

## THE PAUPER HOSPITAL IN EARLY SINGAPORE (Part III) (1840-1849) — Section I

By Y. K. Lee

A general introduction to the study of the medical history of early Singapore has already been outlined.<sup>1</sup>

The history of the Pauper Hospital from 1819-1829<sup>2</sup> and from 1830-1839<sup>3</sup> has already been documented.

In 1837, the Pork Farm was abolished and that portion of the Pauper Hospital which housed the paupers was closed down, and only the 'infirm' side was allowed to function to cater for "acute curable and accident cases." By 1839, a distressing state of affairs existed. There was an inadequately-staffed and poorly-equipped Pauper Infirmary for "acute cases", and numerous chronically-ill and destitute beggars and vagrants living and dying in the streets of the Town. The official view held by those in authority in India was that this was a problem for the people of Singapore to solve themselves, especially the Chinese. The European community of Singapore were, however, of the opinion that the wealthy Chinese were indifferent to the sufferings of their fellow countrymen.

To make matters worse, the inadequate Pauper Hospital accommodated not only paupers "suffering from accidents or acute disease", but also lunatics who were "quiet and inoffensive"<sup>4</sup> (the violent ones were kept in the Jail), and sick European seamen. There was no Lunatic Asylum<sup>5</sup> nor a hospital for European seamen in 1840.<sup>6</sup>

The European seamen stayed in a narrow gallery at the back of the Pauper Hospital. The Senior Surgeon objected to this arrangement but there was no other alternative, and he complained to the Governor:

"... which gallery is merely boarded floor over the privies of the hospital. I represented to Mr. Church the unfitness of such a place for the accommodation and medical treatment of sick Europeans, but there being no

other place available, it was considered advisable to do the best we could for the poor men in this place, otherwise they might be left to die in the Punch Houses or perhaps turned out into the streets. Fortunately there is a running stream passing under the privies which together with the gallery being open into the hospital serves to carry away the bad smells. But the openness of the gallery subjects the patients to the annoyance of the noise made by the Chinese paupers of which the patients complain much. The only advantage it possesses is having a roof over it and placing the poor men within reach of medical assistance..."<sup>6</sup>

"The final orders of the Government in regard to the abolition of the Pork Tax and the reform of the Poor House Establishment" had been sent by the Governor-General to the Governor of the Straits Settlements on 5th September 1838, and these Orders were later confirmed by the Court of Directors in London on 1st September, 1841.<sup>7</sup>

In far-away London and India, it was proper to condemn the Pork Farm "both as objectionable in itself and as a part of the system of partial taxation pressing peculiarly on the poorer classes which it was of so much importance to correct", and to discontinue "the Pauper Establishments which had been maintained from a part of its proceeds and which were in fact lazar houses for persons afflicted with loathsome diseases from all the neighbouring countries".<sup>7</sup> In Singapore, things were seen in a different light by the inhabitants. Letters continued to pour into the offices of the Editor of the Singapore Free Press criticising the Government:

"... if there is charity required, surely it meet with another object than the Government. Daily are presented to our views, sad spectacles of mankind, loathsome, foul and heart-sickening objects of pity and yet there is none to assist them. The Government has built an hospital for Chinamen but surely it must be very inadequate or else why do we see poverty and disease-stricken wretches in every place. While these do exist,

---

Thomson Road General Hospital, Singapore.

Y. K. LEE, A.M., M.D., F.R.C.P. (Lond.), F.R.C.P. (Edin.),  
M.R.A.C.P., F.C.L.M., LL.B., Senior Physician.

---

charity will supplicate and humanity will shudder until the benevolence of our community is exerted on behalf of the natives from whom all our comforts are derived, and the proper channel through which our kindness should flow is in extending our Pauper Hospital, building another for incurables and forming a dispensary by which outdoor patients may be relieved. For this purpose, let Government be petitioned, let private charity be exerted and let everyone remember that 'him who gives the little in his power, the world acquits and heaven demands no more'.<sup>8</sup>

"I am not fastidious nor am I squeamish. My nerves are not weak nor my digestive organs easily disturbed, but I do most decidedly object to taking an involuntary emetic in order to encourage a vile system of economy.

The fact I wish to allude to is that people are daily, even hourly, crawling through the public streets and soliciting charity. Some with faces eaten up by a most loathsome disease, whose eyes, nose and mouth are one vast putrid cancer, others with their legs covered with ulcers of a most disgusting description, and others again whose bodies are stricken with leprosy. We are supposed to possess here a Chinese and Convict Hospital. Why are not these wretched creatures confined in them, or if there is no room (an excuse I have heard given) why does not Government extend those necessary buildings, instead of for the sake of a few dollars disgust the public with the sight of these most unfortunate and much-to-be-pitied persons."<sup>9</sup>

In 1842, sick Convicts and sick pauper Chinese were under one roof in the Pauper Hospital. Destitute Europeans, mainly shipwrecked sailors, continued to be lodged there "to prevent them dying in the streets" as there was still no hospital for European seamen.<sup>10</sup> This state of affairs continued until October 1842 when Smallpox broke out in the Pauper Hospital. It was then decided that the Europeans be moved to a house away from the Hospital and the Smallpox patients isolated as recommended by the Senior Surgeon:

"I have the honour to inform you that there are at present a good many patients suffering from smallpox in the Pauper Hospital which we are unable to separate from the other patients in consequence of the crowded

state of the Hospital. There is consequently very great risk of the disease being spread further among the other sick inmates, and it becomes imperatively necessary to make some arrangements to prevent this. I therefore beg to suggest that a small house in the vicinity be rented for the accommodation of the European patients at present in hospital, of whom there are a considerable number owing to the resort of shipwrecked British seamen to this port, and that the gallery at present occupied by them be appropriated as a Smallpox Ward."<sup>11</sup>

On 1st November, 1842, there were 153 patients under the care of the Surgeon i/c the Pauper Hospital, as follows:<sup>12</sup>

"Europeans, in the new house	17
Convicts	94
Paupers, who if turned out,	
would not find a subsistence	42."

In the meantime, there were plans to build a hospital for European and Native seamen, but the cost was considered prohibitive. The Governor advised the Government of Bengal that a smaller hospital be built only for European seamen, and that native seamen be admitted into the Pauper Hospital for treatment when necessary. This caused more over-crowding.

