

Home (1918) Department.
(Education)

Ordinary SERIES.

G.O. No. 584

DATED 4-5-1918

[Despatch Abstract.]

Confidential reports.

Communicating to the heads of departments under the Home
(Education) Department G.O.No.1583, Public, dated the 5th November
1915 on the subject of ----- on subordinate officers.

BACK PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.	G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

FURTHER PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.	G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

Government of Madras.

PUBLIC DEPARTMENT.

Recd.

Regd.

} 1915.

Enclosures

Spare copies

G.O. No. 1583, 5th November 1915.

Confidential reports.

Communicating to departments of the Secretariat Resolution of the Government of India, Home Department, Nos. 1568-1595, dated 14th September 1915, prescribing the procedure to be followed in communicating to subordinate officers unfavourable remarks made by their superiors in their —.

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

PUBLIC DEPARTMENT.

READ—the following paper :—

**Resolution of the Government of India, Home Department (Establishments),
Nos. 1568-1595, dated Simla, the 14th September 1915.**

The Governor-General in Council has had under consideration the question of the communication to subordinate officers in civil employ of such unfavourable remarks as may be made in regard to them by their superiors at the time of annual reports or on other occasions. The enquiries that have been made show that the procedure at present followed in different provinces, and even in different departments within the same province, is far from identical, and in the absence of any adequate reason for this variety of treatment, and having regard to the inconvenience likely to arise upon the transfer of an officer from one province or department to another in which different rules on the subject are in force, His Excellency in Council considers that the matter should henceforth be dealt with on more uniform lines.

2. The diversity of practice which obtains is sufficient evidence of the difficulty of applying hard and fast rules to the subject, which is one of great importance both to the efficiency of administration and to the interests of the officers of Government, but while recognising that some measure of elasticity is a necessary corollary the Government of India see no reason why, if certain guiding principles are laid down as appropriate to all departments and in all provinces, there should be any difficulty in giving general effect to them. The arguments on both sides are well known; in favour of free communication are the contentions that it is not fair to condemn a man behind his back and that unless a man is told of his defects he has the less chance of rectifying them. On the other hand in justification of the exercise of discretion in the extent and manner of communication it may be urged that if every unfavourable comment is to be passed on, superior officers will be apt to refrain from giving candid opinions on the merits of their subordinates, which would be an undesirable consequence; secondly, that the communication of remarks in many cases will only lead to defences, objections and friction; thirdly, that superior officers can be trusted not to make improper use of the system of confidential reports. None of these considerations is without weight, especially as a general picture of an officer's merits or demerits, so far as the reporting authority has had full opportunity of judging of them, must be regarded as of considerably more value than a report under certain specified headings which has a tendency to become stereotyped and lifeless. But it is the descriptive report which is apt to contain remarks of which it is inexpedient to apprise the officer concerned. Again, there may be good reasons why the departmental head or any other authority dealing with the report should withhold final judgment; he would in such cases be well advised to await a subsequent report, which might either modify or corroborate previous criticisms; in the former event no harm will have been done to the officer concerned; in the latter it would then be time enough to address him. It is also the case that at the time of report many observations upon ability and temperament suggest themselves which it is useless to convey to the officer reported upon. Such defects may be irremediable and their publication would only embitter or discourage the recipient. Further, the method of communication is often a consideration of much importance. The best form is frequently a personal letter giving credit for what is good, while instancing what requires to be corrected. The annual enumeration of defects, without any

acknowledgment of useful work done, may only lead to discouragement and soreness and do more harm than good. There is often a marked resentment of criticism on the part of a good officer which, however unreasonable, is genuinely felt, and may have a prejudicial effect on his future efficiency. For this reason the method to be employed in pointing out to an officer his particular shortcomings should be determined by a consideration of his individual temperament. Finally, in many, possibly the majority of cases, the superior officer has already, in one shape or another, made the defect or defects brought to notice the subject of warning or remonstrance. Examples of the fault or shortcoming will have occurred in daily work and will have been commented upon at the time, and it is therefore most desirable that a reporting officer should always state explicitly whether the attention of his subordinate has already been drawn to the defects noticed. Such an obligation would in itself tend to make the superior officer careful to avoid hasty and superficial comments.

3. In view of these considerations, His Excellency in Council, with the approval of the Secretary of State, is pleased to direct that—

(a) when a report is built up on the individual opinions as noted of different departmental superiors in gradation, it is only the opinion as accepted by the highest authority which need be considered from the point of view of communication;

(b) as a general rule in no case should an officer be kept in total ignorance for any length of time that his superiors after sufficient experience of his work are dissatisfied with him; in cases where a warning might eradicate or help to eradicate a particular fault, the advantages of prompt communication are obvious; where criticism is to be withheld the final authority to consider the report should record instructions, with reasons, according to the nature of the defect discussed, as to the period for which communication is to be kept back;

(c) only those defects need be pointed out which can be remedied, since it would serve no useful purpose to communicate such criticisms as lack of ability or intelligence;

(d) the reporting officer should specifically state whether the defects reported have been already brought in any other connection to the notice of the officer concerned;

(e) remarks in cases in which the Local Government or head of a department or other officer suspends judgment should not be communicated;

(f) great attention should be paid to the manner and method of communication in order to ensure that the advice given and the warning or censure administered, whether orally or in writing, shall, having regard to the temperament of the officer concerned, be most beneficial to him.

