

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Financial DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No.

30

Press
~~Mis.~~

Dated

18. 1.

1858

B. no. 8-9

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Not to be folded or roughly handled

No. 8. From the ACCOUNTANT GENERAL; to the CHIEF SECRETARY to GOVERNMENT, dated 29th December 1857, No. 280.

SIR,

1. I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the resolution of Government of the 4th Instant, No. 778 in the Financial Department, referring for my remarks, the reply* of the Chamber of Commerce to the letter of Government to it, calling upon it to state the specific instances upon which was founded its representation† that the delays in the Accountant General's Office in granting "Certificates" had deterred the public from subscribing to the open 5 per cent Loan.

2. The Chamber have altogether quitted the ground it originally took up. The charge was not simply that there was "delay in granting the Certificates," but that there was such "delay as to deter parties from investing their money in the open Loan." It was to this charge which in my estimation was a very serious one, that I addressed myself; and Government will have observed

* *The words of the Chamber were one of the causes of the paucity of the contributions to the Loan at Madras is, the Chamber have reason to believe, the great delay in the Accountant General's Office which in many instances has precluded parties from subscribing.* that the Chamber have adduced no single* instance in proof of the charge. I thought

† *They take it, isolated and disconnected with the rest of the passage, and then use it as a foundation for inducing a new element into the discussion, viz., complaint of delay in granting Interest orders which question was not advanced at all before. If the whole passage be read it will prove how very unfounded has been the original representation of the Chamber, and how little ground they have to engraft upon it a challenge of enquiry into the interest business of the Office. I had better give the passage, it is this: "I trust Government will be thus convinced that there has been no culpable delay. The business in few Offices, if any, is so well up as to turn out its work, week by week as it comes in. I confess I do not understand how it is that the Chamber have thought proper to make this representation to Government. The loan was opened to transfer on the 30th July last. Their letter is dated the 8th September, say 6 weeks. How could they stake their reputation upon an averment that the subscriptions of a whole community in that short period were injuriously affected by the delay of 552 Bonds, of which the bulk were disposed of in four days, only 8 of the Notes having been kept uncertificated for 8 days, to which add the exceptional case of 3 Notes explained in the preceding para:"* it was impossible to prove anything of the kind, and therefore (not as challenging enquiry into other matters) I made the remark, which the Chamber have now taken up, but for a very different purpose† "I confess I do not understand how it is that the Chamber have thought proper to make this representation to Government."

3. Again, one of the Chamber's positions was that, by reason of the delay in granting the Certificates, parties had to borrow money, "for weeks" if they desire to invest in the Loan. I pointed out that the delay in granting the Certificate could not influence the money transaction, because no man would be unwise enough to take up the cash before he required it and that he need not borrow for more than a day or two, (if he could get such a loan) because the Certificate being granted, say on the Monday, he could take it over to the Treasury on the Monday, or at any rate, on the morrow, i. e., on Tuesday.

4. How do the Chamber answer—they do not controvert what I stated—all that they say is "and that such* (i. e., the man must borrow when he deposits the Promissory Note in the Accountant General's Office)" "must be the case

* *The Chamber say that such Loans can be had but it does not say at what cost. I also stated that they could be obtained but at the cost of 15 days' interest.* "the least consideration would have made evident, for who would be so rash as to commence a transaction, the first step of which is beyond recal, without first securing the means of carrying it out to completion," what sort of an

answer is this? Why do they not produce, or name, the man, or men, who did *borrow* the cash on the day on which he or they deposited the Notes, and who could not, *by reason of the delay in the Accountant General's Office*, repay the money for 3 weeks. Of course preliminary arrangements must be made, but I still deny the necessity, or the probability, of a man taking up cash before he requires it. But if, nevertheless, it has been the case, I can only repeat that if a man did so, it has been his own act, the blame of which does not attach fairly to the Accountant General's Office. Further, the transaction is a complex one, the party has to repay the loan by means of the sale proceeds of one of his acknowledgments. This he may not be able to sell instantly, but whatever may be the delay on this account in repaying the loan, *that delay* in not fairly chargeable on the Accountant General's Office.