By October 1843, the circumstances were so deplorable that the Editor of the Singapore Free Press was moved to write a long editorial:

"Our attention has been called to the numerous decrepit and diseased paupers, chiefly Chinese, who lie about the streets, and for whose maintenance it seems there is no provision. The annoyance they give to the public is by no means slight and although those who only visit the Town in their carriages may suffer no inconvenience, yet it is otherwise to that part of the public who require to pass for any distance along the streets on foot. At the end of the old Bridge near Town, there is always a collection of these unfortunate objects who importune the passengers for charity, but it is in the street leading to the Market that they congregate most numerous. Here they sit in rows exposing their loathsome sores to passersby and tainting the air by the foul smells that proceed from their diseased bodies, forming a spectacle inspiring disgust in everyone who is compelled to approach them, and reflecting the greatest disgrace on the Government by whom this

monstrous nuisance is allowed to exist; yet this sight has been exhibited daily since 1837 when Government in its wisdom thought fit to abolish the Pork Farm from which the Hospital and Poor House was maintained. This was done on the ground that the tax falling upon an article of food consumed exclusively by the Chinese pressed in undue degree upon that part of the population. It was shown in this paper at the time that the Chinese labourers of Singapore were not only paid better than the same class in any part of continental India, but that they were even better paid than the generality of labourers in the most thriving countries of Europe, while this was the only tax which they were called upon to bear. We believe, we may state it as an undisputable fact that the abolition of this tax did not reduce the price of pork a single *duit*. On the contrary, it is now higher than in those times when it was farmed. This may no doubt have arisen from the very rapid increase in the Chinese population which may have prevented the supply from at any time since being equal to the demand, but whatever the cause, it is certain that at no time since 1837 when the tax was abolished, has pork been cheaper than it was in 1836 and the preceding years, when it yielded a revenue from which the Chinese paupers were supported. The Government when abolishing the Pork Farm and allowing the benefits of the Hospital for the treatment of acute cases only, expected that the wealthier classes of the Chinese would combine to provide a lodging and the means of support to those of their impoverished and diseased countrymen who were to be expelled from the Poor House and Hospital. The then Editor of the Free Press expressed a doubt whether Government were not rating the disinterestedness and humanity of the Chinese too highly, and the result has proved the justness of his expectations. Since then the poor were left to depend upon the casual bounty of the public, unheeded and uncared for by their countrymen, and now render it absolutely painful as well as disgusting for anyone who is not perfectly callous as well in his feelings as in his olfactory nerves to walk the streets of Singapore. The subject is one well-deserving attention, and we recommend it to the notice of the Grand Jury when

they meet tomorrow. This is perhaps the last occasion on which they may be required to discharge their functions and they would not more worthily distinguish the circumstance of their last appearance in the character of Grand Jurymen than by endeavouring to abate a nuisance which is a disgrace to the Town of Singapore.

In Penang, since the abolition of the Pork Farm, the Pauper Hospital has been maintained by subscriptions among the inhabitants, European and Native, the former chiefly, but in Singapore we do not know if this has ever been proposed, and we are rather doubtful whether it could be done. We would therefore advise that the Pork Farm should be once more established and we have no doubt that from the increased number of consumers, funds sufficient to accomplish the object in view could be raised. The tax would be so very small that individually it would not be felt, and the class from amongst whom the paupers are chiefly derived will also furnish their support. As long as the Chinese labourers expend so much of their earnings in opium smoking and gambling, it is a farce to talk of the cruelty or injustice of imposing a slight tax upon one of their articles of food, and this brings us to suggest another source from which a considerable revenue might be derived for the support of the Pauper Hospital, namely, the licensing of gambling houses. We are aware that such a proposition may at first sight shock well-disposed individuals as if we were proposing to legalise vice, but a moment's consideration will show the absurdity of such an idea. At the moment, we have at Singapore, the Opium, Seree and Arrack Farms, all as much directly derived from articles which are as obnoxious and more so to the public health and morals as gambling. . . ."<sup>13</sup>

Not all wealthy Chinese were callous as alleged by the Editor. When the Governor invited Mr. Tan Tock Sing, "one of the richest and most influential Chinese on the Island to give me his opinion of the expediency of making a law by which each class of the inhabitants should be held to support their own poor", Mr. Tan offered to bear the expense of erecting a Pauper Hospital at a cost not exceeding \$5,000/-.<sup>14</sup> Mr. Tan's historic letter confirming his offer is quoted in full:<sup>15</sup>

"To the Honourable Lt. Colonel Butterworth, C.B., Governor of Prince of Wales Island, Singapore and Malacca.

Honourable Sir,

With reference to our late personal conference, when you did me the honour to explain to me your views regarding the propriety of establishing some place of refuge for the number of my unfortunate countrymen who, at present while suffering under loathsome diseases crowd the streets of the Town and daily obtrude themselves on the public charity having no other means of obtaining relief, I now beg to confirm what I then said and shall accordingly be most happy to advance any sum not exceeding \$5,000/- towards erecting a suitable building for the support and accommodation of these unfortunate beings, provided that sufficient pecuniary means are furnished for their support and proper maintenance of the land.

You will therefore oblige me by allowing the Government Architect to furnish me with a plan which shall be carried out in a suitable and proper manner at my own private expense.

I have the honour to remain,

Your obedient servant,

(signed) TAN TOCK SING

(in Chinese)

(SEAL)

Singapore, October 17th, 1843."

It will be noted that Tan Tock Sing's offer was only for erecting a hospital. The Government was to undertake the maintenance of the property and the recurrent expenses of supporting the patients.

The Governor sent this letter to the Government of Bengal on 31st October 1843 with his observations on the deteriorating situation in Singapore and his recommendations regarding the passing of an Act for establishing a Poor House, for raising funds to maintain and support the inmates by levying a rate on property, and for framing rules and regulations for the control and management of the institution:<sup>14</sup>

"I have the honour to request that the attention of His Honour, the Deputy Governor of Bengal may be moved towards an evil which has been gradually on the increase at Singapore since the abolition of the Pork Tax, from the proceeds of which the sick and

indigent amongst the Chinese were supported.

If I were not opposed to an exclusive tax of the above nature, the peremptory orders for its abolition would prevent me from suggesting its re-imposition; but the evil has reached such an extent that some remedy for it must be devised. There is not a large thoroughfare in the Town but what the most disgusting objects in all stages of the most loathsome diseases are to be met with. These unfortunate creatures who could formerly claim relief from the source I have adverted, are now utterly destitute, too ill to work; frequently in too great pain to move without assistance from the position they have taken up, where they remain all day seated with a slight covering over their sores, which is removed from time to time to excite the compassion and liberality of the passengers.

Were the Magistrates to commit these people to jail under the Vagrant Act as suggested by the late Governor, a measure of humanity towards the individual as well as the Public, they would be supported at the expense of the State, but it is well known that they could not by any possibility receive accommodation even if such a measure were justifiable. These miserable objects therefore continue to depend upon private charity and there is certainly no want of liberality, but it cannot be expected that the European Community should bear the burden, whilst their own countrymen generally treat the matter with the utmost indifference, leaving the poor creatures to die of disease or starvation as I am grieved to hear was the case rather than give one fraction towards their relief.

There are however some few, very few noble exceptions, and I am about to notice one, who whilst corroborating the above account of his countrymen, lamented most bitterly the abolition of the Pork Tax, which was felt only by those who benefited from it. But as the re-imposition of this source of Revenue as well as support to the sick and indigent Chinese has been prohibited, I desired the individual alluded to, Tan Tock Sing, one of the richest and most influential Chinese on the Island, to give me his opinion of the expediency of making a law by which each class of the inhabitants should be held to support their poor. His

view of the subject will be gathered from the enclosed letter recapitulating an offer he made me at the time to bear the expense of erecting a Pauper Hospital at a cost not exceeding \$5,000/-.