4. The above procedure should govern reports of a periodical nature. There are others which may either be—

(i) reports of particular incidents or acts, which, if disciplinary action is taken, require either regular proceedings or definite censure after the defence of the officer concerned has been taken;

(ii) reports in reply to inquiries whether an officer who has not been well reported on in the past has improved and is fit for promotion; or

(iii) reports in answer to requests for opinions as to the fitness of an officer for a particular appointment, etc.

No special instructions are necessary in respect of the first class, and as regards the others the Governor-General in Council considers that they should not be communicated unless they disclose facts or allegations which in the opinion of the Local Government should be conveyed to the officer concerned. If such remarks were invariably communicated, there is little doubt that reporting officers would be discouraged from giving unreserved advice, and opinions of value would be thereby lost.

5. There remains the question of the treatment of military officers in civil employ. His Excellency in Council is pleased to direct that such of these officers as are not in permanent civil employ should be dealt with under the King's Regulations, while those who are, should come under the rules applicable to the civil officers of the departments in which they are serving.

Home (887) Cn. 1128A
NOTES.
29 Page 18

Home (Misc.) Department.

No. 1583, PUBLIC, 5TH NOVEMBER 1915.

6. These orders will not apply to military medical officers who will continue to be governed by the orders conveyed in the Home Department letter Nos. 251-260, dated the 14th May 1914, but for the rest the standing provincial or departmental instructions and rules should as soon as possible be revised with the view of embodying in them the principles now laid down.

ORDER.—Ordered that a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to all Local Governments and Administrations noted on the margin,* the several Departments of the Government of India (including the office of the Financial Adviser, Military Finance), the Superintendent, Port Blair, the Director-General, Indian Medical Service, the Registrar, High Court, Calcutta, † the Director, Criminal Intelligence, the Administrator-General, Bengal, and the Official Trustee, Bengal, for information.

* Madras.
Bombay.
Bengal.
United Provinces.
Punjab.
Burma.

Bihar and Orissa.
Central Provinces.
Assam.
Coorg.
Delhi.

† By usual letter.

L. R. HIGNELL,
Offg. Secretary to the Government of India.

To the Government of Madras.

Order—No. 1583, Public, dated 5th November 1915.

Communicated to departments of the Secretariat. Their attention is drawn to paragraph 6 of the Resolution of the Government of India directing that the standing provincial or departmental instructions should be revised with a view to embodying in them the principles now laid down regarding the communication to subordinate officers of unfavourable remarks made by their superiors at the time of annual reports or on other occasions.

(True Extract.)

C. G. TODHUNTER,
Ag. Secretary to Government.

To Departments of the Secretariat
(except Pension).

Subject.—Legislative Council Resolution re: communica-
tion of adverse reports to officers concerned.

For the Registrar.

The papers may, it is submitted, be recorded in a G.O., Home (Education) being requested u.o. to communicate G.O. No. 1583, Public, dated the 5th November 1915, to heads of departments under that department. A draft order is submitted for approval.

T.C.N.
24-4-16.

P. de R.
25-4-16.

C.R.
27-4-16.

Sec.

R.R.R.
29-4-16.
Home (Sec) Dept

A draft order is submitted for approval

La
2.5.18
NK
27/5/18

Ca
4.5.18

SA

Confidential report

Communicating to the Heads of Depts. under the Home Edu. Dept.
p.o. no. 1583 Sub-B 5.11.15 on the subject of — on subordinate officers

READ AGAIN G.O. No., dated 19...

" " " " "

191

READ ALSO:—

C. No. 1128A, From the _____, No. _____, dated _____ 191

” ” ” ” ” ” 191

ORDER.

Misc

No. 584, dated 3/5 1918

G.P.O. no. 1583 Pub, dated the 5th Novem
1915 on the subject of confidential
reports on subordinate officers is
communicated to the heads of Dep'ts
under the Home (Secy) Dept

by
2.5.18

19
4.5.18

Rees spent
with ex-
8-5-1966

To The Heads of Depts under the
Home Edu Dept
with a copy of p. no 15-3-16
5-11-15

When given for copying
 When copied FILE
 When examined 65 191
 When signed 65

READ AGAIN G.O. No. . DATED
 191 .

SECRET No.

ENCLOSURE TO G. No.

ORDER OF GOVERNMENT A A A A A A A

LETTER OF GOVERNMENT

STATEMENT WITH LISTS.

PAYERS NOT FILLED UP, BEING MEANT FOR DISPATCH
 IN ORIGINAL.

E.E.-

A = Copy in full.
 B = Not to be copied.
 F = Copy abstract only.
 Q = Copy heading only.