5. The question of the delay in granting Certificates is quite a minor and distinct one from the above, I will now touch upon it. The Chamber commence (para: 2) by stating that the records of "the Office," as they asserted, "almost renders it superfluous for the Chamber to adduce specific instances of delay for the satisfaction of Government." It would be wonderful indeed if the records had *not* given the information, *viz.*, their instances and others, seeing that every single Bond transaction was sifted, but that again was not the question. The question was not what my records contained but what were the instances the Chamber founded its representation upon, and which I said it ought, in all fairness, to have furnished me with, in order that I might explain the cause, or causes of delay. The animus of the Chamber is sufficiently shewn in this para: It admits that one-third of the work was turned out with creditable despatch, but then it insinuates that "the fortunate applicants" were fortunate, because they were natives* who personally

* But the fact is that the number of a Natives was far less than the number of Europeans, &c., who shared in the despatch here adverted to. I do not understand what is meant by personal superintendence no stranger can superintend the work of the Accountant General's Office. All that he can do is to ask personally for despatch, and his request will be attended to out of mere courtesy.

superintended the transfer of their Bonds. I do not suppose Government desire that I should enter upon that point, all I can say is, that in these cases, the

desire was to be courteous, and to meet the wishes of the applicants, and it would have been the same if the members of the Chamber had chanced to be amongst those applicants. The Chamber is too hard upon the Office, it casts blame *both* for despatch *and* for tardiness. Beyond this wish to oblige, I do not believe any "undue preference" was shewn. I do not think the views taken by the Chamber, that because one portion of work can be done with rapidity that all can be done equally quickly, is of universal concurrence and the instances of despatch were not consecutive but were interspersed amongst all the instances.

6. I am well pleased to find that the Chamber's representation of delay had not included the Bainbridge case, for this fact shews how very little, on their own shewing, that representation had to stand upon. In the Bainbridge case I admit the error. The delay was 23 days. The 3 Notes were received on the 26th August, Messrs. Bainbridge & Co. were asked for the Power on the 31st. They did not reply *till the 17th September* and on the 19th the Certificate was sent, Messrs. Bainbridge & Co., in their memorandum which the Chamber have handed up, state that the "Accountant General now disingenuously asserts that the delay was our fault." I do not see, I confess, how I *disingenuously* asserted that. What I did state was that the delay was the fault of my Office, but that *so great* delay would not have occurred if their reply had come earlier. They took 16 days to answer; and to what extent the delay was thus augmented, of course, if there had been no mistake there would have been no delay, but if they had not answered for a couple of months, surely *that* portion of the delay would not have been so entirely attributable to my Office that I should have been debarred from stating the fact in explanation of the cause. It is curious, however, what a glimpse this 16 days' delay accidentally gives us, careless Government Officials, into the supposed superiority, in point of rapidity, of despatch, of a House of Agency in the transaction of business, and of their tender concern for the interests of their constituents. It occurs to me that if the power were granted to ransack their records, and to collect all the complaints of all their constituents, the official offences of the houses represented by the Chamber, which might be gathered together, might perchance afford a catalogue of official sins of omission and commission which would not be so very pleasant to the parties concerned.

7. The Chamber arrogates to itself the right of sitting in judgment. They would not only instruct the Accountant General how he is to conduct the duties of his Office, but teach the *Government* how they are to govern. No doubt the Chamber conceives that it comprises in itself "all the talents" but I deny its ability, much more its competency, to lay down the law to Government, or to myself. Suppose Government were to ask any House of Agency to scrutinize their Accounts, and to render to Government information with respect to the dates on which they credited their constituents with money due to them; or in fact, any particulars of their business. The House would at once deny the right of Government to do any such thing. I certainly should not venture to tell the head of any House of Agency how he ought to conduct his Agency, nor to call to account Messrs. Bainbridge & Co. for taking 16 days to answer a letter, to answer which would have at once rectified an error, about which they made no complaint, and of which they felt not the injury, until tarred on by the Chamber; of which, again, the Chamber knew *nothing* when they made their original representation to Government, and which therefore they ought in all fairness to have put aside as not supporting that representation. My desire is that the work of the

*In the present case their first complaint having no foundation could only have been treated as unfounded.

