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[Despatch Abstract.]

Immigration

In ^{with remarks} enclosing copy of
a report from the
Consular Agent at
Pondicherry containing
the result of ^{the} enquiries
he has made from
immigrants who have
recently been repatriated
from Martinique—

AGAIN ORDER OF GOVERNMENT, DATED
No.

FACE PAGE, No. 1082/92.

OF 15

ENCLOSURES.

CURRENT No.

STATEMENT WITH DITTO.

Letter
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3RD NOVEMBER 1891, No. 925, PUBLIC.

PUBLIC DEPARTMENT.

LETTER—from

THE CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF
FORT ST. GEORGE,

To

THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA,
REVENUE AND AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT.

SIR,

In reply to your letter, No. 1936-37—53, dated 16th September 1891, and in continuation of my communication of the 9th ultimo, No. 855, I am directed to forward, for the information of the Government of India, copy of a report from the Consular Agent at Pondicherry containing the result of inquiries he has made from emigrants who have recently been repatriated from Martinique.

2. They corroborate what has been said by the Consul at Martinique as to the difficulties placed in the way of emigrants wishing to return to India. No complaints were, however, made of their treatment when once on boardship, but in regard to this, I am to invite attention to my letter quoted in paragraph 1 of this communication.

3. Copies of depositions of returned emigrants taken down by the Consul at Pondicherry accompany this letter.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

FORT ST. GEORGE,
3rd November 1891.

Chief Secretary.

[Annexure.]

ANNEXURE.

From Lieutenant-General H. McLEOD, R.A., British Consular Agent, Pondicherry and Karikal, to the Chief Secretary to Government, Madras, dated Pondicherry, 14th October 1891, No. 463.

With reference to your memorandum, No. File 53—Serial 11, dated 10th October 1891, and enclosures herewith returned, I have the honour to report that, on the arrival of repatriated emigrants by the S.S. *Niemen* on the 11th instant, I made personal inquiries among them, and the result, in my opinion, is that every obstacle that ingenuity can devise is placed in the way of emigrants seeking to return. There were none that I spoke to—and I spoke to nearly all the older persons—who did not say that they had been eager to leave for some years, varying from 1½ to 5, and that they were always put off and referred from one office to another and continual delays made on all sorts of pretences, though they were kept at work all the time. I have only had experience of two batches of repatriated emigrants, but the one I am now reporting on is a most miserable lot, there is hardly an able-bodied person amongst them. Sixty-two out of the 199 are children born in Martinique, and therefore not emigrants at all, and the remainder I can easily imagine any employer being very glad to disembarass himself of. They are all very poor, and between them all only possessed a sum of 3,660 francs, equal to Rs. 1,926-4-9.

2. On inquiry from them as to the persons left behind, they all with one consent stated that every one there, to the amount of several thousands, wanted to get away, and they further said that, in view of the recent calamity at Fort de France, they were all starving and must soon perish if means are not taken to remove them. I have taken the statements of a few of them in writing, which I forward, and I beg respectfully to express my opinion that the paragraph 23 of the report of Her Majesty's Consul at Martinique exactly represents the existing condition of affairs—this last batch consisting of nothing but aged and useless persons and children, that doubtless the planters are only too glad to get rid of.

3. No complaints were made of their treatment on boardship. They seem to have been quite satisfied with that.

ENCLOSURE.

No. 92, Ayasawmy, son of Chinnia, has been 9 years in Martinique, has been trying to get a return passage for the last 2 years; he engaged for 5 years, and whenever he sought to leave he was told his time was not up and that he must get a passport from the Bureau Indienne, when they told him to get a note from his employer. His employer refused to give him a note and beat him. He was employed by a Monsieur Caucien (this is as near as I can make out the name) who has a sugar factory in Fort of France. After trying for a year at least, his employer gave him a note which he took to the Bureau Indienne. They told him to wait, and that when a ship came, he should be sent. After this he was sent to work in the sugar gardens; and worked there for 2½ years. He applied every time a ship came, but was refused until the present occasion. He says that there are thousands of British emigrants who want to get away and are not allowed. On my putting this question to the man in the presence of several other emigrants, they all spontaneously replied with great impressment that there were thousands that wanted to return and were not allowed. They all say that they have been badly treated.

93, Parvati, is wife of the above, makes exactly the same statement. This is a very intelligent female for her class of life, and seems to have tried hard to get away and urged her husband to do so.

72, Ponniapully, son of Andiapully, states he went to Martinique 11 years ago under a 5 years' engagement. He was promised by his employer, M. Lalandin, a sugar manufacturer, to be sent free if he would serve another year. He did so and for the past 5 years he has been seeking in vain to return until 3 months ago. He has been working in the factory and sugar-cane fields and as grass-cutter all the time; he got very feeble and no more use, and then he was allowed to go.

71, Nagamah, wife of No. 72, corroborates the above; No. 72 is quite worn out.

83, Govinden Naik, has been 30 years in Martinique, he went there with a 5 years' engagement. He received a pass back after 7½ years, but stayed voluntarily 25 years with M. Papillon, a sugar factor. After his death he was employed by his successor, but did not like him as he had M. Papillon, and for the past 5 years he has been trying to get away, and has only now succeeded as he is no longer fit for work.

85, Paché, wife of the above, has been 19 years in Martinique, and married No. 83 there; she makes a similar statement; she went with a 5 years' engagement, and one year after her arrival married No. 83. They both have been wanting to get away for the past 5 years; they both worked in the same factory.

36, Mohun Sing, son of Balaji Rao, has been 15 years in Martinique, says he worked with M. Lijon on a 5 years' agreement. He stayed voluntarily with M. Lijon for 10 years, but for the past 5 years has been trying to get away, but without success till now.

67, Soobadoo, son of Nagappa, has been 10 years in Martinique. He went with a 5 years' agreement. He remained voluntarily till 1½ years ago, has been trying to get away ever since till now.

68, Minatchi, daughter of Saminadan, has been 8 years in Martinique. She went with a 5 years' engagement; she married No. 67 about 3½ years ago, and wanted to come away with him for the past 1½ years, but they were not allowed till now.

All the emigrants tell a more or less similar story.

(Taken in my own handwriting.)

PONDICHERRY,
12th October 1891.

(Signed)

H. McLEOD, Lieut.-General, R.A.,
British Consular Agent.

Exd. A. Raitt.

1891.

PUBLIC DEPARTMENT.

From the Government of
Fort St. George.

Issued

Read.

Encl.

Letter, 3rd November 1891, No. 925.

NOVEMBER.

Emigration.

Forwarding, with remarks, copy of a report from the Consular Agent at Pondicherry containing the result of inquiries he has made from emigrants who have recently been repatriated from Martinique.

Emigrants wishing to
return to India. &
complaints were how-
ever made of their
treatment whilst on
board ship - but in
regard to this I am to
invite attention to
my letter quoted in
para. 1 of this communication.

3. Copies of depositions
returned Emigrants
taken down by the
Consul at Pondicherry
accompany this letter.

25.11.

23/10.

10.85.00

[Amended]

Public Dept 8

Currents 2933 & 3031

No 925 & 3 Nov 91

To the Secy to the G. of S.

Rev. & Agri. Dept.

Letter 59
desp. 12/11/91

Sir,

In reply to your
letter No. 1936-37
53, of
16. Sep. 91, and in contin-
uation of the 9th
inst. No. 3855, I am
directed to forward for
the information of the
Govt. of India copy of
a report from the Con-
sular Agent at Pondi-
cherry containing the
result of enquiries he
has made from im-
-igrants who have recent-
-ly been repatriated
from Martinique.

2. They corroborate
what has been said
by the Consul at Martin-
ique as to the difficulties
placed in the way of

Public 1891

From

Lieut. General B. M. Lord
R.A.

H.B.M.'s Consular Agent
Pondicherry & Karikal

To The Honorable J. F. Price
C.S.

Chief Secretary to Govt.
Fort St. George

Dated 14th October 91

Recd. 16.10.91

Enclosures 3

No. 463

Subject

Submitting Report
on the enquiry made
from the Returned
Immigrants from
Martinique, in
accordance with
memo dated 10th Oct 91
1891.

Pondicherry & Karikal

1 1/2 1981 60

Vol 4 286

No 92 Ayasawny - son of Chinina has been 9 years in
 Kuanting. He has been trying to get a return pass for the last 2 years
 he stayed for 5 years and whenever he sought to leave he was told
 his time was not up and that he must get a passport from the
 Bureau Indienne, when they told him to get a note from his
 employer - his employer refused to give him a note or leave him
 He was employed by a Chinese (Caucasian) (this is as near as I can
 make out the name) who has a sugar ~~factory~~ ^{his} factory in Port of Prouce
 after staying for a year at last ^{his} employer gave him a note
 which he took to the Bureau Indienne. They told him to
 wait and that when a ship came he should go and work
 after this he was sent to work in the sugar fields and worked
 there for 2 1/2 years - he applied every time a ship came but
 been refused until the present occasion - he says that
 there are thousands of British Emigrants who want
 to go away and are not allowed - on my putting
 this question to the man in the presence of several
 other emigrants they all spontaneously replied with
 great emphasis that there were thousands that
 wanted to leave & were not allowed - they all say that
 they have been badly treated

93 Tarrate is wife of the above man & with the same statement
 This is a very intelligent female for her class of life and
 seems to have tried hard to get away and urged her husband
 to do so.

72. Torunipulla son of Andrikulla states he went to Kuanting
 11 years ago under a 5 year agreement. He was promised by his
 employer that when he had learned a sugar manufacturing he would
 free if he could learn another year - he did so and for the past 5
 years has been working in the sugar fields as far as the time
 working in the factory & sugar cane fields was permitted at the time
 he was not permitted to do more work & then he was allowed to go

In Public C 103033/91

Indra...

71. Hasanah wife of No 72 corroborates the above -
No 72 is quite worn out -

83. From de Henik - has been 30 years in Mauritius. He
went there with a five year engagement - he remained a free
Henik after 7 1/2 years but stayed voluntarily 25 years with
de Pabillon a sugar factor after his death - he was sent to
employment by his successor but did not like him as he had the Pabillon
and for the past 5 years he has been trying to get away and
has not been succeeded as he is too large for work

85. Tacki wife of the above has been 19 years in Mauritius
and married No 83 then she makes a similar statement
again she went with a 5 year engagement and remained
after he arrived married No 83. They both have been wanting
to get away for the past 5 years they both worked in the
sugar factories

36. No one living - Son of Nalaji Rao has been 15 years in Mauritius
says he worked with de Lijon on a 5 year agreement he stayed
voluntarily with de Lijon for 10 years but for the past 5 years he
has been trying to get away but without success till now

67. Soobados son of Nayakha has been 10 years in Mauritius
he went with a 5 year agreement he remained voluntarily
for 1 1/2 years ago he has been trying to get away ever since till now

68. Minichan daughter of Saminudam has been 18 years in
Mauritius she went with 5 year engagement - she married No 67
about 3 1/2 years ago and wanted to come away with him
for the past 1 1/2 years but this was not allowed
till now

All the emigrants tell a similar tale similar story.

Taken in by our Government the Lord of the

of a few of them in writing
which I forward and beg
respectfully to express my
opinion that the paragraph 23
of the report of Her Majesty's
Consul at Martinique exactly
represents the existing
Condition of affairs - this
last batch consisting of
nothing but aged and
persons and children that
doubtless the planters are
only too glad to get rid of.
3. No complaints were
made of their treatment
on board ship. They seem to
have been quite satisfied
with that.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your most obt. Servant

The Lord of the

H.B. his Consular Agent
Pondicherry & Karika

Pondicherry

12th October 1891

71. I. 1. with A No 72 corroborates the above -
Am 22nd

H.B. In's Consul

No. 463

Pondicherry: 14th October
1891

From

I can consider General H. In's Consul
from H.B. In's Consular Agent
left behind in Pondicherry & Karikal
years and that they
and that they
put off and
one officer to
Continual delay in the one Consent
all sorts of
they were kept out of several
the time. I wanted to get away
experience of
repatriated in the recent Calamity
the one I am in France that
on is a most starving and must
there is hardly if means are
person among to remove them
Ken the States

12th Oct

over

FROM

SIR E. C. BUCK, KT.,
Secretary to the Government of India,

TO

The Secretary to the Govt. of Madras.

Rev. & Agri. Dep.:
Emigration.

CHIEF SECRETARY
28 SEP 91

Simla, the 16th September 1891

SIR,

I AM directed to forward for information copy of a report on the present condition of Indian immigration in the colony of Martinique.

2. With reference to paragraphs 6 and 22 of the Consul's report regarding the delay in the repatriation of time-expired Indians and the introduction of a new system for their conveyance by steamers of the Compagnie Transatlantique and Messageries Maritimes, I am to suggest that the Emigration authorities at Madras may be instructed to make such enquiries from coolies returning from Martinique as may tend to elicit evidence on the question at issue, viz., (1) whether any coolies entitled to repatriation are detained against their will, (2) whether there has been material delay in their own repatriation, and (3) whether during the voyage the arrangements for their health and comfort have been reasonably sufficient. After the arrival of one or two convoys the Government of India desire to receive an expression of opinion from H. E. the Governor regarding the working of the new system.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient Servant,

Buck.

Secretary to the Government of India.

était possible dans la circonstance de faire état au préjudice des immigrants, "du manque de bras dont le pays a beaucoup à souffrir après leur avoir enlevé la prime au réengagement dont leurs contrats semblaient devoir leur assurer la jouissance.

Quoi qu'il en soit, Monsieur le Gouverneur, j'ose espérer que les diverses considérations que je viens d'avoir l'honneur de vous permettre de juger des motifs sérieux du Gouvernement Indien pour désirer être renseigné d'une façon précise, par votre bienveillante entremise, au sujet du nouveau mode de repatriement que l'administration vient d'adopter pour le renvoi dans l'Inde des immigrants Indiens, sujets Britanniques, encore à la Martinique.

