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[Despatch Abstract.]

Immigration-Assam.

Recording report on the working of the Assam Labour Board
during the year ending the 30th June 1918.

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No. 1-D.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY.

RESOLUTION.

(EMIGRATION).

Delhi, the 18th November 1918.

The following paper is published in accordance with Rule 29 of the Assam Labour Board Rules :—

Annual Report on the working of the Assam Labour Board during the year ending the 30th June 1918.

I.—ADMINISTRATIVE.

1. Mr. R. W. Davies, I.C.S., Madras, continued to act as Chairman till the 10th September 1917, when he was relieved by Lieutenant-Colonel W. M. Kennedy, C.I.E., I.A., the permanent incumbent, on the termination of the latter's deputation to England. The triennial period for which the elected members were appointed having expired on the 13th April 1918 a general election was held, which was followed by a fresh election of members to serve on the Executive Committee for the ensuing three years. The changes in the elected personnel of the Board and of the Executive Committee are given in detail in appendix A.

2. With effect from the 20th November 1917 Lieutenant-Colonel Kennedy was appointed Tea Commissioner for India in addition to his duties as Chairman. In view of the fact that the Food Controller's scheme for the purchase in India of tea for the United Kingdom occupies the greater portion of Lieutenant-Colonel Kennedy's time and greatly restricts his touring as Chairman, the Government of India have ruled that half his salary as Chairman of the Board should be chargeable to the Food Controller, and that the Government of India and the Board should contribute the remaining half in equal shares.

3. Owing to a technical accounts objection to refunds of cess being made by the Board, a new rule, number 24-A, was prescribed under Section 116F (d), Act VI of 1901, regulating the purposes to which the cess may be applied. The rule, which was published under notification No. 990, dated the 6th April 1918, of the Government of India, in the Department of Commerce and Industry, authorises the application of the cess to the payment of—

- Such portion of the salary and allowances of the Chairman as the Governor-General in Council may direct;
- Allowances to members of the Board to meet their expenses in attending meetings of the Board, or on other journeys performed on the business of the Board;
- The salary and allowances of the supervisors and other establishment appointed by the Board, including any leave allowances, pensions and contributions towards a Provident Fund sanctioned by the Board, and including also such contributions towards the leave allowances and pensions of officers whose services have been lent by Government, as the Governor-General in Council may direct;
- Contingent and other incidental expenses, including tour charges, connected with the maintenance of the Board's office and of the offices of the officers appointed by them;
- Rewards for the detection or prosecution of offences under the Act;

(f) Refunds of the cess realised in respect of:—

(i) Garden-sardars and emigrants on whom it has been erroneously realised;

(ii) Emigrants whose services as labourers have, in the opinion of the Board, for any reason not become available or fully available to employers;

(g) Interest which may fall due on any loan contracted by the Board or on any overdraft of the Board's account with the Bank of Bengal sanctioned by the Board;

(h) Such other charges as the Board may, with the general or special sanction of the Government of India, direct.

4. The two statutory meetings of the Board were held respectively on the 11th October 1917 and the 7th March 1918, and were attended by all the members

Meetings of the Board.

except the following who were unavoidably absent:—

September Meeting—Messrs. C. Wood and N. M. Ross.

March Meeting—Messrs. H. W. Carr, E. H. Hannay, the Hon'ble Sir E. H. Bray, and the Hon'ble Lieutenant-Colonel W. Mason.

5. After each of the meetings of the Board a meeting of the Executive Committee was held, both being attended by all the members.

Meetings of the Executive Committee.

6. The Chairman was on tour for 33 days, and the acting Chairman for 45 days. Details of the places visited will be found in appendix B. Owing to

Tours of Chairman.

his duties as Tea Commissioner, the Chairman's touring had to be greatly restricted. With the exception of two hurried visits to Madras in connection with the tea purchase scheme he was unable, because of press of work, to leave Calcutta from November 1917 to the end of April 1918.

Supervisors.

7. The following table shows the touring and inspection work of Mr. C. E.

Middleton Stewart, supervisor:—

Number of days on tour.	Number of Stations visited.		Number of local agencies inspected.		Number of transport agencies inspected.	
	Once.	More than once.	Once.	More than once.	Once.	More than once.
203	15	24	9	15	...	12

As explained in last year's report, Mr. Stewart is now single-handed and he had to carry out, in addition to his own duties, those of the two supervisors whose services were lent to Government for employment with war Labour Corps. Mr. Stewart was most active in his inspection work, as also in investigating reports of illegal or irregular recruitment and did much useful work in removing local difficulties in the recruiting districts. Towards the close of the year, however, owing to the further combing out of the Government services in order to supply recruits for the Indian Army Reserve of Officers, the Inspector-General of Police, Central Provinces, informed the Board that he is unable to spare Mr. Stewart's services to the Board any longer. Latter has, accordingly, applied for a commission in the Indian Army Reserve of Officers, which, it is expected, will shortly be granted.

