

The Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce



The Bulletin



the Chamber takes a look
at people on the move...

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SEPTEMBER 1974



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談交通綠皮書

香港政府於最近編備完竣「香港交通政策建議書」，並邀請各界人士提供意見。本會「內務委員會」去月曾召開會議，就此作討論，並邀請運輸署一高級職員出席參加座談。會中列席者又包括香港電車公司沙文先生及川崎船務公司告魯法先生。後者為貨箱內陸載運專家。

各界非議甚多

交通政策建議綠皮書受到本港各界人士之評議，但彼等均就本身之利益發言。但若替「綠皮書」申辯却甚困難。「綠皮書」之原作為一較詳細之著作，因此當被刪短成目下之建議書時，其原意便有所出入。

「交通政策建議書」一名對此綠皮書而言，似乎並不合適，因此小冊子只注力描述香港交通動態。將此小冊與統計處另一刊物——香港人口及一九七一年屋宇人口調查：交通動向——作一比較，前者內容愈見貧乏。

由統計處所編備此一刊物單純描述人們在交通上所採用之形式，往外之原因及目的地等，而並非意圖訂立一交通政策。其中資料充備，為交通綠皮書所缺少者。綠皮書並無詳細談及居民之需要，這也就是其失敗之所在。綠皮書只着重談及車輛容量及道路之阻塞情形。

沒有人能否認道路阻塞一事於本港而言，頗為嚴重，可幸綠皮書亦有建議解決此困難之方法。但假若能再深入研討此一問題，如：阻塞之地區，時間及嚴重情形如何？交通阻塞之影響？對經濟、個人生活及香港情況又怎樣？長期而言，人們對交通阻塞是否會接納？交通綠皮書對此等問題毫無交代。書中只說：

「交通阻塞對社會許多方面都有不良的影響，例如：

——把各人的速度拖慢，不但是公共汽車乘客，即本港百份之十有自用車代步的家庭也受影響。交通阻塞不但浪費時間，而且使人着急不安。

——救急車輛如救護車、滅火車和警車等都因阻塞而寸步難移，以至難以執行任務。

——車輛阻塞時所噴出的廢氣，足以造成染污。

——道路長時間壅塞會招致意外，因為行人及駕車者一失去耐性，便會不顧一切，冒險行事。」

所陳事實不足

「綠皮書」所陳述之事實均為眾所週知，但並非為事實全部之真相。例如：綠皮書謂：「居民用自用車往返工作及學校。」這也許是真實，但並無其他事實證明其他各點。

又如有關學童返學一事方面，綠皮書所提乘坐自用車、的士及白牌車上學之學童數字已不合時間性。如統計處之交通動態特性一書所說，返往學校之路程中只有百份之一利用自用車，其他另外百份之一則乘坐的士及白牌車。大多學童只步行上學，此類佔百份之七十，其他百份之二十則靠公共或自用交通工具如學校巴士。有些學童又要乘坐渡海小輪或小巴上學。於此，政府應當鼓勵學校設立學校巴士此一制度，有便其學童往返。

巴士服務欠佳

一九七四年一月，小巴罷駛兩天，至令電車及巴士增多約百分之二十五乘客。無可否認，巴士乘客量較大，及於不受其他交通工具阻礙時，當可迅速移動。但其要點為居民所需如何？或者不少居民覺得小巴移動迅速，較其他交通工具為佳。

如眾所週知，本港巴士之表現較理想中為低，有時更達危險程度。目下巴士收費頗廉，此乃惟一之優點。

政府亦承認希望巴士公司能改善服務。誠然，於香港，巴士為不可缺少之交通工具，但其服務到底能否有所改善？

電車前途未明

綠皮書對電車之將來政策並無一肯定之言述。

電車所載乘客為多而佔地較自用車或小巴為少。但綠皮書對電車前途一字不提。

道路擴展計劃

綠皮書提及政府預備擴建道路之計劃：

「政府決定加速進行龐大的道路計劃。於今後四個財政年度內，政府用於此方面之費用，預算平均每年三億五千萬元（按一九七四年物價計算），而過去三年實際支出合共不足四億元。上述預算數字，主要用在三方面——發展幹綫、改善與擴闊支綫、進行交通工程及管理計劃。」

「作為長遠計劃的一部份，政府的目標是在今後十年內，在全港各地大量發展交通幹綫，以消除阻塞及增加長途行車的速度。這些幹綫在若干地區，或須架空建築，在交叉路口則建行車天橋，並有行人隧道或行人天橋，此外，通往幹綫之通路數目，亦須加

以限制，使幹綫上之交通，能夠通暢無阻。」

本會對此點大表贊同，但却認為應早日着手進行。如貨箱運輸委員會歷時四載才下決定推薦本港建設一貨箱碼頭。其後，葵涌貨箱碼頭興建達兩年之久。

力制自用車增長？

綠皮書中有關自用車方面使社會各界議論紛紜，書中稱：

「要限制本港的車輛，唯一可行之方法似應從財政方面着手。這項措施，目的不在增加稅收，而在增加車主的負擔，以遏止車輛數目繼續增加。」

兩年前，本會「內務委員會」曾就此作一討論，而認定自用車為交通工具中優先次序之末。

本總商會極力反對予以自用車之制限，因此舉只對富有階級有利。

目下，香港為一自由經濟社會，人們努力工作，當希望生活水平有所提高，不少居民更希望獲得一自用車、彩色電視及冷氣機。而使人們失却此等希望為一使人疑惑之政策。因此，本會希望政府能訂立一公平制度控制自用車之增長率。若於某一時間在某一地區限制自用車之使用當為有效之制限方法。

