In other respects, I hope that you will find the arrangements of this Chamber and its precincts convenient and comfortable and conducive to the efficient discharge of business. We have, I think, provided ample accommodation for immediate requirements and indeed probably more accommodation than is actually required in existing circumstances. But the Council is still young and whatever the future may bring forth, there can be no doubt economy not to make provision for expansion. I am particularly interested to find that in accordance with a wish expressed by the Muhammadan members of this Council a room has been provided to which they may retire for the purpose of saying their prayers during the sittings of the Council. That is only one instance of the careful thought which those responsible for the erection of this Council Chamber have shown in making all necessary arrangements for your comfort and convenience. Sir William Marris said when he laid the foundation stone of this building that material surroundings have a way of subtly influencing the minds of men, and I cannot help reflecting as it does, the genius and characteristics of Assam and constructed largely with materials extracted from the forests of Assam, will be a great inspiration both to the members of this Council and to the people of Assam in their advance along the path of political progress.

And now, Sir, before I leave you to carry on the business of the day there are one or two remarks which I should like to make. The first must be to express my own regret and I am sure the regret of all of you at the premature departure of your late President the Hon'ble Mr. Arbuthnott. In a letter which he wrote to me just before he sailed from Bombay he expressed his sorrow and disappointment at not being able to be present to-day at the opening of this Council Chamber in which he took such a deep interest, and I am sure that his disappointment is shared by all of you. I have heard nothing but good report of his conduct as President of this Council and even a cursory perusal of your proceedings shows how much he did to conduct its business on wise lines and to build up a high tradition of dignity and decorum, which will, I am sure, endure. Apart from his work in connection with this Council, his wide experience and knowledge of men and affairs in this province, where he served for a period extending over forty years, were always at the disposal of the Government, and his departure is a grave loss to the administration as well as to the Council. Everyone of you here was his friend, and I am sure that you and the hosts of friends whom he made outside the Council in all parts of the province will join with me in wishing him a speedy restoration to health and many years of happiness in his native land. In the next place, Sir, I should like to extend to you on my own behalf and on behalf of the Government a hearty welcome on your assumption of the honourable but onerous post which you occupy to-day for the first time. When I wrote to you inviting you to take up the duties of the President of this Council I assured you of the hearty support of myself and of my Government. I am glad to be able to renew this assurance publicly to day, and from all that I have heard of the manner in which your appointment has been received, I feel sure that you can count upon the equally hearty support of the Members of this Council in carrying out the duties of your office and in maintaining the high traditions which your predecessor inaugurated.

And now, gentlemen, a few words about the business of the session. You have an interesting and varied programme of work before you. I do not propose to comment in detail to-day on the questions which will come up for your consideration. I have been in this province for less than five months, and though I have travelled over a considerable area and gained a vast amount of information, I do not feel competent to express any final conclusions on many of the matters which you will discuss during the next few weeks; nor would it be respectful for me to do so. If I made any such attempt, I should justly lay myself open to the accusation that I was prejudging issues in regard to which I should await your opinion before coming to any conclusion myself. The most important piece of legislation before you is the Municipal Bill, a truly portentous measure, which has emerged from the Select Committee in an improved form, no doubt, but still containing much debatable matter. I am sure we all regret that the Hon'ble Minister Rai Bahadur Ghanasyam Barua who has hitherto been in charge of the Bill is unable to finish his task and see it through the Council. We all trust that he will before long regain his health and strength and that he will have many more years to devote to the service of his country. In the meantime his colleague the Hon'ble Rai Bahadur Promode Chandra Dutta has kindly consented to take charge of the Bill, and I am exceedingly grateful to him for undertaking this heavy addition to his own duties. I am glad too that we can rely on the help and advice of the Hon'ble Mr. Majid who has, I believe, known this Bill since he assisted at its birth a good many years ago.

