

ANNEXURE.

Office note by the Examiner of Public Works Accounts, dated 18th October 1887, No. 662.

Referring to what I wrote about the routine character of the disposals on objectionable items statements, I may begin by saying that my remarks apply quite as much to my own action as to that of any other officer. I have to deal every month with some fifty or sixty of these statements; they are due on a certain date, and there is a certain limited time for preparing them; and the result is that it is impossible for me to give to them anything approaching to the personal attention which, in my opinion, I should give to any matter reported to Government. Practically I seldom attempt more than to see that there are no unnecessarily irritating remarks in them. If I attempted to do more I should probably delay the submission of the statements indefinitely.

2. It is an established principle of official correspondence that two or more subjects should not be mixed up in one letter (see Code paragraphs 878 and 887), but an objectionable items statement entirely ignores this principle. If each item is thoroughly gone into, they do not all, so to say, *mature* at the same date, and an item which could be disposed of at once may be delayed for weeks or months on account of some other item having no real connection with it. And if they are all gone into at once, their disposal requires, probably, a review of an utterly bewildering amount of matter. The result is that nowhere—neither in the Executive Engineer's office, nor in the Superintending Engineer's, nor in the Examiner's—is any individual item taken up at all thoroughly; at every stage the disposal has to be hurried through in a limited time; many, if not most, of the remarks are of the most futile character, and, when the statements reach Government, they seldom contain any adequate materials for the proper disposal of individual items.

3. In my opinion, therefore, the first step towards making the objectionable items statements more practically effective should be, in a large measure, to do away with them, that is to say, to abandon to a great extent the collective treatment and to deal with the items individually.

4. A collective objectionable items statement is intended, I presume, to serve two distinct purposes. It is intended—

- (i) as a means for regularising, remedying, removing, and checking irregularities, and
- (ii) as a means of exhibiting statistically in a more or less general view the general mass of irregularity, and showing its increase or decrease.

The first purpose, for reason stated above, is secured very badly, and the second can be much better secured by a condensed and classified abstract.

5. The irregularities at present included in the monthly objectionable items statements are:—

- (i) Irregularities in respect of estimates.
- (ii) Irregularities in respect of appropriations.
- (iii) Non-submission of completion reports.
- (iv) Miscellaneous irregularities.

If the statement, in its present form, is retained at all, I would confine its use entirely to the first two classes, for which it was originally designed, and for which—it may perhaps be capable of improvement—it is suited; but I think it would be very much better to deal with the two classes in separate statements, and to have for each a specially adapted form. I would provide for a separate periodical statement of overdue completion reports in a suitable form designed *ad hoc*, so as to show clearly all material facts, such as known dates of completion, when and by whom last inspected, whose inspection awaited, reason for non-submission, &c., with any further remarks of

officers concerned. And I would exclude all miscellaneous irregularities, and arrange that they should be separately and individually reported after due inquiry when necessary. Register of these items could be kept by me in any form and in any detail considered desirable, and periodical statements submitted showing, under any desired classification, their numbers and increase or decrease, and these abstracts would include, according to the wishes of Government, either all items whatsoever, or all outstanding more than a certain time, or only those actually reported to Government. As regards some classes of these miscellaneous irregularities, it might very possibly hereafter be found convenient to submit separate periodical statements in suitable forms as proposed in the case of completion reports, but I will not attempt to go into that matter now.