Il voudrait bien connaître approximativement au moins, le nombre des Indiens à embarquer sur chaque paquebot, le nombre de convois que l'on se propose de faire partir chaque année, et enfin les dispositions prises pour assurer à ces passagers les soins que réclame un si long voyage.

L'opportunité de ces renseignements ressort du fait qu'il restait dans la colonie, au 31^{me} Decembre dernier, 8,421 Indiens.

Je serais heureux de recevoir en même temps, Monsieur le Gouverneur, la confirmation de l'assurance que je me propose de donner au Gouvernement de l'Inde du mal fondé des bruits qui tendraient à faire croire à la campagne que l'adoption du nouvel itinéraire, aurait surtout en vue de retarder autant que possible le repatriement des Indiens valides, tout en fournissant une voie de se débarrasser de ceux déjà vieux ou paresseux.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur le Gouverneur, l'assurance, de mes sentiments très-distingués,

W. LAWLESS,

Le Consul de Sa Majesté Britannique.

Monsieur le Gouverneur
de la Martinique,
Port de France.

[W. F. C.]

3
Le Publ. ch 3033/91

1
Le Press 91

native labourers that can be reckoned upon for the regular labour required for the production of sugar, still the chief staple of the colony. They are much sought for therefore, as more docile and willing while generally less exacting than the natives. They hold, however, entire independence of action in choosing the districts they prefer as well as their employers.

35. But, when overtaken by age or sickness, matters become altogether altered to the immigrant's disadvantage. The estates profess to be unable to support idle hands, since the rates that rule for their products exact strict economy to avoid loss. There then remains but the Dépôt or the Communal Hospitals, the entry to which causes always delay, great trouble and loss of time, too frequently for no useful purpose. Afterwards a pauper's existence with the possible result of dying from hunger has to be submitted to.

36. Yet there can be no doubt that the withdrawal of the Indian labourers remaining in the Island will entail very serious loss in some of the now most productive districts of the Island. This is well known to the Council General that favour it on that account; the majority of that assembly being hostile to the Planters for the reasons adduced in a former report of 1886. Nor is the Government ignorant, either of the ill results of such a measure, and, for that reason and in view to save the cost it would prove, it will, I fear, not willingly favour repatriation in any way.

Synopsis.

37. The following is a synopsis of Indian immigration to Martinique:—

Introduction during the years 1853 to 1883	25,509
Births between 1853 and 1890	4,862
Total	30,371
Deaths during the same period	13,911
Repatriations from 1858 to date	8,029
Total	21,940
Remaining on the 1st January 1891	8,431

SAINT PIERRE, }

15th May 1891. }

Copy.

No. 27.

CONSULAT D'ANGLETERRE A LA MARTINIQUE,

ST. PIERRE,

Le 30^{me} Avril 1891.

MONSIEUR LE GOUVERNEUR,

J'ai bien reçu la lettre No. 344 en date du 9^{me} courant, que vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'écrire, pour me remettre la situation numérique des immigrants Indiens qui se trouvaient encore dans la colonie, au 31^{me} Decembre dernier.

De ce document il ressort que ces travailleurs, qui étaient au nombre de 8,812, à pareille date en 1889, comptaient encore au 1^{er} Janvier de cette année,

BRITISH CONSULATE, MARTINIQUE,
Saint Pierre, 18th May 1891.

Revenue.
No. 38.

The Right Honourable The Marquess of Lansdowne, Viceroy and Governor-General
of India.

MY LORD,

I HAVE the honour to forward, herewith, for the information of Your Lordship in Council, a report upon the present condition of Indian immigration in this Colony.

2. It leaves much to be desired, I regret to add, especially as regards the repatriation of the Indian labourers still resident here.

3. A new system for that purpose is now about to be tried, under instructions, it is reported, from the French Government, which is described, so far as yet known, in the report abovementioned.

4. I desire to be mistaken in supposing that, although, probably devised in consequence of the recent instances of Her Majesty's Government, it is unlikely to be carried out to the satisfaction of Your Lordship in Council. The motives, upon which that supposition rests, are also enumerated in the same report.

5. I beg to submit, furthermore, for the consideration of Your Lordship in Council, a copy of a letter lately addressed to His Excellency the Governor of Martinique that deals fully with the same subject, to which I venture to direct his very earnest attention.

6. His Excellency having been but quite recently called to the Government of this island, which is the case also of the present Colonial Secretary, the expediency of the above communication will, I trust, be deemed commendable.

7. If it elicit a reply, other than the usual simple acknowledgment of its receipt, a copy thereof will be duly sent forward.

I have the honour to be,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's very obedient, humble Servant,

(Sd.) W. LAWLESS,

Consul.

Report on Indian Immigration to Martinique.

1. From a statement supplied to this Consulate on the 9th ultimo, from the Immigration Department, it appears that—

Number of immigrants in the Colony on the 31st
December 1890.
amounted to :—

1st—The number of Indian immigrants
in this colony on the 31st of December last,

8,431 of which number—

4,222 were male adults.

2,297 female adults.

1,011 children (males).

901 children (females).

2. On the 31st December of the previous year the general total of these labourers in the colony numbered—

Number at corresponding date of 1889.

8,712 of both sexes.

Births during 1890.

3. The births registered during 1890 were—
100 of which—

60 were males and
40 females.

4. The deaths reported during the same period were—

Deaths during the same year.

381 and included—
254 males and
127 females.

5. This total testifies to a larger rate of mortality than during the previous 12 months when the deaths were reckoned at 307 out of the 9,978 immigrants resident in the colony on the 1st of February 1889.

6. The question of repatriation remains in a very unsatisfactory condition despite the efforts of this Consulate that are frequently renewed, especially previously to the annual season of the Council General with little effect, I regret to add, although the whole of the Indian immigrants in the colony are and have long been entitled to being sent back to India.

7. The Local Government acting all along, there can be little doubt, under the sanction of the Colonial Ministry, if not in conformity with its actual instructions, seem bent upon detaining these labourers in the colony, after having approved of the decision unduly come to in December 1884, by the Local Assembly, not to grant the premium on re-engagements to which the immigrants were so clearly entitled under the 9th clause of the Convention of 1st of July 1861.

8. This clause was reproduced on each copy of the contracts delivered to the immigrant, upon their departure from India, a fact that denoted sufficiently its importance.

9. The above decision was clearly illegal, since the Council General had no right or power to modify an International Convention. It should have been indeed annulled by the Governor, agreeably to the 13th Article of the Decree of the 26th of July 1854, stating:—

“Est nulle toute deliberation prise par le Conseil General, ou en dehors de ses attributions légales. L'annulation est prononcée par le Gouverneur en Conseil Privé.”

Not alone was this not done, but the then Governor informed this Consulate, as reported in a despatch No. 42, dated the 27th of May 1886, that this unjustifiable breach of the Convention had been approved of by the French Colonial Office.

10. The French Government, by this breach of one of the chief stipulations of a bilateral contract, entitled the immigrants, it may be argued, to claim from that period their right to repatriation.

11. It might be, at least, hoped that under such circumstances the Colony would have become more punctual than before, in sending back the immigrants, as their contracts lapsed.

12. The contrary rather has been the case. The total of the immigrants in the island on the 1st of January 1886 was 12,926. The numbers of those sent back to India since then, has been 1,791 in 1886 and 879 in 1889.

13. At the usual annual sessions of the Council General the propriety of increased activity in repatriating the immigrants is alluded to by the Executive in proposing the vote for the purpose, generally 240,000 francs. The Council agree to the vote, the amount of which is, however, often reduced. But, as no departure follows, the sum is afterwards disposed of for other purposes. As such alterations require the assent of the Governor it follows that the Executive becomes really liable for the delay that is the consequence.

14. The reports of the meeting of the Local Assembly show, however, that over 1,100,000 francs were thus voted during the interval between December 1886, and December last, which would have sufficed, even at the high rate of 500 francs per head, to repatriate 3,600 adults, in lieu of the 674 forwarded by the “Nantes et Bordeaux.”

15. If any further proof be required to prove that the Government alone is responsible for the delay that has occurred in repatriating the immigrants, it is furnished by the fact that the charges, in connection with the immigration service, and particularly those for repatriation, are by law classed among those denominated “Obligatory Expenditure,” by the 7th clause of the “Senatus Consulte Organique” of the 11th of August 1886. The 8th clause completes that just quoted in these terms:—

“Si les dépenses obligatoires ont été omises (au Budget) ou si le Gouverneur en Conseil Privé estime que les allocations, portées pour une ou plusieurs de ces dépenses, sont insuffisantes, le Gouverneur y pourvoit; provisoirement, à l'aide des fonds des dépenses diverses et imprévues.”

“En cas d'insuffisance de ces fonds, il en réfère au Ministre, qui sur sa proposition, inscrit d'office les dépenses omises ou augmente les allocations.”

16. But, although readily resorted to for other purposes, the ample power thus afforded the Executive for preventing the Local Assembly from exceeding its prerogatives, has never been employed, to carry out the engagements stipulated for in the Convention of the 1st July 1861.

17. Perhaps brief reference to the following facts, although foreign to Immigration, may not be out of place here as exemplifying the complete subserviency of the Local Executive and Council General to the desires of the Home Government and also the unceremonious injustice of the latter towards British interest.

18. A Telegraph Company was formed in Paris in 1889, with which the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies signed a treaty granting, as might be expected, great advantages, including a subsidy of 50,000 francs a year from this Colony, without previous reference to the Council General, as legally required.

19. The latter ratified the Treaty nevertheless, subject to the reasonable proviso that the transfer of the subsidy, then in the possession of an English Company—the “West India and Panama”—in return for a copious daily news Bulletin and Commercial quotations, should take place only when the French line between this Island and Guadeloupe would have been linked to the American and European cable system.

20. The Colonial Minister upon learning this telegraphed to re-assemble the Council and have the proviso annulled immediately. It was done, although, in the meantime the vote having been published in the Official Gazette with the sanction of the Executive, had become law in accordance with the Senatus Consulte of 1886.

21. The French Company furnish the news meanwhile by reproducing textually the Bulletin supplied by the English Cable Company to Guadeloupe, whose treaty with the Colony still subsists.

22. A new system of Repatriation under arrangements has been concluded by the Colonial Minister, it seems, with the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique, whose vessels carry the mails between the French Islands and Marseilles, and another French Company running steamers thence to India. It is reported that each batch of immigrants is not to exceed 150, for which a freight of 300 francs per adult will be paid.

New plan of Repatriation by mail steamers.
In batches not to exceed 150 adults.

23. I await the particulars asked for as to the number of shipments to be despatched annually, and the arrangements to insure that the Indian passengers will be frequently enfeebled state will require, during such a voyage. It must be, however, borne in mind that vessels of the capacity of the "Nantes et Bordeaux" could carry in one voyage 620 adults, while it would require 4 batches, each of 150 adults, to repatriate 600. Here it is considered, that this new plan, while affording a semblance of more activity in the repatriation of Indian immigrants, will, in reality, permit of the prolonged detention of the able-bodied labourers while discarding those unfitted for regular labour.

24. The following statements of the late and present allowances, voted for the immigration service, shew the great retrenchments effected in that direction. The sum voted for 1886, although somewhat lower than previously, amounted to 42,234 francs for the protective staff only. It then comprised:

11 Commissary	...	2,746
11 Deputy Do.	...	2,982
11 Writers	...	1,800
11 Interpreters	...	4,000
11 Messengers	...	720
11 Syndic at Saint Pierre	...	4,082
6 Do. in the Chief out-districts	...	13,904
TOTAL	...	42,234

Protective Staff.

travelling expenses included.

25. In addition and for the requirements of the Dépôt, medical attendance and keep of the infirm and time-expired Indians, a sum of 92,954 francs was granted. The vote for 1887 was but 9,300 francs for the Protective service; that was reduced to:

11 Syndic at St. Pierre including	...	3,500
11 francs 37-C. for travelling expenses per diem	...	3,500
11 Do. for Port de France	...	11,800
11 Writers	...	500
11 Interpreters	...	9,300

Protective Staff reduced.

26. The allowances for the Dépôt were also diminished to 12,719 francs, but the ultimate grant had to be increased by the Executive to 40,000 francs.

27. For the current year, the sums voted are:—

Fr. 46,666.93 for the requirements of the Dépôt with medical attendance and,
Fr. 6,463 for the salaries of the Protective Staff now reduced to:—

Votes for Current year.	...	3,000
Dépôt increased.	...	1,800
Protective Staff again reduced.	...	720
1 Syndic	...	...
1 Writer	...	...
1 Interpreter	...	...

Travelling expenses 970 francs to be divided with the Inspector of Prisons, who is supposed to act in the same capacity for immigration.

28. The foregoing unreasonable retrenchments furnish a well-founded motive for reproach, as they have rendered merely nominal the Protective Agency, and the Hospital and relief sources totally insufficient to cope with the annually increasing wants of the immigrants, whose infirmities and age render them unable to gain their living, by means of their own exertions.

29. The deplorable consequence follows, that numbers of these unfortunates are to be found destitute and in rags, both in the country and especially in the large towns, whose only means of subsistence depends upon private charity, which does not always suffice to prevent the more infirm among them from perishing from sheer want; a thing utterly unknown formerly in this Colony.

30. The travelling expenses allowed are so totally inadequate to permit one Syndic to attend to the calls that may arise from the various districts through which the immigrants are disseminated, that it warrants the belief that the latter are expected to come before that agent when complaints occur.

31. It may be alleged that they may apply to the Commissaries of Police. But these officials have made themselves too well known to the immigrants in their punitive character, that they are generally too prone to re-assume, to inspire the immigrants with much confidence as Protectors.

32. It is alleged moreover that the Syndics, as well as the Commissaries of Police, now limit as much as possible their dealings with the immigrants, as productive of reproach and trouble only. Then the Police, as municipal agents, so, share largely the repugnance of the Mayors generally to diminish, in favour of the immigrants, the resources intended for the relief of the poor and sick natives of their districts.