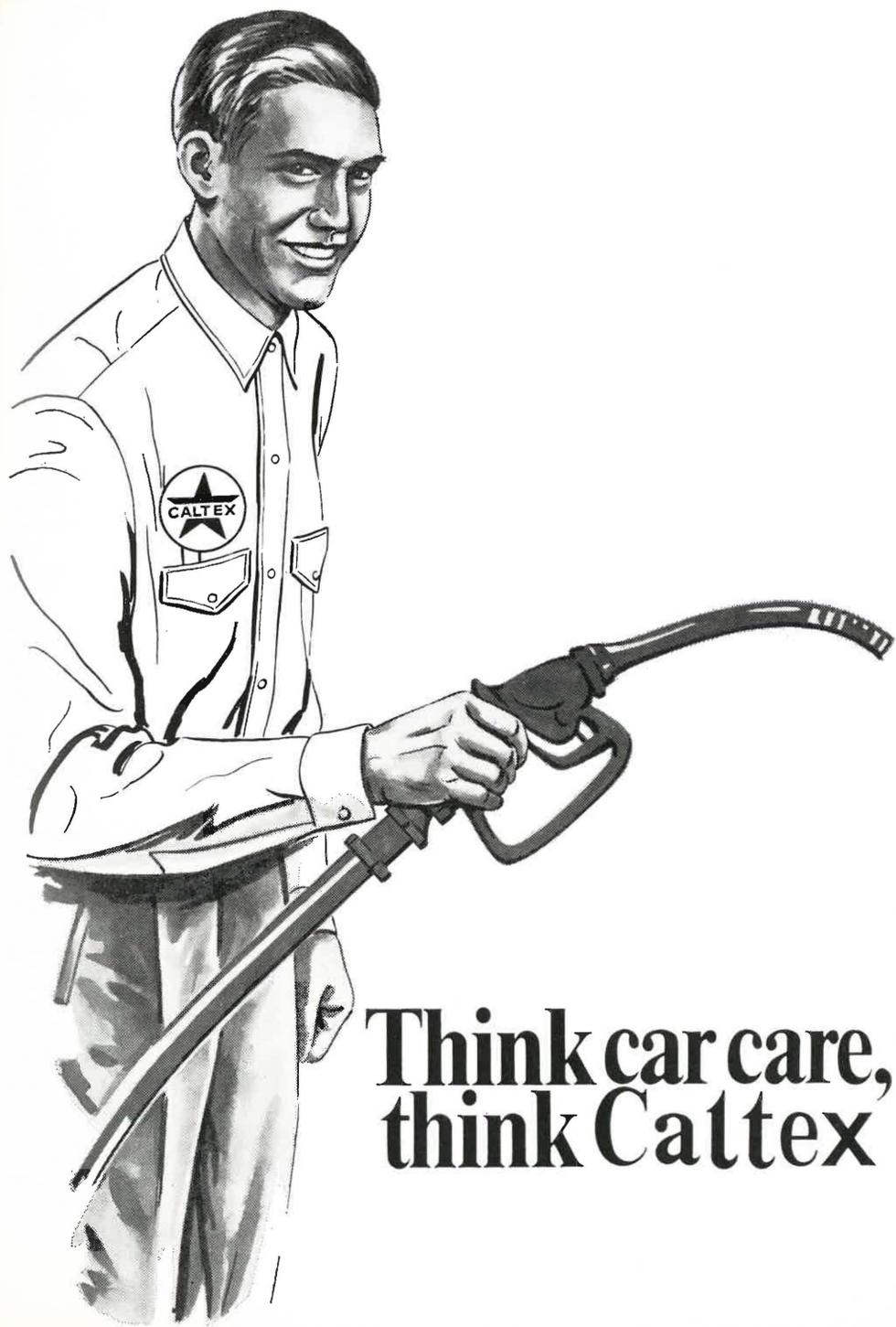
管制公用巴士

政府建議公用巴士有所管制一事，各界議論紛紜討論政府應否於其特權中佔一席。

積極之建議

本總商會認為本港交通政策應基於兩點。

（一）：單純一類交通方式並不可合適



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Transport in Trouble

a view of the Green Paper

THE recent 'Green Paper' on transport, it is claimed, has been published partly to reveal government thinking on the problem, and to call for public reaction to this thinking. Accordingly, the Home Affairs Committee of the Chamber met last month to consider the Green Paper. A senior official of the Transport Department was present to put forward the official point of view, as well as several committee members who had a specialised interest in transport — notably Mr. J. H. W. Salmon of Hong Kong Tramways, and Mr. D. A. Crawford of Kawasaki, who was particularly concerned with the problems connected with the on-land transportation of containers.

As usual a background paper was prepared by the Chamber's secretariat. The views that follow represent an amalgamation of points made in the Home Affairs Committee debate, in the Secretariat paper, and from reading and research since carried out within the Chamber.

The Green Paper has come in for criticism from various sections of the community. In these circumstances, one is tempted to defend the Green Paper and to stress its positive points. Unfortunately, it is not easy to do this.

It is understood that the published version represents a much-edited fraction of what was originally a longer and more comprehensive document. It may be therefore that something has been lost in contracting the text to a size considered suitable for public assimilation. If this is the case, it is somewhat unfortunate.

As it stands, the Green Paper gives an impression of not living up to its title. It is not about 'Transport in Hong Kong'. It is more about the narrower and specific problem of how to keep transport *moving* in Hong Kong.

To be specific, the Paper fails partly because of its paucity of factual

information and detailed research. Comparison with another document recently released by Government highlights this weakness. This comes from Census and Statistics and is entitled *Hong Kong Population and Housing Census 1971: Transport Characteristics*.

It is a vastly different document from the Green Paper in that it sets out simply to describe the findings of research into people's movements about Hong Kong at the time the census was taken. It does not attempt to advocate policy or indeed even to draw attention to problems. It simply describes how people move about, the reasons for their journeys, the mode of travel, and points of departure and destination.

The *Transport Characteristics* pamphlet fills in much of the basic background information (now probably dated but not necessarily invalid) that one would have liked to have seen in the Green Paper. Here at least is some objective evidence of how and why people go from A to B and what their transport needs are.

But the Green Paper — apart from one or two isolated passages — makes little reference to the *needs of*



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people. And this is perhaps its basic failing. Instead it concentrates on vehicle capacities and congestion on the roads.

No one would attempt to deny that road congestion exists in Hong Kong, that it is a serious problem, and that it will get worse unless action is taken. From this point of view the Green Paper is to be praised in that it takes a stand on the issue and suggests an answer.

Living with congestion

But it may have been more meaningful had some attempt been made to set the problem of congestion in perspective. All right, we know it's serious, but how serious? Where and when does congestion occur, since it manifestly does not occur on all roads and at all hours of the day? What in fact are the debilitating results of congestion — in economic terms, in terms of personal convenience, in terms of the general efficiency of running Hong Kong, and of the quality of life here?

In the long run, would people even prefer to put up with a certain amount of congestion, as the alternatives to it are perhaps more unpleasant? This is a point of view which does not seem to have occurred to the authors of the Green Paper. They say for instance:—

'Congestion harms our community in a number of ways:—It slows everyone down, including public transport users and the 10 per cent of households in Hong Kong with private cars. This wastes time and frays

nerves. Emergency vehicles such as ambulances, fire-engines and police cars all get stuck in the common glue-pot, making it far more difficult for them to perform their duties efficiently. It causes pollution, choked up roads cause danger because frustrated pedestrians and motorists take unnecessary risks.'

As common sense statements, these would be accepted by most people. And if congestion was occurring on every road, at every hour of the day, there would be little need to go further in the way of facts and figures. But a brief glance at the *Transport Characteristics* paper shows that definable transport patterns emerge, both in respect of the direction of people's movements and the times of day at which they move.

