

23-9-20

ORDINARY, MS.

Public DEPARTMENT.

G.O., DATED 9-3-93.

No: 195.

INDEXED

When given for copying.

[Despatch Abstract.]

Emigration to Réunion.

FURTHER PAPER, No. *50 158027-4-93* OF 18

C no 2337 of 93

g.p. 61
24-1-94

Assignment to Revision

READ AGAIN ORDER OF GOVERNMENT, DATED
18 , No. , MISCELLANEOUS.

ENCLOSURES

CURRENT No.

STATEMENT WITH DITTO.

ORDER OF GOVERNMENT.

A A

LETTER OF GOVERNMENT.

STATEMENT WITH DITTO.

PAPERS NOT FILED UP, BEING MEANT FOR DESPATCH
IN ORIGINAL (not paged).

N.B.—

- A = Copy in full.
- B = Not to be copied.
- P = Copy abstract only.
- Q = Copy heading only.

Full and Concise

Sub. Dept

CO. No. 52.

Co. No. 637.

From The Govt. of India

Dated 24th February 1893.

FOR ORDERS. with reference

to the notes on record in
G.O. dt 24.8.92, No. 582.

It is submitted that
however much the
period of indenture
might be curtailed
the emigrants should
have the right of free
patriation at the end
of it, in case they wish
to return.

The Govt. of India (Chamber of the East
Despatches) and proposed to organize the
organization of a regular repatriation
service. Of course repatriation will
be free. I think we may leave
the matter in the hands of the
Govt. of India.

WCS
3 Mar

Free repatriation at the
completion of his first
indenture period & absolute
freedom from liability to him
prevents him from
his engagement on the
contracted points in any future
system etc. to the contrary

4/3/93 H. G.

We should wire to India to say that
after reading their despatches we are
content to leave the matter in their hands.

W
8 Mar

To Revenue,
Calcutta.

* 137 after reading
despatches which accom-
panied your 447 twenty
fourth ultimo Réunion
this Govt. content to leave
matter in hands of Govt.
of India. / from orders /
WCS

No. 447
4

Of 24 Feb }
Of 1 Mar } 93.

Encl. two.

Emigration to Réunion.

4. The officer deputed will be Mr. J. W. P. Muir-Mackenzie, whose selection is due partly to the circumstance that as he is now leaving India on furlough his services are readily available, but mainly to the fact that, as Under-Secretary in the Revenue and Agricultural Department, he has become thoroughly familiar with the correspondence and issues relating to the subject.

5. I am to take the opportunity to observe that there are no grounds for the apprehension implied in Mr. Price's letter of the 24th August 1892, that the protection of the coolies will in any way be sacrificed in order to meet the wishes of the French Government. The Government of India desire to encourage emigration to all colonies in the Eastern seas as affording an outlet for the surplus population of the country, and would be ready to extend it to any colony in which adequate guarantees are given for the happiness and comfort of the emigrants. If this position can be secured in Réunion, on any conditions which are acceptable to the French authorities and meet the requirements of the Indian Government, His Excellency the Governor General in Council would certainly view the resumption of emigration to that island with all the more satisfaction that it will be gratifying to the French Government, and afford relief to a colony which is undergoing a crisis of great distress in consequence of the want of labour. But these considerations do not affect the conclusion indicated in my letter No. 1742 of the 29th July last, that the willingness of the Imperial Government to permit such a measure is entirely dependent on the maintenance of efficient protection to the coolie.

6. I am to express a hope that the Governor in Council will be able, on consideration, to support the view of the Government of India that some solution should if possible be found of the difficulties which have culminated in the prohibition of emigration to Réunion with serious consequences to that colony and not wholly without injury to emigration.

7. I am finally to say that the Governor General in Council invites the Government of Madras to furnish him with any further expression of their views which they may desire to submit upon the issues raised in the despatches. It is important that any communication on the subject should be made at a very early date.

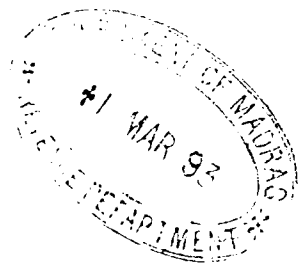
I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient Servant,

V. B. L.

Secretary to the Government of India.



1893.
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.
REVENUE AND AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT.
EMIGRATION.