There is just one thing more that I should like to say. In my judgment, the most important matter outstanding in this province at present is the question of finance. In the instrument of instructions issued by His Majesty the King-Emperor to the Governor of this province, the first duty imposed upon the Governor is to maintain standards of good administration and to encourage religious toleration, co-operation and good will among all classes and creeds. The second duty enjoined by His Majesty is to ensure the probity of public finance and the solvency of the province. In carrying out the first duty, the Governor must to a great extent rely on himself and do what in him lies to execute His Majesty's Command. But in regard to the second duty, I need your unceasing help and support. You will all agree that sound finance is the basis of sound administration, and that nothing could be more foolish or wicked than for us to outrun our resources and to attempt measures of political or administrative progress for which we cannot afford to pay. Retrenchment is not a pleasant process for any body. It is popular enough in the abstract, but as we have seen from the comments on the report of the retrenchment committee of the neighbouring province of Bengal, directly retrenchment is proposed in regard to any concrete administrative scheme or service, angry protests are immediately made, and strong feelings are aroused. There can be no doubt also about the hardship to individual officers of Government which any measures of retrenchment must cause, and I have had several painful examples of that during the last few weeks. From a more general aspect, it is not pleasant, I can assure you, for a new Governor to go round the province as I have been doing during the last three months, and to be met everywhere with signs of the urgent need for improvements of all kinds, and to be compelled to return a regretful answer that nothing can be done because no funds are available. It is not pleasant for the Ministers either to find themselves blocked at every turn in their efforts to benefit their countrymen during their term of office. I know that it is equally unpleasant for you as representatives of the people to have to tell your constituents that they must wait for developments of unquestionable public benefit, until money can be found. But, gentlemen, I am convinced that the path of retrenchment and of rigid economy which we are now treading is the only right path, and that only by following that path to the end can we hope to reach a point from which further advance will be possible. I am glad, Sir, to be able to tell you that the outlook is brighter than it was a year ago. I am not going to anticipate the budget statement which the Hon'ble Mr. Reid will make to you within the next few minutes, but I can say this that the Hon'ble Finance Member has succeeded in producing a state of practical equilibrium which, I, for one, a few months ago never anticipated would be possible. We shall next year, I hope, almost succeed in making our revenue and expenditure balance. The equilibrium is, I admit, a little unstable at present, but there is some ground for hope that we shall be able to make it permanent, and that in the course of the next year or two we shall be enjoying a small surplus which will at all events enable us to make a start with some of those schemes of advance and improvement which the Government no less than you members of this Council have so much at heart. The Hon'ble Mr. Reid will, as I have said, tell you the details of the financial position shortly. What he will not tell you, because he is too modest to do so, is that the relatively satisfactory position in which we find ourselves is the result of his unceasing vigilance as custodian of the public purse; and apart from his financial abilities, his great knowledge and

experience of the province have been invaluable in helping us to decide what economies are and what economies are not feasible. As I have said, I regard this task of getting our financial position straight as the most important business before us at this time, and for the work which he has done in this connection the Hon'ble Mr. Reid deserves your heartfelt gratitude as well as mine. I should like also to add my tribute to Commissioners, Heads of Departments and District Officers for their wholehearted co-operation in this matter. Nothing can be more galling to a keen and conscientious officer than to see a favourite scheme to which he has devoted much time and labour, mutilated or indefinitely postponed. But our officers, I think almost without exception, have realised the parlous state of our finances and have done what they could do to help to put them straight.

And now, Gentlemen, I declare this Council Chamber open. I have read through the records of your proceedings in the old Council Chamber and I have been struck by the spirit of fairness and reasonableness which marks them. The Government has not always been able to comply with your wishes, and you have not always been willing to act upon the advice which has been tendered to you on behalf of the Government, but you have always been ready to consider that advice, and the Government has been equally ready to consider your advice and to meet your wishes as far as possible. My predecessor when he bade you farewell last September acknowledged the courtesy and forbearance that you had always shown to him, and from what I know of you individually, I feel certain that I can count on receiving the same consideration at your hands. For my own part I confirm the promise which Sir William Marris made on my behalf that I shall make it my aim to work amicably with the legislature, to respect its dignity and to encourage its development. In declaring this Council Chamber and this session open, I pray that the blessing of the Almighty may rest upon your deliberations and upon the deliberations of your successors in this place."

His Excellency and his Personal staff then left the Council Chamber and the Council proceeded with the business of the day.

P R E S E N T :

The Hon'ble Rai Bahadur Nalini Kanta Ray Dastidar, *President*, the Hon'ble two Members of the Executive Council, the Hon'ble Minister of Education and 34 nominated and elected members.

OATH OF OFFICE.

The following members, before taking their Seats, made the prescribed oath or affirmation of allegiance to the Crown:—

1. Khan Bahadur Kutubuddin Ahmad.
2. Mr. D. M. Somerville.
3. Mr. J. N. Taylor.
4. Mr. A. Mellor.
5. Khan Sahib Sarafat Ali Chaudhuri.

RESOLUTION ON THE PREMATURE RETIREMENT OF THE
HON'BLE MR. J. C. ARBUTHNOTT, C.I.E., THE FIRST
PRESIDENT.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—Sir, before we go on to the business of the day I ask your permission to move a resolution of which no notice has been given but which I think will justify itself. It runs as follows :—

“That the members of this Council place on record their sense of the loss they have sustained by the premature retirement of their first President, the Hon'ble Mr. Arbuthnott, their indebtedness to him for his just and wise conduct of their deliberations and their earnest hope that he will speedily be restored to health.”