33. It will be observed from the inclosed copy of the advertisement referring to the new plan for the repatriation of the Indian Immigrants that the latter are directed to apply to the Commissaries of Police to have the demands registered. For the reasons above given, this arrangement can hardly be deemed satisfactory, since the demands may be expected to depend upon the manner in which they shall be entertained.

34. It must be owned in conclusion that the Indian labourers have not yet acquired the same independence enjoyed by the natives, who profess to regard them as inferiors and dislike them besides as competitors that limit their exactions for field labour: feelings that are shared by the native police and petty country authorities, for the most part also of African descent. It is nevertheless correct that their condition has very much improved, for those at least who are willing and able to work, owing to the yearly increasing reduction in the number of the

native labourers that can be ascertained.

BRITISH CONSULATE, MARTINIQUE,
Saint Pierre, 18th May 1891.

Revenue.
No. 38.

The Right Honourable The Marquess of Lansdowne, Viceroy and Governor-General
of India.

MY LORD,

I HAVE the honour to forward, herewith, for the information of Your Lordship in Council, a report upon the present condition of Indian immigration in this Colony.

2. It leaves much to be desired, I regret to add, especially as regards the repatriation of the Indian labourers still resident here.

3. A new system for that purpose is now about to be tried, under instructions, it is reported, from the French Government, which is described, so far as yet known, in the report abovementioned.

4. I desire to be mistaken in supposing that, although, probably devised in consequence of the recent instances of Her Majesty's Government, it is unlikely to be carried out to the satisfaction of Your Lordship in Council. The motives, upon which that supposition rests, are also enumerated in the same report.

5. I beg to submit, furthermore, for the consideration of Your Lordship in Council, a copy of a letter lately addressed to His Excellency the Governor of Martinique that deals fully with the same subject, to which I venture to direct his very earnest attention.

6. His Excellency having been but quite recently called to the Government of this island, which is the case also of the present Colonial Secretary, the expediency of the above communication will, I trust, be deemed commendable.

7. If it elicit a reply, other than the usual simple acknowledgment of its receipt, a copy thereof will be duly sent forward.

I have the honour to be,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's very obedient, humble Servant,

(Sd.) W. LAWLESS,

Consul.

Report on Indian Immigration to Martinique.

1. From a statement supplied to this Consulate on the 9th ultimo, from the Immigration Department, it appears that—

Number of immigrants in the Colony on the 31st December 1890. 1st—The number of Indian immigrants in this colony on the 31st of December last, amounted to :—

8,431 of which number—

4,222 were male adults.

2,297 female adults.

1,011 children (males).

901 children (females).

2. On the 31st December of the previous year the general total of these labourers in the colony numbered—

Number at corresponding date of 1889. 8,712 of both sexes.

Births during 1890.

3. The births registered during 1890 were—
100 of which—

60 were males and
40 females.

4. The deaths reported during the same period were—

381 and included—

Deaths during the same year. 254 males and
127 females.

5. This total testifies to a larger rate of mortality than during the previous 12 months when the deaths were reckoned at 307 out of the 9,978 immigrants resident in the colony on the 1st of February 1889.

6. The question of repatriation remains in a very unsatisfactory condition despite the efforts of this Consulate that are frequently renewed, especially previously to the annual season of the Council General with little effect, I regret to add, although the whole of the Indian immigrants in the colony are and have long been entitled to being sent back to India.

7. The Local Government acting all along, there can be little doubt, under the sanction of the Colonial Ministry, if not in conformity with its actual instructions, seem bent upon detaining these labourers in the colony, after having approved of the decision unduly come to in December 1884, by the Local Assembly, not to grant the premium on re-engagements to which the immigrants were so clearly entitled under the 9th clause of the Convention of 1st of July 1861.

8. This clause was reproduced on each copy of the contracts delivered to the immigrant, upon their departure from India, a fact that denoted sufficiently its importance.

9. The above decision was clearly illegal, since the Council General had no right or power to modify an International Convention. It should have been indeed annulled by the Governor, agreeably to the 13th Article of the Decree of the 26th of July 1854, stating:—

“Est nulle toute deliberation prise par le Conseil General, ...
ou en dehors de ses attributions légales. L'annulation est prononcée par le Gouverneur en Conseil Privé.”

Not alone was this not done, but the then Governor informed this Consulate, as reported in a despatch No. 42, dated the 27th of May 1886, that this unjustifiable breach of the Convention had been approved of by the French Colonial Office.

10. The French Government, by this breach of one of the chief stipulations of a bilateral contract, entitled the immigrants, it may be argued, to claim from that period their right to repatriation.

11. It might be, at least, hoped that under such circumstances the Colony would have become more punctual than before, in sending back the immigrants, as their contracts lapsed.

12. The contrary rather has been the case. The total of the immigrants in the island on the 1st of January 1886 was 12,926. The numbers of those sent back to India since then, has been 1,791 in 1886 and 879 in 1889.

13. At the usual annual sessions of the Council General the propriety of increased activity in repatriating the immigrants is alluded to by the Executive in proposing the vote for the purpose, generally 240,000 francs. The Council agree to the vote, the amount of which is, however, often reduced. But, as no departure follows, the sum is afterwards disposed of for other purposes. As such alterations require the assent of the Governor it follows that the Executive becomes really liable for the delay that is the consequence.

14. The reports of the meeting of the Local Assembly show, however, that over 1,100,000 francs were thus voted during the interval between December 1886, and December last, which would have sufficed, even at the high rate of 300 francs per head, to repatriate 3,600 adults, in lieu of the 674 forwarded by the “Nantes et Bordeaux.”

15. If any further proof be required to prove that the Government alone is responsible for the delay that has occurred in repatriating the immigrants, it is furnished by the fact that the charges, in connection with the immigration service, and particularly those for repatriation, are by law classed among those denominated “Obligatory Expenditure,” by the 7th clause of the “Senatus Consulte Organique” of the 11th of August 1886. The 8th clause completes that just quoted in these terms:—

“Si les dépenses obligatoires ont été omises (au Budget) ou si le Gouverneur en Conseil Privé estime

Law on the subject.

que les allocations, portées pour une ou plusieurs de ces dépenses, sont insuffisantes, le Gouverneur y pourvoit; provisoirement, à l'aide des fonds des dépenses diverses et imprévues.

“En cas d'insuffisance de ces fonds, il en réfère au Ministre, qui sur sa proposition, inscrit d'office les dépenses omises ou augmente les allocations.”

16. But, although readily resorted to for other purposes, the ample power thus afforded the Executive for preventing the Local Assembly from exceeding its prerogatives, has never been employed, to carry out the engagements stipulated for in the Convention of the 1st July 1861.

17. Perhaps brief reference to the following facts, although foreign to Immigration, may not be out of place here as exemplifying the complete subserviency of the Local Executive and Council General to the desires of the Home Government and also the unceremonious injustice of the latter towards British interest.

18. A Telegraph Company was formed in Paris in 1889, with which the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies signed a treaty granting, as might be expected, great advantages, including a subsidy of 50,000 francs a year from this Colony, without previous reference to the Council General, as legally required.

19. The latter ratified the Treaty nevertheless, subject to the reasonable proviso that the transfer of the subsidy, then in the possession of an English Company—the “West India and Panama”—in return for a copious daily news Bulletin and Commercial quotations, should take place only when the French line between this Island and Guadeloupe would have been linked to the American and European cable system.

20. The Colonial Minister upon learning this telegraphed to re-assemble the Council and have the proviso annulled immediately. It was done, although, in the meantime the vote having been published in the Official Gazette with the sanction of the Executive, had become law in accordance with the Senatus Consulte of 1886.

21. The French Company furnish the news meanwhile by reproducing textually the Bulletin supplied by the English Cable Company to Guadeloupe, whose treaty with the Colony still subsists.

22. A new system of Repatriation under arrangements has been concluded by the Colonial Minister, it seems, with the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique, whose vessels carry the mails between the French Islands and Marseilles, and another French Company running steamers thence to India.

It is reported that each batch of immigrants is not to exceed 150, for which a freight of 300 francs per adult will be paid.

23. I await the particulars asked for as to the number of shipments to be despatched annually, and the arrangements to insure that the Indian passengers will be provided with the proper space, food and medical treatment that persons in their frequently enfeebled state will require, during such a voyage. It must be, however, borne in mind that vessels of the capacity of the "Nantes et Bordeaux" could carry in one voyage 620 adults, while it would require 4 batches, each of 150 adults, to repatriate 600. Here it is considered, that this new plan, while affording a semblance of more activity in the repatriation of Indian immigrants, will, in reality, permit of the prolonged detention of the able-bodied labourers while affording means for getting rid of those that are infirm, lazy or unfitted for regular labour.

24. The following statements of the late and present allowances, voted for the immigration service, shew the great retrenchments effected in that direction. The sum voted for 1886, although somewhat lower than previously, amounted to 42,234 francs for the protective staff only. It then comprised :

11 Commissary ...	9,746
11 Deputy Do. ...	2,982
11 Writers ...	1,800
11 Interpreters ...	4,000
11 Messengers ...	720
11 Syndic at Saint Pierre ...	4,082
6 Do. in the Chief out-districts	13,904
TOTAL ...	42,234

travelling expenses included.

25. In addition and for the requirements of the Dépôt, medical attendance and keep of the infirm and time-expired Indians, a sum of 92,954 francs was granted.

The vote for 1887 was but 9,300 francs for the Protective service; that was reduced to:

11 Syndic at St. Pierre including 11 francs 37-C. for travelling expenses per diem ...	3,500
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Protective Staff reduced.	9,300

26. The allowances for the Dépôt were also diminished to 12,719 francs, but the ultimate grant had to be increased by the Executive to 40,000 francs.

Votes for Current year.

Dépôt increased.

Protective Staff again reduced.

1 Syndic ...	3,000
1 Writer ...	1,800
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27. For the current year, the sums voted are :—

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Travelling expenses 970 francs to be divided with the Inspector of Prisons, who is supposed to act in the same capacity for immigration.

28. The foregoing unreasonable retrenchments furnish a well-founded motive for reproach, as they have rendered merely nominal the Protective Agency, and the Hospital and relief sources totally insufficient to cope with the annually increasing wants of the immigrants, whose infirmities and age render them unable to gain their living, by means of their own exertions.

29. The deplorable consequence follows, that numbers of these unfortunates are to be found destitute and in rags, both in the country and especially in the larger towns, whose only means of subsistence depends upon private charity, which does not always suffice to prevent the more infirm among them from perishing from sheer want; a thing utterly unknown formerly in this Colony.

30. The travelling expenses allowed are so totally inadequate to permit one Syndic to attend to the calls that may arise from the various districts through which the immigrants are disseminated, that it warrants the belief that the latter are expected to come before that agent when complaints occur.

31. It may be alleged that they may apply to the Commissaries of Police. But these officials have made themselves too well known to the immigrants in their punitive character, that they are generally too prone to re-assume, to inspire the immigrants with much confidence as Protectors.

32. It is alleged moreover that the Syndics, as well as the Commissaries of Police, now limit as much as possible their dealings with the immigrants, as productive usually of reproach and trouble only. Then the Police, as municipal agents also, share largely the repugnance of the Mayors generally to diminish, in favour of the immigrants, the resources intended for the relief of the poor and sick natives of their districts.

33. It will be observed from the inclosed copy of the advertisement referring to the new plan for the repatriation of the Indian Immigrants that the latter are directed to apply to the Commissaries of Police to have the demands registered. For the reasons above given, this arrangement can hardly be deemed satisfactory, since the demands may be expected to depend upon the manner in which they shall be entertained.

34. It must be owned in conclusion that the Indian labourers have not yet acquired the same independence enjoyed by the natives, who profess to regard them as inferiors and dislike them besides as competitors that limit their exactions for field labour: feelings that are shared by the native police and petty country authorities, for the most part also of African descent. It is nevertheless correct that their condition has very much improved, for those at least who are willing and able to work, owing to the yearly increasing reduction in the number of the

native labourers that can be reckoned upon for the regular labour required for the production of sugar, still the chief staple of the colony. They are much sought for therefore, as more docile and willing while generally less exacting than the natives. They hold, however, entire independence of action in choosing the districts they prefer as well as their employers.

These Immigrants now much sought after.

35. But, when overtaken by age or sickness, matters become altogether altered to the immigrant's disadvantage. The estates profess to be unable to support idle hands, since the rates that rule for their products exact strict economy to avoid loss. There then remains but the Dépôt or the Communal Hospitals, the entry to which causes always delay, great trouble and loss of time, too frequently for no useful purpose. Afterwards a pauper's existence with the possible result of dying from hunger has to be submitted to.

36. Yet there can be no doubt that the withdrawal of the Indian labourers remaining in the Island will entail very serious loss in some of the now most productive districts of the Island. This is well known to the Council General that favour it on that account; the majority of that assembly being hostile to the Planters for the reasons adduced in a former report of 1886. Nor is the Government ignorant, either of the ill results of such a measure, and, for that reason and in view to save the cost it would prove, it will, I fear, not willingly favour repatriation in any way.

Synopsis.

37. The following is a synopsis of Indian immigration to Martinique:—

Introduction during the years 1853 to 1883	...	...	25,529
Births between 1853 and 1890	...	...	4,862
	Total	...	30,371
Deaths during the same period	...	...	13,911
Repatriations from 1858 to date	...	...	8,029
	Total	...	21,940
Remaining on the 1st January 1891	...	...	8,431

SAINT PIERRE, }
15th May 1891. }

Copy.

No. 27.

CONSULAT D'ANGLETERRE A LA MARTINIQUE,

ST. PIERRE,

Le 30^{me} Avril 1891.

