M.R.O. 14—10,000—21-4-22.

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Revenue **DEPARTMENT.**

G.O. No. 1701 Press ~~Mis.~~

56-57

Dated 16 – 12 – 1859.

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department, for the month of December 1859.

No. 56. Read the following letter from E. B. THOMAS, Esq., Collector of Coimbatore; to J. D. BOURDILLON, Esq., Secretary to Government, dated 19th November 1859, No. 49.

1. The Proceedings of Government, dated 26th October 1859, No. 2518, place me in such difficulty, that I am compelled to ask the future wishes of Government, on the point of supplying *travellers* and others with coolies, and facilitating their progress up and down the Nilgiris. The tenor of the Government Proceedings would seem to ignore any fixed rates of cooly hire, and forbid any official authority to be exercised, to procure coolies for the transport of travellers and baggage up and down the ghâts, if such is the wish of Government, it will be my duty to direct the several Tahsildars and Cutwalls, (of Ootacamund, Coonoor, Matapolliem, and elsewhere), to confine themselves strictly to their police and other duties, and leave travellers to make their own arrangement and bargains, for coolies, bearers, and carriage, up and down the hills, as best they can. I have no hesitation in saying there would be at once an outcry from all the European community, and the hills would be nearly inaccessible, except to a very few. I *was* also in doubt as to the supply of carriage and coolies for *troops*, general officers, and any others moving on duty—from whom the applications are constant. I have 2 before me at this moment, from Jackatalla itself, (copies enclosed), the order, however, of 8th November, No. 616, received this day, now provides for *carriage*, by contract; where sufficient time and notice is given, (which often is not the case), this arrangement will be very desirable, *provided* the contractors do not ask, as they occasionally do, official "assistance," which means pressing for *them*, instead of for Government direct. I would further most respectfully request instructions as to the measures to be pursued when contractors *fail* to come forward at all, (as may be the case, except in places like Madras, Trichinopoly, Vellore, &c.); or when the contractor fails to complete a contract entered into? am I in such cases, to refer officers to the labour market which has already failed them? and the need for carriage possibly emergent.

2. I have been accused of advocating compulsory labour, and the term I unfortunately used, of "drawing" coolies from the large Burgher villages in turn, is adduced in proof. I respectfully ask what else *could* I do? as I asked in my letter of the 8th October 1859, No. 247. The Government cannot think that travellers, (especially strangers from other Presidencies, invalids, ladies, children, &c.,) *could* do without such assistance? It would save me a vast amount of trouble and odium, if I were relieved of this duty tomorrow; but I know well what would be the result, and inconvenience, to all who apply to me, *daily*, for such aid; and there is perhaps *no* other district where this duty falls so heavily, or is so necessary, as in Coimbatore. So far from being thought, here, to advocate, (as has been unfairly assumed and asserted), compulsory or ill paid labour, my character, I unhesitatingly assert, is that, of leaning too much to the natives, disregarding European traveller's interests, and making them pay too high, this is what is said of me on the hills, equally unfairly; and between the 2 fires, I have no enviable or easy duty.

3. As regards, rates *some* official local scale for cooly hire, according to distance and difficulty, is necessary and usual, every where; in every public bungalow, and every Kacheri; and travellers complain, when they do not find one—the rates in my own district have been gradually raised—some formerly—some lately—when called for. The law of demand and supply, is, of course, *the* proper law to regulate most articles, (labour included), under *natural* and *ordinary circumstances, admitting* of delay and enquiry; but this principle applied to travellers and others in a locality where *detention* might be, and *has been*, death is surely straining a principle beyond its natural and legitimate bearing—and such I consider to be the case of travellers passing through the feverish and difficult approaches to the Nilgiris—while I would refer such, to the labour market, in the plains; I would *assist* them, on the ghâts, and I think there would be a great and reasonable outcry against me, if I did not.