In imitation of my Predecessor who consulted the Chamber of Commerce on most subjects, and wishing to keep all parties in good humour, I asked for their sentiments on the question. They have properly declared that it is not one for their consideration, in which I most entirely concur, and congratulate myself on having elicited this opinion from them. The hint that my proposition should be submitted to a meeting of the inhabitants is commendable but I did not deem this step advisable, till the subject had been before his Honour, the Deputy Governor of Bengal, and in the hope that his Honour may be disposed to take a favourable view of it, I venture to submit the accompanying draft of an Act (see Appendix), which will provide for the maintenance of the Poor throughout the Settlement. If this Act be approved of and passed by the Government of India, I feel assured that some little assistance from the State will be accorded so as to ensure such additions to the Building to be erected by Tan Tock Sing as will afford full and suitable accommodation for the whole object contemplated in this Act. . . . It was truly observed by Mr. Commissioner Young in the 8th paragraph of his letter dated 20th July 1838 that 'the imposition of a rate of the description would, by giving every person an interest in keeping the Settlement free from these unwelcome visitors, do more to check the resort to our Possessions of diseased, indigent and decrepit persons who infest without the slightest degree benefiting society than the most active Police could effect'.

I have carried out this principle further even than Mr. Young proposed by tracing each class separately for the maintenance of their sick. I am by no means wedded to this particular Act and shall be equally happy to receive any other suggestion that may tend to relieve the Community from the loathsome objects which now infest our streets."

A Public Meeting was called by the Sheriff on 9th November 1843.<sup>16</sup> The meeting proposed

that as a Pauper Hospital was to be erected for Chinese and other paupers a petition should be drawn up praying for the re-establishment of the Pork Farm to defray the expenses of its support in lieu of any other tax. Evidently some one had got wind of the Governor's proposal to the Government of Bengal. But it was argued that as the pork tax would fall heavier on the Chinese than on any other class of inhabitants and as only one or two of them were present at the meeting, that the opinion of the Chinese generally should be taken. This was accordingly done and the Chinese preferred the Government to tax their houses, and consequently the motion was dropped and no further action was taken until a reply to the Governor's letter was received from Bengal about a month later.

Meanwhile, a rich Chinese merchant died and bequeathed \$2,000/- towards the erection of a Pauper Hospital. The Singapore Free Press in an article entitled "Chinese Hospital" commented:<sup>17</sup>

"We are glad to learn that there is now every chance of a suitable hospital for the reception of diseased and aged Chinese paupers being erected, and what is still more so gratifying, chiefly through the means of the Chinese themselves. CHAM CHAN SANG, a Chinese Merchant, who died a few days' ago has by his will bequeathed \$2,000/- to the Hospital, and we understand that a short time ago, another wealthy Chinese Merchant, TOCK SING, presented \$5,000/- towards this object. We have no doubt that we shall hear of their example being generally followed by their fellow countrymen in the Settlement so that sufficient funds will speedily be obtained. It is to be wished that means should be taken as soon as possible for the building of the Hospital as the public are daily and hourly shocked by the sight of infirm and diseased Chinese, lepers and others, who frequent almost every street in Town, presenting a spectacle which is rarely to be met with in towns under a pagan government, and which is truly disgraceful when witnessed in a civilised and Christian country, especially one under the government of Englishmen."

In late January 1844, a reply dated 18th December 1843, to the Governor's letter enclosing the draft Act and Tan Tock Sing's offer, was received from the Government of

Bengal. The Deputy Governor of Bengal did not approve of the suggestion to tax the Asiatic portion of the inhabitants to please the Europeans and other non-Asiatics. He was, however, prepared to consider legislation for a universal tax to support the sick poor:<sup>15</sup>

"I have the honour by direction of the Deputy Governor of Bengal to acknowledge the receipt of your letter No. 10103 of the 31st October last with enclosures relative to mendicity and loathsome exposure at Singapore, with the draft of an Act for the suppression of those nuisances and a letter from Tan Tock Sing, a Chinese merchant, proffering a donation of \$5,000/- for the erection of a Poor House.

In reply, the Deputy Governor desires me to observe that the principle of taxing the people for the support of the really disabled poor and prohibiting public begging and exhibition of deformities after ensuring maintenance to such persons is quite sound.

But this proposition is to prohibit begging and loathsome exposure to please the European and quasi-European inhabitants, and then to support disabled mendicants by taxing the Asiatic part of the population consisting chiefly of Chinese who, with one noble exception, do not care whether the beggars are removed or not.

To such a proposal his Honour cannot lend his support. If however the people of the Settlement are willing to be taxed, not separately for each class but universally for the support of the really disabled poor, and having well considered the large probable outlay and heavy taxation that will thereby be occasioned, are yet desirous of making the experiments and willing to pay the rate, Government will readily consider a project of law for that purpose. . . ."

When this reply from Bengal to the Governor was known publicly, several prominent European and Chinese inhabitants immediately requested the Sheriff to convene a Public Meeting to discuss certain matters connected with the erection of a Pauper Hospital and the reply from Bengal.<sup>18</sup>

This meeting was held on Saturday, 3rd February 1844, and certain resolutions were passed, amongst which were a protest that the Deputy Governor of Bengal should hold the view that the erection of the Pauper Hospital was to please the Europeans and quasi-Europeans

and that the Chinese were hard-hearted; a proposal that the funds to support the Pauper Hospital should come from the general revenues of the Settlement and that no further taxation was necessary; recommendations that measures should be taken to prevent immigration of sick paupers; and a proposal that a petition be sent to the Supreme Government.

Immediately after the meeting, Tan Tock Sing as Chairman wrote to the Governor:<sup>19</sup>

" . . . I have the honour as Chairman of a Public Meeting of the Inhabitants held on the 3rd instant for the purpose of considering certain matters connected with the erection of a Pauper Hospital in this Settlement, to enclose a copy of the Resolutions of that meeting, and at the same time, in accordance with the instructions of the meeting, I beg respectfully to request that you will be so good as to afford your countenance and support to the same.

In explanation of the Resolutions I beg to state that it is well known that a considerable number of sick and infirm paupers are annually brought by the Chinese junks and from Rhio, who are landed here and left as burthens upon the charity of the Inhabitants. It is anticipated that should a Hospital be erected it would be the means of attracting these paupers in still greater numbers and thus the institution intended for the infirm and diseased from our own Settlement would be converted into a receptacle for those of other countries who at the same time would not contribute anything towards its maintenance. It may therefore be necessary that measures be adopted for preventing such a result.

The petition alluded to in the 7th paragraph which is in the course of being signed, I shall have the honour of forwarding to you in a few days.

I have the honour . . .

Tan Tock Sing (in Chinese characters)."

Resolutions of a Public Meeting held at Singapore on Saturday, the 3rd February 1844, Tan Tock Sing in the Chair.

A letter from the Under-Secretary to the Government of Bengal to Colonel Butterworth, C. B., Governor of Prince of Wales Island, Singapore and Malacca, No. 1244, dated at Fort William 18th December 1843, having been read by the Chairman.

