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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Public Works DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 3077 Press / Mis.

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Dated 26 9 1866.

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Works Department, 26th September 1866.

No. 628. Read the following Proceedings of the Madras Government in the Revenue Department :—

Intimating that the experiment of planting trees in the bed of the Palar should not be attempted until the locality has been examined, and the measure reported upon by the Public Work's Department. } (Here enter 22nd September 1866, No. 2,562.)

No. 629. ORDER THEREON, 26th September 1866, No. 3,077.

CIVIL WORKS, No. 113.

Communicated to the Superintending Engineer of the 4th Division.

(True Extract.)

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

To the Superintending Engineer, 4th Division.

Exd. S. T. Augustin.

Read the following papers :—

No. 540. From the Acting Civil and Session Judge of Chingleput, to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George, dated Chingleput, 31st August 1866, No. 299.

1. Though there is no famine, there is great distress here on account of the present high prices. A few days ago there was a dacoity in the middle of Chingleput, and at 10 o'clock at night, while the towns-people were yet moving about, a gang of forty men, with torches, boldly ransacked two of the best houses, treated the inmates with unusual roughness, and carried off whatever they could lay hands on.

2. While food is at its present prices, we may expect an increase in the number of such crimes.

3. The Government have, I see, ordered an expenditure of public money in various Districts to relieve the people by giving work to the able-bodied.

4. I take the liberty of suggesting that the greater the number of the localities in which the money is thus spent, the more widespread will be the benefit, for the dearth is not such that thousands are starving in any particular locality; but yet there is probably hardly a village in which those who are at the bottom of the scale are not reduced to a state of desperation. Such an expenditure as will enable this comparatively small and widely-scattered body to meet the pressing wants of nature is, what I conceive, will yield the greatest benefit to the people themselves, and be the most effectively conducive to the public peace.

5. The difficulty of carrying out such a scheme of widely-scattered expenditure is apparent, and will prevent its adoption beyond a certain limit. For it is not always that trustworthy superintendence can be found, nor are there every where works on which Government money can be remuneratively spent.

6. My object in addressing you is to point out that a moderate sum might be advantageously spent here, and, to offer if the Government approve, to undertake the superintendence of the expenditure I suggest.

7. I should be happy to see to the proper expenditure of Rupees 500 within three miles of Chingleput (thus including several villages), and I propose that that sum should be spent on ponds and topes.

8. Besides the irrigation tanks, there are in the neighbourhood of this place many stone-faced ponds ("Kollam") on which the agricultural population and their cattle depend for water.

9. In this season of extreme drought most tanks, ponds, and wells are dry. There can, therefore, never be a better opportunity for deepening these places, and thus putting the population in a better position for meeting any future droughts.

10. The advantages the community will derive, the number of cattle that may in future years be saved through a trifling expenditure now, may surely suffice to render this a work on which public funds may fairly be spent. The appearance of the cattle that live, and the numbers of those that have died for want of water, would plead more eloquently than any words for the small expenditure proposed.

11. In topes, I would ask to be allowed to try an experiment for which the situation of Chingleput is particularly well adapted.

12. The want of fuel is known to be the cause of much of what English farmers consider the miserable husbandry of this country : having no firewood, the manure that should be returned to the land is used as fuel. From this and other causes the supply of firewood is becoming a problem of daily increasing importance.

13. Most of the rivers of the peninsula are for the greater part of the year like the Palar in this neighbourhood, a tract of arid sand, from one to two miles in width, and covering in their course several hundred square miles of area. This large tract being not only lost to vegetation itself, but acting injuriously on the adjacent country by the amount of heat given out from its daily re-heated bed of dry sand. Yet below this blazing strip of desert, which is to be found in most Districts, there is almost always an abundant supply of water.

14. Believing that in the irregular beds of these rivers many spots will be found where the width is far greater than is needed for the discharge of the river water, and where this width can therefore be reduced without danger of unduly damming up the stream, I propose that such spots should be sought out, and planted with the trees best adapted for flourishing in a sandy soil.

15. In rivers with a considerable fall, I believe this course might be pursued without danger along both sides of almost their whole course.

