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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Public Works DEPARTMENT.

Cos D 20.2.1858

G.O. No. 117	Press Mis.-
89-90	
Dated	1858

Not to be folded or roughly handled

No. 89. Read the following letter from J. D. SIM, Esq., Sub Secretary to the Board of Revenue ; to H. FORBES, Esq., Acting Secretary to Government, Revenue Department, dated 19th March 1858, No. 988.

SIR,

I am directed by the Board of Revenue to acknowledge the receipt of Extract Minutes Consultation, dated 24th December last No. 2396, P. W. D., calling for a report on the question, brought forward by the Supreme Government, of introducing Tolls into this Presidency.

In Con. 19th March 1858, No. 46.

2. The Board presume that Government wish for their opinion on the subject, founded on their general experience and on such information as is already on their records, as they observe from the paper now communicated to them that the Chief Engineer has been instructed " to ascertain the views of the several Collectors and District Engineers and submit their communications to Government together with his own opinion." The letter which I have the honor of addressing to you will therefore be drawn up on this understanding.

E. M. Con. 28th March 1857 No. 569 D. P. W. Public. Enc. in above Extract.

3. The subject of Tolls has engaged the attention of the Board on several occasions. In 1856 the Chief Engineer sought their opinion as to the advisability of levying a Toll at a new bridge near Chicacole in Ganjam. The Board entered into the subject in detail and the matter was ultimately submitted by the Chief Engineer to Government who decided against any partial introduction of Tolls and waited for the consideration and settlement of the general question. At the same time a similar application from the Acting Collector of Malabar* was considered by the Board but the above orders of Government led to the subject being postponed until in their report on Local Funds they took occasion to bring the matter again under the consideration of Government. The result of the last reference has been that Government have sanctioned in Malabar the levy over bridges which have superseded ferries of the same Tolls as were previously collected at the ferries.

From Chief Engineer 22nd and 25th September in Consultation 31st October 1856.

Board's Proceedings 31st October 1856, No. 3605.

E. M. C. 27th January No. 160 P. W. D. Public in Consultation 5th February 1857.

* Dated 22nd in Consultation 31st October 1856.
" 16th April in Consultation 30th October 1857.
" 2nd July in Consultation 30th October 1857.

Board's Pros. 30th October 1857, No. 3688.

E. M. C. 6th in Consultation 19th January 1858 R. D. No. 9.

4. It will hence be seen that the subject does not now come before the Board for the first time, and they will proceed to give their opinion on it in the manner above indicated.

5. The Board concur with the Government of India that the question is to be viewed as one of policy rather than of principle. The abstract justice of calling on those who use and profit by expensive roads and bridges to contribute at least to the cost of their repair seems unquestionable, but whether Tolls are the best expedient for the purpose in India calls for careful consideration. It cannot be concealed that the measure is likely to be a very unpopular one, and the returns will probably be small both from the limited traffic and the facilities for evading turnpikes which an unenclosed country affords. The expense at the same time would be great from the salaries which must be given to obtain the services of agents whose personal integrity and character would place the interests of the travelling public in security.

6. It may indeed be argued that turnpikes might be rented out and that it would be the interest of the renters to encourage traffic in their ranges by just and considerate conduct. But unfortunately self interest is frequently short sighted and grasping, and as the means of obtaining redress for exaction must often be practically wanting, the Board would be unwilling to place roads under native renters, if it can be avoided, except in localities where circumstances are particularly favorable as in Malabar.

6. Seeing then the difficulties which surround the practical working of the measure, the Board would advise the establishment of as few Turnpikes or Toll Bars as possible.

7. They would also offer the following suggestions.

1. That the construction and repair of village roads be left to the Local Funds, already organized in several Districts and contemplated for all with this especial object in view and that no attempt be made to levy Tolls on such communications.

2. That in levying tolls on the Trunk roads they should be levied in the first instance at the entrance to Towns and on the larger bridges. In the latter situations they believe that toll bars would be least unpopular as the ferry dues previously paid and the detentions and inconvenience formerly experienced would be remembered. These would also be advantageous positions for Turnpikes as there would be fewer facilities for evading them.

7. The Board have had under consideration the expediency of realizing the necessary Funds by a wheel tax instead of by tolls, but the existence of Local Funds to which the whole body of agriculturists will ultimately contribute, is a difficulty in the way of this measure.

8. The possibility of attaining the object indirectly by increasing the export and import duties has also engaged their attention but this arrangement is open to the objection of being partial.

9. The well known aversion of the people of India to taxation of a novel character and their submission to imposts of old standing, though to European ideas peculiarly arbitrary and vexatious, renders it worthy of consideration whether the Mohturpha, if not appropriated to Municipal purposes might not be divested of all objectionable items and devoted to the maintenance and construction of roads instead of being wholly abandoned. It seems questionable policy entirely to give up taxation which has been long known and acquiesced in at a time when it is considered necessary to impose a new tax the novelty alone of which will render it distasteful to the people.