1st. It was proposed by E.J. Gilman, Esq. seconded by Tan Kim Seng and unanimously carried: That it appears to this meeting that the Government of Bengal is under a misconception in supposing that the proposed erection of a Pauper Hospital for the reception of Chinese and other Asiatics is to please the European and quasi-European portion of the inhabitants, and that the Chinese are indifferent on the subject; that on the contrary, it is the opinion of this meeting that the Chinese are, as a body, most anxious that the same should be carried into effect.

2nd. It was proposed by C. Spottiswoode, Esq., seconded by T.O. Crane, Esq. and unanimously carried: That it is the opinion of this meeting that the erection of a Pauper Hospital is absolutely necessary, and that the funds for the support of the same should be provided from the General Revenues of the Island.

3rd. Proposed by W. Napier, Esq., seconded by Syed Omar and unanimously carried: That it is the opinion of this meeting, that, with reference to the last published official statement of the Revenue and Expenditure of this Island, any further tax for the purpose of supporting the Pauper Hospital is unnecessary.

4th. Proposed by the Chairman, seconded by M. F. Davidson, Esq. and unanimously carried: That on its being decided that a Pauper House be built, it is desirable that the Executive Government do take measures to prevent the importation of sick paupers into the Island.

5th. Proposed by C.A. Dyce, Esq., seconded by J. Guthrie, Esq. and unanimously carried: That funds have been provided for the erection of a European Hospital, and in the opinion of this meeting that it would be expedient and desirable to unite the proposed Pauper and European Hospitals under one roof, as in that event the funds would be amply sufficient to erect a large convenient and sightly building, divided into distinct establishments for Europeans, Chinese and other natives of Asia.

6th. Proposed by W. R. George, Esq., seconded by W. H. Read, Esq. and unanimously carried: That the proceedings of this meeting be forwarded to the Honourable the Governor with a request that the local Government will afford their countenance and support to the same.

7th. Proposed by the Chairman, seconded by T. Smith, Esq. and carried unanimously: That a petition to the Supreme Government embodying the foregoing resolutions be drawn up in

English and Chinese and signed by the inhabitants, and that it be thereafter sent to the Honourable the Governor for transmission to Bengal.

8th. Proposed by G. G. Nicol, Esq., seconded by A. Logan, Esq. and carried unanimously: That the thanks of the meeting be given Tan Tock Sing for his able conduct in the Chair.

The Governor after studying the resolutions, replied on 7th February 1844:<sup>20</sup>

“... The object of the latter part of the 2nd resolution (that funds for the support of the Pauper Hospital should come from the General Revenue) is so entirely opposed to the views of the Supreme Government as well as to those entertained by myself, that I feel compelled, although with much reluctance, to decline giving countenance to the Petition proposed in the 7th Resolution. ...”

The Singapore Free Press reported the proceedings of the Public Meeting in its issue of 8th February 1844 and reminded the Government that there has been public agitation for a Pauper Hospital since 1829:<sup>21</sup>

“... This meeting was held, we believe, principally to consider a letter on the subject which had been received by the Governor from the Bengal Government.

... This letter is in answer to one from the Governor enclosing a draft of an Act for the suppression of mendicity and loathsome exposure at Singapore, and relative to the erection of the hospital for which purpose Tan Tock Sing had offered \$5,000/-. The Deputy-Governor seems to have got the idea that it is merely to please the fastidious ‘Europeans and quasi-Europeans’ that the hospital is to be erected, and he therefore thinks that the Chinese who are almost the only parties who would be benefited by the hospital, ought not to be made to support it, but that the whole community ought to be taxed for it. We believe that the Chinese would have had no objection that the funds required should be raised by a Pork Tax and this tax would have pressed very lightly upon them. The monthly expenditure of the hospital might, we understand, be calculated at \$450-500 per month, say \$6,000/- per annum. This sum the Bengal Government seem to think must be raised by means of a new tax or rate, and it was one of

the objects of the meeting to show that the measure would be unnecessary. . . . The recommendation of the meeting that the proposed Pauper Hospital and the European Seamen's Hospital should be under one roof is, we think, deserving the attention of Government as it would be advantageous in many ways. In the first place, it would lessen the cost of each, while the combination of funds would admit of a much finer building being erected than if they were to be built separately. It would also lighten the labours of the medical establishment and be productive of economy in this as well as in other departments.

We sincerely trust nothing may happen to mar or hinder the establishment of the hospital. It has long been required and it is truly astonishing that a measure which so far back as 1829 called from the Grand Jury the following strong representation should only still be in agitation: 'The Grand Jury beg further to present to your Lordships as a great public nuisance, the increased and greatly increasing number of public beggars, particularly Chinese. The most shocking and loathsome objects are daily exhibited in all parts of the Town and roads of Singapore, of Chinese paupers who since their emigration to the Settlement have fallen victims to sickness and disease so as to entirely incapacitate them from earning an honest livelihood. The Grand Jury therefore beg to be permitted to recommend and suggest to your Lordships the great benefit which they conceive would arise from the construction of a general Pauper Hospital for the reception of these miserable and disgusting objects. By this means the Town will be freed from the present nuisance and the ends of public charity at the same time effectually answered. Such hospital should also be provided with a ward for the admission of sick Europeans who are sometimes unavoidably thrown upon the public.'

We subjoin a copy of the resolution of the meeting which has been laid before the Governor. (see above)"

On 19th February 1844, the Governor wrote to Bengal forwarding the Resolutions of the Public Meeting and at the same time tried to explain what he considered misconceptions in the mind of the Bengal authorities. He men-

tioned that the resolutions of the meeting were opposed to the official view; that he had always favoured the native section of the community and that he had expected opposition to the proposed Act only from the European community; and finally that a wealthy Chinese had bequeathed \$2,000/- towards the erection of the Pauper Hospital:<sup>22</sup>

"... The Resolutions of a Public Meeting of the Inhabitants of Singapore forwarded to me in the accompanying letters from the Chairman of that meeting, which was assembled to take into consideration the expediency of a universal tax for the really disabled Poor, are in the most essential points so opposed to his Honour's view as well as those entertained by myself that I at once declined giving any countenance to the Petition in preparation for submission to the Supreme Government.

Under these circumstances, I should have hardly thought it necessary to trespass further on his Honour's time, if it did not occur to me that a word or two may be necessary to explain away any want of perspicacity in my communication of the 31st October.

It would appear by the 2nd paragraph of the letter under acknowledgement as if I wished to prevent the exhibition of the deformed, whereas I have not seen a deformed person on the Island. The mendicity and exposure to which I alluded to, has and is consequent on the Paupers suffering from sores on their legs, such as all Natives are more or less subject to on arrival and which if not properly and early attended to, spreads to a most fearful extent so as to present a most loathsome spectacle.