MONSIEUR LE GOUVERNEUR,

J'ai bien reçu la lettre No. 344 en date du 9^{me} courant, que vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'écrire, pour me remettre la situation numérique des immigrants Indiens qui se trouvaient encore dans la colonie, au 31^{me} Décembre dernier.

De ce document il ressort que ces travailleurs, qui étaient au nombre de 8,812, à pareille date en 1889, comptaient encore au 1^{er} Janvier de cette année,

8,431 personnes des deux sexes, après avoir tenu compte de 381 décès et de 100 naissances qui avaient, lieu, pendant le cours de l'année 1890.

Pour obéir aux prescriptions du Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Impériale et Royale, j'ai maintenant le devoir de renouveler, de la façon la plus pressante, les vives instances, déjà si fréquemment et j'ai le regret d'ajouter—si vainement tentées par ce Consulat auprès de l'Administration, en vue d'obtenir le repatriement des Indiens sujets Britanniques qui, après avoir rempli leurs contrats de travail attendent depuis si longtemps que la colonie s'acquitte pour le moins de l'engagement de les repatrier, engagement stipulé dans la 9^{me} clause de la convention du 1^{er} Juillet 1861, sous la garantie du Gouvernement Français.

C'est là un sujet que j'ai cru devoir signaler à votre bienveillante attention des la première entrevue que vous avez bien voulu m'accorder, au mois de février dernier après avoir été appelé au Gouvernement de la Martinique, et que, au surplus, vous aviez promis d'examiner avec toute l'attention qu'il comportait.

Et, en effet, Monsieur le Gouverneur, votre lettre précitée à été suivie d'une communication, en date du.....mois dernier, de Monsieur le Directeur de l'Intérieur, par laquelle ce Chef d'Administration anno que, conformément aux instructions ministérielles et au vote du Conseil Général il avait enfin été décidé, "de repatrier cette année des Indiens par la voie des Paquebots de la Compagnie Général Maritime correspondant avec ceux des Messageries Maritimes."

A cette communication était annexé un exemplaire d'une annonce devant être placardée aux mairies de la campagne, et qui a été depuis publiée dans le 'Moniteur Officiel' de la colonie, "en vue au faciliter aux Indiens libérés l'inscription sur les listes de repatriement."

Cette mesure, à laquelle il est à observer que l'Administration a recour à cette occasion pour la première fois, fournit l'assurance que les dispositions du Gouvernement auront reçu la publicité nécessaire; elle permet aussi d'espérer que l'Administration songe à satisfaire sérieusement, reste si longtemps en souffrance, nonobstant les réclamations réitérées de ce Consulat, de repatrier ces travailleurs.

Et, ne me serait-il pas permis, Monsieur le Gouverneur, puisque vous n'avez été nommé que de cette année aux hautes fonctions que vous occupez aujourd'hui—et que tel est, également, le cas de Monsieur le Directeur de l'Intérieur—de rappeler succinctement quelques faits, d'ailleurs de date assez récente, se rattachant au service de l'immigration, dont il me semble qu'il conviendrait de tenir compte à cette occasion.

C'est une impression qui ressort du paragraphe de la lettre susmentionnée de Monsieur le Directeur de l'Intérieur, où il est parlé "de faciliter aux Indiens libérés leur repatriement." Cette expression prête à l'interprétation, assurément erronée, qu'il existe encore dans la colonie des immigrants Indiens qui auraient encore des contrats de travail non acquittés.

Il vous sera pourtant facile de vous assurer, Monsieur le Gouverneur, qu'il s'est écoulé plus de six ans depuis que le Conseil Général a cru devoir supprimer dans sa session de 1884, non seulement l'immigration Indienne, mais aussi la prime de réengagement, garantie aux immigrants avec le droit de repatriement dans les termes les plus formels, par le 9^{me} article de la Convention du 1^{er} Juillet 1861, dont la reproduction dans tous les contrats de travail passés dans l'Inde pour compte de la colonie, dénote assez l'importance que les parties contractantes y attachaient.

Cet article établit, en effet, que la durée de l'engagement d'un immigrant ne pourra être plus de cinq ans, &c. A l'expiration de ce terme tout Indien qui aura atteint l'âge de 10 ans, au moment de son départ de l'Inde aura droit à son repatriement. S'il consent à contracter un nouvel engagement, "il aura droit à une prime et conservera le droit au repatriement à l'expiration de ce second engagement."

Il est à faire remarquer, de plus, que le Décret du 13^{me} Février 1852 établit non moins péremptoirement que l'immigrant aura pendant l'année que suivra l'expiration du premier contrat la faculté d'opter entre la jouissance du droit du

repatriement et une prime équivalente aux frais de son repatriement personnel et enfin que cette dépense sera comprise dans le budget de la colonie, parmi les dépenses obligatoires."

Mais comme il n'appartenait pas évidemment, au Conseil Général de la Colonie d'annuler, ou même de modifier les stipulations d'une convention internationale, on pouvait supposer de son vote à cette occasion aurait été annulé le Chef de la Colonie, conformément d'ailleurs aux termes du Décret de 1854 qui déclare "nulle toute délibération prise par cette assemblée en dehors de ses attributions."

Cependant, rien de semblable n'a eu lieu ! Bien mieux, Monsieur le Gouverneur allègre, dans une communication à ce Consulat, en date du 27^{me} Novembre 1885, a pu affirmer que les agissements de l'assemblée locale, quoique si manifestement en contradiction avec les termes de la convention du 1^{er} juillet 1861, avaient été sanctionnés par le Gouvernement métropolitain.

Dans de telles conditions Monsieur le Gouverneur, vous reconnaitrez sans doute que les engagements des immigrant Indiens, résidant dans la colonie, se trouvaient, des lors annulés de plein droit. Il ne se pourrait pas évidemment qu'après avoir relevé une des parties à un contrat bilatéral, d'une des conditions les plus favorables à l'autre partie, cette dernière, c'est-à-dire l'immigrant Indien restât seule engagée.

Si, maintenant, on examine ce qui a été fait, depuis lors, pour le repatriement de ces travailleurs, lesquels en Décembre 1885, étaient au nombre de 10,055 personnes, des deux sexes, ayant si clairement droit à être renvoyés dans l'Inde, on trouve qu'il n'a été expédié, pendant cette longue période de près de sept années, que 879 personnes des deux sexes, parmi lesquelles 205 enfants ; en Septembre 1889 par le vapeur "Nantes et Bordeaux," que ces Indiens, ayant dû attendre pour s'embarquer près de quatre mois au chef lieu, ou il est avéré que les dispositions prises pour leur logement laissaient tant à désirer, beaucoup d'entre eux, après avoir épuisé leurs faibles économies, n'ont pu attendre le moment du départ.

Il y a encore à ajouter que le terme moyen du séjour dans la colonie des Indiens adultes, au nombre de 674 composant le convoi repatrié par le "Nantes et Bordeaux," s'est élevé à 12⁸⁵ années.

Il est démontré, cependant, par les listes d'embarquement remises par l'Administration à ce Consulat, après le départ de ce bâtiment, que 14,354 francs représentaient les sommes déposées par les 196 adultes en destination de Karikal, qui seraient, d'après ces mêmes listes, les seuls qui eussent à recourir à cet établissement pour sauvegarder leur économies.

Le pécule de ces 196 immigrants, après un séjour aussi prolongé dans la colonie, ne dépasserait donc pas la moyenne de 74 francs par tête, chiffre assurément bien malgre, surtout si on le rapproche des résultats obtenus, par ces mêmes travailleurs ailleurs.

Peut-on pour l'expliquer, faire état du séjour de quatre mois que les passagers du "Nantes et Bordeaux" ont dû faire au chef lieu, à attendre leur embarquement ? Mais, il ne dépendait pas de ces malheureux de l'éviter ! Et n'est-il pas même avéré aujourd'hui, que c'est l'insuffisance de la nourriture fournie au dépôt, qu'il leur a fallu combler, qui les a forcés à recourir à leurs propres moyens ? N'est-il pas aussi de notoriété publique que beaucoup, parmi les Indiens désignés d'abord pour partir sur ce navire, ont du une fois leurs économies épuisées, retourner aux propriétés où ils étaient employés et manquer ainsi le départ ?

Ce ne sont pas du reste les seuls fâcheux résultats causés par la prolongation de leur séjour au chef lieu.

Ne faut-il pas en effet y rapporter les affections qui se sont manifestées parmi eux dans le cours du voyage, donnant lieu à de très nombreuses mortalités qui ont provoqué de la part du Gouvernement de l'Inde, des réclamations dont l'administration locale aura eu sans doute connaissance, et qui méritent en tous cas d'être appelées ici ?

Et pour quels motifs le nombre des convois de repatriement d'immigrants Indiens a-t-il été limité, pendant le long intervalle écoulé de 1886 à 1891, à celui par le "Nantes et Bordeaux ?" C'est une question qui s'impose dans la circonstance, et sur laquelle je me permets d'insister très-respectueusement, en raison du nombre toujours croissant de ceux de ces travailleurs qui, après avoir épuisé leurs forces et leurs économies,—s'ils en avaient pu amasser,—n'ont plus guéré d'autres moyens d'existence que la charité particulière, qui reste impuissante en face de ce flot, d'année en année plus considérable, de dénuement et de misère ; à tel point qu'il ne se passe pas de mois sans que—fait inconnu naguère à la Martinique ; l'on ne ramasse, soit en ville, soit à la campagne des Indiens morts, ou mourants d'inanition absolue !

Les comptes rendus des séances du Conseil Général, où il est traité de l'immigration, ne fournissent pas cependant l'explication suffisante des lenteurs mises à renvoyer les immigrants dans leurs foyers. En effet, si cette assemblée s'est appliquée avec persistance à marchander et à réduire les sommes demandées pour leur hospitalisation et pour l'entretien au dépôt des Indiens malades et impropres au travail, on doit reconnaître qu'il a été voté, pendant la période sus-indiquée, un total 1,100,000 francs en vue de leur repatriement.

Or, même au fret élevé de 300 francs par tête, cette somme eût suffi à renvoyer dans l'Inde près de 3,000 adultes en sus de ceux partis par le "Nantes et Bordeaux." Il y a à rappeler, également, que le Conseil, à deux reprises, en 1885 et en 1887, avait déclaré qu'il laissait l'Administration libre de dépasser, si besoin était, les sommes votées pendant ces sessions, pour le service du repatriement des immigrants.

Dans de telles conditions on ne saurait reprocher au Conseil Général seulement, les lenteurs déplorables apportées à leur renvoi ; alors même que cette assemblée ait cru pouvoir employer, postérieurement, à d'autres fins une bonne partie de l'argent destiné en premier lieu à ce service.

Il convient de faire observer d'ailleurs que ces dépenses, étant classées parmi celles dites "obligatoires," n'ont pu être distraites de l'emploi qui leur avait été primitivement affecté sans le consentement du Chef de la Colonie, à qui précisément la loi donne pouvoir, au cas où il estime insuffisantes les allocations votées pour faire face aux dépenses obligatoires, d'y pourvoir d'office.

Les articles 7 et 8 du Senatus Consulte organique du 4^{me} Juillet 1866 ne laissent aucun doute à cet égard ; mais il convient d'ajouter, que si cette voie a été suivie, à plusieurs reprises, pour d'autres services, il n'est pas à ma connaissance qu'elle ait jamais été employée au profit du repatriement des Indiens, nonobstant son urgence puisqu'il s'agissait de faire enfin droit à des réclamations si bien justifiées.

Je me permets de croire, Monsieur le Gouverneur, qu'il n'est plus nécessaire de reputer à cette heure les diverses raisons mises en avant pour expliquer les retards apportés au repatriement des immigrants.

Pourrait-on équitablement les attribuer à l'insuffisance des fonds du trésor public ?

Monsieur le Gouverneur Germain Casse, votre prédécesseur, a fait justice de cette légende, lorsqu'en Décembre 1889, il a félicité la colonie de son excellente position financière, que confirmait, du reste, le chiffre toujours élevé des fonds de réserve.

Et si, des fonds spéciaux destinés à servir au repatriement des immigrants il ne restait plus rien, n'est-il pas à la connaissance de tous que cela provient de ce que ces fonds ont été affectés à un emploi entièrement étranger à ce service ? Enfin l'assentiment donné à ce virement par la métropole ne confirme-t-il pas les droits que je suis chargé de faire valoir ?

Il ne me semble pas utile non plus de m'appesantir sur ce qui a été avancé relativement au préjudice que la colonie aurait à redouter du retrait des travailleurs Indiens. Cette raison, que je retrouve également dans une lettre de Monsieur le Gouverneur, votre prédécesseur, me paraît la plus justifiée, s'il

était possible dans la circonstance de faire état au préjudice des immigrants, "du manque de bras dont le pays a beaucoup à souffrir après leur avoir enlevé la prime au réengagement dont leurs contrats semblaient devoir leur assurer la jouissance.

Quoi qu'il en soit, Monsieur le Gouverneur, j'ose espérer que les diverses considérations que je viens d'avoir l'honneur de vous permettre de juger des motifs sérieux du Gouvernement Indien pour désirer être renseigné d'une façon précise, par votre bienveillante entremise, au sujet du nouveau mode de repatriement que l'administration veut d'adopter pour le renvoi dans l'Inde des immigrants Indiens, sujets Britanniques, encore à la Martinique.

Il voudrait bien connaître approximativement au moins, le nombre des Indiens à embarquer sur chaque paquebot, le nombre de convois que l'on se propose de faire partir chaque année, et enfin les dispositions prises pour assurer à ces passagers les soins que réclame un si long voyage.

L'opportunité de ces renseignements ressort du fait qu'il restait dans la colonie, au 31^{me} Decembre dernier, 8,421 Indiens.