I move this resolution, Sir, not as the official spokesman of the Government but as a member of this Council; and I know that in doing so I voice the feelings of every member. His Excellency has spoken of the loss that the province and the Council have sustained by the enforced departure of the Hon'ble Mr. Arbuthnott, and we all feel that loss very keenly. As President, as His Excellency said, he set standards and established traditions which will endure in this Council. Outside the Council there was no officer, no man in the province who was better known, more respected or better loved than he was. It is not easy for me personally to do justice to the resolution, because no one knew Mr. Arbuthnott longer or more intimately than I did and it is hard to give expression to deep feeling. But speaking again as a member of this Council—we all saw here with what dignity, with what unflinching courtesy, with what even-handed justice he guided our proceedings. I do not know that all of us realised—some of us certainly did—how arduously he laboured before the Council met, how scrupulously he weighed all sides of the issue before he gave a decision, and how anxious he was that justice should be done to every one. His memory will live long in this Council. It will live long in the hearts of his many friends.

THE HON'BLE MR. A. MAJID :—Sir, I associate myself wholeheartedly with all that has fallen from the lips of my Hon'ble colleague, and I warmly support the resolution.

RAI BAHADUR KRISHNA CHANDRA CHAUDHURI :—Sir, I rise to associate my name with the resolution moved by the Hon'ble Mr. Reid. I knew Mr. Arbuthnott for a very long time and had the privilege to serve the Government with him for a very long time in my younger days; and I always appreciated his merits; I wholeheartedly support the resolution now before us.

THE HON'BLE RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA :—Sir, I rise to support this resolution. When his appointment was first announced some of us thought that the selection was one which should not have been made, and—I may make a confession here—I went so far as to write to Sir Beatson Bell protesting against the appointment. Sir Beatson Bell wrote back saying that he hoped that before long, I should have reasons for changing my opinion, and he has proved to be a true prophet; for, it was not long before I realised the truth of his statement. For at the close of the

very first session of this Council the Hon'ble Members vied with one another in showing their respect to the President and in bearing testimony to his independence, his impartiality and his ability. The position he was occupying was one of exceptional difficulties. He had to start this Council on its career and there was no tradition to guide him. His responsibilities therefore were very great, but he was fully equal to them. He was a gentleman without a peer and his personality impressed everybody who came in contact with him. Let us hope that he will recover speedily and spend the remaining years of his life in rest and in peace. We cannot complain if he retires to rest because he has earned it by his life-long and devoted service to the public.

SRIJUT DALIM CHANDRA BORAH :—Sir, I beg to support the resolution moved by the Hon'ble Mr. Reid, and in doing so I beg to state that had notice been given of this resolution in time probably most of the Hon'ble Members would have had opportunities of commenting on the conduct of the Hon'ble gentleman, both as a private and as a public man and excellent services rendered to the public. I am not fully prepared to give brief sketch of the history of the Hon'ble gentleman, both public and private, and therefore I am not in a position to speak more than what I have just now said. With these few words I again very respectfully and cordially support the resolution just moved by the Hon'ble Mr. Reid.

SRIJUT NILMONI PHUKAN :—Sir, I beg to support this resolution, and in doing so I really feel, as I have already expressed my feelings to you in a personal letter, that perhaps on the opening day the House will feel the poorer by his absence. And what I feel, I know, is also felt by the whole House. Personally I regard that the late President was one of the oldest officers of Assam and we the people of Assam always looked upon him as one of us. We remember how stern he was in his look and how soft he was in his feelings.

We have been always benefitted by his wisdom and we now feel how wisely he managed things in this Council and how glad we would have been to find him here to-day also. And I take this opportunity also of congratulating you, Sir, now that you are a no less worthy successor of the late President.

REV. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY :—Sir, I beg to support this resolution. When I heard that the Hon'ble Mr. Arbuthnott was going away I was feeling very sorry. He was very kind to all of the Members of the Council here and he showed every consideration for the faults and failings of the Members of the Council. I had some personal talks with him in certain matters and I was very much pleased that he was really helpful and was ready to give suggestion in a very friendly way. I am very glad, however, that one of the elected members of the Council has been chosen as the President of the Council. I am very glad, Sir, that you are now as an elected Member of the Council presiding over the Council, though we shall always miss Mr. Arbuthnott from our midst. As the former President was very genial and kind to us and as he did his best to help us in many respects and he was willing to overlook our faults and failings, so we expect and I feel sure that our present President will be and do the same.