I would also most respectfully beg to disabuse His Honour's mind from the impression that the object I had in view was to please the European and Quasi-European inhabitants. I can assure His Honour that my object was most pure and disinterested, that I have not the most distant ambitions to please any one portion of the Straits community more than another, that if I allowed any 'prejudices to get the better of my principles, I should certainly lean to the Native part of it, and that till I determined on the course I felt called upon to take by ocular demonstration of the sufferings of the diseased Chinese, I never exchange-



ed a word on the subject with any European.

....

I may further add that the only persons from whom I expected or met with opposition was from the European inhabitants, not simply by their own uplifted voices but more particularly by their intercourse with the Natives, who were originally almost unanimous in wishing to have the proposed Act put in force. At first view, this will seem barely credible but when I mention that most of the Europeans are in close mercantile connections with the richer class of Natives, and that others have ranges of houses under erection for the meaner classes of the inhabitants which would necessarily be less valuable if put up for sale with this tax upon them, His Honour will have little difficulty in obtaining a clear insight to the motives by which the Europeans and quasi-Europeans are animated. They are moreover smarting just now under the lash they themselves imposed on the community in the shape of an increased assessment on household property.

I must however add that the charitable portion of the European community are heavily taxed as well in supporting the sick as in supplying the destitute of their own class with money, which from time to time they are obliged to do, if only to get rid of them from the Settlement.

In conclusion, I can only express my regret at being unable to offer any other expedient to relieve these unfortunate people without opposing the views of His Honour or those of the Community, than by suggesting that a sufficient sum for the purpose may be taken from the Assessment Fund. I confess that I am most anxious not to see the measure entirely abandoned as in addition to the \$5,000/- from Tan Tock Sing Esq., a wealthy Chinese by name Cham Chan Sang lately deceased, had bequeathed an additional sum of \$2,000/- to be appropriated to the erection of the Chinese Pauper Hospital.

The resort of infirm and diseased Chinese from other countries could be prevented by a short Act somewhat similar to that enclosed, subjecting the Commanders of Vessels landing them to a heavy fine and this, under any circumstances I would respectfully recommend to His Honour's consideration."

On 29th March 1844, the Governor transmitted the Petition "signed by the principal Chinese inhabitants and the majority as well as chief British merchants in the Settlement." The Governor had changed his mind and forwarded the petition when "he found that it was more in accord with the views of His Honour than the Resolutions of the Public Meeting" had led him to expect.<sup>23</sup>

"The Prayer of the present Petition is that a Tax of 2% may be imposed on Houses and Landed Properties, and that \$4,000/- per annum may be accorded by Government or the Assessment Department towards the maintenance of the institutions.

I have little doubt but that the Assessment Department will be able to afford the whole of this sum without inconvenience to the Public in the course of a few years, and that by the period the Hospital is finished, one half that sum might be appropriated to this purpose, notwithstanding the manifold and great improvements required in and about the Town, and if His Honour would graciously be pleased to sanction an allowance from the State of \$2,000/- more, I have every hope that by donations and bequests a sufficient sum would be accumulated, the interest of which in the course of time, would render the Institution independent of other support.

In the 3rd paragraph of my letter under date the 31st October last, I spoke of the indifference with which the Chinese treat the suffering of their countrymen. The present petition shows a very different feeling and I am happy to record it more especially as they are quite willing that the Tax should fall on them alone with a view to the support of the Chinese poor.

In conclusion, I beg to express a hope that I shall be pardoned for taking up so much of his Honour's time on a question which viewed by itself and at a distance, is of small moment except on the score of humanity, but when considered in connexion with the people who form the principal portion of the inhabitants of Singapore to which Port, Traders from all parts of the world congregate, it may appear of some degree of importance to relieve our streets from the miserable objects in whose behalf I desire to interest his Honour."

When the European community came to know of the Petition submitted by Tan Tock Sing Esq. "at the request of the subscribers . . . regarding the maintenance of the Pauper Hospital about to be erected by me", there was public indignation over what it considered was very unethical conduct. The Editor of the Singapore Free Press wrote a scathing article condemning the Chinese community and proposed that the other racial groups petition the Governor for a poll-tax on the Chinese:<sup>25</sup>

"We have learnt with much surprise that a petition to the Government for an addition of 2% to the assessment for the purpose of supporting the Pauper Hospital had been in circulation for some time. This document we understand has been numerously signed by the Chinese and by one or two Europeans (although the Governor stated that the majority of the European merchants had signed, see above), and we have heard has actually been sent to Government, a most extraordinary proceeding it seems to be that such a thing should have been done without any public meeting having been called or any intimation whatever having been given to the bulk of the European community of such a proposal being in contemplation. It is only two months ago, since at a Public Meeting of the Inhabitants, it was unanimously resolved that 'any further tax for the purpose of supporting a Pauper Hospital is unnecessary', yet we have been credibly informed that the present proposal has been brought forward by the Chairman of that Meeting. We have not heard that any opinion has been expressed by Government on the resolutions agreed upon at the Public Meeting held on 3rd February last. . . . Although it was resolved by the Public Meeting that the funds for the hospital ought to be derived from the general revenue of the Island, yet when it is recollected that this declaration was coupled with another that no additional tax was necessary, present sources being amply sufficient, we certainly think the Chinese would have displayed more good taste had they allowed the proposal which is intended almost exclusively for their benefit, to come from the other part of the community on whom it will press with the greatest burden. The European merchants and others who occupy the highest rented part of the Town both as regards dwelling houses and godowns, ought surely to have

been consulted. 10% is an assessment large enough in all conscience. . . .

As to the proposal of the Chinese, it is preposterous and ought to be met by a counter-representation on the part of the other classes of the inhabitants. If the Chinese are so anxious for a new tax, they might raise ample funds by a poll tax on themselves, which would certainly be less objected to than any increase in the assessment."

The Government of Bengal replied on 6th May 1844<sup>26</sup> to say that it was satisfied with the Governor's explanation that he had no intention of gratifying the European part of the population at the expense of the Asiatic. "Far from such being his impression, His Honour believes that your views in respect to the measures proper to be adopted coincide with his own." But the Government of Bengal was not in favour of excluding by law the immigration of sick paupers, and suggested caution and further study regarding the use of the Assessment Fund to support the hospital: ". . . the Deputy-Governor directs me to state that he is not satisfied of the propriety of excluding by law the resort to the Settlement of any description of persons, and as regards the application of the Assessment Fund to the relief of the really disabled poor, coupled as such a measure would probably be with a Vagrant Act for the prevention of public beggaring, the Deputy-Governor would wish you before anything further is done, to consider carefully and report to what extent a charge of this kind might press on the fund in question."

The foundation stone of the European Seamen's Hospital was laid in June and that of Tan Tock Sing's Hospital in July 1844. The Singapore Free Press reported that "these two buildings are to be erected from the designs of Mr. Thomson, Government Surveyor, and it is thought by those competent to judge, that they will be handsome edifices and add much to the appearance of the Town, especially as they are placed in a very conspicuous situation on Pearl's Hill."<sup>27</sup> There was however uncertainty regarding funds for the annual recurrent expenditure of running the hospital, and public opinion was against any increase in the assessment and hope was expressed that some wealthy Chinese would make a sizeable donation as an endowment:

". . . But we suppose this will be considered before commencing the building as it would

be rather awkward to find when the hospital is finished that there were no funds for its support. The proposal to increase the Assessment for this purpose is one which can never be sanctioned as 10% is enough to pay on that account, and as Government will not in all probability allow the required amount to be borne by the existing revenue, private subscription will very likely have to be resorted to as in Penang, unless indeed some wealthy Chinese, following the laudable example of the raiser of the edifice, resolve to endow it."