Je serais heureux de recevoir en même temps, Monsieur le Gouverneur, la confirmation de l'assurance que je me propose de donner au Gouvernement de l'Inde du mal fondé des bruits qui tendraient à faire croire à la campagne que l'adoption du nouvel itinéraire, aurait surtout en vue de retarder autant que possible le repatriement des Indiens valides, tout en fournissant une voie de se débarrasser de ceux déjà vieux ou paresseux.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur le Gouverneur, l'assurance, de mes sentiments tres-distingués,

W. LAWLESS,

Le Consul de Sa Majesté Britannique.

Monsieur le Gouverneur
de la Martinique,
Port de France.

[W. F. C.]

BRITISH CONSULATE, MARTINIQUE,
Saint Pierre, 18th May 1891.

Revenue.
No. 38.

The Right Honourable The Marquess of Lansdowne, Viceroy and Governor-General of India.

MY LORD,

I HAVE the honour to forward, herewith, for the information of Your Lordship in Council, a report upon the present condition of Indian immigration in this Colony.

2. It leaves much to be desired, I regret to add, especially as regards the repatriation of the Indian labourers still resident here.

3. A new system for that purpose is now about to be tried, under instructions, it is reported, from the French Government, which is described, so far as yet known, in the report abovementioned.

4. I desire to be mistaken in supposing that, although, probably devised in consequence of the recent instances of Her Majesty's Government, it is unlikely to be carried out to the satisfaction of Your Lordship in Council. The motives, upon which that supposition rests, are also enumerated in the same report.

5. I beg to submit, furthermore, for the consideration of Your Lordship in Council, a copy of a letter lately addressed to His Excellency the Governor of Martinique that deals fully with the same subject, to which I venture to direct his very earnest attention.

6. His Excellency having been but quite recently called to the Government of this island, which is the case also of the present Colonial Secretary, the expediency of the above communication will, I trust, be deemed commendable.

7. If it elicit a reply, other than the usual simple acknowledgment of its receipt, a copy thereof will be duly sent forward.

I have the honour to be,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's very obedient, humble Servant,

(Sd.) W. LAWLESS,

Consul.

Report on Indian Immigration to Martinique.

1. From a statement supplied to this Consulate on the 9th ultimo, from the Immigration Department, it appears that—

Number of immigrants in the Colony on the 31st December 1890. 1st—The number of Indian immigrants in this colony on the 31st of December last, amounted to :—

8,431 of which number—

4,222 were male adults.

2,297 female adults.

1,011 children (males).

901 children (females).

2. On the 31st December of the previous year the general total of these labourers in the colony numbered—

Number at corresponding date of 1889.

8,712 of both sexes.

Births during 1890.

3. The births registered during 1890 were—
100 of which—

60 were males and
40 females.

4. The deaths reported during the same period were—

Deaths during the same year.

381 and included—
254 males and
127 females.

5. This total testifies to a larger rate of mortality than during the previous 12 months when the deaths were reckoned at 307 out of the 9,978 immigrants resident in the colony on the 1st of February 1889.

6. The question of repatriation remains in a very unsatisfactory condition despite the efforts of this Consulate that are frequently renewed, especially previously to the annual season of the Council General with little effect, I regret to add, although the whole of the Indian immigrants in the colony are and have long been entitled to being sent back to India.

7. The Local Government acting all along, there can be little doubt, under the sanction of the Colonial Ministry, if not in conformity with its actual instructions, seem bent upon detaining these labourers in the colony, after having approved of the decision unduly come to in December 1884, by the Local Assembly, not to grant the premium on re-engagements to which the immigrants were so clearly entitled under the 9th clause of the Convention of 1st of July 1861.

8. This clause was reproduced on each copy of the contracts delivered to the immigrant, upon their departure from India, a fact that denoted sufficiently its importance.

9. The above decision was clearly illegal, since the Council General had no right or power to modify an International Convention. It should have been indeed annulled by the Governor, agreeably to the 13th Article of the Decree of the 26th of July 1854, stating:—

“Est nulle toute deliberation prise par le Conseil General, ou en dehors de ses attributions légales. L'annulation est prononcée par le Gouverneur en Conseil Privé.”

Not alone was this not done, but the then Governor informed this Consulate, as reported in a despatch No. 42, dated the 27th of May 1886, that this unjustifiable breach of the Convention had been approved of by the French Colonial Office.

10. The French Government, by this breach of one of the chief stipulations of a bilateral contract, entitled the immigrants, it may be argued, to claim from that period their right to repatriation.

11. It might be, at least, hoped that under such circumstances the Colony would have become more punctual than before, in sending back the immigrants, as their contracts lapsed.

12. The contrary rather has been the case. The total of the immigrants the island on the 1st of January 1886 was 12,926. The numbers of those sent back to India since then, has been 1,791 in 1886 and 879 in 1889.

13. At the usual annual sessions of the Council General the propriety of increased activity in repatriating the immigrants is alluded to by the Executive in proposing the vote for the purpose, generally 240,000 francs. The Council agree to the vote, the amount of which is, however, often reduced. But, as no departure follows, the sum is afterwards disposed of for other purposes. As such alterations require the assent of the Governor it follows that the Executive becomes really liable for the delay that is the consequence.

14. The reports of the meeting of the Local Assembly show, however, that over 1,100,000 francs were thus voted during the interval between December 1886, and December last, which would have sufficed, even at the high rate of 300 francs per head, to repatriate 3,600 adults, in lieu of the 674 forwarded by the “Nantes et Bordeaux.”

15. If any further proof be required to prove that the Government alone is responsible for the delay that has occurred in repatriating the immigrants, it is furnished by the fact that the charges, in connection with the immigration service, and particularly those for repatriation, are by law classed among those denominated “Obligatory Expenditure,” by the 7th clause of the “Senatus Consulte Organique” of the 11th of August 1886. The 8th clause completes that just quoted in these terms:—

“Si les dépenses obligatoires ont été omises (au Budget) ou si le Gouverneur en Conseil Privé estime que les allocations, portées pour une ou plusieurs de ces dépenses, sont insuffisantes, le Gouverneur y pourvoit; provisoirement, à l'aide des fonds des dépenses diverses et imprévues.”

“En cas d'insuffisance de ces fonds, il en réfère au Ministre, qui sur sa proposition, inscrit d'office les dépenses omises ou augmente les allocations.”

16. But, although readily resorted to for other purposes, the ample power thus afforded the Executive for preventing the Local Assembly from exceeding its prerogatives, has never been employed, to carry out the engagements stipulated for in the Convention of the 1st July 1861.

17. Perhaps brief reference to the following facts, although foreign to Immigration, may not be out of place here as exemplifying the complete subserviency of the Local Executive and Council General to the desires of the Home Government and also the unceremonious injustice of the latter towards British interest.

18. A Telegraph Company was formed in Paris in 1889, with which the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies signed a treaty granting, as might be expected, great advantages, including a subsidy of 50,000 francs a year from this Colony, without previous reference to the Council General, as legally required.

19. The latter ratified the Treaty nevertheless, subject to the reasonable proviso that the transfer of the subsidy, then in the possession of an English Company—the “West India and Panama”—in return for a copious daily news Bulletin and Commercial quotations, should take place only when the French line between this Island and Guadeloupe would have been linked to the American and European cable system.

20. The Colonial Minister upon learning this telegraphed to re-assemble the Council and have the proviso annulled immediately. It was done, although, in the meantime the vote having been published in the Official Gazette with the sanction of the Executive, had become law in accordance with the Senatus Consulte of 1886.

21. The French Company furnish the news meanwhile by reproducing textually the Bulletin supplied by the English Cable Company to Guadeloupe, whose treaty with the Colony still subsists.

22. A new system of Repatriation under arrangements has been concluded by the Colonial Minister, it seems, with the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique, whose vessels carry the mails between the French Islands and Marseilles, and another French Company running steamers thence to India.

It is reported that each batch of immigrants is not to exceed 150, for which a freight of 300 francs per adult will be paid.

23. I await the particulars asked for as to the number of shipments to be despatched annually, and the arrangements to insure that the Indian passengers will be frequently enfeebled state will require, during such a voyage. It must be, however, borne in mind that vessels of the capacity of the "Nantes et Bordeaux" could carry in one voyage 620 adults, while it would require 4 batches, each of 150 adults, to repatriate 600. Here it is considered, that this new plan, while affording a semblance of more activity in the repatriation of Indian immigrants, will, in reality, permit of the prolonged detention of the able-bodied labourers while affording means for getting rid of those that are infirm, lazy or unfitted for regular labour.

24. The following statements of the late and present allowances, voted for the immigration service, shew the great retrenchments effected in that direction. The sum voted for 1886, although somewhat lower than previously, amounted to 42,234 francs for the protective staff only. It then comprised:

11 Commissary ...	9,746
11 Deputy Do. ...	2,982
11 Writers ...	1,800
11 Interpreters ...	4,000
11 Messengers ...	720
11 Syndic at Saint Pierre ...	4,082
6 Do. in the Chief out-districts	13,904
TOTAL ...	42,234

travelling expenses included.

25. In addition and for the requirements of the Dépôt, medical attendance and keep of the infirm and time-expired Indians, a sum of 92,954 francs was granted.

The vote for 1887 was but 9,300 francs for the Protective service; that was reduced to:

11 Syndic at St. Pierre including	
11 francs 37-C. for travelling	
expenses per diem ...	3,500
11 Do. for Port de France ...	3,500
11 Writers ...	11,800
11 Interpreters ...	500
	9,300

Protective Staff reduced.

26. The allowances for the Dépôt were also diminished to 12,719 francs, but the ultimate grant had to be increased by the Executive to 40,000 francs.

Votes for Current year.

Dépôt increased.

Protective Staff again reduced.

1 Syndic ...	3,000
1 Writer ...	1,800
1 Interpreter ...	720

27. For the current year, the sums voted are:—

Fr. 46,666.93 for the requirements of the Dépôt with medical attendance and,

Fr. 6,463 for the salaries of the Protective Staff now reduced to:—

Travelling expenses 970 francs to be divided with the Inspector of Prisons, who is supposed to act in the same capacity for immigration.

28. The foregoing unreasonable retrenchments furnish a well-founded motive for reproach, as they have rendered merely nominal the Protective Agency, and the Hospital and relief sources totally insufficient to cope with the annually increasing wants of the immigrants, whose infirmities and age render them unable to gain their living, by means of their own exertions.

29. The deplorable consequence follows, that numbers of these unfortunates are to be found destitute and in rags, both in the country and especially in the larger towns, whose only means of subsistence depends upon private charity, which does not always suffice to prevent the more infirm among them from perishing from sheer want; a thing utterly unknown formerly in this Colony.

30. The travelling expenses allowed are so totally inadequate to permit one Syndic to attend to the calls that may arise from the various districts through which the immigrants are disseminated, that it warrants the belief that the latter are expected to come before that agent when complaints occur.

31. It may be alleged that they may apply to the Commissaries of Police. But these officials have made themselves too well known to the immigrants in their punitive character, that they are generally too prone to re-assume, to inspire the immigrants with much confidence as Protectors.

32. It is alleged moreover that the Syndics, as well as the Commissaries of Police, now limit as much as possible their dealings with the immigrants, as productive usually of reproach and trouble only. Then the Police, as municipal agents also, share largely the repugnance of the Mayors generally to diminish, in favour of the immigrants, the resources intended for the relief of the poor and sick natives of their districts.

33. It will be observed from the inclosed copy of the advertisement referring to the new plan for the repatriation of the Indian Immigrants that the latter are directed to apply to the Commissaries of Police to have the demands registered. For the reasons above given, this arrangement can hardly be deemed satisfactory, since the demands may be expected to depend upon the manner in which they shall be entertained.

34. It must be owned in conclusion that the Indian labourers have not yet acquired the same independence enjoyed by the natives, who profess to regard them as inferiors and dislike them besides as competitors that limit their exactions for field labour: feelings that are shared by the native police and petty country authorities, for the most part also of African descent. It is nevertheless correct that their condition has very much improved, for those at least who are willing and able to work, owing to the yearly increasing reduction in the number of the

native labourers that can be reckoned upon for the regular labour required for the production of sugar, still the chief staple of the colony. They are much sought for therefore, as more docile and willing while generally less exacting than the natives. They hold, however, entire independence of action in choosing the districts they prefer as well as their employers.

These Immigrants now much sought after.

35. But, when overtaken by age or sickness, matters become altogether altered to the immigrant's disadvantage. The estates profess to be unable to support idle hands, since the rates that rule for their products exact strict economy to avoid loss. There then remains but the Dépôt or the Communal Hospitals, the entry to which causes always delay, great trouble and loss of time, too frequently for no useful purpose. Afterwards a pauper's existence with the possible result of dying from hunger has to be submitted to.

36. Yet there can be no doubt that the withdrawal of the Indian labourers remaining in the Island will entail very serious loss in some of the now most productive districts of the Island. This is well known to the Council General that favour it on that account; the majority of that assembly being hostile to the Planters for the reasons adduced in a former report of 1886. Nor is the Government ignorant, either of the ill results of such a measure, and, for that reason and in view to save the cost it would prove, it will, I fear, not willingly favour repatriation in any way.

Synopsis.

37. The following is a synopsis of Indian immigration to Martinique:—

Introduction during the years 1853 to 1883	...	...	25,509
Births between 1853 and 1890	...	...	4,862
		Total	30,371
Deaths during the same period	...	...	13,911
Repatriations from 1858 to date	...	...	8,029
		Total	21,940
Remaining on the 1st January 1891	...	...	8,431

SAINT PIERRE, }
15th May 1891. }

Copy.

No. 27.

CONSULAT D'ANGLETERRE A LA MARTINIQUE,

ST. PIERRE,

Le 30^{me} Avril 1891.

MONSIEUR LE GOUVERNEUR,

J'ai bien reçu la lettre No. 344 en date du 9^{me} courant, que vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'écrire, pour me remettre la situation numérique des immigrants Indiens qui se trouvaient encore dans la colonie, au 31^{me} Decembre dernier.