Office should be well done, and I never take it ill if any one points out to me any delay in a Department of my Office. What I deprecate is, the Chamber assuming the right to collect complaints and then rushing up to Government, denouncing the internal proceedings

in my Office upon which courteous communication to myself would have had the desired influence,* if acceleration of business was the only end aimed at.

8. I have always regarded Government as a Court of appeal, not to be addressed unless the aggrieved party has at least made known his grievance to the Officer who may be inculpated. The Chamber aver that they acted in no hostile spirit. (para: 4.) To this I can only reply that the Chamber is assuredly no *curia amicitiae*. It talks about its being invidious to point out specific instances, and "unpleasant to make complaints," but they do not seem to think it otherwise than agreeable to the head of a Public Office that a vague untenable, nay unfounded, charge should be placed on Government records against it.

9. The Chamber notice that in my Statement of the periods of delivery I omit "the days of delivery and receipt of the Notes and also Sundays" I conceive that since the "work of the Office" is in question, this is the only fair way of stating the case. If the question was how long the period was between the Despatch of the Promissory Notes from the House of Agency or Bank, and their receipt back; then the mode of computation by the Chamber would be accurate. But to take in, as they do, I will shew where presently, holidays, Xmas holidays for instance, only evinces an anxiety to make the worse appear the better cause, not an anxiety to represent matters fairly between Office and Office, for what have I to do with delays in transit or with any "dies non" or no working day.

10. In para: 8 of their letter of the 24th November 1857, the Chamber admit the vexation caused by the loss occasioned by the "turn of the market," as if the work of the Accountant General was to be measured by that Barometer, I deny this *in toto*. If the appreciation of that work is to be governed by the turn of the market, then when the market turns in favor of the holder of a Promissory Note, the work is well done, if the turn of the market be against the holder, the work is ill done, which is absurd. The delay may in the latter case be prejudicial, but what if the turn be in favor, should we then hear murmuring, would not the profit cover a multitude of sins of delay.

11. I do not think it is expected of me to enter into particulars with respect to Statements A. and B. of the Chamber, as I have already intimated to Government that I have taken all the Bonds (552) between the 30th July, the date of the opening of the Loan, and the 9th September, the date of reference to me of the Chamber's original representation, and shewed what the detention was; *viz.*, for nearly 400 of the 552, the Certificates were delivered, or sent, to the parties in 5 working days; for 43 in 6 days, for 5 in 7 days, and for 8 in 8 days, not including of course the Bainbridge case. The Chamber does not confine itself now to this period but changes its ground to later dates to suit its own views. Moreover, it gives the dates of letters forwarding Bonds, which dates signify little when the question is delay in the Accountant General's Office, since it does not follow that their letters were despatched on the said dates, and the Accountant General's Office surely is not responsible for the time thus introduced into the calculation. The Chamber

Fort Saint George, Financial Consultation, 19th January 1858.

No. 9.

ORDER THEREON, No. 30; dated 18th January 1858.

In the above letter the Accountant General furnishes the explanation called for by Government in Extract Minutes of Consultation, 4th Ultimo, in regard to the delay in the despatch of business imputed to his Office by the Chamber of Commerce in their Chairman's letter of the 24th November last.

2. The Right Honorable the Governor in Council thinks it unnecessary to review in detail Mr. Prendergast's representations and remarks, or to prolong the controversy between that Office and the Chamber. Of needless delay in the issuing of Certificates for the 5 per cent Loan, which was that originally brought to notice by the Chamber of Commerce, the Accountant General in the opinion of Government stands absolved. That there has been delay in the settlement of interest on Government Securities alleged in the Chamber's second letter Mr. Prendergast admits, and he engages "to take measures to obviate such delay in future."

3. The Governor in Council is satisfied with this promise, but he observes that in their communication of the 24th November the Chamber attribute the delay, now admitted by the Accountant General, to the failure on the part of that Officer "to give his personal attendance and ensure that of his Covenanted Subordinates in Office during the usual hours of business." Mr. Prendergast makes no comment upon this part of the Chairman's letter, and if such irregularity has hitherto obtained, it must at once be corrected. Regular attendance in such Offices as that of the Accountant General is indispensable to the due despatch of business, and the Government must insist on its being rendered and will accept no excuse but that of sickness for its omission.

