

Public Works (1898) Department.

G.O., No. 2145 W

DATED 25 August 98

[Despatch Abstract.]

Unofficial references to Heads of Departments

From: Public Dept. stating
that there is no objection to the employment of Secretaries
to Govt., at their discretion, of the system of —
Recorded—

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

PUBLIC DEPARTMENT.

READ—the following paper:—

Extract from letter No. 39, dated 21st January 1898, from W. S. Meyer, Esq.,
I.C.S., recorded in G.O., No. 884, Judicial, dated 7th June 1898.

26. I think that work in the Madras Secretariats might be materially facilitated by the adoption of the 'unofficial reference' system in vogue in the offices of the Government of India. If, for instance, a matter comes before the Imperial Finance Department on which some officer directly subordinate thereto—say, the Comptroller-General or the Director-General of the Post Office—can usefully and expeditiously advise from his personal knowledge, the papers, with such notes as may have been already recorded thereon, are sent to him *un-officially*, to be returned with a note on the point or points at issue. The advantages of this system, which practically makes the heads of departments special occasional members of the Secretariat, are as follows:—

(1) The unofficial reference is always considered urgent and therefore saves the delay which might be occasioned by calling for a formal report.

(2) The reply must be given personally by the officer consulted, and his dealing with the subject himself instead of merely initialling an office draft, is thereby insured.

(3) The officer referred to has the advantage of seeing the notes already recorded, and can therefore meet difficulties which may have presented themselves to Secretaries or Honourable Members, or point out practical objections which may exist to a course that they have been inclined to favour.

(4) Though the views of the departmental head may not be accepted, the discussion has all been confidential, and the differences between himself and Government are not published as would be the case in an official report the orders on which might have to go to his subordinates.

Similarly the practice of different departments of the Secretariat communicating with each other by formal official *memoranda* is in the Government of India reduced to a minimum by the same system of unofficial references. Where, as so often happens, a matter which appertains primarily to one Secretariat also concerns another, the practice here is for the papers and notes to circulate from the one department to the other. The second department has thus the advantage (without any formal drafting) of knowing, not only the conclusions at which the first has arrived, but the arguments on which these are based, and can therefore acquiesce or object with far greater effect.

These suggestions apply with equal force to all branches of the Madras Secretariat, but I make them here as my commission came originally (G.O., No. 955, dated 5th July 1897) from the Judicial Department.

ORDER—No. 878, Public, dated 9th July 1898.

The Government sees no objection to the employment by Secretaries to Government, at their discretion, of the system of unofficial references to heads of departments.

(True Extract.)

[Signature]

Govt Chief Secretary.

To the Departments of the Secretariat. (O. W. B.)

Exd. A. F. Eccleston.

[Handwritten notes and signatures]
10/7/98
13/7/98
14/7/98