As a temporary measure, for the period of the war, the Board have since the close of the year under review sanctioned the appointment of Mr. P. D. Kirkham to act as supervisor *vice* Mr. Stewart. Mr. Kirkham retired last year from the Government service as Superintendent of Police, Central Provinces, and has since been working under the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association as local agent at Bilaspur.

Difficulties having been experienced by supervisors owing to their not being empowered to record evidence in cases of illegal recruitment under

investigation by them, or to order the arrest of persons actually engaged in their presence in the offence of illegal recruitment, the Board enquired of local Governments whether there would be any objection to the investiture of Mr. Middleton Stewart with powers of a magistrate of the third class for purposes of the investigation but not of the trial of cases under section 164, Act VI of 1901. Except the Chief Commissioner of Assam, who for technical reasons was unable to accept the Board's recommendations, all the local Governments concerned agreed, as an experimental measure for one year, to accede to the request of the Board, and have vested Mr. Stewart with powers of a magistrate of the third class for purposes of the investigation but not the trial of cases of illegal recruitment. It is too soon yet to estimate the practical effect of this concession.

8. Since it seemed desirable that the supervisor should, as an experimental measure, be allowed a reliable appointment of subordinate investigating agency assistant in order to help in the investigation of cases of illegal recruitment, which often require a good deal of detailed work, including prolonged watching for the despatch of illegally-recruited gangs of coolies and the following up of such gangs from the recruiting district to the tea estate, the Board decided to enquire from local Governments whether they would have any objection to the appointment of a reliable inspector or sub-inspector of police to work under Mr. Stewart. All the local Governments concerned agreed to the appointment being made except the Government of Madras who were inclined to the opinion that the appointment is not necessary in that province in view of the absence of reports of cases of abuses in recruitment. The Board, accordingly, decided to obtain a suitable officer to work under Mr. Stewart in all the provinces concerned except Madras, and an inspector of police, whose services have kindly been lent to the Board by the Government of Bihar and Orissa, was towards the close of the year appointed to the post on a salary equivalent to that which he received from Government, *plus* a deputation allowance of Rs. 50 a month, the Board paying in addition the usual contribution towards his leave and retiring allowances. The inspector makes detailed investigations under the orders of Mr. Stewart and patrols the transit routes. A better idea will be gained of the utility of the appointment after a year's experience.

II.—SUPERVISION OF LOCAL AGENTS.

9. Fifty-nine applications for the grant or renewal of licenses as local agents were received, all of which the Board recommended to be granted. No applications were pending at the close of the year. Superintendents of Emigration in all cases accepted the Board's recommendations.

Of the 59 persons who held licenses as local agents at the close of the year, 53 were employes of the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association, the remainder being appointed by individual estates or firms or combinations thereof.

10. On the 1st July 1917 there were altogether 35 local agencies at work, distributed as follows:—

Bengal two, Madras five, Bihar and Orissa eighteen, United Provinces six, Central Provinces four. Of these thirty were under the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association and five under individual firms or estates.

In the course of the year the Makum and Namdang Tea Companies closed their local agency at Ranchi, but later on the Namdang Tea Company opened a new agency there under Mr. Halford, who was till recently local agent at Dumka for the estates represented by Messrs. Williamson Magor and Company, Messrs. Balmer Lawrie and Company, and Messrs. Barry and Company. These firms closed down their separate local agency at Dumka in the month of December 1917.

The Scandinavian Home Mission to the Santals opened a local agency at Dumka, in charge of the Reverend Boe Bojeson Bogh, M.B., in the interests of the mission's tea estate at Ding Dinga in the Goalpara district.

The Tea Districts Labour Supply Association closed their local agency at Baidyanath in the Santal Parganas, as the results did not justify its maintenance. In Madras they transferred the Bezvada local agency to Rajahmundry in the district of Godavery. Bezvada is a large railway junction. No *bona fide* local coolies are available there, those picked up by the garden-sardars being of the waif and stray type. It was, moreover, difficult for the local agent effectively to control the garden-sardars in a place of this description. The local agency at Parvatipur in the Vizagapatam district was, also, at the desire of the District Magistrate, transferred from that place to Waltair, the headquarters of the district. The most convenient location for the local agency in that district would probably be Vizianagram. Two special local agencies to supervise recruitment in the Ganjam and Vizagapatam Agency tracts were opened, but have since been amalgamated with the local agencies at Berhampore and Vizagapatam.

