

Local & Munl. (1898) Department.

MISCELLANEOUS.

G.O., No. 3012.

DATED 18298.

INDEXED.

[Despatch Abstract.]

Relief Works

Recording for R.D. passing
orders regarding the opening of
_____ on the tank system in
the Yellow District.

BACK PAPERS.

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

FURTHER PAPERS.

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

Local & Munl. (189 8) Department.

CURRENT No. 359 L

From

The Revenue Department

In Order No. 391 Dated 18/2/98

Recorded

Press No. 72

18/2/98

Dated 7th February 1898

Received

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SUBJECT.

Passing orders re: the opening of relief works on the task system in the Bellare district

18/2/98

18/2/98

16/2/98

any

BACK PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

FURTHER PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

Proceedings of the Madras Government. Revenue Department. LOCAL GOVT. 359

Read Proceedings of the Board of Revenue Settlement, &c, No: 132, Dns, d, 11th Jan: 1898.

Submitting to Govt, for Sanction, Nellore Collector's letter requesting allotments for test-works started, and requesting the Collector to reconsider his opinion regarding the unsuitability of the gang piece-works system.

Read also Proceedings of the Board of Revenue Settlement, &c, No 461 Dns, dated 21st Jan: 1898, Submitting to Government, with remarks, letter from the Collector of Nellore, requesting Sanction to continue certain relief works on the Task System.

Order thereon, No: 72, Press, dated 7th February 1898.

With the first of the Proceedings read above, the Board of Revenue submits to Government an application for allotments from the Collector of Nellore for the test-works now in progress or proposed to be opened in the district and for the kitchens attached. The Collector considers that the intermediate system of carrying out works ordered in Government Order No: 2, dated 4th January 1898, is not suitable for the works proposed and that the distress in the taluks of Udayagiri and Kanigiri has already reached the stage when task-work becomes necessary; and in his communication embodied in the second of the Proceedings read above, while reporting that he has issued instructions for the introduction of the system on some of the works he requests the sanction of Government for continuing the task-work system on others.

2. The following test-works were in progress at the time of the Collector's report :-

- (1) Udayagiri - - - - Prickly-pear removal.
 - (2) Nandanavanam - - Tank repairs.
 - (3) Narravada
 - (4) Pamur
 - (5) Peddarikatla
- } - - - Metal-breaking.

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In regard to (1) above, the Collector states in a letter of 17th December last that he intended to remove the work to a place five miles to the north of Udayagiri if the number on the work should increase considerably; and it appears from the latest season and other reports received from the district that the work at Udayagiri has now been transferred to Nellatur on the Udayagiri - Sitarampur road. The Collector also proposes to start work on this road at Sitarampur, distant about ten miles from Nellatur, as he considers that the work at Nellatur is too far off for the residents of Sitarampur and the neighbouring villages. The allotments applied for for the Udayagiri work (now closed) and the others named above aggregate Rs. 2,700 and an additional allotment of Rs. 2,000 is required for kitchens.

3. The above proposals for an extension of works are based on the assumption that there is now in the district undoubted distress requiring the interference of Government under the Famine Code; but since the Collector has as yet furnished little information regarding the tasks exacted from the workers, the Government is not satisfied that the works now in progress have proved the existence of such distress. The numbers on the works are no doubt on the increase but this is no proof of distress unless the works are being carried on, as they should be, under deterrent conditions. The Commissioner of Revenue Settlement has been recently touring in the tracts reported to be affected and he will be requested to submit a detailed report as to the tasks enforced and the wages paid at the various works, and generally as to whether the works are being carried out under stringent code conditions so as to enable Government to decide whether famine conditions really exist and, if so, to what extent relief works are required.

4. The Collector's programme consists of a number of scattered isolated works and if he is under the idea that it is in every case necessary to provide labour near the villages of the persons to be relieved, he is under a misapprehension. The Collector should be directed to take immediate steps to replace numerous scattered works by a few carefully chosen works

works of large size, providing suitable hutting accommodation for the workers who are unable to attend from their own homes. The Government is of opinion that where labourers are provided with resident accommodation on the works, no distance within the limits of the same taluk at all events should be regarded as too great.

5. The Government observes from the weekly season reports that persons who are not dependants of workers are being fed at the kitchens attached to the test-works; The Collector will be instructed to discontinue this at once. In regard to the relief of dependants the Government has more than once expressed the opinion that it is inexpedient to supplement the wages at test works by the grant of gratuitous relief to dependants, but will not disturb the arrangements made by the Collector pending receipt of the detailed report on the condition of the district which the Commissioner of Revenue Settlement has been called upon to submit. The Commissioner, with, however, he informed that no kitchens should be opened for the future in connexion with test works, and generally that no gratuitous relief of any kind should be given without the previous sanction of Government except in connexion with regular relief works carried on on the task-work system.