De ce document il ressort que ces travailleurs, qui étaient au nombre de 8,812, à pareille date en 1889, comptaient encore au 1^{er} Janvier de cette année,

8,431 personnes des deux sexes, après avoir tenu compte de 381 décès et de 100 naissances qui avaient, lieu, pendant le cours de l'année 1890.

Pour obéir aux prescriptions du Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Impériale et Royale, j'ai maintenant le devoir de renouveler, de la façon la plus pressante, les vives instances, déjà si fréquemment et j'ai le regret d'ajouter—si vainement tentées par ce Consulat auprès de l'Administration, en vue d'obtenir le repatriement des Indiens sujets Britanniques qui, après avoir rempli leurs contrats de travail attendent depuis si longtemps que la colonie s'acquitte pour le moins de l'engagement de les repatrier, engagement stipulé dans la 9^{me} clause de la convention du 1^{er} Juillet 1861, sous la garantie du Gouvernement Français.

C'est là un sujet que j'ai cru devoir signaler à votre bienveillante attention des la première entrevue que vous avez bien voulu m'accorder, au mois de février dernier après avoir été appelé au Gouvernement de la Martinique, et que, au surplus, vous aviez promis d'examiner avec toute l'attention qu'il comportait.

Et, en effet, Monsieur le Gouverneur, votre lettre précitée à été suivie d'une communication, en date du.....mois dernier, de Monsieur le Directeur de l'Intérieur, par laquelle ce Chef d'Administration anno que, conformément aux instructions ministérielles et au vote du Conseil Général il avait enfin été décidé, "de repatrier cette année des Indiens par la voie des Paquebots de la Compagnie Général Maritime correspondant avec ceux des Messageries Maritimes."

A cette communication était annexé un exemplaire d'une annonce devant être placardée aux mairies de la campagne, et qui a été depuis publiée dans le "Moniteur Officiel" de la colonie, "en vue au faciliter aux Indiens libérés l'inscription sur les listes de repatriement."

Cette mesure, à laquelle il est à observer que l'Administration a recour à cette occasion pour la première fois, fournit l'assurance que les dispositions du Gouvernement auront reçu la publicité nécessaire; elle permet aussi d'espérer que l'Administration songe à satisfaire sérieusement, reste si longtemps en souffrance, nonobstant les réclamations réitérées de ce Consulat, de repatrier ces travailleurs.

Et, ne me serait-il pas permis, Monsieur le Gouverneur, puisque vous n'avez été nommé que de cette année aux hautes fonctions que vous occupez aujourd'hui—et que tel est, également, le cas de Monsieur le Directeur de l'Intérieur—de rappeler succinctement quelques faits, d'ailleurs de date assez récente, se rattachant au service de l'immigration, dont il me semble qu'il conviendrait de tenir compte à cette occasion.

C'est une impression qui ressort du paragraphe de la lettre susmentionnée de Monsieur le Directeur de l'Intérieur, ou il est parlé "de faciliter aux Indiens libérés leur repatriement." Cette expression prête à l'interprétation, assurément erronée, qu'il existe encore dans la colonie des immigrants Indiens qui auraient encore des contrats de travail non acquittés.

Il vous sera pourtant facile de vous assurer, Monsieur le Gouverneur, qu'il s'est écoulé plus de six ans depuis que le Conseil Général a cru devoir supprimer dans sa session de 1884, non seulement l'immigration Indienne, mais aussi la prime de réengagement, garantie aux immigrants avec le droit de repatriement dans les termes les plus formels, par le 9^{me} article de la Convention du 1^{er} Juillet 1861, dont la reproduction dans tous les contrats de travail passés dans l'Inde pour compte de la colonie, dénote assez l'importance que les parties contractantes y attachaient.

Cet article établit, en effet, que la durée de l'engagement d'un immigrant ne pourra être plus de cinq ans, &c. A l'expiration de ce terme tout Indien qui aura atteint l'âge de 10 ans, au moment de son départ de l'Inde aura droit à son repatriement. S'il consent à contracter un nouvel engagement, "il aura droit à une prime et conservera le droit au repatriement à l'expiration de ce second engagement."

Il est à faire remarquer, de plus, que le Décret du 13^{me} Février 1852 établit non moins péremptoirement que l'immigrant aura pendant l'année que suivra l'expiration du premier contrat la faculté d'opter entre la jouissance du droit du

repatriement et une prime équivalente aux frais de son repatriement personnel et enfin que cette dépense sera comprise dans le budget de la colonie, parmi les dépenses obligatoires."

Mais comme il n'appartenait pas évidemment, au Conseil Général de la Colonie d'annuler, ou même de modifier les stipulations d'une convention internationale, on pouvait supposer de son vote à cette occasion aurait été annulé le Chef de la Colonie, conformément d'ailleurs aux termes du Décret de 1854 qui déclare "nulle toute délibération prise par cette assemblée en dehors de ses attributions."

Cependant, rien de semblable n'a eu lieu! Bien mieux, Monsieur le Gouverneur allègre, dans une communication à ce Consulat, en date du 27^{me} Novembre 1885, a pu affirmer que les agissements de l'assemblée locale, quoique si manifestement en contradiction avec les termes de la convention du 1^{er} Juillet 1861, avaient été sanctionnés par le Gouvernement métropolitain.

Dans de telles conditions Monsieur le Gouverneur, vous reconnaitrez sans doute que les engagements des immigrant Indiens, résidant dans la colonie, se trouvaient, des lors annulés de plein droit. Il ne se pourrait pas évidemment qu'après avoir relevé une des parties à un contrat bilatéral, d'une des conditions les plus favorables à l'autre partie, cette dernière, c'est-à-dire l'immigrant Indien restât seule engagée.

Si, maintenant, on examine ce qui a été fait, depuis lors, pour le repatriement de ces travailleurs, lesquels en Décembre 1885, étaient au nombre de 10,055 personnes, des deux sexes, ayant si clairement droit à être renvoyés dans l'Inde, on trouve qu'il n'a été expédié, pendant cette longue période de près de sept années, que 879 personnes des deux sexes, parmi lesquelles 205 enfants; en Septembre 1889 par le vapeur "Nantes et Bordeaux," que ces Indiens, ayant du attendre pour s'embarquer près de quatre mois au chef lieu, ou il est avéré que les dispositions prises pour leur logement laissaient tant à désirer, beaucoup d'entre eux, après avoir épuisé leurs faibles économies, n'ont pu attendre le moment du départ.

Il y a encore à ajouter que le terme moyen du séjour dans la colonie des Indiens adultes, au nombre de 674 composant le convoi repatrié par le "Nantes et Bordeaux," s'est élevé à 12.85 années.

Il est démontré, cependant, par les listes d'embarquement remises par l'Administration à ce Consulat, après le départ de ce bâtiment, que 14,354 francs représentaient les sommes déposées par les 196 adultes en destination de Karikal, qui seraient, d'après ces mêmes listes, les seuls qui eussent à recourir à cet établissement pour sauvegarder leur économies.

Le pécule de ces 196 immigrants, après un séjour aussi prolongé dans la colonie, ne dépasserait donc pas la moyenne de 74 francs par tête, chiffre assurément bien malgre, surtout si on le rapproche des résultats obtenus, par ces mêmes travailleurs ailleurs.

Peut-on pour l'expliquer, faire état du séjour de quatre mois que les passagers du "Nantes et Bordeaux" ont dû faire au chef lieu, à attendre leur embarquement? Mais, il ne dépendait pas de ces malheureux de l'éviter! Et n'est-il pas même avéré aujourd'hui, que c'est l'insuffisance de la nourriture fournie au dépôt, qu'il leur a fallu combler, qui les a forcés à recourir à leurs propres moyens? N'est-il pas aussi de notoriété publique que beaucoup, parmi les Indiens désignés d'abord pour partir sur ce navire, ont du une fois leurs économies épuisées, retourner aux propriétés où ils étaient employés et manquer ainsi le départ?

Ce ne sont pas du reste les seuls fâcheux résultats causés par la prolongation de leur séjour au chef lieu.

Ne faut-il pas en effet y rapporter les affections qui se sont manifestées parmi eux dans le cours du voyage, donnant lieu à de très nombreuses mortalités qui ont provoqué de la part du Gouvernement de l'Inde, des réclamations dont l'administration locale aura eu sans doute connaissance, et qui méritent en tous cas d'être rappelées ici?

Et pour quels motifs le nombre des convois de repatriement d'immigrants Indiens a-t-il été limité, pendant le long intervalle écoulé de 1886 à 1891, à celui par le "Nantes et Bordeaux"? C'est une question qui s'impose dans la circonstance, et sur laquelle je me permets d'insister très-respectueusement, en raison du nombre toujours croissant de ceux de ces travailleurs qui, après avoir épuisé leurs forces et leurs économies, s'ils en avaient pu amasser, n'ont plus guère d'autres moyens d'existence que la charité particulière, qui reste impuissante en face de ce flot, d'année en année plus considérable, de dénouement et de misère; à tel point qu'il ne se passe pas de mois sans que—fait inconnu naguère à la Martinique; l'on ne ramasse, soit en ville, soit à la campagne des Indiens morts, ou mourants d'inanition absolue!

Les comptes rendus des séances du Conseil Général, où il est traité de l'immigration, ne fournissent pas cependant l'explication suffisante des lenteurs mises à renvoyer les immigrants dans leurs foyers. En effet, si cette assemblée s'est appliquée avec persistance à marchander et à réduire les sommes demandées pour leur hospitalisation et pour l'entretien au dépôt des Indiens malades et impropres au travail, on doit reconnaître qu'il a été voté, pendant la période sus-indiquée, un total 1,100,000 francs en vue de leur repatriement.

Or, même au fret élevé de 300 francs par tête, cette somme eût suffi à renvoyer dans l'Inde près de 3,000 adultes en sus de ceux partis par le "Nantes et Bordeaux." Il y a à rappeler, également, que le Conseil, à deux reprises, en 1885 et en 1887, avait déclaré qu'il laissait l'Administration libre de dépasser, si besoin était, les sommes votées pendant ces sessions, pour le service du repatriement des immigrants.

Dans de telles conditions on ne saurait reprocher au Conseil Général seulement, les lenteurs déplorables apportées à leur renvoi; alors même que cette assemblée ait cru pouvoir employer, postérieurement, à d'autres fins une bonne partie de l'argent destinée en premier lieu à ce service.

Il convient de faire observer d'ailleurs que ces dépenses, étant classées parmi celles dites "obligatoires," n'ont pu être distraites de l'emploi qui leur avait été primitivement affecté sans le consentement du Chef de la Colonie, à qui précisément la loi donne pouvoir, au cas où il estime insuffisantes les allocations votées pour faire face aux dépenses obligatoires, d'y pourvoir d'office.

Les articles 7 et 8 du Senatus Consulte organique du 4^{me} Juillet 1866 ne laissent aucun doute à cet égard; mais il convient d'ajouter, que si cette voie a été suivie, à plusieurs reprises, pour d'autres services, il n'est pas à ma connaissance qu'elle ait jamais été employée au profit du repatriement des Indiens, nonobstant son urgence puisqu'il s'agissait de faire enfin droit à des réclamations si bien justifiées.

Je me permets de croire, Monsieur le Gouverneur, qu'il n'est plus nécessaire de reputer à cette heure les diverses raisons mises en avant pour expliquer les retards apportés au repatriement des immigrants.

Pourrait-on équitablement les attribuer à l'insuffisance des fonds du trésor public?

Monsieur le Gouverneur Germain Casse, votre prédécesseur, a fait justice de cette légende, lorsqu'en Décembre 1889, il a félicité la colonie de son excellente position financière, que confirmait, du reste, le chiffre toujours élevé des fonds de réserve.

Et si, des fonds spéciaux destinés à servir au repatriement des immigrants il ne restait plus rien, n'est-il pas à la connaissance de tous que cela provient de ce que ces fonds ont été affectés à un emploi entièrement étranger à ce service? Enfin l'assentiment donné à ce virement par la métropole ne confirme-t-il pas les droits que je suis chargé de faire valoir?

Il ne me semble pas utile non plus de m'appesantir sur ce qui a été avancé relativement au préjudice que la colonie aurait à redouter du retrait des travailleurs Indiens. Cette raison, que je retrouve également dans une lettre de Monsieur le Gouverneur, votre prédécesseur, me paraît la plus justifiée, s'il

était possible dans la circonstance de faire état au préjudice des immigrants, "du manque de bras dont le pays a beaucoup à souffrir après leur avoir enlevé la prime au réengagement dont leurs contrats semblaient devoir leur assurer la jouissance.

Quoi qu'il en soit, Monsieur le Gouverneur, j'ose espérer que les diverses considérations que je viens d'avoir l'honneur de vous permettre de juger des motifs sérieux du Gouvernement Indien pour désirer être renseigné d'une façon précise, par votre bienveillante entremise, au sujet du nouveau mode de repatriement que l'administration veut d'adopter pour le renvoi dans l'Inde des immigrants Indiens, sujets Britanniques, encore à la Martinique.

Il voudrait bien connaître approximativement au moins, le nombre des Indiens à embarquer sur chaque paquebot, le nombre de convois que l'on se propose de faire partir chaque année, et enfin les dispositions prises pour assurer à ces passagers les soins que réclame un si long voyage.

L'opportunité de ces renseignements ressort du fait qu'il restait dans la colonie, au 31^{me} Decembre dernier, 8,421 Indiens.

Je serais heureux de recevoir en même temps, Monsieur le Gouverneur, la confirmation de l'assurance que je me propose de donner au Gouvernement de l'Inde du mal fondé des bruits qui tendraient à faire croire à la campagne que l'adoption du nouvel itinéraire, aurait surtout en vue de retarder autant que possible le repatriement des Indiens valides, tout en fournissant une voie de se débarrasser de ceux déjà vieux ou paresseux.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur le Gouverneur, l'assurance, de mes sentiments très-distingués,

W. LAWLESS,

Le Consul de Sa Majesté Britannique.

Monsieur le Gouverneur
de la Martinique,
Port de France.