Mr. White, local agent of the Salolah Tea Company, Limited, at Cuttack, died towards the end of the year, and the agency has remained closed up to the present.

The above changes left thirty-two local agencies at work at the close of the year.

11. The work of the different local agencies was carried on generally to the satisfaction of the Board. One local agent, of whose methods of working the Board did not approve, resigned his license.

12. Owing to the war and causes connected therewith, there has been a great drain on the European staff of the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association.

A number of their agents have joined the army; Mr. H. A. Pickford, one of the oldest and most respected of the local agents, died when on sick leave and several others have been incapacitated owing to illness. It is practically impossible to secure suitable men to fill the vacancies. The shortage of men has greatly handicapped the Association in their work during the past year. The decrease in recruitment, also, has hit the Association hard financially. As mentioned in paragraph 10 of last year's report, negotiations are in progress with the object of re-organising the constitution of the Association and of broadening the basis of membership, and the general principles on which it is proposed that the scheme should be worked have been formulated. The detailed scheme, however, has not as yet been prepared.

13. As it not infrequently happens that acting local agents have to be appointed for a month or so in temporary emergencies, due to the illness of the permanent incumbent or other urgent causes, it has been arranged with local Governments that Superintendents of Emigration should issue temporary licenses in such cases, informing the Board of the action taken, since if the applications were to be submitted through the Board much delay would be occasioned.

III.—RECRUITMENT.

14. In paragraph 12 of last year's report it was mentioned that the prospects of recruitment for the year 1917-18 were not bright. This forecast has unfortunately proved to be correct. The cess returns (including those for June 1918, which for financial purposes appertain to the succeeding year) show that 13,452 garden-sardars obtained 12,849 labouring recruits from the 1st July 1917 to the 30th June 1918, the figures for the previous year being 28,317 garden-sardars and 33,759 labouring recruits respectively. Taking the figures of the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association, under whose supervision almost the whole of the recruitment for Assam is carried out, these show that, including garden-sardars still in the recruiting districts at the beginning of the year 1917-18, there were altogether 15,384 at work as against 28,524 in the year 1916-17, and that in the past year 13,970 adults or 17,735 souls were recruited, the figures for the previous season being 26,828 adults and 36,315 souls respectively. It may be explained that the Association's year begins on the 1st September and that their system of classifying

adults for the purpose of the levy of their fees is different from that on which the cess is assessed. The reduction was shared by all the recruiting areas. Results were best in Ranchi and the United Provinces. Except in the latter area the number of recruits per garden-sardar fell short of the 1916-17 standard, which itself was lower than that of the previous year. The causes for the less satisfactory results were various, one of the chief being that agricultural conditions were good, so the poorer people were not obliged to emigrate under stress of want. In this connection it is interesting to note that the Chairman and supervisor, in the course of their inspections of local agencies, have drawn attention to the large proportion of the recruits which were related to the garden-sardars, a fact which indicates that the latter had not much success outside of their immediate *clientèle*. Had there been famine or scarcity in any area their operations would have been more widespread. An explanation of the shortage of recruits, which is almost universally put forward by local agents and which is undoubtedly correct, is that garden-sardars were deputed in fewer numbers and too late in the season. As explained in the report for 1916-17, this was due to the uncertainty of the outlook for tea during the opening months of the season. The Food Controller's tea purchase scheme, however, had a most re-assuring effect, and from January onwards garden-sardars were sent down in increasing numbers, with the result that there was a marked recovery in the numbers of labourers and dependants engaged. The greater demand for recruits for war purposes, both combatant and especially non-combatant, also affected results. Speaking generally the good pay offered for military service, the temporary nature of the employment and the prestige which attaches to service under Government are attractive to the emigrant coolie. In some directions, also, recruitment for Assam was directly restricted owing to the needs of the war. In the Ganjam Agency Tract the engagement of labourers and dependants was stopped altogether for three months, in order not to interfere with recruitment for the local Labour Corps. In Saran the emigration of males of the sweeper caste was temporarily forbidden, as efforts were being made to obtain them for Mesopotamia. The embargo was, however, eventually removed since the attempt to induce these people to enlist in a sweeper's corps failed. More serious has been the complete stoppage of the recruitment of Nepalese in the Gorakhpur district for the coal mines of the Assam Railways and Trading Company at Margherita, which used to draw from this area a considerable supply of short-term labour consisting of immigrant Nepalese. Under previous arrangements recruits used to be produced before the local military Recruiting Staff Officer, who selected those suitable for army purposes, the remainder being allowed to proceed to Assam. But at the instance of the Nepal Durbar, who wish to conserve their man-power for purely military purposes, the Government of the United Provinces requested that the recruitment of Nepalese should be discontinued, and this has been done. The Board and the tea industry recognise that recruitment for war purposes has the paramount claim, and are always ready to assist in the promotion of all reasonable measures which Government may consider to be necessary in order to secure recruits for the army or subsidiary war services in the field. All that is asked is that measures should not be adopted which would injure recruitment for Assam, without conferring a corresponding benefit on recruitment for war purposes. Apart from the demands of the Army Department, the growth of local industries in the recruiting districts as the result of the war constitutes an additional drain on the available supply of labour. Chota Nagpur and the Feudatory States of Bihar and Orissa are the main recruiting grounds for Assam. In this area there is the promise of great industrial development. Large industries, such as the Tata Iron and Steel Works at Sakchi, already employ great numbers of unskilled labourers at high rates of pay. In the Tata Works alone it is stated that 10,000 coolies are employed, and the Board understand that many new applications are being made for mining and other concessions. There are also numerous small industrial concerns which employ unskilled labour. These sources of employment, paying good wages and close to the homes of the coolies, cannot but prove a powerful counter-attraction to comparatively distant Assam, and contribute to some extent to the ill-success of the garden-sardar. At Chaibassa, for the last two or three years, several estates secured a connection by employing short-term labour, which