MR. E. S. ROFFEY :— Sir, I rise to support this resolution. In doing so I do not think I can do better than endorse the words which have fallen from the Hon'ble Mr. Reid. At the same time I think, on behalf of the whole House, I may say that we all very deeply regret the enforced retirement of the Hon'ble Mr. Arbuthnott, our late President.

KHAN BAHADUR MUHAMMAD BUKHT MAZUMDAR :— Sir, I beg to support whole-heartedly this resolution which has just been moved by the Hon'ble Mr. Reid for the early departure of Mr. Arbuthnott. I was personally known to him and am well aware of his good qualities. I pray for his speedy recovery and wish that he may spend the remaining days of his life in peace.

THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT :— I request the Hon'ble Members to carry the Resolution standing.

The resolution was carried unanimously all standing.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :— May I, Sir, interrupt once more before the formal business of the day begins. His Excellency offered you on behalf of his Government a welcome on your accepting the office of President, and on behalf of the Members of the Council I desire to extend to you Sir, our cordial welcome. Your long experience of the Legislative Councils of this province, and still more those qualities which those of us who have the privilege of your friendship know so well, lead us to the confident belief that we can expect from you the same dignity, the same unflinching courtesy, the same even-handed justice that we received from your distinguished predecessor. We are assured that under your guidance the high standard which he set for our Council proceedings will be fully maintained, and I know, Sir, that I speak for the whole Council in assuring you that we will respect your authority, that we will cheerfully submit to your ruling and that we will to the utmost support you in the discharge of the responsible duties which you have undertaken.

THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT :— Your Excellency and Hon'ble Members : Before commencing the business, I thank you very much for your kind words of welcome especially spoken of by His Excellency and the Hon'ble Mr. Reid. It is indeed a pleasure to me to see that all my friends and well-wishers have become very happy to see me in the presidential chair. May God help us ; and I hope and trust that with your help and co-operation I shall be able to give you satisfaction in the discharge of my duties. With these few words I beg to resume my seat.

BUDGET FOR 1923-24.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :— I beg, Sir, to present to the Council the budget of the province for the year 1923-24. Each member will find on his table as usual an explanatory memorandum, certain abstract statements of provincial receipts and expenditure with the demands for grants which will be presented later, and the civil estimates in detail. The papers include the proceedings of the meeting of the Advisory Finance Committee which considered the budget estimates on the 18th of January, and three statements which analyse the estimated expenditure. These statements are a new feature, and will it is hoped be of assistance to Members when studying the budget. For the idea we are indebted to the Government of Bengal.

The Council are familiar with the budget procedure, and I need only say that there will be no discussion of the budget to-day, but that in the April session there will be a general discussion of the budget as a whole and of any principle involved therein. Subsequently separate demands will be presented to the Council by the Member or Minister in charge of each department for the grants for the carrying on of these departments. We must again ask for not less than two days' notice of motions that any grant or item in a grant be omitted or reduced, but if Members who intend to move reductions or omissions could see their way to give us longer notice either formally or informally this will enable the replies to be more complete than might otherwise be possible. If an explanation of any item in the budget is wanted any of the officers of the Finance Department will be glad to furnish this.

The Council were told a year ago that the financial position was most unsatisfactory, and a few months later the situation was further explained in a note which was presented to the Council in September and is reproduced as an annexure to the memorandum. The taxation measures put forward by the Government were approved by the Legislature, but notwithstanding the current year closes not only with all the provincial balances exhausted but with an overdraft which we estimate at Rs. 7,28,000. Details will be found in the explanatory memorandum, and I need mention only one or two of the more important features. Receipts under Excise and Stamps have fallen short of our expectations. The Excise sales were held when there was still interference with bidders and memories of the picketting of shops and the boycotting of consumers were yet fresh. In addition the general adoption of the vend fee system of settling licenses in place of that of fixed monthly fees has materially affected receipts. When a shop was knocked down for a monthly fee it was the practice to require a deposit of two months' fees, which was credited in the accounts of the year in which the sales were held as an advance payment for the year for which settlement was made. Under the vend fee system no such advance payments are taken but the license-holders give a security deposit. The loss of these advance payments has made a difference of about five lakhs to receipts. As against this we should have no remissions. On the expenditure side the Council Chamber, and this is a matter of which more will be heard, has cost some one and a half lakhs more than was expected. We have had to admit a claim from the Government of Bengal for a contribution to the cost of the Calcutta High Court, which for last year and the current year amounts to Rs. 1,90,000. Lastly the overdraft includes the two lakhs which as the Council were told in September we have borrowed from the Government of India for the Goalpara Forest Tramway. It was, as the Council were told, from the first our intention to finance this project by a loan and not from revenue, but for the moment the provincial overdraft is shown as increased by this amount.