To

THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

No. $\frac{447}{4}$.

Dated Calcutta, the 24th February 1893.



SUBJECT.

COMMUNICATES remarks on the subject of the resumption of emigration to Réunion.

File No. 4.

Serial No. 2.

1893.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

Revenue and Agricultural Department.

EMIGRATION.

No. 7, DATED CALCUTTA, THE 15TH FEBRUARY 1893.

(COPY.)

(Letter to Her Majesty's Secretary of State
for India.)

SUBJECT-

COMMUNICATES remarks on the question of
the resumption of emigration from India to
Réunion.

G. I. C. P. O.—No. 907 R. & A.—14-2-93.—102.—G. R.

No. $\frac{417}{4}$.

FROM

E. C. BUCK, Kt., C.S.I.,

Secretary to the Government of India,

TO

THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

Revenue and Agri. Dept.
Emigration.

CALCUTTA, the 24th February 1893.

SIR,

With reference to the correspondence ending with Mr. Price's letter No. 582, dated 24th August last, I am directed to forward, for information, copies of two despatches addressed by the Government of India to Her Majesty's Secretary of State on the subject of the resumption of emigration to Réunion.

No. 7, dated 15th February 1893.
„ 8, „ 15th „ „

2. It will be seen that the Government of India have resolved to depute an officer to Réunion to enquire into the condition of the coolies, and to report, after consulting with the local authorities, whether any terms can be devised upon which emigration may be safely renewed. The despatches sufficiently explain the reasons which have led them to adopt this course.

3. It will be observed that in the "Open" despatch care has been taken not to pledge the Government of India to any specific course of action as the result of the enquiry, and also to avoid all reference to the possibility of finding a remedy in free emigration as it has not yet been suggested either by or to the French authorities. In their "Secret" despatch, however, they have expressed the opinion that the resumption of emigration is not likely to be practicable without a radical reform of the existing labour-system; that the leading principle upon which discussion should be based is the diminution or removal of penal and other legal restrictions by which the freedom of the immigrant is affected; and that the more important measures by which this object may be secured will possibly be found in the curtailment of the first indenture, in the release of the coolie from liability to re-engage, and in a complete liberty at the end of the initial engagement, either to return to India, or to pursue such lawful avocations in the colony itself as would be open to inhabitants of French nationality. This despatch should for the present be regarded as confidential.

least serve to complete the work which Surgeon-Major Comins has begun in the West Indies, and give us a complete view of the position of Indian emigrants in the nearer as well as in the more distant Colonies.

5. It will not fail to be understood both by Your Lordship and the French Government that in approving of the proposed deputation we in no way recede from the position which we have steadily maintained, that without proper guarantees for the liberty and good treatment of the coolie and the establishment of a state of things entirely different from that which prevailed at the time when emigration was prohibited, the idea of re-opening emigration cannot be entertained.

6. Pending the receipt of the report from the officer who may be deputed, we prefer not to make any further attempt to formulate the conditions under which emigration can be renewed. The most important of them have been sufficiently indicated in previous correspondence, and are enumerated in our letter to the Governments of Madras and Bengal, Nos. 1742-1743, dated the 29th July 1892. They do not, however, appear to be acceptable in their present form to the French authorities, and are considered by the Consuls to be not unlikely to lead to difficulties in practical working. We are disposed to believe, therefore, that the only hope of arriving at effective and workable conditions is by inquiry in Réunion itself in consultation with the Consul and the local authorities.

7. We request that the British Consul in Réunion may be instructed to give every assistance to our officer, and that the French Government may at the same time be asked to afford him the necessary facilities in the conduct of his inquiries and the formulation of his proposals.

8. With reference to the demand* by M. Drouhet for 6,000 coolies, we have informed the French Consul at Calcutta that their recruitment would be contrary to law and cannot be permitted until the general question of renewing emigration to Réunion is settled.

* Letter from Sir H. Walpole, dated the 21st October 1892.
(Enclosures of despatch No. 105 of 27th October 1892.)

We have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient, humble Servants,

LANSDOWNE.

P. P. HUTCHINS.

D. BARBOUR.

A. E. MILLER.

H. BRACKENBURY.

C. B. PRITCHARD.

List of Enclosures.

Letter from the Government of Madras, No. 582, dated the 24th August 1892.