Many of the 'facts' given in the Green Paper are rather bald 'common sense' types of assertion, which have some obvious truth, but which are unlikely to be the whole truth — at least not on the evidence made public.

One example occurs early in the Green Paper '. . . private cars are normally used for journeys to and from work and school'. The statement may be true, but no attempt is made to produce facts or figures to confirm what we otherwise must take to be an assumption.

For example exact but possibly out of date figures do exist for the percentage of children who travel to school by private car, taxi and pak pai. And, according again to the *Transport Characteristics* tables, only

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about one per cent of all journeys to school are made by private car, and a further one per cent are by taxi or pak pai. The most common mode of 'transport' used by schoolchildren is their own legs! Walking accounts for about 70 per cent of all journeys to school, and the next most common method, accounting for about 20 per cent of journeys made, is either a public or private (i.e. school) bus.

This study also shows that often schoolchildren have to depend on more than one mode of transport for different 'legs' of their journey — e.g. for those crossing the harbour, a combination of perhaps minibus, ferry and then a further minibus. In this situation, a good answer to the problem would seem to be the development of the school bus system. There are already several good examples of this, but there can be little doubt that Government itself could do more to encourage this system, in Government schools at least, if not elsewhere.

An example is quoted from the two day minibus strike in January 1974, showing that the withdrawal of minibuses allowed the bus and tram fleet to carry 25 per cent more passengers.

No-one wishes to dispute that the buses *can* carry more passengers (at least at certain hours of the day) or that they will move more quickly if not impeded by other traffic. But — should not the argument be about what people *want*? And may not many find it more convenient and comfortable to travel by minibus? It

is an equally uncontestable fact that minibuses at present are swifter and more comfortable than buses.

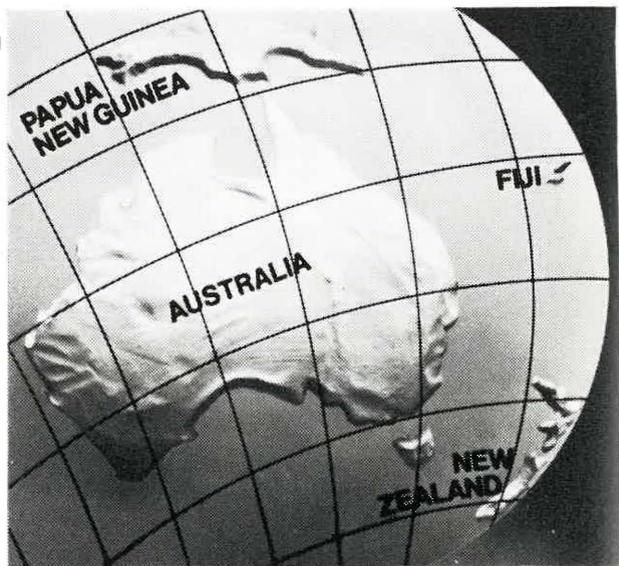
Uncomfortable buses

It is widely acknowledged that the general standard of comfort and convenience offered by HK's public buses falls far short of perfection, and bus travel can indeed at times be distinctly dangerous. The same serious drawback also applies to other forms of transport, of course, but it seems reasonable to expect a higher standard of safety in a public rather than a private vehicle. Bus travel at present is cheap certainly, but that appears to be its sole advantage.

Government admits that better standards are required from the bus companies, and remarks from the Commissioner for Transport since the publication of the Green Paper leave no doubt as to his personal views on the subject. In view of this, is Government's faith in the bus really justified? It would be hard to imagine a public transport system working in HK without buses. Nonetheless, all over the developed world (ie. the world of large cities), it is proving increasingly difficult to strike a balance between economic factors and the efficient operation of bus services.

Certainly the 'experiment' — if that is the right word — with minibuses shows that while they are far from perfect they do perform a reasonable public service, and this is reflected in the fact that they are also more

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expensive than franchised buses. And of course another part of the price we pay for this service is the inefficiencies of congestion.

Might government be unduly optimistic in believing that Hong Kong can ever have a bus service that combines efficiency with low costs?

While this may seem — and indeed is — nit-picking, many assertions that may not be worth arguing over in another context have become the foundations of what seems a clear policy to give priority to buses and to restrict, if not almost eliminate, other forms of transport. And this is where the Chamber takes issue with the policy as it appears to be expressed in the Green Paper.

Prominent among aspects of the paper that have caused concern among Chamber Members, is the failure to state clearly policy on the future of the tramway system. Trams appear to be, after buses, Transport Department's favourites, in that they carry many passengers (a tram with a trailer in fact carries more people than a bus) and occupy relatively little road space in relation to the more numerous private cars and minibuses.

But almost no declaration is made concerning the future long term role of trams. It appears that this must wait until the Comprehensive Transport Study at present being carried out by Government's consultants has been completed.

Another point to disturb committee members was the feeling that 'traffic management schemes', which are

among the Green Paper's answers to easing congestion, were often slow to be devised and even slower in implementation.

Road policy

The use of traffic planning and management schemes to keep vehicles moving cannot be divorced from another aspect of government policy — the construction of new roads and the improvement of existing roads. The Green Paper gives emphasis to Government's programme for the improvement of the road system:—

'The government intends to spend an average of \$350 million (at 1974 prices) in each of the next four financial years and this compares with less than \$400 million spent during the whole of the three preceding years. In the main this expenditure will be devoted to: development of trunk routes; improvements, including widening of secondary routes; traffic engineering and management schemes.

'As part of a continuous process, the intention, over the next 10 years, is to relieve congestion and accelerate speeds for longer journeys by developing a large number of trunk routes throughout the territory. Freedom of movement on these routes, which will be elevated in some places, will be ensured by limitation of the number of access roads serving them and by flyovers at intersections and by subways or bridges for pedestrians.'

The Chamber fully endorses this intention, and it's only criticism is whether indeed the programme should

perhaps have been started sooner, since many of our present problems arise from the failure of the road system to keep pace with other development in transport.

Containers ignored

To give an example, the Container Committee deliberated for four years before coming to a recommendation that HK should have a container terminal. It might have been maintained that containerisation was an inevitable development, given HK's reliance on overseas markets where containerisation was developing quickly. Even after the decision to go ahead with the Kwai Chung terminal was made, construction work took almost two years. Government therefore had plenty of warning that our road system would sooner or later have to cope with containerisation, yet very little was done in the way of planning for this.

Another example of failure to plan quickly enough is Government's admission that its estimates of the growth in car ownership were proved too conservative. While getting one's figures wrong is perhaps a pardonable error, it does emphasise the need that exists to press on with improvements in HK's roads as quickly as possible.

Another aspect of planning where the interests of conflicting parties often gives rise to delays is the construction of facilities for pedestrians. Although Government has done much of late in an attempt to improve pedestrian facilities it is widely agreed that the

programme does not yet cope with the real needs of Hong Kong's crowded population.