was going forward fairly freely. This short-term emigration has now, however, unfortunately ceased, but the Board hope that the cessation is temporary only, and that it will be possible before long to revive this type of emigration, which provides a useful means by which gardens, and especially new gardens, can establish a recruiting connection. The Tea Districts Labour Supply Association have arranged that their local agents should send reminders to managers a few weeks before short-term coolies are due to return to their home districts, since it is absolutely essential for the success of the short-term system that managers should insist upon coolies, whose period on the garden has expired, returning to their homes, whether they wish to remain or not. This is necessary in order to give confidence and to show the village people that promises are kept. Such emigrants can after a short stay in their villages be returned to the garden to settle there permanently if they wish to do so. Managers who omit to insist upon the return of short-term labour not only damage their own recruiting, but injure that also of all other estates wishing to employ this class of labour.

15. The acting Chairman, after personal consultation with the Agents to the Governor in Vizagapatam and Godavery, addressed these officers in connection with the extension of recruiting facilities in the Agency Tracts of those

Measures affecting recruitment.

districts. In the case of the Vizagapatam Tract the Agent was unable to support the proposals, except as regards the ex-patriation of the families of coolies now in Assam, and he thought that the castes, the recruitment of which in the open area is now permitted, should still further be restricted. The Government of Madras, however, decided to leave matters as they are in the latter respect, but accepted the recommendation of the Agent and acting Chairman as regards the ex-patriation of the families of coolies from the Vizagapatam Tract now in Assam, namely, that a coolie wishing to take his family from the closed area to Assam should be sent down to the local agent, who would then be in a better position to ascertain their whereabouts by personal enquiry from the coolie than the taluk officer, who, under the existing orders, has only the lists, generally erroneous, supplied by the tea garden manager to guide him.

From the portion of the Ganjam Agency Tract recently thrown open some 103 souls were recruited by 153 garden-sardars last season. Only 20 souls were obtained by 16 garden-sardars this season, but, as explained above, recruitment was stopped altogether for three months. On the whole, the results are encouraging and give grounds for the hope that an extension of the area of recruitment would yield a welcome addition to the Assam labour force, as the people are reported to be poor and ready enough to emigrate in order to better themselves. From the experience gained, however, the Board have come to the conclusion that the opening to recruitment of small areas, hedged round with restrictions, while adjacent areas remain closed, leads to much confusion, considerable expenditure and small results. It is exceedingly difficult for managers in Assam and even for the local agent to be certain what villages are within the opened area, as the definition of boundaries is inevitably vague, and this applies with greater force to the garden-sardars themselves, who are apt to stray beyond the prescribed boundaries, thereby tending to the creation of cases of misdescription and illegal recruitment with the active connivance of the recruits themselves, who are anxious to emigrate. Much unnecessary trouble, also, is caused to the local officers of Government dealing with emigration who have to decide whether intending emigrants come from the open or closed area. The Board, therefore, are of opinion that, in the interests of all concerned, it is desirable that, if any extensions of the recruiting area are granted in the future, they should comprise either whole Tracts or a substantial proportion thereof, and that special restrictions should be reduced to a minimum; in fact they think that recruitment should be carried on under ordinary conditions or not at all. Since the close of the year the Chairman has had the advantage of discussing this difficult question with the Government of Madras and with the Agent to the Governor in Ganjam, and the Board hope to be in a position before long to submit proposals as regards the Ganjam Tract, which will, at any rate, ameliorate the difficulties now being experienced in that area.