[W.F.C.]

BRITISH CONSULATE, MARTINIQUE,
Saint Pierre, 18th May 1891.

Revenue.
No. 38.

The Right Honourable The Marquess of Lansdowne, Viceroy and Governor-General of India.

MY LORD,

I HAVE the honour to forward, herewith, for the information of Your Lordship in Council, a report upon the present condition of Indian immigration in this Colony.

2. It leaves much to be desired, I regret to add, especially as regards the repatriation of the Indian labourers still resident here.

3. A new system for that purpose is now about to be tried, under instructions, it is reported, from the French Government, which is described, so far as yet known, in the report abovementioned.

4. I desire to be mistaken in supposing that, although, probably devised in consequence of the recent instances of Her Majesty's Government, it is unlikely to be carried out to the satisfaction of Your Lordship in Council. The motives, upon which that supposition rests, are also enumerated in the same report.

5. I beg to submit, furthermore, for the consideration of Your Lordship in Council, a copy of a letter lately addressed to His Excellency the Governor of Martinique that deals fully with the same subject, to which I venture to direct his very earnest attention.

6. His Excellency having been but quite recently called to the Government of this island, which is the case also of the present Colonial Secretary, the expediency of the above communication will, I trust, be deemed commendable.

7. If it elicit a reply, other than the usual simple acknowledgment of its receipt, a copy thereof will be duly sent forward.

I have the honour to be,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's very obedient, humble Servant,

(Sd.) W. LAWLESS,

Consul.

Report on Indian Immigration to Martinique.

1. From a statement supplied to this Consulate on the 9th ultimo, from the Immigration Department, it appears that—

Number of immigrants in the Colony on the 31st December 1890.
amounted to :—

1st—The number of Indian immigrants in this colony on the 31st of December last,

8,431 of which number—

4,222 were male adults.

2,297 female adults.

1,011 children (males).

901 children (females).

2. On the 31st December of the previous year the general total of these labourers in the colony numbered—

Number at corresponding date of 1889. 8,712 of both sexes.

Births during 1890.

3. The births registered during 1890 were—
100 of which—

60 were males and
40 females.

4. The deaths reported during the same period were—

Deaths during the same year.

381 and included—
254 males and
127 females.

5. This total testifies to a larger rate of mortality than during the previous 12 months when the deaths were reckoned at 307 out of the 9,978 immigrants resident in the colony on the 1st of February 1889.

6. The question of repatriation remains in a very unsatisfactory condition despite the efforts of this Consulate that are frequently renewed, especially previously to the annual session of the Council General with little effect, I regret to add, although the whole of the Indian immigrants in the colony are and have long been entitled to being sent back to India.

7. The Local Government acting all along, there can be little doubt, under the sanction of the Colonial Ministry, if not in conformity with its actual instructions, seem bent upon detaining these labourers in the colony, after having approved of the decision unduly come to in December 1884, by the Local Assembly, not to grant the premium on re-engagements to which the immigrants were so clearly entitled under the 9th clause of the Convention of 1st of July 1861.

8. This clause was reproduced on each copy of the contracts delivered to the immigrant, upon their departure from India, a fact that denoted sufficiently its importance.

9. The above decision was clearly illegal, since the Council General had no right or power to modify an International Convention. It should have been indeed annulled by the Governor, agreeably to the 13th Article of the Decree of the 26th of July 1854, stating:—

“Est nulle toute deliberation prise par le Conseil General, ...
ou en dehors de ses attributions légales. L'annulation est prononcée par le Gouverneur en Conseil Privé.”

Not alone was this not done, but the then Governor informed this Consulate, as reported in a despatch No. 42, dated the 27th of May 1886, that this unjustifiable breach of the Convention had been approved of by the French Colonial Office.

10. The French Government, by this breach of one of the chief stipulations of a bilateral contract, entitled the immigrants, it may be argued, to claim from that period their right to repatriation.

11. It might be, at least, hoped that under such circumstances the Colony would have become more punctual than before, in sending back the immigrants, as their contracts lapsed.

12. The contrary rather has been the case. The total of the immigrants in the island on the 1st of January 1886 was 12,926. The numbers of those sent back to India since then, has been 1,791 in 1886 and 879 in 1889.

13. At the usual annual sessions of the Council General the propriety of increased activity in repatriating the immigrants is alluded to by the Executive in proposing the vote for the purpose, generally 240,000 francs. The Council agree to the vote, the amount of which is, however, often reduced. But, as no departure follows, the sum is afterwards disposed of for other purposes. As such alterations require the assent of the Governor it follows that the Executive becomes really liable for the delay that is the consequence.

14. The reports of the meeting of the Local Assembly show, however, that over 1,100,000 francs were thus voted during the interval between December 1886, and December last, which would have sufficed, even at the high rate of 300 francs per head, to repatriate 3,600 adults, in lieu of the 674 forwarded by the “Nantes et Bordeaux.”

15. If any further proof be required to prove that the Government alone is responsible for the delay that has occurred in repatriating the immigrants, it is furnished by the fact that the charges, in connection with the immigration service, and particularly those for repatriation, are by law classed among those denominated “Obligatory Expenditure,” by the 7th clause of the “Senatus Consulte Organique” of the 11th of August 1886. The 8th clause completes that just quoted in these terms:—

“Si les dépenses obligatoires ont été omises (au Budget) ou si le Gouverneur en Conseil Privé estime que les allocations, portées pour une ou plusieurs de ces dépenses, sont insuffisantes, le Gouverneur y pourvoit; provisoirement, à l'aide des fonds des dépenses diverses et imprévues.”

“En cas d'insuffisance de ces fonds, il en réfère au Ministre, qui sur sa proposition, inscrit d'office les dépenses omises ou augmente les allocations.”

16. But, although readily resorted to for other purposes, the ample power thus afforded the Executive for preventing the Local Assembly from exceeding its prerogatives, has never been employed, to carry out the engagements stipulated for in the Convention of the 1st July 1861.

17. Perhaps brief reference to the following facts, although foreign to Immigration, may not be out of place here as exemplifying the complete subserviency of the Local Executive and Council General to the desires of the Home Government and also the unceremonious injustice of the latter towards British interest.

18. A Telegraph Company was formed in Paris in 1889, with which the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies signed a treaty granting, as might be expected, great advantages, including a subsidy of 50,000 francs a year from this Colony, without previous reference to the Council General, as legally required.

19. The latter ratified the Treaty nevertheless, subject to the reasonable proviso that the transfer of the subsidy, then in the possession of an English Company—the “West India and Panama”—in return for a copious daily news Bulletin and Commercial quotations, should take place only when the French line between this Island and Guadeloupe would have been linked to the American and European cable system.

20. The Colonial Minister upon learning this telegraphed to re-assemble the Council and have the proviso annulled immediately. It was done, although, in the meantime the vote having been published in the Official Gazette with the sanction of the Executive, had become law in accordance with the Senatus Consulte of 1886.

21. The French Company furnish the news meanwhile by reproducing textually the Bulletin supplied by the English Cable Company to Guadeloupe, whose treaty with the Colony still subsists.

22. A new system of Repatriation under arrangements has been concluded by the Colonial Minister, it seems, with the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique, whose vessels carry the mails between the French Islands and Marseilles, and another French Company running steamers thence to India.

It is reported that each batch of immigrants is not to exceed 150, for which a freight of 300 francs per adult will be paid.

23. I await the particulars asked for as to the number of shipments to be despatched annually, and the arrangements to insure that the Indian passengers will be provided with the proper space, food and medical treatment that persons in their frequently enfeebled state will require, during such a voyage. It must be, however, borne in mind that vessels of the capacity of the "Nantes et Bordeaux" could carry in one voyage 620 adults, while it would require 4 batches, each of 150 adults, to repatriate 600. Here it is considered, that this new plan, while affording a semblance of more activity in the repatriation of Indian immigrants, will, in reality, permit of the prolonged detention of the able-bodied labourers while affording means for getting rid of those that are infirm, lazy or unfitted for regular labour.

24. The following statements of the late and present allowances, voted for the immigration service, shew the great retrenchments effected in that direction.

The sum voted for 1886, although somewhat lower than previously, amounted to 42,234 francs for the protective staff only. It then comprised:

Comparison of former and present allowances for the immigration service.

Voted for 1886.

ed to 42,234 francs for the protective staff only. It then comprised:

11 Commissary ...	9,746
11 Deputy Do. ...	2,982
11 Writers ...	1,800
11 Interpreters ...	4,000
11 Messengers ...	720
11 Syndic at Saint Pierre ...	4,082
6 Do. in the Chief out-districts	13,904
TOTAL ...	42,234

Protective Staff.

travelling expenses included.

25. In addition and for the requirements of the Dépôt, medical attendance and keep of the infirm and time-expired Indians, a sum of 92,954 francs was granted.

Expenses for Dépôt.

Vote for 1887.

The vote for 1887 was but 9,300 francs for the Protective service; that was reduced to:

11 Syndic at St. Pierre including	
11 francs 37-C. for travelling	
expenses per diem ...	3,500
11 Do. for Port de France ...	3,500
11 Writers ...	11,800
11 Interpreters ...	500
Protective Staff reduced.	9,300

26. The allowances for the Dépôt were also diminished to 12,719 francs, but the ultimate grant had to be increased by the Executive to 40,000 francs.

27. For the current year, the sums voted are:—

Fr. 46,66693 for the requirements of the Dépôt with medical attendance and,

Fr. 6,463 for the salaries of the Protective Staff now reduced to:—

Votes for Current year.	
Dépôt increased.	
Protective Staff again reduced.	
1 Syndic ...	3,000
1 Writer ...	1,800
1 Interpreter ...	720

Travelling expenses 970 francs to be divided with the Inspector of Prisons, who is supposed to act in the same capacity for immigration.

28. The foregoing unreasonable retrenchments furnish a well-founded motive for reproach, as they have rendered merely nominal the Protective Agency, and the Hospital and relief sources totally insufficient to cope with the annually increasing wants of the immigrants, whose infirmities and age render them unable to gain their living, by means of their own exertions.

29. The deplorable consequence follows, that numbers of these unfortunates are to be found destitute and in rags, both in the country and especially in the larger towns, whose only means of subsistence depends upon private charity, which does not always suffice to prevent the more infirm among them from perishing from sheer want; a thing utterly unknown formerly in this Colony.

30. The travelling expenses allowed are so totally inadequate to permit one Syndic to attend to the calls that may arise from the various districts through which the immigrants are disseminated, that it warrants the belief that the latter are expected to come before that agent when complaints occur.

31. It may be alleged that they may apply to the Commissaries of Police. But these officials have made themselves too well known to the immigrants in their punitive character, that they are generally too prone to re-assume, to inspire the immigrants with much confidence as Protectors.

32. It is alleged moreover that the Syndics, as well as the Commissaries of Police, now limit as much as possible their dealings with the immigrants, as productive usually of reproach and trouble only. Then the Police, as municipal agents also, share largely the repugnance of the Mayors generally to diminish, in favour of the immigrants, the resources intended for the relief of the poor and sick natives of their districts.

33. It will be observed from the inclosed copy of the advertisement referring to the new plan for the repatriation of the Indian Immigrants that the latter are directed to apply to the Commissaries of Police to have the demands registered. For the reasons above given, this arrangement can hardly be deemed satisfactory, since the demands may be expected to depend upon the manner in which they shall be entertained.

34. It must be owned in conclusion that the Indian labourers have not yet acquired the same independence enjoyed by the natives, who profess to regard them as inferiors and dislike them besides as competitors that limit their exactions for field labour: feelings that are shared by the native police and petty country authorities, for the most part also of African descent. It is nevertheless correct that their condition has very much improved, for those at least who are willing and able to work, owing to the yearly increasing reduction in the number of the

native labourers that can be reckoned upon for the regular labour required for the production of sugar, still the chief staple of the colony. They are much sought for therefore, as more docile and willing while generally less exacting than the natives. They hold, however, entire independence of action in choosing the districts they prefer as well as their employers.

These Immigrants now much sought after.

35. But, when overtaken by age or sickness, matters become altogether altered to the immigrant's disadvantage. The estates profess to be unable to support idle hands, since the rates that rule for their products exact strict economy to avoid loss. There then remains but the Dépôt or the Communal Hospitals, the entry to which causes always delay, great trouble and loss of time, too frequently for no useful purpose. Afterwards a pauper's existence with the possible result of dying from hunger has to be submitted to.

36. Yet there can be no doubt that the withdrawal of the Indian labourers remaining in the Island will entail very serious loss in some of the now most productive districts of the Island. This is well known to the Council General that favour it on that account; the majority of that assembly being hostile to the Planters for the reasons adduced in a former report of 1886. Nor is the Government ignorant, either of the ill results of such a measure, and, for that reason and in view to save the cost it would prove, it will, I fear, not willingly favour repatriation in any way.

Synopsis.

37. The following is a synopsis of Indian immigration to Martinique:—

Introduction during the years 1853 to 1883	...	...	25,509
Births between 1853 and 1890	...	...	4,862
		Total	30,371
Deaths during the same period	...	...	13,911
Repatriations from 1858 to date	...	...	8,029
		Total	21,940
Remaining on the 1st January 1891	...	...	8,431

SAINT PIERRE, }
15th May 1891. }

Copy.

No. 27.

CONSULAT D'ANGLETERRE A LA MARTINIQUE,

ST. PIERRE,

Le 30^{me} Avril 1891.

MONSIEUR LE GOUVERNEUR,

J'ai bien reçu la lettre No. 344 en date du 9^{me} courant, que vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'écrire, pour me remettre la situation numérique des immigrants Indiens qui se trouvaient encore dans la colonie, au 31^{me} Decembre dernier.

De ce document il ressort que ces travailleurs, qui étaient au nombre de 8,812, à pareille date en 1889, comptaient encore au 1^{er} Janvier de cette année,

8,431 personnes des deux sexes, apres avoir tenu compte de 381 décès et de 100 naissances qui avaient, lieu, pendant le cours de l'année 1890.

