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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Public Works DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 1087 Press / Mis.

121-122

Dated 10 - 4 - 1866.

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Works Department,
10th April 1866.

No. 121. Read the following letter from J. G. COLEMAN, Esq., to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George, dated Madras, 20th March 1866:—

In pursuance of a Resolution passed at a Sheriff's Meeting of the Inhabitants of Madras held at the People's Park on Saturday the 3rd February 1866, I have the honor, in the absence of the Chairman, to request that you will be pleased to submit to His Excellency the Governor in Council the accompanying Memorial (in triplicate), in order that it may be transmitted to the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for India, at His Excellency's earliest convenience.

No. 122. ORDER THEREON, 10th April 1866, No. 1,087.

ESTABLISHMENT, No. 11.

Resolved that the Memorial received with this letter be forwarded to the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for India, and that the Memorialists be advised of its despatch.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) CHARLES A. ORR, Colonel, R. E.,
Secretary to Government.

Exd. S. T. Augustin.

To The Right Honorable
The Secretary of State for India

Right Honorable Sir,

We, the undersigned inhabitants of Madras beg most respectfully to submit the following petition to your gracious Consideration.

Not long ago we learned with the utmost surprise that the Committee appointed by you to make arrangements for the erection of a new Central Railway Station in Madras had selected, as the most suitable site for such a Station, a portion of the Madras Peoples Park.

You will understand our surprise on learning that the Peoples Park is not only the sole public pleasure ground in Madras, but from the fact of its being situated, close to the Crowded Quarters of the poored population, it is largely frequented by precisely those Classes, who most need the means of escape to open spaces and pure air. Such a place of resort, desirable in any great city, is specially desirable in a city of which the poored quarters are so badly off in point of drainage and ventilation as

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are those of Madras. It seemed to us that nothing short of extreme necessity, could justify the slightest encroachment upon ground so much wanted by the Community, and there was in the present instance not even a semblance of such necessity to diminish our surprise.

This surprise, however, was at first unaccompanied by any feeling of alarm for the safety of our Park, since we knew that altho' professional zeal and self interest might for a time blind the Railway Committee to the real character of their strange proposal, it would be at once condemned by the whole Community, official and non official, of Madras, and we naturally expected that in the face of such universal condemnation the Committee would not persevere in their scheme.

The result has fully confirmed our calculations as regards the wishes of the Community though we regret to find that we erred in supposing that due deference would be paid to those wishes by the Committee.

How strong and unanimous is the public feeling which they had thought proper to set at defiance you may judge from the following facts.

In the first instance, when the proposal to take away a portion of the People's Park became known, it was at once vehemently condemned by the whole Madras Press, consisting of four Journals, which, collectively represent with sufficient fidelity the various classes of the European and East-Indian Community. 3

In the second instance, the proposal was no less strongly censured by the late Committee of the People's Park, all men of mark and ability and peculiarly qualified by their official position and experience to estimate the extent to which the advantages offered by the Park are used and appreciated by the people of Madras, and therefore to judge how far any sacrifice of these advantages would be compensated for by the alleged advantages of the proposed scheme. This Committee denounced the scheme as "preposterous" and "absurd" expressed their surprise that a Committee, appointed by Government should have ever ventured to propose it, and even declined to lend their countenance to a meeting to which they were invited for the purpose of considering it.

In the third instance, when the proposal was laid in due course before the Government of Madras, it was by them declared open to grave and manifest objections, and its proposers were requested to reconsider it before finally submitting it to Government for transmission Home. After these emphatic and repeated intimations of the wishes of the entire Community, it appeared impossible that any Committee, composed of English men would persevere in a scheme nominally undertaken

undertaken on behalf of that Community, and when therefor we learnt that the Railway Committee were notwithstanding, still resolved to refer their proposal to Her Majesty's Secretary of State their Conduct, which hitherto we regarded only with surprise, began to occasion us serious alarm, for it seemed almost unintelligible, except on the supposition that the Committee had hopes of bringing to bear upon you indirect influence sufficiently powerful to override the united wishes of the Government and the Community of Madras.

Under these circumstances we did not think it safe to treat the proposal of the Committee with the contempt which otherwise it would appear to us to deserve, and we have therefor thought it expedient to hold a Public meeting, with a view to obtain a more formal, if not a fuller, expression of public opinion that has yet been pronounced and to embody this opinion in a petition to you. We cannot indeed, without unduly exceeding the usual limits of a petition of this nature, go very minutely into the details of the question, but we feel that we may safely rest our case upon the following facts. We presume that the new Station, which it is proposed to erect, is to be erected, not in the Special interests of this or that Railway Company or Committee, but in the General interests of the

the Community at large. If therefore we were even to assume that the Committee are correct in stating that the People's Park furnishes the one suitable site for such a station, we should still maintain that it would rest with the Community to determine for themselves whether they would rather preserve their Park unmutilated at the cost of dispensing with a new Station or obtain a new Station at the cost of mutilating their Park. It seems to us that the only Controversy which in such a case could possibly arise would turn upon the question whether the Collective wish of the Community was really and fully known, and in the present case there can be upon this question no room for doubt. We have already told you of the strong opinion expressed by the Local Government, the Press and the People's Park Committee, and for further proof, if further proof be wanting, we have only to point to the organization of this Public meeting a proceeding very rare in Madras - and respectfully to invite your Special attention to the description of names with which this petition is so numerously signed. You will find that they represent all classes of the Community, Native, East Indian and European, from the highest Servants of the Crown to the humblest artizans. This is in any case an important Consideration, but in the present case it

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it becomes doubly important from the fact that inasmuch as the People's Park is used almost exclusively by the middle and lower classes, those Members of the higher class, who have joined in this protest, have done so, from no impulse of personal interest or prejudice but on purely public and philanthropic grounds, because they feel that any encroachment upon the scanty sources of health and recreation now enjoyed by their humbler brethren in Madras cannot be too jealously guarded against. If therefore the Railway Committee choose to assume that Madras cannot furnish a suitable site for a central station without the appropriation of a portion of the People's Park we have only to reply that the Community have unanimously resolved that they would rather do, as they have hitherto done, without a central Station, than obtain it at such a sacrifice.