The rules for the regularisation of recruitment in the Feudatory States of Bihar and Orissa are still under the consideration of the Government of that Province. Their promulgation is expected shortly.

Speaking generally, the present is not a favourable time for pressing for extended facilities for recruitment or for the opening of new local agencies, in view of the strenuous attempts of Government to obtain recruits for the combatant and non-combatant war services.

16. This question, as mentioned in paragraph 14 of the report of last year, has been under the consideration of the Indian Tea Association with a view to the limitation of advances and bonuses paid to garden-sardars. Owing to the disturbed and unusual conditions which are concomitants of the war, the

Cost of sardari recruitment.

Association have decided that the time is not opportune for arriving at a definite decision as to the limitations to be imposed. Further consideration of the matter has, therefore, been postponed until normal conditions shall be restored. As a result of the inspections of the Board's officers, however, the Board are satisfied that the advances made to garden-sardars are generally moderate and are insufficient to enable them to lay out money in the purchase of coolies, at any rate to any appreciable extent. The practice of paying *per capita* bonuses through local agents has been stopped, and the utmost vigilance is exercised in order to insure that garden-sardars are not financed direct by the estates. In one respect it has been unfortunately necessary to increase expenditure since the Tea Districts Labour Supply Association, owing to the falling off in recruitment, have been obliged to raise their fees to Rs. 20 per adult, the income of the Association being derived from fees charged on the persons recruited. But the enhancement of the fees is, it is hoped, temporary, and the situation would be eased were all estates to pay more attention to recruitment and to depute garden-sardars earlier in the season and in larger numbers. The payment of a bonus to the immigrant to be taken with him or left with his family has been suggested as a stimulus to recruiting. It is understood that such bonuses have been paid to recruits for Labour Corps and in Ranchi small payments of this description have to be made to intending emigrants, as it is the local custom, the practice being somewhat similar to that obtaining at hiring fairs in Ireland. No one objects to the coolie being granted a bonus, provided that it can be insured that he actually receives it and that it is not filched away from him or his family and applied to improper purposes, and provided, also, that the practice does not tend to bring into existence the professional emigrant who accepts the bonus and turns "unwilling" when in transit, knowing well that it is practically impossible to recover the bonus from him or to secure his conviction in a court of law for cheating.

17. Notwithstanding the activity in recruitment for war purposes, the prospects for the ensuing season in many of the recruiting areas are distinctly good, so

far as can be judged at present. In a number of districts the rainfall has been deficient, and an early cessation of the rains seems to be probable. These conditions may result in a partial failure of the crops in portions of the recruiting districts. Garden managers may, therefore, depute garden-sardars freely in the reasonable hope that results will be substantially better than those of last year. There is, however, no reason to apprehend that the results should be worse than in the past season, and, indeed, if concerns send down their garden-sardars in good time, there is every reason to believe that last year's figures will be improved upon. But looking beyond the immediate future, there are indications that it will be necessary for the tea industry to take stock of its position if it is to hold its own in the face of other competing interests. Allusion has already been made to the ever-growing industrial activity in the areas from which Assam draws its labour, which is providing increased employment on liberal rates of pay, close to the home of the emigrant coolie. In view of these developments it will probably be necessary for the tea industry in the near future to consider whether additional inducements in the matter of pay should not be offered. It is true that the outdoor employment on tea estates, the easy conditions as regards leave, etc., the provision of rice fields and the good prospects of eventual settlement on Government land as peasant proprietors tend to attract coolies to and to keep them in Assam. It is true, also, that actual pecuniary inducements have in many cases at present little or no influence on the coolie's decision to emigrate. Many of them pay