The year for which we are budgetting thus begins with a minus balance and in spite of all efforts estimated expenditure will exceed estimated receipts by Rs. 72,000. At first sight no outlook could well be more hopeless. Our critics will say that this year we have exhausted our resources and run into debt, for overdrafts have to be considered as loans from the Central Government and we have provided for the payment of interest, and that next year we propose to run still further into debt. I shall try to persuade the Council that the situation, bad as it undoubtedly is, is yet not wholly desperate. If

Hon'ble Members will look at the total figures of receipts and expenditure for the three years for which these appear in the statement of provincial receipts and expenditure, without considering the opening balances, they will see that our income has been growing while our expenditure has decreased and is decreasing. If there are no floods or similar calamities Land Revenue receipts should steadily increase. Forest receipts are improving year by year. A marked recovery in Excise receipts is anticipated now that the times are normal, and this despite the fact that we have increased the prices of excisable articles, further reduced issues, and added to existing restrictions. I mentioned certain abnormal non-recurring charges in the current year. We are next year providing three lakhs for the Murarichand College building and borrowing a further sum of half a lakh for the completion of the Goalpara Forest Tramway.

I said just now that the statements laid before the Council show our receipts to be expanding and our expenditure diminishing. The figures of the revised estimates for the current year in the summary of expenditure require a word of explanation. At first sight it would appear that we shall this year spend on Reserved subjects six lakhs more and on Transferred subjects nearly two and a half lakhs less than we proposed. The details given in the explanatory memorandum furnish a complete answer to any accusation that the Government discriminate in their economies, but at the risk of repetition I should like to call attention to four important items. There is first of all our payment of Rs. 1,90,000 towards the cost of the Calcutta High Court. Then there are the charges on account of additional police, most of which were recovered. Then there is the increase in the cost of the Council Chamber. And lastly we not only transferred from the "Education" to the "Civil Works" head the provision of one and a half lakhs for the Murarichand College but found an additional sum to enable further progress to be made. Expenditure under "Education" appears in the accounts as "transferred;" under the Civil Works it appears as "reserved."

The Council were told in September that all possible economies had been enjoined and that the instructions had been loyally followed. It became clear that further and more drastic measures were required, and in framing the budget for the coming year it was decided to reduce each departmental expenditure budget by five per cent. The memorandum shows that with few exceptions this has been done, and the thanks of the Finance Department are due to the Members of the Executive Council, the Ministers and the Heads of the various Departments for their co-operation. In particular the Council will, I am sure, wish to pay a tribute to the Inspector General of Police who has gone far beyond the five per cent. standard of reduction in his Assam Rifles budget. After the provincial budget was framed the Report of the Bengal Retrenchment Committee was received and this is being closely examined. Not all the recommendations of the Committee are applicable to this province, while some of the economies suggested, even if approved, would have to be sanctioned by higher authority than this Government. But I can assure the Council that the examination of the suggestions made will be a very serious one. The process of abolishing posts and reducing establishments where this is possible has been going on steadily, and I would only ask the Council to remember again that the full effect of such economies is not usually felt immediately.

To sum up I have tried to show that but for abnormal charges we would by this time have succeeded in bringing our expenditure within our income. We are not without hopes that by further retrenchments we shall yet achieve this in the course of the coming year, and it may be possible at the time of the budget discussions to announce fresh savings. In any case another year of stern economy should see our accounts balance and a beginning made towards paying off our indebtedness to the Government of India. Meantime it will be realised that an economy budget does not admit of progress. We have provided for essentials alone. Only when the province has reached financial stability can we think of borrowing and of financing development schemes from capital and not solely from revenue.

One word of warning in conclusion. We assume in our forecasts that the year will be peaceful, that there will be no interference with the liberty of the subject and that it will be possible to maintain law and order without having to strengthen the Police force or take special measures. If our hopes are unfulfilled it is certain that our forecasts will have to be modified.

THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT :—I beg to propose that a telegram to the following effect be sent to the Hon'ble Mr. ARBUTHNOTT :—

That the Members of this Council place on record their sense of the loss they have sustained by the premature retirement of their first President the Hon'ble Mr. Arbuthnott, their indebtedness to him for his just and wise conduct of their deliberations and their earnest hope that he will speedily be restored to health.

The motion was carried unanimously.

The Council was adjourned to Friday, the 2nd March 1923, at 2 P.M.

Shillong,
The 5th March 1923. }

A. MELLOR,
Secretary to the Legislative Council.