„ „ Bengal, No. 3140, dated the 14th November 1892,
and enclosures.

No. 7 of 1893.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

REVENUE AND AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT.

EMIGRATION.

To

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF KIMBERLEY, K.G.,
Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India

CALCUTTA, the 15th February 1893.

MY LORD,

IN fulfilment of the promise conveyed in our Despatch No. 56 Emigration, dated the 2nd August 1892, and with reference to subsequent correspondence ending with your Despatch No. 120 (Public—Emigration) of the 22nd December last, we have the honour to submit to Your Lordship a further communication on the proposal to renew emigration to the French Colony of Réunion.

2. We have carefully considered the opinions expressed by the Governments of Bengal and Madras on the subject, and enclose copies of the letters which they have submitted. We have also examined the papers which we have recently received from Your Lordship, and pending the arrival of which, as requested in the telegram from the India Office, dated the 12th December last, we postponed our decision.

3. As the case stands, we are called upon to resolve whether we should at once close the discussion by declaring the resumption of emigration to Réunion to be impracticable on any conditions that can be devised, or whether, in deference to the anxiety of the French Government for the relief of the Colony or for other reasons, we should consent to a further examination of the subject. After considerable hesitation necessitated by the views expressed by the Local Governments consulted and their advisers, as well as by the unfavourable character of the reports received from the British Consuls, we have decided to adopt the second course, and to accede to the wish expressed by the French Government in M. Ribot's letter, dated the 23rd December 1891, for the deputation of an officer to investigate the circumstances which demand attention and to report generally on the question of resuming emigration to the Colony.

4. The Madras Government, as Your Lordship will observe, though deprecating on the information before them any renewal of emigration, approve of the proposals for a local inquiry into the condition of the coolies already on the island, which, whether leading to a renewal of emigration or not, will at

Dispatch from G. of I. to Secy. of State no 8215-2-93.

re migration to Reunion.

CONFIDENTIAL.

[CONFIDENTIAL.]

No. 8 of 1893.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

REVENUE AND AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT.

EMIGRATION.

To

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF KIMBERLEY, K.G.,
Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India.

CALCUTTA, the 15th February 1893.

MY LORD,

IN Despatch No. 7 of this date we have informed Your Lordship of our intention to depute an officer to inquire into the condition of Indian coolies in Réunion and to report on the question of resuming emigration to that Colony. As we have considered it probable that Your Lordship may wish the despatch announcing the deputation to be communicated to the French Government, we have reserved for this separate and confidential despatch the more detailed observations which it is necessary to make upon the subject.

2. We have not failed to attach full weight to the strong objections expressed by the Government of Madras in their letter No. 582, dated the 24th August 1892, against the renewal of emigration on any terms. But we have, at the same time, taken into consideration the facts that the Bengal Government, with its larger experience of colonial emigration and with the advice of Dr. Comins before it, does not urge us to close the discussion; that three successive Consuls in Réunion—Messrs. St. John, Bell, and Bennett—have advised that the resumption of emigration ought not to be considered impracticable; and that the planting community as well as the French Government have evinced a genuine readiness and anxiety to introduce substantial reforms. Under all the circumstances, therefore, we do not consider ourselves justified in meeting the proposals of M. Ribot with a peremptory refusal.

3. Nor have we overlooked the unfavourable character of the last annual report submitted by Mr. Bell, or the individual cases of oppression or failure of justice recorded by both himself and Mr. Bennett. They show that abuses still continue to be too prevalent; but, on the other hand, some of the cases to which attention is drawn are such as must occur under any and every system of emigration, and they establish the fact that the coolies are to a certain extent protected by the authorities. The very officers who send us these reports testify that the condition of the majority of the emigrants has of late

improved, especially on the larger estates, and is on the whole not unfavourable. "On many, even on the generality of estates," writes Mr. Bennett, "the Indians are happy and contented." We apprehend, moreover, that abuses will not cease until the system under which they flourish is reformed; and we are not surprised at their continued existence while the conditions of emigration remain unaltered.

On the whole, we do not feel justified in affirming that the more recent accounts add materially to the difficulties already existing in the way of resuming emigration.