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little regard to the terms offered and leave their homes either to join their relatives in Assam or simply because they wish to get away for one reason or another. Nevertheless, with the growth of local industries, attended by a rise in the local rate of wages and extended local employment, it is reasonable to suppose that the coolie will, in time, be more and more influenced by financial considerations, and will learn to weigh the relative advantages of employment nearer his home, which will not entail the break up of his household, and emigration to Assam. It is unfortunate that under the Assam system wages are presented to the would-be emigrant in the most unfavourable light. What may be described as the standard wage is admittedly low, and it is difficult to explain to the coolies that this can be earned by a few hours' work, and that the diligent coolie can, if he wishes, earn additional wages which compare favourably with those paid by other industries. Even without raising the standard wage the Board think that an improvement would be effected if each estate were to furnish its garden-sardars with a statement in the vernacular of the recruiting district setting forth the advantages which it has to offer, not only in the matter of regular wages, *tiacca*, and bonuses but also as regards housing, medical attendance, leave, sick and pregnant allowances, fuel, the supply of rice at reduced rates when prices are high, the provision of garden plots and rice lands, and facilities for the formation of hamlets of coolies of the same caste. This has often been recommended and the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee laid considerable stress on the advantages of advertisement in paragraph 65 of their report. The suggestion has not, however, been acted upon up to the present, at least to any great extent. The Board have thought it right to put forward the above considerations, in the hope that the tea industry will give the matter thought with a view to timely measures being taken to meet difficulties in recruitment which may arise in the future. With wages and the cost of living rising on all sides the tea industry can scarcely afford to stand still much longer.

IV.—ILLEGAL RECRUITMENT.

18. It is with much pleasure that the Board have to record a great improvement under this head. Only one important case of attempted illegal recruitment

Recruitment by arkatties.

was brought to light. It concerned one Banerji, who, with the assistance of one Chakrabarty, a Duars recruiter, engaged to supply coolies to a certain estate in Assam on the *per capita* payment basis. The investigations of the supervisor and inspector disclosed the fact that Banerji had obtained from the manager a letter appointing him local agent of the estate. This letter, of course, had no legal effect. The case was detected in time to prevent the supply of any coolies, though it is believed that some were collected ready for despatch. The manager, when called upon for an explanation, readily admitted his fault and assisted the Board by furnishing all the information at his disposal. The Board, accordingly, dealt with the case by a reprimand which has been published in the proceedings of the local Branch of the Indian Tea Association. A case has been instituted against Banerji and Chakrabarty.

Two other cases of suspected dealings with arkatties are under investigation, one in the Balaghat district and the other at Buxar in the Saran district. In the latter case suspicion has been aroused regarding a gang of coolies who turned unwilling at Goalundo. There are grounds for the belief that they were not *bonâ fide* emigrants and that the garden-sardar obtained them from a well-known arkatti at Buxar. Unfortunately the magistrate at Goalundo released the coolies without referring to the local agent or the Board, so it is difficult to trace them but the supervisor and the inspector have the matter in hand.

Taking it all round, the Board consider that the position as regards illegal recruitment is now satisfactory. Doubtless there are occasionally isolated cases of garden-sardars obtaining coolies from petty arkatties, which are generally detected owing to the vigilance of local agents, but the organised gangs have been broken up and are no longer at work. This happy result is due in a great measure to the loyal support which the Board have received from employers, who as a body refuse to have any dealings with illegal recruiters. It was mentioned in paragraph 15 of last year's report that the Central Provinces Administration had prohibited recruitment by garden-sardars not working under a local

agent. Similar notifications have been published by the other local Governments in the recruiting districts. Thus a definite stop has been put to recruitment by independent garden-sardars, who generally either were themselves arkatties or obtained their recruits through the latter.

19. Garden-sardars are not always free from blame, their most common offence being misdescription at which the emigrants themselves actively connive.

Such cases are reported by the local agent to the magistrate, with the result that the garden-sardar is generally convicted and imprisoned. In comparison with the large number of garden-sardars at work the cases are not numerous.

V.—FINANCIAL.

20. By Department of Commerce and Industry notification No. 1092, dated the 6th April 1918, the rate of cess during the year under review was fixed at

Rs. 2 per garden-sardar and labouring emigrant. The cess was punctually collected, collections by local agents being checked locally by the supervisor in the course of his inspections as provided in revised rule 24 (4). The Chairman also checked collection work in some cases. A total sum of Rs. 1,500 was refunded, *viz.*, Rs. 1,128 on 564 garden-sardars and Rs. 372 on 186 emigrants.