Yet another area of transport where the efforts of different groups call for greater co-ordination is in the provision of water-borne passenger services. One delay in increasing these is the low priority given to the construction of piers in the public works programme. Businessmen who have considered the development of more extensive ferry services also have some reservations on their economic viability. It has been pointed out that unless a ferry service is guaranteed a fairly constant off-peak volume of traffic, fare structures tend to become expensive in relation to the needs of the mass of the population.

Possibly the sections of the Green Paper that have caused greatest controversy are the proposals relating to private car ownership and use. It is worth quoting the Green Paper on this subject:

'It would seem that the only practicable forms of restraint on traffic in Hong Kong would be fiscal ones, that is to say measures applied through the fiscal system, not to raise revenue, but on the contrary to limit motoring by making it so much more expensive that the rate of increase in use or ownership of cars declined.'

Destroying incentives

Over two years ago, when the Chamber's Home Affairs Committee first considered transport policy in

cont'd on Pg. 29

Pen Profile

Ian Kinnear

PEN Profile this month features the first in a new series aimed at introducing a different type of businessman.

These businessmen, however, do not help to make profits for any one particular company. But they have to be, by the nature of their work, astute salesmen and marketeers, even though they never even directly sell a product. They are also a group of men who can be extremely helpful to Chamber members. We refer of course to the resident Trade Commissioners attached to the various Commissions and Consulates in Hong Kong.

It seems appropriate to start this series with the man who is probably the newest arrival to the Trade Commission scheme in Hong Kong — Mr. Ian Kinnear who arrived a few weeks ago to take up his post as Senior British Trade Commissioner.

Although Mr. Kinnear has never been in Hong Kong before, he is not unfamiliar with Asian business.

He was with the Colonial Service in Malaya for five years; 18 months of which was spent in the Economic Division of the Treasury. And from 1966 to 1968, he ran the Commercial Section of the British Embassy in Jakarta.

'Of course there is no other place like Hong Kong. It is quite unique,' he says when asked if any of his other postings resembled Hong Kong.

'I met and worked with a large number of Chinese both in Malaya

and in Indonesia. That is probably the main similarity.'

From his biographical data, it would appear that the continent that Mr. Kinnear knows best is Africa. He was born 49 years ago in Kenya where his father was editor of the 'East African Standard'. He went to school there until he was 13 and then it was back to England for four more years of education.

'In the early part of the war, I returned to Kenya to see my parents and it wasn't long before I was called up.' Ian Kinnear was assigned to an East African Armoured Car Unit in which he spent 3½ years. During this period he was stationed in India and Ceylon.

'After the war, I continued my education at Oxford where I took a degree in 'Modern Greats' — politics, philosophy and economics. I suppose they threw in philosophy to stop one from being over-practical.'

Journalism not for him

He then returned to Kenya and became a journalist. After a short period he realised that journalism was not for him, and joined the Colonial Service. He was five years in Malaya and then five years back in Kenya.

'After Kenya became independent, there didn't seem to be much future in my line of business so I joined the Commonwealth Office, which later merged with the Foreign Office to

form the Commonwealth and Foreign Office.'

He spent the next four years at Whitehall. It was during this time that he gave up his bachelorhood. The Kinnears now have two daughters, who are both here in Hong Kong with their parents.

After his stint in London came the posting to Jakarta. In 1968 he was back in Africa, this time as Head of Chancery with the British High Commission in Dar-es-Salaam. He stayed in Tanzania for two years. Prior to Hong Kong, he was on secondment to the Government of Bermuda for three years.

'Hong Kong is as much as I expected it to be,' he says. 'One just can't help being impressed by the vitality and speed at which everything happens.'

As for his present post, Mr. Kinnear explains, 'The main function of a British trade commission is to help increase and to stimulate British exports. The commission in Hong Kong is one of a network of similar organisations in British embassies and high commissions around the world.'

Assisting exporters

'We in the trade commission cannot do people's work for them. We are here to assist British exporters in any way we can. I don't come carrying any magic wand. Exporting is just hard work, as is the everyday routine work of the Commission here.'

When asked what the British Trade

Commission was doing to enlighten British importers as to what Hong Kong has to offer, he said, 'There may be some British firms which are ignorant of what Hong Kong has to offer but not many. There is a regular flow of trade missions from Britain to this region and most of these missions contain a high proportion of representatives of firms new to this part of the world. In the next 10 months, something like 17 trade missions will be coming through Hong Kong. In addition trade missions sponsored by UK chambers of commerce, circulate their reports to a large number of firms. It therefore follows that knowledge of what Hong Kong has to offer is widespread.'

Passing the message

The British Trade Commission in Hong Kong occupies an entire floor in Shell House and has a total staff of around 30. There are two ways in which the Commission 'passes the message' that there is business to be done in HK. First of all representatives of British firms are provided with local contacts. Secondly, it is the function of Commission staff to visit local factories in order to discover their requirements. The Commission then puts them in touch with suppliers in the United Kingdom.

'We have other types of promotional activity. For instance there is the display section in the Commission office. This month we're featuring British-made television sets.'

The Membership Mix

IT came as little surprise at the end of last year, when the Chamber increased its subscription, that we lost 357 of our 2,131 members. Since then however recruitment of new members has successfully brought the total membership figure back up to 1,850 at the beginning of August.

It is a normal annual trend that membership decreases at the time of subscription renewal with reasons ranging from company closures, re-organisations, to little need for Chamber services. Then there is a steady upward movement after April and membership reaches its highest point at the end of a year.

In order to keep meaningful track of our membership structure, the Membership Department has recently compiled an index of membership distribution throughout the Colony.

Mr W. S. Chan, Assistant Secretary in charge of Membership, explained, 'The figures (for the period ending June 31) show that the majority of membership, 70 per cent, are on the Island; over 28 per cent are in Urban Kowloon, while the remaining two per cent are located in the New Territories.'

Further breakdown shows that of the 1,282 members on Hong Kong Island, over 1,086 or 59 per cent of total membership can be found in the Central District. About 140 members are situated in Wanchai, Happy Valley, Causeway Bay, North Point and Quarry Bay.

W. S. Chan continued, 'From these figures, it would appear that there has

not been any dramatic move away from Central because of the high rent situation. We should be in a better position to judge any change in 1975 when we have a year's activity to compare.'

Kowloon members

The scene in Kowloon is more widespread. Of the 522 members to be found on the peninsula, 250 have offices in the Tsim Sha Tsui 'Golden Mile' District, about 120 in the districts of Yaumati, Mongkok, Shamshuipo, Cheungshawan and Laichikok while 110 members are in the dense industrial areas of San Po Kong and Kwun Tong.