6. The works in progress at Narravada and Narramarella are road works, and if the intermediate system is suitable for any works at all in Udayagiri or Kanigiri, it must be suitable for these works. At the same time the preponderance of women and children in the numbers reported as on relief seems to show that any distress that there may be in these taluks cannot be severe. It is therefore not clear why the Collector should object to the system as unsuitable. The Government of course does not intend that the system should be adopted irrespective of local conditions which may render its introduction undesirable but as the Collector's objection appears to be largely due to a misapprehension of the nature and scope of the system it is necessary to explain in some detail what the system is, how its adoption is desirable in the early stages of distress, and how it can be carried out with advantage and economy at almost any

any stage of distress.

7. As its name implies the System is intermediate between the contract piece-work system of ordinary works and the Task-work system of the Famine Code, and was originally intended for adoption in the early stages of distress on the score of its economy. In relief works carried out under the conditions laid down in the Code, employment has to be provided for the inefficient who under the ordinary Contract System would never be taken on at all, and such works give in consequence a very poor result for a very large expenditure in money and trouble. When, therefore, distress, though present, is not so acute as to drive on to the works a large proportion of inefficient labourers or of persons unaccustomed to labour, payment by results is more economical than task work; in other words, so long as an able-bodied labourer can earn enough by piece work to enable those of his family who do not work to live at home, he will support them and himself more cheaply than Government can do. The piece-work rates should, however, be so fixed as to form a real test of distress and so as not to attract labour for which there is existing employment elsewhere. The System as originally framed in the North-Western Provinces required the interposition of petty contractors or middlemen between Government and the actual labourers but it was soon found that this arrangement though suitable for less considerable works, when distress was not general, was not adapted for large undertakings designed to afford relief to considerable numbers of unskilled labourers, and in the North-Western Provinces a modified form of it was consequently adopted in which the State dealt directly with the labourers; the work was laid out, supervised and measured by Government officials, and tools, where necessary, were supplied by Government; but payments were made by results as in the original Scheme and no dependants were recognised. The original Scheme and this modified form correspond respectively to the works of classes (ii) and (iii) mentioned in para. 6 of Government Order 430, dated 3rd June 1897. The former of the two is the same as the modified Contract System described in Section 16 of the Madras Famine Code as suitable at the commencement of distress.

8. When directing the introduction of these two classes of works the Government intended (vide para 6 of P.O. 430, dated 3rd June 1897) that they should be adopted only in the earlier stages of distress and should be replaced by regular relief works when the demand for employment by inefficient labour became considerable. But later correspondence received by Government since the above order was passed on the working of the System in the North-Western Provinces, shows that the modified form of the System latterly adopted in those Provinces has been found suitable for even advanced stages of distress and that with suitable modifications and subject to certain limitations, it may be adopted with advantage in almost all stages. These modifications which will be found fully described in the papers printed in Government Orders Nos. 662, dated 2nd August 1897, and 705, dated 20th August 1897, are:—

(1) the distribution of cooked food to young children and the addition of three pies to supplement the diet of nursing mothers.

(2) the formation of weakly persons into separate gangs in exceptional cases.

These modifications rendered a larger supervising staff necessary than on code works but the System was reported to be notwithstanding more economical. It was also found to be different than code works but it was not suited to localities where distress was very severe and in these localities it had to be supplemented by code works on subsistence wages.

9. It will be seen that the essence of the Scheme is piece work at rates which are somewhat less than the ordinary rates — ^{rather} or less than the ordinary rates raised with due regard to the prevalent high prices — but still sufficient to leave some margin for the support of dependants. It is of course not intended that the wage of each worker should vary with the number of his dependants but only that the rates while below full current rates should be so fixed as to give a sufficient wage to an able-bodied labourer with an average family.

10. The System can, it is believed, be adopted on large as well as on small and petty works. It is to be distinctly understood that the adoption of the System does not mean

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the opening of petty village works, which the Collector has been directed to avoid, concentrating his operations on large works. In the event of distress becoming really severe it may become necessary to open village works to supplement these central works; and where such village works are opened and assigned to village headmen or other middlemen on contract, the contract should be coupled with a condition that all applicants for employment shall be admitted and that the work shall be paid for at rates to be specified beforehand. When the system is adopted on large works, middlemen may be employed in the early stages or where the official staff necessary for supervision is not readily available, but the Govt. hopes that it will always be found possible to adopt the modified form of the system. It is unnecessary to issue any instructions at present with reference to the later modifications found necessary in the North-Western Provinces and referred to in para 8 above. With these remarks the Government remits the subject to the Commissioner of Revenue Settlement and the Local Authorities who will determine where the intermediate system and the task system of the Code may most advantageously be adopted. The former should be thoroughly tried wherever it appears suitable.

12. Subject to the remarks made and the ^{instructions} issued in the preceding paragraphs, the Collector is authorized to incur expenditure within the limits of the allotments of Rs. 27,700 applied for by him for relief works. Much of the expenditure that is now incurred from Provincial Funds will be ultimately recoverable from the Local Fund Boards. The necessary orders for a remodelling of the Nellore Local Board's budget will issue in the Financial Department.

(True Extract).

W. R. Marjoribanks

To
 ag: Asst. Secretary of Government
 The Board of Revenue, Revenue Settlement, &c.
 " Public Works Department.
 " Financial Dept.
 " Local and Municipal Dept.
 " Accountant-General.

MS/7 Feb 98

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