21. In appendix C will be found the auditor's report and the audited statement of accounts. In the budget estimate for the year an income of Rs. 2,93,395-9-8

was estimated for, comprised of an opening balance of Rs. 1,59,000, which included Rs. 1,25,000 invested (the actual opening balance being Rs. 1,59,414-0-10), a Government grant towards the Chairman's salary of Rs. 14,145-9-8, a sum of Rs. 1,18,000 being the cess on 26,000 garden-sardars and 33,000 emigrants, and Rs. 2,250 as interest on investments. The actual income amounted to Rs. 2,33,499-10-10, including the above opening balance, but excluding receipts due to withdrawals of fixed deposits and realisations from matured Treasury Bills, other than a sum of Rs. 312-8-0 being the interest thereon which is included in the sum of Rs. 25,000 shown as matured on the receipt side of the audited statement of accounts, the decrease being due to lower realisations from cess on garden-sardars and emigrants which fell short of the estimate by Rs. 65,398. The apparent large reduction in the opening balance, as shown in the audited statement of receipts and expenditure, is due to the exclusion of Rs. 75,000 invested in 5½ per cent War Bonds and Rs. 50,000 placed in fixed deposit with the Bank of Bengal. It may be explained that the audited statement of accounts is prepared from the cash-book and, therefore, differs from the budget estimate, which includes in the opening balance sums invested and on fixed deposit at the close of the previous year, but excludes fixed deposits and purchase of Treasury Bills which are made and which mature during the course of the year. The expenditure, excluding sums invested, amounted to Rs. 72,334-12-5 against an estimate of Rs. 1,21,116-7-9, the reduction being due chiefly to the fact that the staff of supervisors was reduced to one. There were also economies under almost all other heads. The closing balance amounted to Rs. 1,61,164-14-5, as compared with the budget estimate of Rs. 1,72,279-1-11. The closing balance was comprised as follows:—

	Rs.	A.	P.
Cash balance	11,477	6	5
Fixed deposit with Bank of Bengal	50,000	0	0
5½ per cent. War Bonds	75,000	0	0
Three months' Treasury Bills	24,687	8	0
TOTAL	1,61,164	14	5

The adjustment of the shares of the Chairman's salary from the 20th November 1917 to the 30th April 1918, between the Ministry of Food, the Government of India and the Board will bring in a further sum of Rs. 4,830-7-0 to the Board.

22. The budget estimate for 1918-19, as passed at the meeting of the Board held in March 1918, provides for an income of Rs. 2,49,134-3-6 made up as follows:—

	Rs.	A.	P.
Opening balance	1,64,454	0	0
Cess at Rs. 2 on garden-sardars and emigrants	64,000	0	0
Government of India's contribution (which will now be reduced as the result of the redistribution of the contributions towards the Chairman's salary)	15,679	3	6
Interest on investments	5,001	0	0

An expenditure of Rs. 90,926-3-0 has been budgetted for, leaving an estimated closing balance of Rs. 1,58,208-0-6.

VI.—MISCELLANEOUS.

23. Doubt having arisen as to whether the currency of the certificates granted to garden-sardars is governed by the endorsement signed by the countersigning officer to the effect that the certificate ceases to be in force on the expiry of twelve months from the date of countersignature, or by the entry made by the employer in column 12, specifying the period within which the garden-sardar is required to return to the garden, the question was referred to the Assam Administration, who ruled that the period is governed by the endorsement and that all certificates are, therefore, in force *proprio vigore* for one year from the date of countersignature, the entry in column 12 by the employer being merely an instruction. In order to make this quite clear a revised certificate and endorsement have been prescribed by the Chief Commissioner. The matter is of importance since courts, as a rule, were under the impression that the currency of the certificate depended upon the entry in column 12, with the result that garden-sardars bringing in recruits after the expiry of the period specified in that column were often prosecuted and in some cases sentenced to substantial terms of imprisonment. Countersigning officers in Assam used frequently, also, erroneously to correct the endorsement so as to bring the period into conformity with that specified in column 12. Garden-sardars are generally ignorant people with a very hazy idea as to dates, and when they visit their villages are rather apt to take their own time in returning. If they bring in coolies after their certificates have expired a technical offence has undoubtedly been committed, but as long as the recruits are produced before the local agent for registration no actual harm is done to any one, so the Board are of opinion that sentences of imprisonment in such cases are to be deprecated as an unduly harsh punishment.