Board's Pros. 23rd January 1858, No. 323.

10. Having thus expressed their views on the general question the Board abstain from entering into details as they do not possess the necessary Statistics and are unacquainted with the system which according to Lieutenant Colonel Baker's letter has been successfully introduced along the grand Trunk road in the N. W. Provinces. The information which will be before Government when the Chief Engineer submits the reports of the Collectors and District Engineers will enable an opinion to be formed of the degree in which the Board's present suggestions may prove practically useful.

No. 90. ORDER THEREON, No. 714; dated 17th April 1858.

In this letter the Board submit their views on the question of levying tolls for the construction and maintenance of the roads in this Presidency. They fully admit the abstract justice of requiring those who use the roads, to contribute towards their maintenance; but they doubt whether the levy of tolls is the best expedient for realizing the necessary funds. They advert to the unpopularity of the measure, and the difficulties which surround its practical working; and they advise the establishment of as few Turnpikes or Toll Bars as possible. In the 7th para., they suggest that the construction and repair of village roads should be undertaken by means of the Local Funds, and that tolls on trunk roads should be levied in the first instance at the entrance to towns, and on the larger bridges. In the subsequent paras., they advert to other modes of realizing the necessary funds, which they have had under consideration, and the difficulties which have suggested themselves in the way of each; and lastly, they submit that if the Moturpha were divested of all objectionable items, it might be devoted to the construction and maintenance of roads, instead of being wholly abandoned.

To Government of India 22d March 1858, No. 511.

2. The Right Honorable the Governor in Council observes that the Government of India have been already addressed on the question of levying tolls for the maintenance of roads in this Presidency; and His Lordship in Council does not perceive that the Board's present letter throws any light on the subject which would have affected the views then expressed by Government. There are however some points in the Board's letter which seem to call for notice, and on these the Government will now proceed to offer a few remarks.

3. And first in regard to the suggestion in para. 7, it is observed that it has never been the intention of Government that village roads should be liable to toll; but it has always been intended that, together with talook roads, they should be constructed and maintained out of the local funds to be established in each District. As regards the proposal of the Board that toll bars should be as few as possible, the Government are disposed to doubt its propriety. The Government admit that it may be questionable whether tolls should be collected; but if it be decided that the system should be introduced, they are of opinion that all traffic, as far as may be possible, should be included, and that toll bars should be so erected as to embrace all carts moving on a given line of road.

4. To the Board's proposal that the Moturpha revenue should be applied to the construction and repair of roads, the Government cannot assent. That revenue it is proposed to abolish, not because it is not required for the general purposes of the State, but because it is oppressive in its nature, partial in its operation, and almost peculiarly a tax upon the poor. These evils would not be removed by the application of its funds to the maintenance of the roads; and the Government are of opinion that the Moturpha, like all taxes, must stand or fall on its own merits, and not with any reference to the object to which it is applied.

5. Moreover, the Government consider a wheel tax, or a toll bar, to be fair, because those pay who derive immediate benefit from the roads, but this would not be the case if the Moturpha were applied as the Board suggest; and artizans and handicraftsmen might justly complain that they were taxed to maintain communications which, throughout their lives, they never used.

(Signed) H. FORBES,
Acting Secretary to Government.

No. 988.

From

J. D. SIM, Esq.,
Sub Secretary to the Board of Revenue.

To

H. FORBES, Esq.,
Acting Secretary to Government,
Revenue Department.

Sir,

I am directed by the Board of Revenue to acknowledge the receipt of Extract Minutes Consultation, dated 24th December last No. 2396, P. W. D. calling for a report on the question, brought forward by the Supreme Government, of introducing Tolls into this Presidency.

InCon.19thMarch 1858 No.46.

2. The Board presume that Government wish for their opinion on the subject, founded on their general experience and on such information as is already on their records, as they observe from the paper now communicated to them that the Chief Engineer has been instructed "to ascertain the views of the several Collectors and District Engineers and submit their communications to Government together with his own opinion." The letter which I have the honor of addressing to you will therefore be drawn up on this understanding.

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E. M. C. 27th Jan. No. 160 P. W. D. Public in Con. 5th Feb. 1857.

*Dated 22d in Con. 31st Oct. 1856.
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Board's Pros. 30th Oct. 1857 No. 3688.

E. M. C. 6th Jan Com 19th July. 1858 R. D, No. 9.

4. It will hence be seen that the subject does not now come before the Board for the first time, and they will proceed to give their opinion on it in the manner above indicated.

5. The Board concur with the Government of India that the question is to be viewed as one of policy rather than of principle. The abstract justice of calling on those who use and profit by expensive roads and bridges to contribute at least to the cost of their repair seems unquestionable, but whether Tolls are the best expedient for the purpose in India calls for careful consideration. It cannot be concealed that the measure is likely to be a very unpopular one, and the returns will probably be small both from the limited traffic and the facilities for evading turnpikes which an unenclosed country affords. The expense at the same time would be great from the salaries which must be given to obtain the services of agents whose personal integrity and character would place the interests of the travelling public in security.