4. The Government cannot subscribe to the remark of the Chamber in paras: 12, 13, of the Chairman's letter of the 24th November last. They must observe that the task of pointing out specific instances of unnecessary delay in the public business of the Accountant General's Office, was not imposed by Government upon the Chamber, but was, as noted in Extract Minutes of Consultation, 10th October 1857, in consequence of the offer made by the Chamber themselves. But had it been otherwise, the Government can perceive nothing invidious in parties who have preferred complaints being asked for cases in proof of them. The course indicated by the Chamber or that of the appointment of a Government Officer not belonging, it is to be presumed, to the Office concerned, to make the necessary enquiries on an *ex parte* representation, would be very inconvenient and objectionable, and unless in very serious cases quite unnecessary. Moreover, an Officer so appointed would after all often have to be furnished with specific instances by the parties complaining. On some occasions indeed he might obtain them at the cost of much delay and trouble from the records of the Office, but in others this would not be practicable..

Int. Depart.
No. 99
to the Accountant General
Dated 29th December 1857

For orders

I have no objection in allowing
the necessary business to be
transacted in the office.

The last part of the
absolved from the first
change made by the Chamber.

He admits delay as regards
the second, which he hopes to
remedy.

Lt. M. 70.

I observe that the Acct. Genl.
makes no comment on the delay
of the Chamber of Commerce
the main cause of the delay imputed,
& which the Acct. Genl. admits is the irreg-
ularity of the attendance of himself
& his assistants during the
usual hours of business.

For this irregularity no excuse can
be found. & regular attendance
should be exacted. It is his duty
being accepted as an excuse for
its omission -

Wm. Hall -

Financial Department

No 30

Extract from the Minutes of Consultation

Dated 18th January 1858.

Read the following letter
from the Accountant General

(Here enter 29th Decr 1857)
No 280.

In the above letter
the Accountant General
furnishes the explanation
called for by Government
in Co. Min. Con. 4th Mth.
in regard to the delay in
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imputed to his office by
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in their Chairman's letter
of the 24th Nov^r last. -
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H

W

hall

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3. — The Governor in Council is satisfied with this promise, but he observes that in their communication of the 24th Nov^r, the Chamber attribute the delay, now admitted by the Accountant General, to the failure on the part of that officer "to give his personal attendance and ensure that of his Commanded Subordinates in office during the usual hours of business". Mr. Prendergast makes no comment upon this part of the Chairman's letter — and

and if such irregularity has hitherto obtained, it must at once be corrected. — Regular attendance in such offices as that of the Accountant General is indispensable to the due despatch of business and the Government must insist on its being rendered and will accept no excuse but that of sickness for its omission. —

4. — The Government cannot subscribe to the remark of the Chamber in paras 12, 13 of the Chairman's letter of the 24th Nov^r, last. They must observe that the task of pointing out specific instances of unnecessary delay in the public business of the Accountant General's office was not imposed by Government upon the Chamber, but was, as noted in Ex. Min. Con. 10th Oct^r 1874, in consequence of the offer made by the Chamber themselves. But had it been otherwise the Government can perceive nothing

invidious

Ind. to Com 19 Aug

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have preferred complaints
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not belonging, it is to be pre-
sumed, to the office concerned,
to make the necessary en-
quiries on the spot, re-
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able, and unless in ^{very} serious
cases quite unnecessary —
Moreover, an officer so ap-
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with specific instances by
the parties complaining —
and on some occasions in-
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them at the cost of much
delay and trouble from the
records of the Office, but in
others this would not be prac-
ticable. —

To the Account General.

Chamber of Commerce.
(Copy of E. M. C.) only

Dispt. 21th

J. P.

10 Cps

Tru & L. E. 16. 7. 1874
1858

in 87. 19. 1874
Tru 1858. 1874.

N. 30

Black-

Dated 18. 1874.

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