4. We cannot, however, disguise from ourselves the fact that these difficulties may prove insurmountable if the renewal of emigration is to be attempted upon the lines which have hitherto been adopted. From time to time conditions have been formulated, the acceptance of which has been declared a *sine quâ non* to such a renewal. Several of the most important of these stipulations were dealt with by M. Ribot on behalf of the French Government in his letter to the address of His Excellency Lord Dufferin, which was forwarded with Your Lordship's Despatch No. 11, dated the 4th February 1892. The first proposal was that the British Consul should be allowed to inspect estates. This was accepted very partially by M. Ribot, who suggested that a permission to accompany the Protector on his ordinary visits should suffice. But with the labour-system unaltered we should certainly be unable to accept this alternative. Mr. Bennett, it is true, in paragraph 20 of the memorandum forwarded with Sir T. Lister's letter of the 5th May last to the India Office, has suggested a system of joint inquiry and inspection by the Protector and Consul. But in his report of the 15th October, he explains that in the memorandum he was enumerating only the *minimum* of the powers which ought to be invested in the Consul for the protection of the coolies, and added that the grant even of the limited right of inspection which he proposed, though essential to prevent the continuance of the existing oppression and injustice, would place the Consul in a very embarrassing position, and would be most unlikely to be conceded by the French Government. We can hardly doubt the correctness of those views, and we are driven to the belief that, if emigration is to be renewed, protection for the coolie will have to be devised in some other way. This virtually means that the existing labour-system must be materially reformed; for, unless such changes can be made in it, as would justify us in waiving the condition of inspection by a British representative, we apprehend that no negotiations with the Réunion authorities will have any chance of success.

5. With reference to re-engagement, M. Ribot, while willing that every contract of re-engagement should be approved by the Consul, does not accept the proposal to prohibit the entry into a re-engagement until after the expiry of the previous contract. This stipulation is one to which great importance has been attached, and which we should not be prepared to give up unless assured by our officer that the danger of re-engagements being extorted has been removed. One of the principal abuses which has been brought to light consists in the illegitimate pressure to re-engage, which is exercised upon coolies during the currency of their indentures.

6. Another difficulty presented by the existing system of indenture is that of the repatriation of coolies. It would, we think, be necessary to require arrangements for a regular repatriation service to be completed and in working

order before the renewal of emigration could be assented to on anything like the terms that have hitherto been in force.

7. Again there is no doubt that the present system has led to many concomitant evils with which it is difficult to deal in any special covenant or convention. Sufficient illustrations of this remark will be found in the numerous abuses due to the system of "livrets" or tickets of leave, the harsh laws respecting vagabondage and desertion, the special powers given to the police, the prevention of access to the Consulate, the condemnation to the "ateliers de discipline," the "macadam", and incarceration within the communal "dépôts."

8. Such abuses as prevail, however, are, as it has often been observed, due less to the actual defects of the laws than to the mode in which and the agency by which these laws are administered. For this reason among others the appointment was demanded of a Protector unconnected with the Creole interest or nationality. This request has been acceded to. The results, however, which were expected from the appointment have not been attained, the Creole interest in the local legislature and planting community being sufficient, apparently, to neutralise the influence of any official, whatever his nationality, who does not happen to be possessed of considerable force of character. If then the present labour-system is to be maintained, it would probably be necessary to demand the complete reorganisation, at serious expense, of the whole establishment of syndics and other subordinate agents of the protective service. It is almost hopeless to expect the acceptance of so onerous a condition by a Colony, which has murmured on more than one occasion at the burden upon its financial resources, entailed by the maintenance of the existing establishments. On the other hand, the incompetence and untrustworthiness of the existing officials appear to be such that it might prove impossible to devise any provision of law, convention, or contract which would not be rendered nugatory if its enforcement depended, to any material extent, on their good will or exertions.

9. Our chief hope then of a solution lies in radical reform of the labour-system rather than the formulation of conditions upon which it may be continued with little or no alteration in its fundamental characteristics. In this connection, the suggestions put forward by Mr. Bennett in his report No. 28, dated the 15th October 1892, to the address of the Foreign Office, in favour of so-called "free emigration" appear to us to be worthy of careful consideration. Your Lordship, we note, agrees with the Foreign Office in doubting whether there would be any advantage in the free system which he advocates over that which now obtains. These remarks, however, seem to refer to the absolute removal of all restraints on emigration, and need not, we understand, be held to apply to their curtailment or to the introduction under proper restrictions of some greater freedom in the position of the coolie.

