

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Marine DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No.	<i>134</i>	Press ~~Mis.~~
<i>10-11</i>		
Dated	<i>14-4-1859</i>	

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Fort Saint George, Marine Consultation, 19th April 1859.

No. 10. EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF CONSULTATION in the Public Department under date the 6th April 1859, No. 526.

(Vide Diary to Public Consultation, 12th April 1859, Nos. 5, 6, 6A, 6B, and 7.)

(Communicating copy of a Minute by the Honorable the President, suggesting certain alterations in the mode in which the correspondence is conducted between the Home and Indian Governments.)

No. 11.

ORDER THEREON, No. 134; dated 14th April 1859.

To be Recorded.

(Signed) T. PYCROFT,

Chief Secretary.

Extract from the Minutes of Consultation, under date the 6th April 1859.

Read the following Minute by the Honorable the President, dated 2nd April 1859.

It was understood that the first subject I was to take up was the mode in which the correspondence is conducted between the Home and Indian Governments.

2. This has not been altered since the time when the business of the East India Company was confined to the affairs of a few Commerical Factories. According to the custom of that day, the ill-paid Agents employed abroad were required to report the whole of their proceedings, sending home an exact transcript of every letter which had been written by them.

3. Since the Factories have become Empires, this practice has been productive of the greatest inconvenience. The Home Government is overwhelmed with a mass of correspondence which no physical capacity can master. No sufficient distinction is made between those subjects which are of a perfunctory, and those which are of an important character; and overgrown bodies of Clerks and Printers are kept up, at the Indian Presidencies and in London, at a lamentable cost of money, and still more of misdirected time and labour, for the purpose of carrying on this monster correspondence.

4. The correspondence of the Colonial Office is conducted on a different principle. Each Governor sends to the Colonial Office an Annual Report, or Blue Book, upon the general state of his Government, and he also makes up the Annual Budget, or Financial Exposition, according to a prescribed form—beyond which he is left to follow his own judgment as to the reports made by him. Whatever faults may have been found with our Colonial Administration, it has never been alleged that Her Majesty's Government has been insufficiently informed of what has been passing in the Colonies. The subjects which are really worthy of the attention of the Secretary of State, are brought to his notice in a well prepared shape; and the correspondence of forty or fifty separate Governments, which, under other conditions would be unmanageable, is conducted with regularity and ease. Since 1855-56 the Annual Colonial Blue Book has been adopted into our Indian system, under the name of the Annual Administration Report; but as every thing else has remained unchanged, this has merely made the correspondence still more unwieldy.

5. Immediately upon assuming charge of this Government, I consulted our able and experienced Secretaries, Mr. Pycroft and Mr. Bourdillon, whose joint Memorandum upon the subject has been read in Council. My colleagues agreed with me, that the recommendations contained in this Memorandum should be forthwith acted upon, that is, that leaving the Annual Administration Report to be made as at present, we should report such subjects, from time to time, as are necessary to be reported, each in a separate letter. The selection of the subjects will be ordinarily left to the Secretaries, but the Members of Government, in passing Drafts which dispose of important questions, will also note particular questions as proper to be reported upon. The saving of time, labour, and expence, from this change, especially if it should be adopted in the other Presidencies, and the concentration upon the great interests of India of powers of mind which are at present too much frittered away among a variety of insignificant objects, cannot fail to be productive of great public advantage.

6. Mr. Pycroft's and Mr. Bourdillon's remarks upon the necessity of pruning the redundancy of *writing*, which is carried in this country to the same excess as *speaking* is at home, are perfectly just; and we will depend upon their giving due effect to their sensible, practical suggestions.

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To be recorded.

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