6. I have said above (in the last paragraph) that I would report all miscellaneous irregularities separately *after due inquiry when necessary*, and with regard to this last clause I may say that, in most cases of a plain breach of some distinct rule, whether by way of commission or of omission, I would propose to report the matter at once. "Inquiry," in far too many cases, simply means inordinate delay, months spent in sending reminder after reminder, eliciting eventually a bare statement to the effect that the matter is under correspondence with the Superintending Engineer, or that the irregularity was unavoidable, or that the matter will be disposed of shortly—which may mean anything from one month to eighteen—or some information equally useless, whereas the essential thing, in nearly all these cases, is that they should be dealt with and disposed of promptly. Therefore I would, as a rule, report the irregularity at once, but with a view to saving time and trouble it might be arranged that, in all such cases, I should send a copy of the report to the Executive Engineer concerned, with an intimation that, under such and such a paragraph of the Code (to be introduced for the purpose with the approval of Government), the officer's explanation (meaning of course a real and full explanation) should be furnished at once to Government through the Examiner, and, if necessary, through the Superintending Engineer, such explanation being due (again according to Code) within a specified time. Failing arrival of the explanation within the prescribed time, I should at once report the non-receipt to Government, and leave the further disposal of the matter entirely to Government. I do not for a moment wish to suggest that there is anything specially heinous about these miscellaneous irregularities, or that their number is very abnormal in Madras, but I think that the one great irregularity—a consequence I think of the system—is the way in which, in far too many cases, they are allowed to linger on unremedied, and, except as a matter of routine, almost unnoticed. I am convinced that, with a little promptness and determination, such of these irregularities as are not really unavoidable would soon be stopped under a system of individual treatment, whilst, as regards many of the remainder, the result of the more thorough consideration given to the matter would be to remove the occasion for technical irregularities by suitable modifications of the Code when shown to be desirable.

7. I am myself very dubious as to the advantage of the collective treatment as regards any of the different classes of irregularities, so far as concerns the first of the purposes referred to in paragraph 4, but that treatment is not so obviously unsuitable for the first three classes of irregularities as it is for miscellaneous irregularities. It is, however, very desirable, I think, that the different *classes* should be separately dealt with, because it is only on this condition that the forms adopted can, from time to time, be suitably modified, and more perfectly adapted to the several purposes. It would be impossible for me to go fully into the matter here, but I have no doubt that the collective treatment of these irregularities, *class by class*, can be materially facilitated by taking note of necessary incidents and of points of similarity between individual cases of the same class and gradually adapting the form used to the circumstances and requirements of the class concerned, so as to ensure all essential facts being clearly exhibited, and if Government should approve of the suggested change, I would at once take into consideration the question of alterations immediately desirable in the present form to meet more completely the requirements of the classes of cases referred to.

8. I would therefore deal with (1) irregularities as to estimate, (2) irregularities as to appropriation, and (3) non-submission of completion reports, in three separate

statements, and, as already suggested, I would make these statements quarterly instead of monthly as at present; but with regard to appropriations somewhat closer attention may be necessary towards the close of the financial year, and therefore during the last quarter of the year this one statement might be more frequent. As regards the statistical report or abstract relating to miscellaneous irregularities, I think that a half-yearly statement would be quite sufficient.

9. With a view to distributing the work in connection with these statements I would fix the due dates of the three quarterly statements, so that the statement for some one class should be due every month.

10. With a view to reducing the *number* of statements I would prepare them by circles instead of, as now, by divisions, and as regards separation by funds I see no reason why one statement (for each circle) should not be submitted for all funds dealt with in the General Branch and one for all dealt with in Irrigation Branch of the Secretariat.

11. With regard to specific measures for reducing irregularities of any kind with the more careful attention to individual cases which the proposed changes will, in my opinion, secure, experience will, I have no doubt, soon indicate both the measures to be taken in order to put a stop to real irregularities, and the modifications required in the rules in order to remove from the category of objectionable items many transactions and proceedings which are really unobjectionable, and possibly unavoidable, and I may point out that the adoption of any part of the suggestions made by the Superintending Engineer, VI Circle, in his letter, No. 771 T.J., dated 18th July 1887 (see also my office note No. 489 of 26th August 1887) for increasing the powers of Superintending Engineers will at once tend to reduce irregularities in respect of estimate. As regards this class, however, something more might, I think, be done. It seems to me that when a work is begun without estimate, or is continued after the estimate is exceeded, either (1) the work must go on, and ought to go on, regardless of estimate, or (2) it ought to be stopped; and I am quite prepared to admit that in the majority of cases the work probably ought to go on, and that the technical irregularity, under present rules, is unavoidable; but in such cases I think the Superintending Engineer might be empowered, if he is satisfied that the work ought to go on, to grant a provisional sanction, within his powers of course, and for a limited time, on a rough estimate of the expenditure, pending submission of detailed plans and estimates; and that when the expenditure is likely to exceed his own powers, he should report the circumstances and obtain a similar provisional sanction from Government; but if the objectionable items statement to Government is a quarterly return, such provisional sanction by Government should hardly ever be necessary. Precautions against above would not, I think, be difficult.