A minor matter in connection with these certificates, which often occasions trouble and delay, is the fact that technical mistakes are not infrequently made by employers in filling them up, and this is especially the case when a local agency comprises more districts than one. In strict law the certificates must be returned to the labour district for amendment, and countersigning officers often require the re-appearance before them of the garden-sardar when attesting the correction. This entails considerable expense and delay as well as harassment to the garden-sardar. The Tea Districts Labour Supply Association accordingly suggested that magistrates in the recruiting districts might be authorised, as an executive measure, to make the necessary corrections. The Board recommended this suggestion to local Governments in the recruiting districts and favourable replies have been received from the Governments of Madras, Bengal, the United Provinces, and the Central Provinces. The Government of Bihar and Orissa were unable to agree to the proposal on the technical grounds already mentioned, but have suggested that the necessary corrections can be made by the countersigning officer in Assam under section 60 of the Act without requiring the re-appearance of the garden-sardar. A reference has been made to the Assam Administration on this point.

24. Transit arrangements are generally satisfactory. The rest-houses maintained by the forwarding agents were inspected by the Board's staff, who found the arrangements, including those for the supply of food, to be adequate. Several conferences have been held with the administration of the Eastern Bengal Railway, with a view to the improvement of transit facilities on the Amingaon route, and the Board wish to acknowledge the sympathetic consideration given to the subject by the Agent and his staff. The revised arrangements, when completed, will place the transit facilities on this railway on a very satisfactory footing. The route is one which is likely to become increasingly popular owing to the saving of time effected.

25. The Board received the thanks of the Government of India, Army Department, and of the Government of Bihar and Orissa for the assistance rendered by them in raising Labour Corps in Chota Nagpur and the Santal Parganas.

ORDERED that a copy of the above Resolution be forwarded to the Local Governments and Administrations noted in the margin* and that it be published in the Supplement to the Gazette of India.

* Government of Bengal.
Government of Bihar and Orissa.
Government of the United Provinces.
Government of Madras.
Hon'ble the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces.
Hon'ble the Chief Commissioner of Assam.

A. H. S.

(*for*) Secretary to the Government of India.

House (mis) Dept.

Annual Report of the Assam Labour Board from the Govt, Dept. of Labour & Ind. 128 18/19

[3432 + 3523]

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The resolution of the Govt. of India publishing the annual report on the working of the Assam Labour Board during the year ending 30th June 1918. (Third report after the Board was constituted) is submitted referenced. The noticeable features are set out below.

(d)
vide G.O. 1257 for last
14.12.17
years report

para 9 of the report

2. There were 59 applications for the grant or renewal of Local Agents licences all of which were recommended by the Board. There were five (5) local agencies in this Pres. for the (6) six northern districts from which recruitment to Assam is permitted, the agency at Begwada in Kishna district having been abolished. (vide G.O. 263 of 18.3.18).

3. The following statement compares the number of recruits and the number of garden sardars employed for the purpose during the year under report and the two preceding years.

<i>Labourers</i>	<i>Garden Sardars</i>
1915-16-56588	37849
1916-17-33759	28317
1917-18-12849	13452

The conspicuous decrease in the number recruited is attributed partly to favourable agricultural conditions and the greater demand for recruits for war purposes. In Gaujam recruitment was stopped for three months to facilitate ^{recruitment} ~~the formation~~ ^{of the} Gaujam Labour Corps.

4 In para 15 of the report reference is made to this Govt refusal to throw open further Agency tracts for recruitment for Assam, and the opinion is expressed that it is desirable that if any extensions of the recruiting area (in the Agency tracts) are granted they should comprise either whole tracts or a substantial portion thereof and that special restrictions should be reduced to a minimum, as the opening to recruitment of small areas hedged round with restrictions while adjacent areas remain closed, leads to much confusion, considerable expenditure and small results.

The Assam Labour Board's proposals on the subject referred at the end of para (15) may be awaited.

A draft order recording the report is subd.

para 14
pages 45
4

para 15
page 64

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LD
25/12/18

LDs
22/12/18
16.12.18
20.12.18
22/12/18

House of Miss DEPARTMENT.

Recording report on the working of the
Labour Board during the year ending June 1918.

READ AGAIN G.O. No., dated 191 ..

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READ ALSO:—

C. No., From the, No. 125, dated

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To Mr. Dr. Masters of Rayam
Vijayapatam, Gadavari, District
Kistna & Mellore.

Also with an si
prepost coach
(acknowledging)

[Faint, mostly illegible handwritten notes on lined paper. Some visible words include "copy", "examined", "signed", "G.O. No.", "191", "ORDER OF GOVERNMENT", "LETTER OF GOVERNMENT", "STATEMENT WITH LITTO.", "PAPERS NOT FILED UP, BEING MEANT FOR DISPATCH IN ORIGINAL."]

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191

IN G.O. No.
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STATEMENT WITH LITTO.

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