But, as you may suppose, this assumption is altogether unnecessary. It is on the very face of it absurd to assume that throughout the whole of Madras, a City sparsely built over and for its extent thinly populated, there is but one suitable site for the required Station. I have not here space to discuss the other sites available for this purpose, nor indeed is the assumption we are combating sufficiently credible to require explicit refutation. It will be enough to inform you that in the opinion of competent and unbiassed judges, among others the Local Government, there are other sites to be found which are in every respect suitable for the proposed Station which can be taken without injury either to the Public or to individuals, and which offer even to the Railway Company quite as many advantages as those to be obtained by the proposed appropriation of the People's Park, except in the one point of cheapness of site; therein indeed lies the whole gist of the matter. The question is simply and solely one of money, and that not even a large sum of money, since land is far from of premium in Madras.

There is at present for sale closely adjoining the site now demanded in the People's Park, a patch of waste land which the Railway Company could obtain at a very moderate price, and to which the sole objection alleged is that its selection would involve the

the Construction of a Railway Bridge over a Canal. But even were a large sum of money involved, instead of the Comparatively trivial outlay. Your Memorialists Submit that the pecuniary interests of a Single Company should not be permitted to outweigh the interests and wishes of an entire Community.

As regards the pleas said to be advanced by the Railway Committee that they only wish to take a small portion of the People's Park, your Memorialists Submit:-

Firstly, that the portion required is by no means small, inasmuch as it amounts to about one-tenth of the whole area comprised by the Park, and includes the principal and most convenient Entrance.

Secondly, that the ground is so valuable to the public, for the reasons above pointed out, that no portion of it, small or large, can be spared, but that on the Contrary every effort should be made to further enlarge instead of diminishing it, especially as the necessity for it will steadily increase with the increase of population, and of dwelling places in Madras.

Thirdly, that to sacrifice any portion, however small, of a public pleasure ground, so much needed and prized by the Community, to the interests of a Company is to establish a precedent of the most dangerous kind.

Fourthly,- (and to this objection we would call your Special attention) that the Madras Public have no sufficient Guarantee - and from the nature of the case, can in no way secure a sufficient Guarantee that, if the Railway Company once obtain any portion of the People's Park, they will always remain content with this portion; but that on the Contrary there is every reason to expect that as Railway Traffic increases, and the requirements of the Railway Company expand, it will become absolutely necessary either to abandon the new Station or appropriate a further indefinite portion of the People's Park.

As regards the plea - that a Railway Station will beautify the Park, your Memorialists Submit that this is a question of taste on which the Public are probably more competent (and certainly less interested) judges than the Railway Committee, and that the public so far from adopting this view consider that a Railway Station, with all its accessories, will tend rather to disfigure the Park than to adorn it.-

In conclusion your Memorialists have only to reiterate their most earnest prayer that you will grant this their petition, and not sanction a Scheme which your Memorialists consider fraught with the most injurious consequences to the welfare, present and prospective, of Madras.

And your Memorialists will ever pray.

Madras
3rd February
1866.

P/Mis/1258 of 1866.

Madras 20th March 1866.

To

The Honorable C.A. Arbuthnot
Chief Secretary to Government
Fort Saint George.

Sir

In pursuance of a Resolution passed at a Sheriff's Meeting of the Inhabitants of Madras held at the peoples' Park on Saturday the 3rd February 1866, I have the honor in the absence of the Chairman to request that you will be pleased to submit to His Excellency the Governor in Council the accompanying Memorial (in triplicate) in order that it may be transmitted to the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for India at His Excellency's earliest convenience.

I have the honor to be.
Sir
Your most obedt Servant

Circular

Public Works Department.

No. 1087

1087

PROCEEDINGS of the MADRAS GOVERNMENT

Under date the 10th April 1866.

Read the following

From Mr. J. E. Coleman (Here enter No. — dated 20 March 1866)

Resolved that the memorial recd with this letter be forwarded to the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for India, and that the memorialists be advised of its despatch.

To J. E. Coleman Esqre

Copy in a letter to England dd 11th April No 19 of 1866.

No. 1087 Public Works Dept. Madras 10th April 1866. From Chief Engr. J. E. Coleman Madras

Read Letter from Chief Engr. dated 20 March 1866 No. 3 - enclosing a Memorial from Inhabitants of Tellicherry praying for the construction of a Breakwater at that Port

No. 3358

Forwards for transmission to the Secretary of State a Memorial from inhabitants of Tellicherry praying for the construction of a Breakwater at that Port

Encl. 1087 · 10th April 1866.

Dept 18/4/66

Copy sent to Letters to England
dated 11th April No 19 of 1866.

P. W. 186 D. Department.

Bo: of Good for April

No. 1084

PROCEEDINGS OF GOVERNMENT of Madras

Dated 10th April 66.

The Memorial from the Inhabitants of Madras praying that a portion of the Peoples Park may be appropriated for a Railway Station

Nos 121-122

Enclosure 1866 D. Letter