The ceremony for the laying of the foundation stone of Tan Tock Sing's Hospital was reported by the Singapore Free Press of 25th July 1844. The account will be quoted in full:<sup>28</sup>

"On Monday morning, the 25th July, 1844, the foundation stone of the new Pauper Hospital at Pearl's Hill was laid in the presence of the Honourable Thomas Church, Resident Councillor, Tan Tock Sing, by whose munificence the funds for the building had been supplied, and a number of other gentlemen. A brass plate was deposited beneath the foundation stone, on which was engraved the following inscription:

The Foundation Stone  
of

The Chinese Pauper Hospital  
Singapore,

was laid on the XXVth July, MDCCCXLIV,  
during the Government of

The Hon'ble Colonel W.J. Butterworth, C.B.  
Governor of Prince of Wales' Island,  
Singapore and Malacca,

The Hon'ble T. Church, Esquire,  
being Resident Councillor at Singapore.

The funds for the erection of this building were  
furnished by the humane liberality of

Tan Tock Sing, Esq., J.P.,  
Chinese Merchant in Singapore.

It was the wish of several brethren of the Mystic craft that the ceremony of laying the foundation of the building which was to be appropriated to those purposes of charity and benevolence which are recognised by Masons as among the fundamental articles of their constitution, should be performed with Masonic honours, but it was unfortunately found to be too late to make the necessary arrangements."

The Grand Jury continued to censure the Government for using the existing Pauper Hospital for other purposes and demanded a statement of account of the defunct Pork Farm:<sup>29</sup>

"The Grand Jurors present that the building erected with money the proceeds of a local and partial tax, expressly for the reception of Chinese and other paupers, is used principally as a hospital for the imported convicts, while loathsome diseased paupers are lying about in the streets. They would further with all respect call for a Statement of Account of the money collected from the late Pork Farm since it was submitted to them in February 1838 when a balance of \$17,596.66 was available, and they would by anticipation object to the expenditure of any portion of this money otherwise than for the benefit of diseased paupers."

The Singapore Free Press praised the Grand Jury for their Presentment and stressed that no new tax was necessary. "... deserves great credit for their industry and zeal for the public welfare. . . . \$17,596.66 if judiciously invested would go far to endow the proposed Pauper Hospital and prevent the necessity of having recourse to any new tax or farm. . . ." <sup>30</sup>

The Governor took the opportunity afforded by the Presentment of the Grand Jury to comment on the Pauper and Convict Hospital and to ask the Bengal Government for funds to maintain the proposed Tan Tock Sing's Hospital:<sup>31</sup>

"The community at this Settlement have long laboured under the impression that the revenue obtained from the Pork Farm abolished in 1837 was a municipal fund, and this may be accounted for by the revenue derived therefrom having been applied to the support of the inmates of the Pauper Hospital and the discontinuance of admission to the Pauper Hospital except persons suffering from accident and acute diseases being contemporaneous.

. . . I hardly know what the Right Honourable the Governor will think of paupers, weakened by disease brought on not infrequently by idleness and want, being thrown amidst the Convicts whose crimes have exiled them from their country. Such is the case, however, there being but one large room for the whole. The humane liberality of Tan Tock Sing who has under

erection the Building alluded to in my letter under date the 29th March last, No. 51, will however enable me to remove the paupers in the course of a few months from their present morally contaminating atmosphere with the Establishment at present authorised for the Pauper Hospital (1 Apothecary \$15; 1 Dresser \$6.82; 2 Peons \$10; Total \$31.82), and I would fair hope that the Right Honourable the Governor of Bengal will graciously be pleased to allow \$2,000/- per annum towards the maintenance of this establishment which is about the average sum expended since 1837 in the Pauper Hospital. This with such aid as the Community may individually afford and the supply of a certain sum from the Assessment Department would, I am persuaded, effectually clear our streets from the loathsome objects with which they now are infested."

The Governor of Bengal replied on 20th April 1845 that the application of a yearly grant of \$2,000/- towards the maintenance of the hospital in the course of erection by Tan Tock Sing would "be taken into consideration hereafter on your reporting the completion of that building and the plan on which the Institution is to be managed."<sup>32</sup>

The Grand Jury on 17th April 1845 once again complained that on their visit, the Pauper Hospital contained 33 sick paupers, 48 sick Indian convicts and 14 local convicts, and that "the building is now used chiefly as a hospital for convicts, numerous houseless, diseased and maimed beggars are to be found in the streets". They also asked for an accounting of the balance of the funds of the Pork Farm in the hands of Government, and suggested that this balance and the value of the present building which was not used solely as a Pauper Hospital, be applied to support the inmates of Tan Tock Sing's Hospital which was about to be completed.<sup>33</sup>

This time there was an official reply from the Resident Councillor.<sup>33</sup> He stated that the Pauper Hospital was as much Government property as the Court House or any other public building, and that the proceeds of the Pork Farm like the other Farms had been paid into the Local Treasury and carried to the Public Account. The Pauper Hospital had been built at the entire expense of Government and the maintenance of the inmates was defrayed by Government without any particular reference to the amount of the Pork Farm. Moreover, a large proportion

of the \$17,596.66 (the balance in February 1838) had already been expended in maintaining the inmates of the hospital, and the balance, exclusive of the value of the building, on 1st April 1845, was \$1,420.09, which would be exhausted in nine months as it still cost about \$150/- per month to maintain the inmates.

The Singapore Free Press reported on 22nd May 1845 that "... the Seamen's Hospital is now completed and the Pauper one in progress so that a great change will be produced in the appearance of that part of the Town in less time than a year from this day, elegant buildings covering the present unsightly swamp. . . ."<sup>34</sup> and the Governor informed Bengal on 14th August 1845 that "the Pauper Hospital under erection by Tan Tock Sing will shortly be finished when I shall submit a plan for the management of the Institution as required in the 4th paragraph of your letter dated 2nd April last. . . ."<sup>35</sup> But the public were getting impatient and there were insinuations that the Police Superintendent and the Governor were not doing their work properly and that police constables allowed beggars to roam the streets in return for a portion of the takings:<sup>36</sup>

"... the numerous Chinese with loathsome disease. . . are daily increasing and the streets becoming more disgusting every day. These Chinese are now allowed (at least no one interferes with them) to sit in a line the whole length of bridges, not only obstructing the passengers and endangering their own lives, but creating an atmosphere which is sickening in the extreme. I can hardly concede that this nuisance can be known to the Deputy Superintendent or he would with his usual vigilance, put an end to it. I am inclined to think that those innocent creatures called peons are at the bottom of this, and actually share in the gainings of these unfortunate people who continue to scrape together a good sum by begging. . . . There are no two opinions as to the anxiety of our energetic Governor to do all in his power for the good of the Settlement, and could he escape for a few minutes in the daytime from the mass of business with which he is surrounded and personally inspect the Town. . . ."