10. We are disposed to think that the great revolution which has been effected in the conditions of emigration to the colonies in the Eastern seas by improved facilities of communication, has not been fully appreciated. Between Réunion and India the conveyance of passengers now takes place entirely by steam, and the voyage from Madras lasts but little over a fortnight. Between India and Mauritius there is monthly communication, while between Mauritius and Réunion local steamers ply with frequency and regularity. The consequence is that any Réunion coolie who can get free from his engagement

has little or no difficulty in returning to India whenever he pleases. The demand for labour is so great that, if free, he could readily earn enough within a short period to pay for his passage. Even if he elects to stay in the Colony, his condition and prospects as a free labourer on the island are not unenviable, a fact of which there is full evidence in the reports submitted both by the British Consuls and by Dr. Comins. On the other hand, we are disposed to believe that the principal blot on the prevailing system consists in the almost insuperable obstacles placed in the way of the emancipation from indentured service, and that, if effective measures were taken for the removal of these obstacles, the other evils attendant on the coolie's lot might be found to disappear with them.

11. In view of these considerations, the main question to which we think that enquiry should be directed is whether a sufficiently satisfactory position for the emigrant could not be secured by the curtailment of the period of initial service under the indenture contract; by the strict limitation, if not the entire prohibition, of re-engagements; and finally by the modification or abrogation of the obnoxious penal restrictions and disabilities imposed on Indians by existing labour-laws, decrets, police regulations and the like, some of which the French authorities themselves seem willing to relax.

12. In making the suggestions to which expression is given in the preceding paragraph, we have adhered to the principle which underlies our whole policy in regard to emigration that the ultimate position which it is desired to obtain for the Indian emigrant is complete liberty. One main object of such laws and restrictions as have to be imposed in the initial stages of emigration is to secure the emigrant from oppression, and so far as their removal or curtailment will, under the changing circumstances of civilization, tend to relieve him from oppression, they should, we think, be removed or curtailed. Those which weigh most heavily on the expatriated coolie are necessitated principally by a long-term engagement. It is an indispensable condition of emigration so long as the journey between the country supplying and the country receiving labour is difficult and expensive, so long, in fact, as the importation of a coolie entails a heavy expenditure on the employer. But the need for it diminishes with every improvement that is effected in the communications between the exporting and importing countries. This is the view which we have taken in the case of Assam. The fact, however, that the master of the coolie is less under our control in Réunion than he is in Assam, makes it expedient that the period of engagement should, in the former case, be shorter than in the latter; that the initial term should indeed be as short as the employers of labour can be induced to accept; and that after it has been completed either the labourer should not be allowed to pledge his services again, or his employer should be absolutely debarred from putting pressure on him to renew his engagement.

13. The time may come when indentures may be altogether dispensed with and free labour be attracted in sufficient abundance to all the nearer Colonies. Mr. Bennett's letter indeed proceeds on this assumption. But we do not believe that at present the system of recruiting by agents in India can or will, in the case of Réunion, be entirely abandoned, and so long as this is the case it appears to be impossible to do away altogether with the initial indenture, since recruiting operations must be watched and controlled by the Indian authorities.

14. We propose accordingly to direct the deputed officer to inquire whether, as an alternative to the conditions considered essential to the con-

tinuance of emigration on the existing system, proposals on the lines above indicated, having in view the gradual emancipation of indentured coolies, might not offer a better solution.

15. Pending the conclusion of the inquiry, we do not intend to trouble Your Lordship with any detailed examination of the various suggestions made by M. Ribot or the Local Governments and their advisers. As soon as our officer reports to us we shall lose no time in communicating our decision as to the possibility of resuming emigration, and Your Lordship may rest assured that we shall be careful before all things to safeguard the interests of the Indian emigrant.

We have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient, humble Servants,

LANSDOWNE.

P. P. HUTCHINS.

D. BARBOUR.

A. E. MILLER.

H. BRACKENBURY.

C. B. PRITCHARD.

[CONFIDENTIAL.]

File No. 4.

Serial No. 3.

1893.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

Revenue and Agricultural Department

EMIGRATION.

No. 8, DATED CALCUTTA, THE 15TH FEBRUARY 1893.

(COPY.)

*(Letter to Her Majesty's Secretary of State
for India.)*

SUBJECT.

Communicates remarks on the question of
the renewal of emigration from India to
Réunion.