Looking at a breakdown of membership in relation to their nature of business, the decline in the last 12 months has not altered the proportions much.

Import/export business still remain at their same high level of 62.7 per cent of membership in 1974. Manufacturers on the other hand have shown a decrease of 1.3 per cent from the July, 1973 percentage of 26.3 (537 members). On the other end of the yard stick, both commercial services and transportation firms have increased in membership, services from 5.1 per cent to 6.1 per cent and transportation from 3.4 per cent to 3.6 per cent. Our miscellaneous section which encompasses groups such as public utilities, professional people, hotels, department stores, etc. have also increased by 0.1 per cent to 2.6 per cent.

Picture Briefing

- A. The Chamber was recently visited by a group of Industry Assistants from the Commerce and Industry Department. Hari Cheng, Executive Assistant, explains certification procedures under the watchful eye of A. C. C. Stewart, manager of the Certification Department.
- B. The New Senior British Trade Commissioner, Mr. I. A. C. Kinnear paid an introductory visit to the Chamber on July 24, when he had discussions with the Director. (Also see Pen Profile, Page 13).
- C. The General Committee and the China Area Committee played hosts at a luncheon in honour of Mr. K. C. Wong, outgoing Chairman of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce, on July 17. Mr. Wong (centre) returns the toast offered by the Chairman, Peter Foxon, while Mr. M. F. Wong, Secretary of the Chinese Chamber, looks on.
- D. A discussion was held on July 29, with visiting members of the Japan Retailers Association. The Director presided over the meeting.
- E. The Chamber has initiated a series of staff-meets-staff sessions with members of the Consular corps. The first of these was held on July 26 when officials from the Australian Commission were our guests.





A.



B.



C.



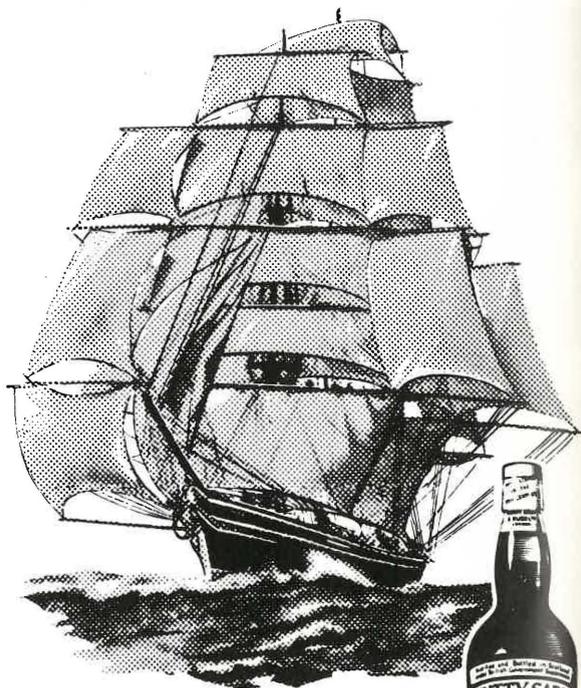
D.



E.

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The good business Lunch

Considering the size of Hong Kong's Indian community, we are surprised that there are not more Indian restaurants in town. As far as central Hong Kong is concerned there appears to be only two, and one of these — replacing a previous venture in the same premises — is relatively new. The Ashoka is in the upper part of Wyndham Street, near to the Central Magistracy, and incidentally, to its competitor, the Gaylord. As usual the Good Business Lunch team arrived anonymously and without booking. We walked through the restaurant doors at what might be expected to be the height of the lunch-time rush-hour — 1.05 pm.

The Ashoka has both an upper and a lower floor, and the latter was almost fully occupied on our arrival. This was not necessarily a bad thing, since the upper part of the restaurant is probably the more pleasant. We were in fact the first customers to arrive on the upper floor, which is a smallish room, able to accommodate about 30 people.

There may be a structural reason for it, but the use of space in the Ashoka struck us as being rather odd. The upper floor does not run the length of the building but is cut short by a sort of 'well' arrangement, although one cannot actually look down onto the lower floor, as the room finishes in a series of opaque windows, ornamented by a metal grille. If, as we did, you choose to sit next to this, it gives a pleasant impression of being aloft in space —

though the Air India ad. inside the menu may have put this suggestion into our minds.

The menu was inspected over dry martinis on the rocks. We felt in need of a bracer and the flavours of Indian food are in any case sufficiently defined to break through the numbing effects on the palate of chilled gin and vermouth. A few pappadums accompanied the drinks.

The menu is not over long but is perfectly adequate and it should not be difficult to select dishes to the choice of one's party. Firstly, a few starters are suggested — such as a yoghurt drink at \$2.50 — and two soups. The traditional Mulligatawny costs \$4.50.

After this, one gets to the heart of the menu in four main sections — fish dishes, tandoori baked dishes, Indian regional specialities and vegetarian dishes. Accompanying dishes — rice and breads — etc. as well as side dishes and desserts are of course available.

Possibly outside of India itself, we have found that Indian restaurants tend to fall into two types. Firstly, there is what might be termed the conventional curry house. Value for money perhaps, but not exactly a gastronomic treat. The second type of Indian restaurant which seems to be becoming more popular the world over, including Hong Kong, does make an effort to serve gourmet food, and one of its characteristics is usually the inclusion of a Tandoori section. It is pleasing to report that the

Ashoka comes into this category.

Selections and prices from the menu might include a Jhinga Marsala (marinated fried prawns) at \$12.50, or a Jhinga Curry Aur Chowal (prawns in curry sauce) at \$15.00 — one of the more expensive dishes, which shows that the price range certainly falls into the reasonable category.

Turning to Tandoori dishes, one may have chicken at \$10.50, mutton at \$9.50 or fish at \$9.00. House specialties include Keema Mutter (Chicken and peas) at \$9.00, Gosht Rogan Josh Kashmiri (lamb in sauce) also at \$9.00, or a Hyderabad Biryani (mutton cooked with rice) at \$10.50, among others. Vegetarian dishes include Malai Kofta (vegetable kebab) at \$5.50 and four other selections.

To a non-Indian palate, the dessert of Gajar Haleva, which is grated carrots cooked with milk and mawa may not exactly appeal, but there are other sweets which omit the carrots in case you are in doubt.

No prawns

Our attempt to order the prawns in curry sauce, seemingly the prestige dish, failed. It was, the house informed us, not available that day. Tandoori chicken was suggested as an alternative so we went along with the idea. We followed it with a Rogan Josh and Murg Ke Tikki Makhani (chicken again, but this time in a spicy sauce). To accompany these, we had plain rice, several Naan (bread) and a dish of raita.