In September 1845, the Police Magistrates took upon themselves the thankless task of trying to raise funds to build a shed to house the paupers and to feed them. They sent the following circular to the inhabitants:<sup>37</sup>

"It having been painfully conspicuous that the Town of Singapore contains an immense number of diseased and destitute persons who for various causes are unable to earn a livelihood, crowding the streets and public thoroughfares and exposing to view the fearful ulcers and emaciated frames which are the natural consequences of such a state of penury. It is confidently believed that all to whom this is known will be eager to come forward and assist in remedying this evil.

That poverty is a fertile source of crime is abundantly acknowledged, but as prevention is always better than cure and the law of kindness stronger than that of severity, let us form a committee to consider the expediency of making collections for the purpose of erecting a shed in some open space out of Town, appointing an overseer to live on the spot with a small salary and purchasing rice and fish for the really diseased and destitute until other permanent arrangements are made.

There are at present upwards of 200 paupers in the Town. Should any three gentlemen be willing to join the Rev. Mr. Moule, Captain Cuppage and Mr. Dunman, it is expected that such measures could easily and speedily be adopted as would effectually remedy the evil and give the gratifying reflection that suffering has been alleviated and the causes of crime diminished while the sensitive would be free from the sight of such objects."

The Editor of the Straits Times (newly established) was an enthusiastic supporter of this scheme. Long articles appeared in his paper on the "Native Poor"<sup>38</sup> and "The diseased and indigent of Singapore, their miseries and means for their relief",<sup>37</sup> drawing attention to the fact that in Singapore, 25 years after its founding, nothing was done for the paupers who had to resort to crime or beg to keep body and soul together; that many Chinese were lured to Singapore where they died of starvation or disease after having resorted to opium smoking. The formation of a benevolent society was proposed:<sup>37</sup>

"... To provide for the poor and helpless is the bounden duty of the more fortunate of the community.

It is now more than 25 years since the first formation of the Settlement of Singa-

pore, but still up to this hour no provision is made for the poor, no asylum is provided for the sick, no refuge exists for the destitute. The increase of crime is dilated on, its growing evil lamented but no eye pities, no hand is outstretched to help the poor. The latter to supply his physical necessities may steal. . . . Most of the streets, bridges, passages of the Town and places of public resort are thronged with miserable objects whose diseased and shattered frames strike horror to the heart. . . . their forlorn situation is no crime. . . . no fund exists from whence their necessities may be relieved and the evil complained of remedied. This circumstance we are bound to say reflects strongly on to the discredit of our Christian and wealthy population. . . .

Of the 36,000 Chinese inhabitants at Singapore, about one-third have no visible or permanent means of support. They land here with views which are somewhat strangely contradicted by the nothingness of the result. We are borne out by the Police that nearly 6,000 persons are comparatively starving and that more than 100 die each year from positive hunger. Designing men raise thousands of Chinese recruits to bring them in the junks each year. The delusive wealth, ease and luxuries of Singapore dwindle into insignificance and the immigrant to his sad disappointment finds that the streets are not paved with the precious metal which his fancy painted, that in fact even labour is not in demand, and he is consequently left a prey to indigence and disease, or prompted to steal for the purpose of supplying his necessities—no fund exists to enable him to live until he can procure employment, no asylum is found where he can rest his head in peace. Crime is his only resource, its commission ensures what is not otherwise obtainable and places him above the pressing and immediate wants of our common nature, or if some moral feeling exists against the commission of actual crime, he is driven to the use of the intoxicating and noxious drug which hurries him to a premature grave. Every habitual opium smoker is a candidate for the array of diseased wretches that in every direction meet the eye. . . . In every street of the Town are to be seen objects of wretchedness. Poverty is stalking through our streets and in the purlieus of the Town where the haunts

of vice are, indigent and diseased are unobserved by the European part of the community. Many are dying daily for lack of labour and food. . . .

We propose the formation and establishment of a benevolent or friend-in-need society, supported by monthly subscriptions and placed under the management of a committee of subscribers elected annually. We have every reason to believe that the Native community will very cheerfully unite in the proposed plan for the amelioration of the sufferings of the destitute. No difficulty we imagine will exist in raising the necessary funds (about \$200 p.m.) to carry out the object of the proposed institution. Indeed the Police Magistrates are willing to afford every encouragement and have anticipated our wishes by sending the circular which has been responded to somewhat in excess of our most sanguine expectations. . . . We take a warm interest in the benevolent object which it is proposed to be accomplished and will feel unmingled pleasure in aiding the efforts of such of the friends of the suffering poor who will unite in establishing the society to which we have alluded. The amount of misery which will be relieved as well as the amount of crime which will be prevented by the institution is incalculable, whilst the distribution of the funds under the management of a committee will afford the best guarantee that the truly necessitous will alone be relieved and imposters be punished as vagrants.

We trust that the matter will not be allowed to rest. Let a meeting be held and a society established. The design is one of utility, its object the good of our fellow creatures. It will be for such society through its officers to seek out deserving objects of sympathy, to console the afflicted, to visit the foresaken, to remove from the public gaze the wretched beings whom poverty and disease mark as monuments deserving our observation and regards—wretched mortals more fitting objects for commiseration and relief than our reproach and disgust.”

One week later, the Straits Times was able to report some success in its appeal with participation from the Native community, but regretted that there were some who objected to the scheme on the grounds that social welfare was a Government responsibility, and that it would encourage pauperism. It pointed out parti-

nently that Government participation is always uneconomical and would invariably mean increased taxes:<sup>38</sup>

“The appeal which we put forth last week on behalf of the destitute and miserable objects that infest the streets and lack the common necessities of life, has been most cheerfully responded to and we are extremely happy to notice that subscriptions have been entered to the amount of \$113/- monthly besides sundry donations amounting to \$100/-. The more fortunate of the native community awake to the sufferings and misery of their unhappy countrymen have very benevolently subscribed nearly one half of the sum above-mentioned. Such an exhibition of philanthropy is exceedingly gratifying and is eminently calculated to produce the most pleasurable sensation always attendant on the exercise of those noble parts of the human character which call forth feelings of sympathy for the less fortunate of the species. . . .

There are some whose position and circumstances enable them to contribute to the work of amelioration but who nevertheless decline or neglect to do so from a jealous supposition that the Government ought to provide for the poor, or else from an erroneous opinion that by establishing an asylum for the destitute some encouragement will be afforded to the idle and profligate. Both objections are futile, not to say childish. Were the Government to provide for the destitute and wretched beings stalking through our streets—a step our worthy and humane Governor would, we doubt not, most cheerfully perform—new taxes must necessarily be levied or the rate of assessment be augmented in order to meet the additional demands on the finances of the Settlement. Were Government to undertake the task, it most likely would be on a scale at least liberal and commensurate with the demand that exists for pecuniary aid, but at the same time a Government establishment is not likely to be so economically conducted as a voluntary association whose officers must feel a pleasure in discharging the duties of humanity that belong to such an institution. The objection as to the encouragement of pauperism is illusory. The diseased would be sent to hospital, the destitute but starving pauper would whenever able, be obliged to labour within the institution in return for

food and shelter and thus contribute to his own support, while the vagrant and imposter would be dealt with according to the law—measures sufficiently deterrent of professed pauperism. . . .

