

Public Works (1898) Department.

RAILWAY BRANCH.

G.O., No. 139. *AL*

DATED 26th Jan'y 1898.

[Despatch Abstract.]

Appointment of a Famine Commission

Pres. Secy Dept. forwarding Resolution of the Govt. of India regarding the —, and authorising the Commissioners of Revenue Settlement, Land Records, and Agriculture to hold direct communication with the Famine Commission.
Recorded.

See 8/2

Indexed. *9/2*

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.	G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

Public (1898) Department.

Order No 139. R dated 26/1/88

No. 17,

Records of

Dated 10th January 1898

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Enclosures

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SUBJECT.

BACK PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

FURTHER PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

FILE No. 245 OF
1897.

SERIAL No. 26.

1897.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE AND AGRICULTURE.

FAMINE.

RESOLUTION.

No. 35—245-26

Dated Calcutta, the 23rd December 1897.

SUBJECT.

Appointment of a Famine Commission to formulate for future guidance the experiences of the famine of 1896-97.

G. I. C. P. O.—No. 637 R. & A.—24-12-97.—1,500.—R. N. D.

READ—

- (1) Despatch to Her Majesty's Secretary of State, No. 86, dated 25th November 1897.
- (2) Telegram from Her Majesty's Secretary of State, dated 22nd December 1897.

RESOLUTION.

It has been decided, with the approval of Her Majesty's Secretary of State, to appoint a small Commission to formulate for future guidance the lessons which the famine experience of 1897 has to teach. The Governor General in Council will take another opportunity of publicly expressing his appreciation of the manner in which the operations for the relief of distress have been conducted; while any complete review of them must await the receipt of the Provincial reports. But the information already at his disposal warrants him in believing that, regarded with reference to their object, which was to prevent the loss of human life from starvation at the smallest expense to the tax-paying community, those operations have on the whole been conspicuously successful.

2. As was to be expected, however, the methods by which that object has been attained, and the measure of economy which has been secured in the administration of relief, have not been the same in all provinces. The organisation for the relief of distress which has been elaborated in each province on the lines laid down by the Famine Commission of 1878, and embodied in the Provincial Famine Codes, has now, for the first time in most of the affected provinces, been practically tested on a large scale; and on the whole it has stood the trial well. But while the experience of the past year has suggested no alterations in the main lines which were prescribed as the basis for the administration of relief, it has been found necessary, in almost every province, to depart in some not unimportant respects from the detailed provisions of the local Code in order to meet the differing conditions of distress. And the direction which these departures have taken has varied from province to province.

3. The experience thus gained will be of incalculable value when India is next face to face with famine. But in order to render it available for future guidance, it is essential to collect and collate it while the facts are fresh, and to embody it in amended Famine Codes. It is no doubt the case that, while the broad lines upon which relief is to be administered may properly be prescribed for the whole of India, variations in detail will be necessary under the varying conditions to be found in the several provinces, and that each province must retain its individual Code. But it is certain that almost every province will have something to learn from the experience of others, and it will be advisable to take special measures to collate that experience; and especially, where the cost of relief and the numbers relieved have been larger than elsewhere in proportion to the acuteness of the distress and the population affected by it, to enquire to what causes the excess was due, and whether an adherence to the lines followed in other provinces might not, on a future occasion, reduce the cost without diminishing the efficacy of the measures to be adopted.

4. The inquiry will be far narrower in scope than that entrusted to the larger Famine Commission, which was appointed with such signal advantage in 1878. Twenty years ago no general famine policy had been enunciated by Government, the experience gained in Behar in 1873 and in Southern India in 1877 from what were virtually experiments in relief, was all that was available, and the Commission had to formulate a policy and to evolve general principles for guidance in the actual presence of famine. But this was, perhaps, the least important portion of their duties. They were also bidden to consider and advise upon measures of the widest possible nature, such as might "diminish the severity of famines, or place the people in a better condition for enduring them." The programme that was laid down by them accordingly under the head of "Measures of protection and prevention" has since then been actively prosecuted; and though much still remains and always will remain to be done, the omissions and defects are fully recognised, and are gradually being dealt with as opportunity offers, and no further general inquiry of this nature is either necessary or advisable. So, too, the experience of the past year has shown that the general lines of policy laid down in 1878 stand in no need of reconsideration. It is the details of the scheme of relief that require to be revised. But in such a matter details are hardly less important than principles.