Pour obeir aux prescriptions du Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Impériale et Royale, j'ai maintenant le devoir de renouveler, de la façon la plus pressante, les vives instances, déjà si fréquemment et j'ai le regret d'ajouter—si vainement tentées par ce Consulat auprès de l'Administration, en vue d'obtenir le repatriement des Indiens sujets Britanniques qui, après avoir rempli leurs contrats de travail attendent depuis si longtemps que la colonie s'acquitte pour le moins de l'engagement de les repatrier, engagement stipulé dans la 9^{me} clause de la convention du 1^{er} Juillet 1861, sous la garantie du Gouvernement Français.

C'est là un sujet que j'ai cru devoir signaler à votre bienveillante attention des la première entrevue que vous avez bien voulu m'accorder, au mois de février dernier après avoir été appelé au Gouvernement de la Martinique, et que, au surplus, vous aviez promis d'examiner avec toute l'attention qu'il comportait.

Et, en effet, Monsieur le Gouverneur, votre lettre précitée à été suivie d'une communication, en date du.....mois dernier, de Monsieur le Directeur de l'Interieur, par laquelle ce Chef d'Administration anno que, conformément aux instructions ministérielles et au vote du Conseil Général il avait enfin été décidé, "de repatrier cette année des Indiens par la voie des Paquebots de la Compagnie Général Maritime correspondant avec ceux des Messageries Maritimes."

A cette communication était annexé un exemplaire d'une annonce devant être placardée aux mairies de la campagne, et qui à été depuis publiée dans le 'Moniteur Officiel' de la colonie, "en vue au faciliter aux Indiens libérés l'inscription sur les listes de repatriement."

Cette mesure, à laquelle il est à observer que l'Administration a recour à cette occasion pour la première fois, fournit l'assurance que les dispositions du Gouvernement auront reçu la publicité nécessaire; elle permet aussi d'espérer que l'Administration songe à satisfaire sérieusement, reste si longtemps en souffrance, nonobstant les reclamations réitérées de ce Consulat, de repatrier ces travailleurs.

Et, ne me serait-il pas permis, Monsieur le Gouverneur, puisque vous n'avez été nommé que de cette année aux hautes fonctions que vous occupez aujourd'hui—et que tel est, également, le cas de Monsieur le Directeur de l'Intérieur—de rappeler succinctement quelques faits, d'ailleurs de date assez récente, se rattachant au service de l'immigration, dont il me semble qu'il conviendrait de tenir compte à cette occasion.

C'est une impression qui ressort du paragraphe de la lettre susmentionnée de Monsieur le Directeur de l'Interieur, ou il est parle "de faciliter aux Indiens libérés leur repatriement." Cette expression prête à l'interprétation, assurément erronée, qu'il existe encore dans la colonie des immigrants Indiens qui auraient encore des contrats de travail non acquittés.

Il vous sera pourtant facile de vous assurer, Monsieur le Gouverneur, qu'il s'est écoulé plus de six ans depuis que le Conseil Général a cru devoir supprimer dans sa session de 1884, non seulement l'immigration Indienne, mais aussi la prime de réengagement, garantie aux immigrants avec le droit de repatriement dans les termes les plus formels, par le 9^{me} article de la Convention du 1^{er} Juillet 1861, dont la reproduction dans tous les contrats de travail passés dans l'Inde pour compte de la colonie, dénote assez l'importance que les parties contractantes y attachaient.

Cet article établit, en effet, que la durée de l'engagement d'un immigrant ne pourra être plus de cinq ans, &c. A l'expiration de ce terme tout Indien qui aura atteint l'âge de 10 ans, au moment de son départ de l'Inde aura droit à son repatriement. S'il consent à contracter un nouvel engagement, "il aura droit à une prime et conservera le droit au repatriement à l'expiration de ce second engagement."

Il est à faire remarquer, de plus, que le Décret du 13^{me} Février 1852 établit non moins péremptoirement que l'immigrant aura pendant l'année que suivra l'expiration du premier contrat la faculté d'opter entre la jouissance du droit du

repatriement et une prime équivalente aux frais de son repatriement personnel et enfin que cette dépense sera comprise dans le budget de la colonie, parmi les dépenses obligatoires."

Mais comme il n'appartenait pas évidemment, au Conseil Général de la Colonie d'annuler, ou même de modifier les stipulations d'une convention internationale, on pouvait supposer de son vote à cette occasion aurait été annulé le Chef de la Colonie, conformément d'ailleurs aux termes du Décret de 1854 qui déclare "nulle toute délibération prise par cette assemblée en dehors de ses attributions."

Cependant, rien de semblable n'a eu lieu! Bien mieux, Monsieur le Gouverneur allègre, dans une communication à ce Consulat, en date du 27^{me} Novembre 1885, a pu affirmer que les agissements de l'assemblée locale, quoique si manifestement en contradiction avec les termes de la convention du 1^{er} Juillet 1861, avaient été sanctionnés par le Gouvernement métropolitain.

Dans de telles conditions Monsieur le Gouverneur, vous reconnaîtrez sans doute que les engagements des immigrant Indiens, résidant dans la colonie, se trouvaient, des lors annulés de plein droit. Il ne se pourrait pas évidemment qu'après avoir relevé une des parties à un contrat bilatéral, d'une des conditions les plus favorables à l'autre partie, cette dernière, c'est-à-dire l'immigrant Indien restât seule engagée.

Si, maintenant, on examine ce qui a été fait, depuis lors, pour le repatriement de ces travailleurs, lesquels en Décembre 1885, étaient au nombre de 10,055 personnes, des deux sexes, ayant si clairement droit à être renvoyés dans l'Inde, on trouve qu'il n'a été expédié, pendant cette longue période de près de sept années, que 879 personnes des deux sexes, parmi lesquelles 205 enfants; en Septembre 1889 par le vapeur "Nantes et Bordeaux," que ces Indiens, ayant dû attendre pour s'embarquer près de quatre mois au chef lieu, ou il est avéré que les dispositions prises pour leur logement laissaient tant à désirer, beaucoup d'entre eux, après avoir épuisé leurs faibles économies, n'ont pu attendre le moment du départ.

Il y a encore à ajouter que le terme moyen du séjour dans la colonie des Indiens adultes, au nombre de 674 composant le convoi repatrié par le "Nantes et Bordeaux," s'est élevé à 1285 années.

Il est démontré, cependant, par les listes d'embarquement remises par l'Administration à ce Consulat, après le départ de ce bâtiment, que 14,354 francs représentaient les sommes déposées par les 196 adultes en destination de Karikal, qui seraient, d'après ces mêmes listes, les seuls qui eussent à recourir à cet établissement pour sauvegarder leur économies.

Le pécule de ces 196 immigrants, après un séjour aussi prolongé dans la colonie, ne dépasserait donc pas la moyenne de 74 francs par tête, chiffre assurément bien malgre, surtout si on le rapproche des résultats obtenus, par ces mêmes travailleurs ailleurs.

Peut-on pour l'expliquer, faire état du séjour de quatre mois que les passagers du "Nantes et Bordeaux" ont dû faire au chef lieu, à attendre leur embarquement? Mais, il ne dépendait pas de ces malheureux de l'éviter! Et n'est-il pas même avéré aujourd'hui, que c'est l'insuffisance de la nourriture fournie au dépôt, qu'il leur a fallu combler, qui les a forcés à recourir à leurs propres moyens? N'est-il pas aussi de notoriété publique que beaucoup, parmi les Indiens désignés d'abord pour partir sur ce navire, ont dû une fois leurs économies épuisées, retourner aux propriétés où ils étaient employés et manquer ainsi le départ?

Ce ne sont pas du reste les seuls fâcheux résultats causés par la prolongation de leur séjour au chef lieu.

Ne faut-il pas en effet y rapporter les affections qui se sont manifestées parmi eux dans le cours du voyage, donnant lieu à de très nombreuses mortalités qui ont provoqué de la part du Gouvernement de l'Inde, des réclamations dont l'administration locale aura eu sans doute connaissance, et qui méritent en tous cas d'être rappelées ici?

Et pour quels motifs le nombre des convois de repatriement d'immigrants Indiens a-t-il été limité, pendant le long intervalle écoulé de 1886 à 1891, à celui par le "Nantes et Bordeaux"? C'est une question qui s'impose dans la circonstance, et sur laquelle je me permets d'insister très-respectueusement, en raison du nombre toujours croissant de ceux de ces travailleurs qui, après avoir épuisé leurs forces et leurs économies, s'ils en avaient pu amasser, n'ont plus guère d'autres moyens d'existence que la charité particulière, qui reste impuissante en face de ce flot, d'année en année plus considérable, de dénoûment et de misère; à tel point qu'il ne se passe pas de mois sans que—fait inconnu naguère à la Martinique; l'on ne ramasse, soit en ville, soit à la campagne des Indiens morts, ou mourants d'inanition absolue!

Les comptes rendus des séances du Conseil Général, où il est traité de l'immigration, ne fournissent pas cependant l'explication suffisante des lenteurs mises à renvoyer les immigrants dans leurs foyers. En effet, si cette assemblée s'est appliquée avec persistance à marchander et à réduire les sommes demandées pour leur hospitalisation et pour l'entretien au dépôt des Indiens malades et impropres au travail, on doit reconnaître qu'il a été voté, pendant la période sus-indiquée, un total 1,100,000 francs en vue de leur repatriement.

Or, même au fret élevé de 300 francs par tête, cette somme eût suffi à renvoyer dans l'Inde près de 3,000 adultes en sus de ceux partis par le "Nantes et Bordeaux." Il y a à rappeler, également, que le Conseil, à deux reprises, en 1885 et en 1887, avait déclaré qu'il laissait l'Administration libre de dépasser, si besoin était, les sommes votées pendant ces sessions, pour le service du repatriement des immigrants.

Dans de telles conditions on ne saurait reprocher au Conseil Général seulement, les lenteurs déplorables apportées à leur renvoi; alors même que cette assemblée ait cru pouvoir employer, postérieurement, à d'autres fins une bonne partie de l'argent destiné en premier lieu à ce service.

Il convient de faire observer d'ailleurs que ces dépenses, étant classées parmi celles dites "obligatoires," n'ont pu être distraites de l'emploi qui leur avait été primitivement affecté sans le consentement du Chef de la Colonie, à qui précisément la loi donne pouvoir, au cas où il estime insuffisantes les allocations votées pour faire face aux dépenses obligatoires, d'y pourvoir d'office.

Les articles 7 et 8 du Sénatus Consulte organique du 4^{me} Juillet 1866 ne laissent aucun doute à cet égard; mais il convient d'ajouter, que si cette voie a été suivie, à plusieurs reprises, pour d'autres services, il n'est pas à ma connaissance qu'elle ait jamais été employée au profit du repatriement des Indiens, nonobstant son urgence puisqu'il s'agissait de faire enfin droit à des réclamations si bien justifiées.

Je me permets de croire, Monsieur le Gouverneur, qu'il n'est plus nécessaire de reputer à cette heure les diverses raisons mises en avant pour expliquer les retards apportés au repatriement des immigrants.

Pourrait-on équitablement les attribuer à l'insuffisance des fonds du trésor public?

Monsieur le Gouverneur Germain Casse, votre prédécesseur, a fait justice de cette légende, lorsqu'en Décembre 1889, il a félicité la colonie de son excellente position financière, que confirmait, du reste, le chiffre toujours élevé des fonds de réserve.

Et si, des fonds spéciaux destinés à servir au repatriement des immigrants il ne restait plus rien, n'est-il pas à la connaissance de tous que cela provient de ce que ces fonds ont été affectés à un emploi entièrement étranger à ce service? Enfin l'assentiment donné à ce virement par la métropole ne confirme-t-il pas les droits que je suis chargé de faire valoir?

Il ne me semble pas utile non plus de m'appesantir sur ce qui a été avancé relativement au préjudice que la colonie aurait à redouter du retrait des travailleurs Indiens. Cette raison, que je retrouve également dans une lettre de Monsieur le Gouverneur, votre prédécesseur, me paraît la plus justifiée, s'il

était possible dans la circonstance de faire état au préjudice des immigrants, "du manque de bras dont le pays a beaucoup à souffrir après leur avoir enlevé la prime au réengagement dont leurs contrats semblaient devoir leur assurer la jouissance.

Quoi qu'il en soit, Monsieur le Gouverneur, j'ose espérer que les diverses considérations que je viens d'avoir l'honneur de vous permettre de juger des motifs sérieux du Gouvernement Indien pour désirer être renseigné d'une façon précise, par votre bienveillante entremise, au sujet du nouveau mode de repatriement que l'administration veut d'adopter pour le renvoi dans l'Inde des immigrants Indiens, sujets Britanniques, encore à la Martinique.

Il voudrait bien connaître approximativement au moins, le nombre des Indiens à embarquer sur chaque paquebot, le nombre de convois que l'on se propose de faire partir chaque année, et enfin les dispositions prises pour assurer à ces passagers les soins que réclame un si long voyage.

L'opportunité de ces renseignements ressort du fait qu'il restait dans la colonie, au 31^{me} Decembre dernier, 8,421 Indiens.

Je serais heureux de recevoir en même temps, Monsieur le Gouverneur, la confirmation de l'assurance que je me propose de donner au Gouvernement de l'Inde du mal fondé des bruits qui tendraient à faire croire à la campagne que l'adoption du nouvel itinéraire, aurait surtout en vue de retarder autant que possible le repatriement des Indiens valides, tout en fournissant une voie de se débarrasser de ceux déjà vieux ou paresseux.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur le Gouverneur, l'assurance, de mes sentiments très-distingués,

W. LAWLESS,

Le Consul de Sa Majesté Britannique.

Monsieur le Gouverneur
de la Martinique,
Port de France.

[W. F. C.]

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