But notwithstanding the great liberality that has been displayed as also the probability that the sum already subscribed will be sufficient to the demands of the establishment alluded to, we particularly and earnestly entreat all who have not contributed their mite to do so cheerfully and without delay. . . .”

The rival newspaper, the Singapore Free Press, was however against the scheme. It published letters to the Editor which supported this view point:<sup>39</sup>

“A circular emanating from the Police Office has of late been going the rounds of the Settlement requesting the aid of the community towards raising a subscription to relieve the diseased and destitute Chinese who crowd our streets. Although the principle set forth in this petition deserves approbation, the means employed to work it out are anything but satisfactory. . . .

The next serious subject for consideration is, if Government sent round circulars for subscriptions to support the Chinese poor now, what will they do when Tock Sing's Hospital is finished? Where are the funds to come to support that institution?

If it requires \$200/- per month to support the paupers and sick now, what will it be when in addition there will be the hospital, nurses, and medicines to provide, not to speak of the extra number of sick that will come to this Settlement from the neighbouring islands, from Rhio and even from China when they hear of the good quarters provided for them.

The Government promises medical assistance, public charity must do the rest. . . .”

The correspondent went on to state that the small European community could not be expected to contribute largely to provide for the Chinese paupers, and proposed that the tax on pork be reintroduced. “Pork is consumed by Europeans as well as Chinese, the tax would tell equally as regards the different proportions of the population and the hospital provided for. . . .the present bad system of begging petitions would be abolished.”

And the Editor then added his own comments. The paupers being birds of passage,

not having contributed to the welfare of the settlement in better times, were not entitled to community support. Moreover, many of them had got into this sorry state as a result of opium smoking. This being the case, the Government which derived revenue from the sale of opium, should bear the brunt. If Government refused to assist, then the Chinese community, especially the wealthy members, who had benefited by the labour of the poor, should be taxed to support the paupers. Means should also be taken to prevent the immigration of diseased persons from abroad, and to see that only the really diseased are supported. The idle should be made to work and eke out their own existence. The re-establishment of the Pork Farm was advocated, and if necessary a Gambling Farm:

“We quite agree with our correspondent as to the inexpediency of the course proposed to be adopted for providing for the diseased and destitute unless as a temporary measure. Although we assent to the general proposition that the maintenance of the poor ought to be borne by all, yet we think, in the case of the pauper population here, there are circumstances which seem to make an exception to the rule, and point at a different course to be followed in regard to them.

The class of persons who are to be relieved here are not as in England constituted of members of the community who by sickness, old age, etc. have become unable to work or cannot obtain it. They have not while able by their industry earned a title to support when disabled from labour, but on the contrary it will be found, if the matter is inquired into, that the great mass of the Chinese vagrants in Singapore (for of the other classes, the mendicants are exceedingly few) are persons who have arrived here from China or elsewhere in a state of disease or have been sent over from Rhio by the Dutch. It will be found that many of these paupers have been reduced to their present wretched state by the uncontrolled indulgence in vice. Arriving from China, they find that they have here the opportunity of indulging in opium smoking as much as they please, and accordingly every pice they can compass is spent in the smoking shop, and they speedily become by their inordinate addiction to this most insidious and undermining of all vices, the miserable objects whom we daily contemplate in our streets.

Is it then right or proper that the public, which has not derived any advantage from the skill or labour of the great majority of these persons, should be called upon directly to support them? Ought not the Government out of the large sums it derives from the vend of this drug which reduces these men to disease and pauperism, to spare a small sum for the support of the misery which it has created? There is a surplus revenue, there is a large and increasing sum derived each year from the Opium and Spirit Farms, and it is but decent that some small part of it should be devoted to an institution for the relief of the pauper, which will give a sanction to the appropriation of the rest to less benevolent purposes, and excuse in some measure the existence of the sources from which it is derived.

If Government however persists in refusing this, then we would still argue that the community at large are not called upon either by voluntary subscriptions or by new taxation to support these Chinese paupers. To their own countrymen who profit by their labour and who as a body are the richest and most numerous class of inhabitants of Singapore, the Chinese poor are entitled to look for support and shelter. They themselves have recognised the justice of doing so and never complained of the Pork Farm which was maintained for this purpose as being unjust or invidious from falling upon them alone. . . . When Government in a fit of sentimentality abolished the Pork Farm in 1837, it was with an expressed expectation that a voluntary benevolence of the wealthy of their own countrymen would amply compensate for the provisions of which the abolition of the Pork Farm deprived the pauper Chinese. The Free Press then ventured to express a doubt whether any such active charity would be found amongst them and the state of our streets at the present time shows these doubts to have been well-founded. Their humanity has ever since remained at zero with the exception of Tan Tock Sing and one or two others, and it only experienced a thaw the other day when they could not for very shame but follow the example of liberality set them by the Europeans in behalf of the Chinese paupers. We doubt much however whether their charitable feelings would not very much abate at a

direct monthly demand for a sum in hard cash, and therefore it is that we advocate the expediency of levying on them indirectly if it is required the funds for maintaining the Pauper Hospital.

Some means ought to be taken at the same time to prevent the introduction of diseased persons from China by the junks and from Rhio and other neighbouring places, and care must be had that only the really diseased and indigent are relieved. Many who might earn a subsistence by labour prefer an idle and vagabond life even though may be at times reduced to short commons, and for such the House of Correction seems a fitter receptacle than the Pauper Hospital. While such a large extent of uncultivated land remains in Singapore, no man who can handle a *changkol* (hoe) need want for food. . . .

We do not deny the necessity which there exists of some measure being taken for the diseased and aged paupers being taken care of. We only urge that this ought to be done by other means than by appealing to the charity of the European population which ought to be reserved for other and more deserving objects. We maintain that the Government out of the surplus derived in large measure from supplying the means of the vicious indulgence which reduces so many of these persons to disease and want, ought to support the necessary institution, and failing Government taking upon itself the burden, then we think the numerous and wealthy class to which the paupers belong ought to be the chief means of support. This has always been considered, for although Government abolished the Pork Farm yet it was as we have said, in the expectation that the Chinese would support their poor countrymen voluntarily.

Their voluntary association for such purpose unexcited by large subscriptions from Europeans being hopeless, we advocate the re-establishment of a Tax at which previously they never murmured and the operation of which they do not feel. . . . There is another tax which we have always thought would be productive of considerable revenue. . . . the proceeds of which might very appropriately be applied to the support of the Chinese paupers. We mean a Gambling Farm. . . .”

(To be continued. References will be found at the end of Section 2 of this article.)