12. The only other suggestion that I can make "with a view to making the statements more practically effective" is that Government should insist on having real explanations, and real reasons, instead of the futile routine remarks which are now so frequent, and which, as I have already pointed out, are in a great measure—indeed I hope almost entirely—the result of the system, which makes any other than a routine disposal a matter of considerable difficulty.

13. The adoption of the proposals now made would no doubt necessitate some modification of the present system of dealing with objectionable items as between the Examiner and the Executive Engineer, but it is not now necessary to consider this matter at length.

14. I wish to repeat that nothing that I have said is meant to imply that there is any abnormal amount of irregularity in the Madras Presidency. I do not think there is; but I think there is more than there should be, or need be; and I think that the labor involved in, and the irritation caused by, the system at present adopted for remedying irregularities is out of all proportion to the results, and that better results might be secured with, in the end, much less trouble; and, in case I have not already made my meaning sufficiently clear, I will also repeat that, in my opinion, the fault lies almost entirely with the *system* (which compels a routine, and therefore ineffectual, treatment of the matter), and not with those who work with, or work under, the system.

15. It may be said that detailed inquiry into individual items might proceed concurrently with the collective treatment under the objectionable items statement system, and no doubt it *might*; but there is an obvious waste of time in doing the same thing twice over, and I do not think that the staff generally has any time to spare.

16. With regard to the question as to what other statements could be similarly dealt with, *i.e.*, submitted less frequently than at present, I think that, if I have to single out individual statements, I can only specify the monthly divisional return of grants, expenditure and balances, in so far as it extends beyond a bare application for credit. The monthly application for credit would of course remain, but would be a very simple matter. The rest might, in my opinion, be made a quarterly statement if not done away with altogether, together with the budget register and connected procedure (see Code paragraph 1588 *et seq.*) in divisional offices, leaving to the Examiner the responsibility for taking the check which the present procedure is intended to secure; but this return is so intimately connected with returns required by the Accountant-General, Public Works Department, that it might be difficult to obtain the sanction of the Government of India to any change.

17. I am also seriously of opinion that all practical purposes would be perfectly well secured, and the audit in some respects considerably facilitated, if detailed accounts—*i.e.*, accounts supported by schedules in full detail—were submitted bi-monthly instead of monthly. I think the difficulties both in divisional offices and in the central office are considerably enhanced by the impossibility of disposing of one set of accounts before the next is submitted. The Financial Department would probably require some monthly accounts, but there need not, I think, be any difficulty in providing for monthly abstract statements in sufficient detail and sufficiently accurate, without insisting on the monthly submission of the mass of detail now required.

18. In conclusion, I may mention that there seems to be no reason why Government—if so disposed—should not at once sanction the procedure suggested above in connection with miscellaneous irregularities. Sanction of the Government of India seems unnecessary.

20TH MARCH 1888, No. 917 W., PUBLIC WORKS.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

General.
Account.

LETTER—from

COLONEL H. R. MEAD, R.E.,

Joint Secretary to the Government of Madras,

Public Works Department,

To

THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA,

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

SIR,

With reference to the latter part of paragraph 7 of my letter, No. 2611 W., dated 4th October 1887, in which it was stated that certain points in connection with the question of reducing clerical work in divisional offices would probably before long form the subject of correspondence with the Government of India, I am directed to forward a copy of the Proceedings of this Government, No. 916 W., dated 20th March 1888, and to request the sanction of the Government of India to the modification of paragraph 352 of the Madras Public Works Code in the manner suggested in paragraph 8 of the Government order. The Code paragraph in question is based on paragraph 124, chapter III, volume I, of the Government of India Code.