6. It may indeed be argued that turnpikes might be rented out and that it would be the interest of the renters to encourage traffic in their ranges by just and considerate conduct. But unfortunately self interest is frequently short sighted and grasping, and as the means of obtaining redress for exaction must often be practically wanting, the Board would be unwilling to place roads under native renters, if it can be avoided, except in localities where circumstances are particularly favorable as in Malabar.

6. Seeing then the difficulties which surround the practical working of the measure, the Board would advise the establishment of as few Turnpikes or Toll Bars as possible.

7. They would also offer the following suggestions,

1. That the construction and repair of village roads be left to the Local Funds, already organized in several Districts and contemplated for all with this especial object in view and that no attempt be made to levy Tolls on such communications.

2. That in levying tolls on the Trunk roads they should be levied in the first instance at the entrance to Towns and on the larger bridges. In the latter situations they believe that toll bars would be least unpopular as the ferry dues previously paid and the detentions and inconvenience formerly experienced would be remembered. These would also be advantageous positions for Turnpikes as there would be fewer facilities for evading them.

7. The Board have had under consideration the expediency of realizing the necessary Funds by a wheel tax instead of by tolls, but the existence of Local Funds to which the whole body of agriculturists will ultimately contribute, is a difficulty in the way of this measure.

8. The possibility of attaining the object indirectly by increasing the export and import duties has also engaged their attention but this arrangement is open to the objection of being partial.

9. The well known aversion of the people of India to taxation of a novel character and their submission to imposts of old standing, though to European ideas peculiarly arbitrary and vexatious, renders it worthy of consideration whether the Mohturpha, if not appropriated to Municipal purposes might not be divested of all objectionable items and devoted to the maintenance and construction of roads instead of being wholly abandoned. It seems questionable policy entirely to give up taxation which has been long known and acquiesced in at a time when it is considered necessary to impose a new tax the novelty alone of which will render it distasteful to the people.

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10. Having thus expressed their views on the general question the Board abstain from entering into details as they do not possess the necessary Statistics and are unacquainted with the system which according to Lieut. Col. Baker's letter has been successfully introduced along the grand trunk Road in the N. W. Provinces. The information which will be before Government when the Chief Engineer submits the reports of the Collectors and District Engineers will enable an opinion to be formed of the degree in which the Board's present suggestions may prove practically useful.

REVENUE BOARD OFFICE,
Fort St. George,
19*th March* 1858.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant.

Sub Secretary.

~~1857~~ 1858

No 714

Extract from the Minutes of Consultation

Under date the 16th March, 1858.

Read the following

Letter from the Sub Secretary to

the Board of Revenue

Fort St. George enter 19th March 1858 No 988

In this letter the

Board submit their views on

the question of levying tolls

for the construction and main-

tenance of the roads in this

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the abstract justice of requiring

those who use the roads, to

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tolls is the best expedient for

realizing the necessary funds.

They advert to the unpopularity

of the measure, and the

difficulties

Read a Letter from the Sub Secretary to the Board of Revenue dated 19th March 1858 No 988 submitting the views of the Board on the question of levying tolls for the construction and maintenance of the roads in this Presidency.

Ordered that the Letter be circulated for the perusal of the Members.

Read a Letter from the Sub Secretary to the Board of Revenue dated 22nd March 1858 No 989 forwarding a Copy of the Minutes of Consultation of the Government of Fort St. George dated 16th instant.

Ordered that the Letter be circulated for the perusal of the Members.

Copy Minute 31st April

difficulties which surround its practical working, and they advise the establishment of as few Turnpikes or Toll Bars as possible. In the 4th para they suggest that the construction and repair of Village roads should be undertaken by means of the Local Funds, and that tolls on Trunk roads should be levied in the first instance at the entrance to towns, and on the larger bridges. In the subsequent paras, they advert to other modes of realizing the necessary funds, which they have had under consideration, and the difficulties which have suggested themselves in the way of each; and lastly, they submit that if the Octroi plan were divested of all objectionable items, it might be devoted to the construction and maintenance

To Govt of India 22nd March 1858 No 511.

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And first in regard to the suggestion in para 4, it is observed that it has never been

been the intention of Govern-
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The Government admit that it
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Govt

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J. G.

2 Copies to the Secretary.
Dispatched 19

Rec'd 8th Jany/58 No 20 to 22
" 23rd Decr/57 " 138.
" 31st March/58 " 53 to 58.
" 27th Jany/58 " 42 to 44.

Public Works 1858 Despatch
Dy to Govt. 26th April

No 714
Extract Minute of Govt.
Dated 17th April/58

Reviewing the Board's remarks on the question of levying tolls for the construction and maintenance of the roads in this Presidency.

1589 & 90