We shared each dish, and on the

whole were pleased. The favourite by general vote appeared to be the chicken in sauce, although we could not quite place the sharp flavour of the sauce — was it vinegar? It seemed not quite acid enough to be lemon juice. The Rogan Josh was slightly too hot for one member of the company, but what does one go to an Indian restaurant for, if not for spice and fire?

Two of our company tried desserts (not of the carrot type) and followed them with tea and coffee. The coffee was extremely good, although the tea was perhaps a trifle weak.

The total bill, including our drinks and a 10 per cent service charge, came to just under \$100. This in today's inflationary conditions struck us as being not unreasonable for a modest but pleasant mid-day meal.

The Ashoka, while fully recommended for those who like Indian food, is perhaps more suited to the entertainment of friends, be they business or personal friends, rather than as a setting for a working business lunch, where there is perhaps selling or finance to be discussed. Owing to the size of the room, tables are quite close and even the taped sitars will not prevent the man at the next table from eavesdropping, if he feels so inclined.

If however you have guests in town who fancy Indian food, and you don't need to talk confidential business, you may rest assured that they will appreciate the Ashoka. Members of the local Indian community certainly appear to do so.

Forum

One source of information in Hong Kong is Government figures and the official pronouncements of Departmental Directors. Frequently the press — particularly the Chinese press — takes a different point of view.

Forum attempts to sum up views on current economic etc. issues expressed by different newspapers, to highlight discrepancies of fact, variance of interpretation and opinion, and, where thought fit, to add our own comment. In this way, we hope to highlight current issues where there seems to be a divergence of viewpoint, so that Chamber members may keep up with all sides of the picture.

IN his speech to the Hong Kong Society of Accountants on July 19, the Financial Secretary called for an 'urgent public debate' on the question of how fast public expenditure should grow in relation to the Hong Kong economy as a whole. Since then much has been said on the subject in the papers, on television and radio, in public forums and, we can be sure, in private discussion. The debate has in the main centred on the problem of raising additional revenue in order to avoid future budget deficits. Few would seem to question the necessity of this — it is rather a matter of *how* the money should be raised: by borrowing overseas, by introducing higher tax rates and/or a wider tax base, or by using our reserves.

In this month's *Forum*, therefore, we will attempt to sum up the debate so far. Reaction to the FS' speech has ranged from support for tax

increases to harsh criticism of Government financial policy. One paper even accused Mr. Haddon-Cave of 'hypocrisy' in asking for a public debate. However, most circles seem to have appreciated the importance of his speech, and the urgency of the problem.

The **Sunday Post Herald** (21.7.74) pointed out that 'unpalatable as tax increases are, we have to realise that while miracles have been performed on a tax rate of 15 per cent in the past 10 years it cannot continue to provide an adequate share of our revenue in future'.

The paper suggested that a realistic tax increase would be at least 2½ per cent. However, it continued, serious thought would also have to be given to new forms of direct taxes, as well as raising more revenue from indirect taxes, licences and Government services. 'Clearly, there is a reserve of direct taxability which can and must be tapped — Government services such as housing, water, medical treatment and education cannot continue to be subsidised at present levels.' The paper called for a 'well-organised seminar', lasting two or three days, with well-chosen speakers and a wide cross-section of the thinking public being asked to listen to and discuss the views presented.

According to people interviewed by the **Hong Kong Standard**, the Financial Secretary was simply making an excuse for the Government to delay the plans that he had once promised. They did not believe that Hong Kong

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was heading towards a deficit in the next three years, as suggested by Mr. Haddon-Cave. They disapproved of tax increases and said that the Government should bring back at least half of the reserves from Britain. (**HK Standard** 21.7.74).

Seeking a mandate

Ming Pao (22.7.74) also believed that the FS was seeking a 'mandate' to raise taxes, and wants to be able to say 'Well, you (the public) supported me in this!' However, the paper believed, to seek such a 'mandate' certainly represents a step forward, on the part of the Government.

An editorial in **Wah Kiu Yat Pao** (29.7.74) quoted Mr. S. N. Kung of the Civic Association as saying that tax increases should not be considered at the present time. They would add to the difficulties currently being experienced by commerce and industry, not to mention the general public. He believed that the best solution for HK's future economic well-being was to bring back part of the reserves and to raise a loan. Mr. Kung believed that by retrieving a portion of our reserves the Government would be showing the people of Hong Kong that those reserves are not permanently frozen in the UK. The **Wah Kiu Yat Pao** believed that these words represented the voice of the majority of people in Hong Kong.

Every person in Hong Kong must agree that it would be better to borrow than to raise taxation, asserted **Ming Pao** (3.8.74). Increased taxation

should only be resorted to after the reserves have been exhausted. Of course, added the paper, the economists would say raise taxation first, but when the Hong Kong Government does this it will not put out its hands to the rich alone. The average citizen will also be affected.

A **Sing Tao Jih Pao** editorial adopted a somewhat different stance from other leading papers on the question of how to increase Government revenue (23.7.74). It believed that none of the three possibilities cited by the Financial Secretary was very suitable. As the FS himself pointed out, Hong Kong's GDP growth rate in recent years has been slower than the increase in public expenditure. The reason for this is that our exports are not selling well enough, and this is due largely to high production costs. To increase taxation would further raise production costs, and this would in turn harm our export growth rate. Moreover, the tax burden on the general public is already considerable and should not be increased.

A better solution, suggested the editorial, would be to tighten up on Government expenditure. The paper went on to advocate a 'managed economy' to replace the present laissez-faire system. There should be a period of controls over rents, prices, interest rates, imports and exports. If the Government continues with its laissez-faire policy, it concluded, there will be no way of assuring the future of our economy.

Mr. Haddon-Cave's speech was the

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topic of debate in the **Radio-HK Television** production 'Needle Point' on July 26. Those taking part in the discussion included Mr. Lau Wah-sum of the Financial Secretariat and representatives from the Urban Council, business circles, the media and the professions.

Opening the debate, Mr. Lau pointed out that over the next 10 years projected Government expenditure on public works projects averaged out at \$2,500 million a year. Of this amount, \$1,800 million could be obtained from taxation and other normal sources of revenue. This leaves a shortfall of \$700 million for which the Government will have to find new sources of revenue if it is not to drastically curtail expenditure on such projects as public housing, new towns, roads and water storage.

All agreed that these vital projects should not be curtailed. However, Urban Councillor Edmund Chow believed that we shouldn't borrow from overseas at the present time as this would entail considerable interest. A lecturer in Economics at HK University, Dr. Henry Ho, also believed that it would not be wise to borrow large amounts abroad, as this would be highly inflationary.

Mr. Ronald Li of the Far East Stock Exchange disagreed. He believed that we should borrow as heavily as possible, rather than draw on our reserves or risk driving away foreign capital by raising the standard tax rate.