2. I am also to recommend strongly, for the sanction of the Government of India, the proposal under head VI of the proceedings that the objectionable item statement be made a quarterly instead of a monthly return. Under the present procedure the orders of Government on the statement for one month rarely reach the officers concerned before the submission of the return for the succeeding month, and many items which have been finally disposed of by the orders on one statement are thus unnecessarily repeated in the next. It is also argued that, if the return be submitted quarterly, numerous petty irregularities, which are now reported to Government, would find no place in the statement, inasmuch as they would be remedied before the expiration of the quarter. I am at the same time to invite attention to paragraphs 12 *et seq.* of the Government order, and to the accompanying copy of a note by the Examiner, Public Works Accounts, No. 662, dated 18th October 1887, which show the measures proposed to render the objectionable item statement less of a routine matter than it now is and more effective in the prevention and removal of irregularities.

3. I am also directed to inquire whether the Government of India would be inclined to view favorably the proposals in paragraphs 16 and 17 of the order, that the monthly return of grants, expenditure and balances be converted into a quarterly

return, and that the divisional accounts in full detail be submitted bi-monthly instead of monthly as at present. If so, I am to say that the measures necessary to carry out the changes will at once be taken into consideration and the result reported to the Government of India in due course.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

(Signed) H. R. MEAD, Colonel, R.E.,
Joint Secretary to Govt., P.W.D.

FORT ST. GEORGE,
20th March 1888.

GENERAL.
ACCOUNT.

Govt. of {1888} Madras.
PUBLIC WORKS.

Dated March, 20th.

Recd.

Encl.

20th March 1888, No. 917 W.

MARCH.

Monthly Divisional Accounts

The Government of India addressed with regard to certain suggestions for the simplification of the — and the reduction of clerical work in divisional offices.

No 542

Executive Engineer's Office
4th March 1888.
Camp. Todern.

From

A. A. G. Malet Esq.

Executive Engineer of Vellore

The Superintending Engineer

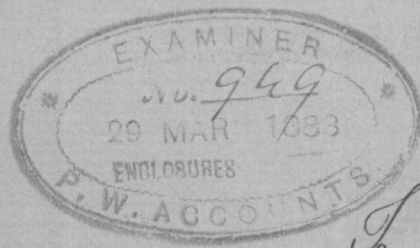
II Circle.

Sir,

With reference to your endorsement No. 7901 of 9th ultimo, I have the honor to inform, that in many cases contractors & Piece-workers fail to do the work within the agreed time and in accordance with the specification. In such cases it becomes necessary to employ Departmental labor to rectify or finish the work. The value of this labor is of course deducted from the Contractor's Bill to whom the full rates as per agreement are allowed. It is of course open to me to cancel the original agreement entirely & start fresh. This procedure would involve a deal of trouble which the procedure I now follow obviates. Contractors generally fail when the work is nearly completed and to cancel the original and make a new agreement would involve the following difficulties —

(1) The Coolies engaged by the original Contractor would disappear instead of as they now do assist in finishing the work

(2) Final measurements of an incomplete work



work would have to be taken and deductions made for sectioning &c, there is always difficulty in this.

3. The new man would require a higher rate to finish off the work, I should have to calculate the extra cost & deduct it from the original Contractor. This could not be done with accuracy.

4. There would be considerable delay between the stopping of one Contractor & the starting of another.

By the method I adopt extra men are put on when necessary without stopping the work. The whole work is billed for when completed, the cost of extra labor deducted & so the estimate is not unduly exceeded.

I have &c

Wm. A. G. Mallet

Executive Engineer
Madras

/True copy/

J. Hannan

Superintending Engineer
Travancore

Enclos. to S.E. of 876 et L.
18-3-88



E.2
P.W. 2447
3881

No 876 et L.

Superintending Engineer Office
II Circle, Aginipad
18th March 188.

From

J. Hannan Esq
Superintending Engineer
II Circle



To

The Chief Engineer
For Irrigation.

Enclos: 1.

Sir,

With reference to G.O. No 3170 W of the 22nd November 1887, passing orders on Provincial Objectionable Items statement. Imperial, Provincial and Local for August 1887 and calling for a special report on item 7 of the statement, for employing departmental labor on works to be done by contractors in the Sangam Project, I have the honor to forward you a copy of the Madras Executive Engineer's letter No 542 of the 4th Instant explaining the circumstances under which departmental labor is employed on work to be done by contractors, and to state that I concur with his remarks.