5. The duties of the Commission will therefore be—

- to examine the manner in which the provisions of the Famine Codes of the several provinces differ from one another, and in which their prescriptions have been departed from;
- to inquire into the degree of success which has in each case attended the measures adopted, considered primarily with regard to the relief of distress and the saving of human life, and secondarily with regard to economy;
- to advise as to the measures and methods of working which seem likely to prove most effective in these two respects; and
- to make any inquiries and record any recommendations or opinions which it is thought will prove useful in the case of future famines.

It is to be understood that the object of the inquiry is to furnish guidance for the future; and that it is concerned with the past, only in so far as may be necessary to that end.

6. The President of the Commission will be Sir James Broadwood Lyall, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., late Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab. The Members of the Commission will be Surgeon-Colonel Richardson, lately Inspector General of Civil Hospitals, North-Western Provinces and Oudh; Mr. T. W. Holderness, I.C.S., lately Deputy Secretary to the Government of India in the Department of Revenue and Agriculture (Famine); Mr. T. Higham, C.I.E., Inspector General of Irrigation and Joint Secretary to the Government of India in the Public Works Department; and Rai Bahadur Bipin Krishna Bose, M.A., B.L., Government Advocate, Nagpur, and Secretary to the Provincial Committee of the Famine Charitable Relief Fund. Mr. H. J. McIntosh, I.C.S., will be Secretary to the Commission. The representation upon a small Commission of each province affected by the late famine is impossible; but the Government of India desire that each Local Government should nominate, to be attached to the Commission as a temporary Member while they are actually making inquiries within the province, one of its own officers who is personally acquainted with the practical working of the system of relief adopted, and whose presence will ensure that material points are not overlooked or misunderstood.

7. The Commission will be formally constituted on the arrival of Sir James Lyall and Dr. Richardson from England. They will probably wish to visit Bombay, Madras, Bengal, the Central Provinces, the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, and possibly Berar, and to make inquiries upon the spot; but the Governor General in Council desires to leave the matter of method and procedure in the investigation with which they are charged entirely to their discretion. The general conduct of the inquiry and the regulation of the course of business before the Commission will be entrusted to the President in communication with the Members. The Commission, through their Secretary acting under the instructions of the President, will correspond direct with Local Governments and Departments of the Government of India, and with any local authorities with whom direct communications may be authorised by Local Governments as a matter of convenience and in order to save time; and it is requested that all communications or requisitions for information emanating from them may be treated as urgent and complied with promptly, and that in the event of the Commission visiting a province, they may be afforded every facility for their inquiries.

ORDER.—Ordered, that copies of this Resolution be forwarded to the Local Governments noted in the margin, to the Secretary to the Famine Commission, and to the Foreign, Public Works, Home, and Finance Departments of the Government of India for information.

Govt. of Madras.	Ch. Commr. of C. P.	
" Bombay.	" Assam.	
" Bengal.	" Coorg.	
" N.-W. P. & Oudh.	" Ajmere.	
" Punjab.	The Resident at Hyderabad.	
" Burma.		

Ordered also, that it be published in the Supplement to the *Gazette of India* for general information.

By order,
DENZIL IBBETSON,
Secretary to the Government of India.

Revenue Department
Proceedings of the Madras Government.

Read Resolution of the Government of India, Revenue and Agricultural Department, No. 35—245-26, d. 23rd December 1897.

Order thereon, No. 17, Press dated 10th January 1898.

Communicated to the Departments of the Secretariat and the Heads of Departments under the Revenue Department.

2. The Commissioner of Revenue Settlement Land Records and Agriculture is authorised to hold direct communication with the Commission and all Heads of Departments will be instructed to afford the Commission every facility for the prosecution of their enquiries.

(True Extract)

R. Narayanaiah

Ag: Under Secretary to Government

To

The Departments of the Secretariat.
Heads of Departments under the Revenue Dept.