The Business Editor of **Wah Kiu**

Yat Pao, Mr. Li Kang, believed that slight tax increases would do Hong Kong no harm. The standard rate could be increased to 20 per cent, provided this was done at a 'suitable time'.

Seminar on FS speech

A seminar on the same theme was held by the Hong Kong Economic Society on August 8. The Chairman of the seminar, and President of the Society, Professor Ronald Hsia, in opening the seminar said first of all that he personally was not convinced that HK is heading for a period of 'persistent deficits' as stated by Mr. Haddon-Cave. He believed that a distinction should be made between long-term planning and cyclical movements. We might be heading for a deficit in the short term, but there was no reason to believe that this would be persistent. It was also rather misleading to take 1973/74 as a base year for a 10 year forecast, he said.

Mr. David Millar, Chief Manager of the Chartered Bank, believed that it is important to keep our reserves intact as they provide backing for the HK dollar. Moreover, he pointed out that the reserves amount to only 52 per cent of overall expenditure for the year; last year the proportion was 73 per cent. At the moment expenditure is growing much faster than revenue, and it is a general rule that Government revenue must be financed out of current expenditure. It would be dangerous to break this rule. We must stick to self-liquidating projects — by which is meant revenue-



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generating projects like the Castle Peak desalination plant, — and remain debt-free. The necessary revenue can best be generated by throwing the tax-net wider. At present only about 3 per cent of the Hong Kong population pays tax, which is a rather low proportion. However, Mr. Millar emphasised that the existing standard rate of 15 per cent should not be raised.

Mr. Dennis Ting, Chairman of the Hong Kong Plastic Manufacturers Association and member of the Chamber's General Committee, agreed with Mr. Millar's recommendation that the existing tax structure could be widened. The tax-paying bracket should be expanded to include more of those who presently benefit from Government social expenditure.

Export slow-down

Mr. Ting hoped that fiscal policy would not harm HK's economic growth. There are signs of a slow-down of our export sales. In recent years expenditure has been increasing at a rate of 7.4 per cent per annum, while GDP has been growing at a rate of only four per cent. Thus it is vital to increase the efficiency of the economy and improve our sources of supply in order to boost export growth and, therefore, GDP growth. There are many ways to raise revenue other than through tax increases, he believed, and a widening of the tax base was one obvious way. An improvement in the efficiency of tax collection would also make a considerable difference, he said. Finally, Mr. Ting said he really could not

understand why Government should talk of borrowing from the World Bank and similar institutions when we have our reserves in the UK.

Dr. Henry Ho of the University of Hong Kong cited the economic theory of a post World War II economist, Colin Clark, who said that Government expenditure should never exceed 25 per cent of National Product. However, said Dr. Ho, some governments are now spending around 30 per cent of the National Product and doing quite well. In HK the ratio is only 17 per cent, and Dr. Ho believed that this could be raised. He believed there is considerable scope in HK for a growth of the Government sector.

The Financial Secretary voiced concern that increases in public expenditure diverted funds away from the private sector. However, Dr. Ho believed that expenditure on housing, education, etc. is 'investment in human resources', and as such highly productive in the long term. There is the question of the *efficiency* of present Government expenditure, he said. For instance, expenditure on the police force is considerable, but the crime rate continues to soar.

Dr. Ho believed that the least inflationary of the three possibilities raised by the Financial Secretary would be to increase taxation, in particular indirect taxation. He agreed that the present tax base is too narrow, and could be widened. However, he was opposed to the use of our reserves, as this would be highly inflationary, and would only provide a short-term solution to our problems.

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Transport—cont.

HK, a list of priorities was drawn up and it was agreed that the private car came lowest on the list. The Chamber cannot therefore be accused of displaying undue bias in favour of the motor trade.

Nonetheless, the Chamber has long opposed, and continues to oppose, any attempt to restrict car ownership by purely fiscal means.

Any attempt to make private motoring prohibitively expensive must favour the rich man at the expense of the less rich. If it be assumed that one of the purposes behind Hong Kong's economic development is to create increased wealth for the whole community and not just for a select few, it then follows that the use of fiscal means to regulate buying power is to some extent in conflict with this concept.

Hong Kong has so far been able to offer its people the incentives traditional to a free economy, namely, the expectation that enterprise and hard work will ultimately be reflected in a higher standard of living. While ownership of what we might call the three 'C's—a Car, a Colour television and air Conditioning may not be the only or the highest ideals a person may set himself, they are nonetheless not unreasonable aspirations that seem to be a goal for many of our people. To remove the incentives towards enterprise through purely fiscal means is a policy that should not be embarked upon lightly.

The Chamber would be reluctant to see the 'poorer' motorist taxed out of

existence while his richer counterpart enjoys the hoped for greater freedom of the roads that would result. It ought not to be beyond the ingenuity of Government to devise a more equitable but equally effective means of restricting the growth of private motoring, if this indeed is to be considered a necessary objective. A simple restriction on the use of private vehicles in certain areas at certain times might indeed be all that is needed.

Equity or management

Equally controversial is Government's avowed intention to take an equity stake in any future franchised bus companies, so as to allow it to exercise a degree of control over the activities of these companies.

While this may be a praiseworthy objective, the means may not be appropriate, hitting, as they do, an uneasy compromise between private enterprise on the one hand and outright nationalisation on the other.

Firstly, it may be argued that in order really to make the Government viewpoint effectively, a large equity stake would be necessary. Secondly, and more importantly, the prospective division of interest among the board members of the proposed new companies could lead to conflict that in the long run may harm rather than help efficient operation of the services.

The purpose of an equity stake in any venture is to show a reasonable return on the capital invested. It is the responsibility of *management*, not shareholders, to plan and control the

efficient day-to-day operations of a venture. It would be preferable to devise a system of control of operations other than the rights conferred by the holding of an equity stake.

All this however is negative comment. To be more constructive, the Chamber believes that HK's transport policy might best be evolved if two basic principles are kept in mind. Firstly, it seems obvious that one form of transport alone — be it bus, tram, taxi or whatever, can never meet the needs of all travellers in all circumstances, and that where possible, the traveller should be given a choice of alternatives. Secondly, the development of transport planning should go hand-in-hand with the wider concept of town planning, rather than being looked at in isolation.

It follows from the first of these principles that there is a place for the mini-bus as well as the large double-decker bus. Equally there is a role for the taxi and private car. The attempt to give priority to one or other means of transport, *except perhaps on certain routes*, may keep traffic moving, but will hardly meet the needs and wishes to the traveller.

The importance of the second of these principles, which is perhaps even more fundamental, has already been well explained in a recent article emanating from the HK branch of the Royal Town Planning Institute and published in the *South China Morning Post* on July 27th.