I have the honor to be

Sir

Yours most obedt servant

J. Hannan
Superintending Engineer
II Circle

Compd



From,

The Suptg. Engineer,
2nd Circle.

To,

^{E.1}
^{P.W. 244}
The Chief Engineer,
³⁸⁸¹
For Irrigation.

Dated 18th March 1888.

No. 876 et L.

Enclos: 1.

Let me see correspondence

^{24/3}
Langam Project. Employing
Departmental labor on
works to be done by contractors
in the — Forwarding copy of
Mellone S^r officer's letter ex-
-plaining the circumstances
for —

Letter from the Superintending Engineer, Second
Circle, No. 876 et L. dated 18th March 1888.



No. 31. E. W.

Encs: 2

Forwarded to the Chief Engineer, Public
Works Department, for disposal. The undersigned
sees no objection to the course adopted by the
Executive Engineer.

Chepāh
26th March 1888 }

Davidson
For Chief Engineer for Irrigation

To

The Chief Engineer,
P. W. Department.

3881.
PWC No. 2993

No. 1410C d/28 March 1888

To

In favour of
Munshi.

Mem
25.3.88

On

28.3.88

E.2

To W.

No. 1403
25.4.88 Emr. 4

The objection has been misunderstood. Of course there is not the slightest objection to the Executive Engineer's proceedings as described by him, the objection was to the way in which the transaction was recorded in the accounts.

2. The objection can be best explained by referring to the two contract certificates, sent herewith. Certificate No. 5 of June 1886 shows a work done by contractor of the value of

20

Rs. 1,474-13-4 and payments to contractor Rs. 1,097-5-4, leaving a balance of Rs. 377-8-0 due to him. From the next certificate No. 5 (final) dated March 1887 (paid in August) it appears that between June 1886 and August 1887 no work was done by the contractor, but certain work which he should have done was done on his account by the Executive Engineer, departmentally or otherwise, to the value of Rs. 888-10-8, and in certificate No. 6 the value of work thus done is deducted from the total value of work certified to, whereas the proper plan would have been to charge these payments, aggregating Rs. 888-10-8 as payments to the contractor's account from time to time as incurred on his behalf, that is to say they should, as incurred, have been debited in the contractors' ledger, and then they should have appeared in the 4th. page of certificate No. 6 (under "memo of payments made").

3. The correct procedure in such cases is however nowhere laid down, and the form of contract bills makes no provision for entering sums paid

not to the contractor but on his account, ^sunder the circumstances the mistake — if it can be called one — was very natural. Indeed it will probably seem to most people that the procedure actually adopted is the simplest and most proper, but the objection to it is that it provides no record whatever of sums paid for work done on the contractor's account.

4. It will I think be well to codify the procedure to be adopted in such cases, and to introduce any necessary modifications of detail in the forms.

5. I may add that this case never should have been reported to Government, and never would have been so reported, unless possibly as illustrating the necessity of laying down the procedure to be adopted, had it not been that, as explained in my office note No. 662 dated 18th. October 1887 it is impossible for me to make any but the most superficial examination of the provincial objectionable items statements in the present form. Under the modified arrangements sanctioned in G.O. No. 916 W.

dated 20th. March 1888, I trust no cases will be reported to Government which do not really call for their notice.

Handwritten signature

C.

Handwritten signature

25/4.

no 3170 w of 22-11-87
" 917 w of 10-3-88

P.W. Co 3881

No 1409 w of 14 May 1888

The Engr's office
The Engr's office
note will be commu-
-icated to the Suptg.
Engr II circle, with
reference to his letter
No 876 h L of 18 March
1888

Recd 26-4-88.

End 4.

2. The Engr will submit
a draft standing order
describing the procedure
to be adopted when
departmental labours
is supplied for contract works.

No 1409 w of 14 May 1888

WMS
30.4.88

John
2/5/88

S. E. II circle ✓
Ch. E. for Engr ✓
Engr. P.W. ✓
with 2 enclos ✓
30/4-1888

with order