16. Whether it would be safe permanently to shut off the river from these portions during flood time, and thus permanently reduce the area of its bed, is a question that should be separately answered for each river, and towards which we should gradually feel our way by experiment.

17. There are probably rivers whose discharge has permanently decreased from various causes, and whose beds might therefore with advantage be considerably narrowed. Others again, from the destruction of ancient reservoirs at their head, and other causes, may now be more impetuous and larger in flood season than they used to be, and with these we must be careful of interfering.

18. I would propose that, for the present at least, the river be allowed as free access as ever to the parts thus planted, flowing unrestrictedly among the young trees.

19. If care is taken to select sites where the flood waters do not rest for many days, raise the proper kind of trees, not put them out till they are about six feet high, and pay them some trifling attention for two years, I am sanguine that the river topes I advocate might be raised over what would form in the aggregate a very considerable area, and that this might be done at small cost.

20. The advantages I should expect are the following:—

First.—The injurious heat radiating area would be reduced.

Second.—The impetuosity of the rivers would be diminished, their waters flowing from among the trees and their roots for a *longer period* than that of the present flood.

Third.—The occasionally destructive effects of unchecked floods would be avoided.

Fourth.—Firewood would be more abundant just where the densest population naturally exists, viz., along the river banks.

Fifth.—The manure now used as fuel would be returned to the soil, and produce larger crops to the benefit of the whole community.

Sixth.—Timber for building purposes could be raised where now there is none.

21. The Palar, which is close to Chingleput, is just the type of river I am speaking of.

22. A successful experiment, on the part of Government, would probably soon find imitators among private parties.

23. I should be glad if the Government would sanction an expenditure of Rupees 500 for the purpose, and permit me while here to superintend the experiment. It would distribute a little money to good purpose at this critical period, and would not, I hope, be without other valuable results.

Referred to the Board of Revenue for report.

(Signed) J. D. SIM,
Secretary to Government.

11*th September* 1866.

No. 541. Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 14th September 1866.

Read Endorsement of the Secretary to Government, Revenue Department, dated 11th September 1866, on a letter from the Acting Civil and Session Judge of Chingleput, to the Chief Secretary to Government, dated 31st August 1866, No. 299, soliciting sanction for Rupees 500 to be spent on the experiment of planting trees, &c.

1. The Board recommend that a sum of Rupees 500 be placed at the disposal of the Acting Judge of Chingleput from the Local Jungle Conservancy and Planting Fund for the experiment he proposes of planting in the river-bed.

2. The Board deem it well worthy of trial. It is well known that in many parts of the country, the Babool (one of the most useful of woods for agricultural purposes and for fuel) grows luxuriantly in the beds of tanks, without interfering with the water-spread, and without being injured by prolonged submersion, while the shade must diminish evaporation, and the stock of timber and fuel is materially increased.

No. 542. ORDER THEREON, 22nd September 1866, No. 2,562.

Miscellaneous.

The Government observe that Mr. E. C. G. Thomas has just been appointed Acting Civil and Session Judge of Cuddapah. The Board will ascertain whether the Sub-Collector will undertake the work proposed by Mr. Thomas; but planting in the bed of the river must not be attempted until the Engineer Officer has examined the locality carefully, and reported that the measure is unobjectionable.

(True Extract.)

Secretary to Government.

To the Board of Revenue.
,, the Public Works Department.
,, the Acting Judge of Chingleput.

Exd. S. T. Augustin.

No 3077

Comm[d] of the

Subsistence of the 4[th] Div[n]

Fort St George
26[th] Septr 1765

Sept 27[th] Rec[d]

P.W. 1866 Dep.tt
Pro:- of Govt. for Sept.r 3922

Pro: &c: Govt. Rec:- Dep.tt
No 2562

Dated 22nd }
Rec.d 24th } Sept.r 1866

Madras

Intimating that
the experiment of Planting trees in the bed of the Palar should not be attempted until the locality has been examined and the measure reported upon by the P.W. Dep.t.

A 828. 829.

C.No. 3077 - 26th Sept.r 66