One vital point made in this article is that the traffic needs of any district

are related to the density of population of that district (an obvious enough point in itself), but that this principle was ignored in Hong Kong by for instance separating building legislation, which permits the development of high-rise office blocks, often with a greater occupancy per square foot than in other cities of the world, from a consideration of the need to 'feed' these office blocks. And this of course includes an adequate means of getting workers to and from them.

If any sceptic needs a simple and convincing illustration of the implications of this, may we suggest he stands outside the Connaught Centre during any weekday lunch hour. The sheer volume of humanity pouring in and out of this single building is impressive — almost frightening. It is widely admitted that Hong Kong does not have any town planning, except in a rather rudimentary sense of zoning for land utilisation. As the new Secretariat for the Environment gathers strength and experience this may well change, but a change cannot come too soon.

In the meantime we sympathise with the problems of the Commissioner of Transport. He has a difficult job and has to cope with circumstances that are often beyond his direct control.

In this position, it is not surprising that his proposals offer only a limited solution to a limited problem. But the Green Paper cannot be anything other than a short term plan for 'transport in Hong Kong.'

全部居民之需。而居民於往外交通工具方面應有所選擇。

(二)交通全盤計劃應與城市計劃相提並重。

正如南華早報七月二十七日之社論所說，某一地區之交通所需與其地區之人口有切密關係。

誠然，香港於土地利用方面之基礎知識不大充沛，但一切於短期內將有所改善。

總商會深曉運輸署之工作艱巨，而要征服之困難甚多。因此不難想象交通綠皮書之內容只談及某些困難問題及其解決辦法。

本會會員一覽

去年年末，當本會增加會費後，約共三百五十七間商號退出商會。於此之前，本會會員機構共二千一百三十一間。多月來之會員徵募工作使本年八月初，會員公司達一千八百五十間。

一般而言，於會費遞增時會員商號數字亦同時下降乃屬常情，其間原因包括公司結束營業、改組及不再需求本會所提供之各項服務等。每年於四月後，會員數字則逐漸增加，於年底達全年之高峯。

最近，本會會員都曾審慎分析研究會員商號之分佈情形，並將彼等作一完善之索引編備記錄。

據會員部助理秘書陳煥榮先生稱：「至六月卅日止，大概有百分之七十會員機構位設於港島，百分之二十八位設九龍市區，其他一小撮在新界。」

又於位設港島之一千二百八十二間會員公司中，超過一千零八十六間（或會員總數百分之五十九）位設中區，約有一百四十間在灣仔、跑馬地、銅鑼灣、北角及鰂魚涌等

地區營業。

陳氏解釋謂：「單從數字表面看來，並無任何特別跡象顯示工商機構因租金飛揚而遷離中區另覓辦事處。但一切需假以時日，於年終時方可作一判斷性之分析。」

於九龍方面，於五百二十二間會員商號中，約二百五十間位設尖沙咀，一百二十間分佈油蔴地、旺角、深水埗、長沙灣及荔枝角等地區，其餘一百一十間則設於新蒲崗及官塘等工業區。

於過去十二個月以來，會員商號行業類別之比例並無多大變更。出入口商仍領先，佔全數百分之六十二點七。廠商則自去年七月後畧為減少了百份之一點三（於去年七月為百份之二十六點三，即五百三十七間）。

但另一方面，商業服務機構於會員全數中由百份之五點一增至百份之六點一，運輸行業機構由百份之三點四增至百份之三點六。其他各式各類機構，如公用事業、專業門類、酒店及百貨公司等機構亦增加了百份之零點一，佔會員全數百份之二點六。

介紹英國海外 工商管理服務

英國董事協會，於英國政府及工商業贊助下創辦了英國海外工商管理服務社（即B E S O）。該社派遣經驗充沛之工商業家，無論為企業政策或具有專門技能者——前往發展中之國家，予以中小型企業提供新方法及新技術，以增進企業業績。

「英國海外工商管理服務社」於印度、牙買加、馬來西亞、星加坡及馬拉威等地均有設立。於本港，其代表為香港科學管理學會。

據科學管理學會之洪燦先生稱：「英國海外工商管理服務社是一獨立機構，其辦事處設董事協會之倫敦總部。服務社經費全賴補助金。由一位高級人員担任主管及處理行政事宜，並由英國重要工商界人士及海外發展處與工業貿易部高級代表組成之委員會管理。行政主任分駐在若干發展中國家之代表保持聯繫，各代表就各地所需提出建議。各地代表所負任務至為重要，包括向行政及志願服務之高級人員提供資料，與當地公司磋商

，並儘可能使志願服務人員工作順利進行。

應徵服務人員多是志願工作，即將退休或最近已退休，且富有經驗之工商界人士。

每項工作期間可達半年，如有需要並可延長。服務社並不向獲得協助之公司收取費用，但彼等需支付該服務人員及其眷屬之當地生活費等開支。

各界人士對此項服務計劃感興趣者，請逕向香港科學總會洪燦先生垂詢。（電話：五——七四九三四六）。

介紹英國駐港高級商務專員

（自是期會訊開始，我們將向各會友介紹各駐港之商務專員及領使館要員，使大家對彼等有進一步之認識。首先要向大家介紹者為新近蒞港履新之英國駐港高級商務專員——甘禮雅先生。）

甘禮雅先生於不久前才抵港任英國駐港高級商務專員之要職。雖然此乃甘氏首次蒞港，但彼對亞洲事務却非常稔熟。

甘氏曾於馬來亞殖民民事務處服務達五年之久，其間十八個月時間隸屬財務部之經濟組。

於一九六六至六八年期間，甘禮雅先生為耶加達之英國大使館之商業組主管，負責該組重要職守。

對甘氏而言，香港具有其獨特之風格，有異世界其他各地。

甘氏現齡四十九歲，在非洲之肯亞誕生。於十三歲時才返回英國受教育。

於其服兵役期間，曾重返非洲駐守。大戰結束後，進牛津大學攻讀，專修政治、哲學及經濟。

畢業後，甘禮雅先生再返非洲肯亞，於新聞界服務，但稍後則發覺此行業與其性格

有所抵觸，因而加入殖民地事務處服務。

於肯亞宣佈獨立後，彼投身聯邦事務處工作。此事務處隨後與外務處合併，成為聯邦及外務辦事處。

於抵港履新之前，甘禮雅先生曾在百慕達政府工作達三年之久。

談及英國駐港商務辦事處之工作時，甘氏謂：「我們主要之職責是促進英國之出口。我們予以英國出口商所需之幫助，使彼等於出口方面倍覺方便。」

甘氏又謂：「現刻，不少來自英國之貿易訪問團到來本港。於未來十個月內，約十七團貿易團將到此方。該等團隊大多由英國各商會贊助。」

英國駐港商務專員辦事處設中區蜆壳大廈，辦事處現有職員約三十多名。

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