4. I think I clearly explained that I collected coolies for *travellers* only—that I asked a list of captain Farewell's labourers, *only* for the purpose of avoiding employing *them*, knowing from long experience the tricks played by the natives at Jackatalla, to avoid ghât work, and secure the easy and high paid work of Jackatalla. I am truly sorry to differ in any way from the view taken by the Government, of the rates of labour, or on any other point; but so long as I am a responsible public officer, knowing the facts and circumstances of this locality, better than they can be known by the Chief* Engineer or any one at Madras, I am bound to offer to Government an independent and honest opinion, without reference to what favor it may hold in any quarter. I therefore said, and I can only repeat it, that labour is attracted to Jackatalla by exorbitant and needlessly high rates—making that, and all other Public Works on the Hills, more costly than they need be—and I think that Government will *eventually*, on fuller enquiry, find this opinion to be correct, and the consequent evil, one of still more importance to planters, than to Government; at Jackatalla Government is in fact the great *monopolist* of labour, at a *monopoly* rate; and the European community suffers accordingly.

* 300 *miles off.*

5. When the Governor General and suit, with all the Bengal families and followers, left the hills, in 1855, I was called on, officially, to supply 7,000 coolies *on* the hills, and 400 bullock carts below. I did so, and without outcry or complaint ensuing; by taking care, so far as possible, that none were ill treated, or unpaid, but it was no easy duty: and Government would not, I conclude, consider that it was one I could have *possibly* declined, or that the parties could have moved without such aid?

No. 57. ORDER THEREON, 16th December 1859, No. 1701.

1. The Government resolve to inform the Collector of Coimbatore that they entirely adhere to their determination to prevent compulsory labor, and that they expect all their officers cordially to co-operate for that purpose.

2. Travellers to and from the hills must pay such rates as will procure for them voluntary assistance; and the Collector should encourage persons to come forward who will undertake to provide the necessary aid at certain fixed rates.

(Signed) J. D. BOURDILLON,
Secretary to Government.

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This should be replied to as follows—
The Government entirely adheres to its determination to prevent compulsory labour, and expects ~~the~~ of all its Officers cordially to cooperate for this purpose.

Travellers to and from the Hills must pay such rates as will procure for them voluntary assistance and it will be the duty of the Collector to encourage persons to come forward who will undertake to provide the necessary assistance on those terms

Ld Mayo
9 Dec 59

Rev. Dept.

No. 1701.

Proceedings of the Madras Government

Under date the 16th December 1859.

Read the following

letter from the Collector of

Coimbatore.

Requesting with reference to the Proceedings of Government dated 26th October 1859, to be informed of the future wishes of Government on the point of supplying Travellers and others with Coolies &ca. &ca. Facilitating their progress up and down the Ghauts.

(Here enter 19th Nov. 1859 No. 49)

1. The Government resolve to inform the Collector of Coimbatore that they intend adhere to their determination to prevent compulsory labor, and that they expect all their officers cordially to cooperate for that purpose.

2. Travellers to and from the hills must pay such rates as will procure for them voluntary assistance, and ~~[illegible]~~

the

the Collector (should) encourage persons to come forward who will undertake to provide the aid at certain fixed rates, necessary ~~assistance that it~~ ~~be spent to him to make an~~ engagement with an individual to this effect, for a limited time, on the most favorable terms offered and to guarantee to the contractor the payment of the rate stipulated, by all persons applying to him the Collector to provide portage.—

3. Until he shall be able to form such a contract the Collector should fix liberal rates of hire, under section 5 Regulation 11 of 1816, proportioned to the scale of wages now obtaining on the Nilgiris he should make it known to all concerned what rate has been so fixed, and should adopt means to ensure its prompt and full payment.

1 Copy
Coll. of Nilgiris Dist. 17
to Board of Rev for information 18

If the Collector fails to do so is not to levy Assessment—

what does this mean?—

The orders of Govt. forbid any Collector to compel labor—

[illegible] but there is [illegible] labor—

This power is taken from the Collector and should be

4

upon to render service or from compelling labor—

Here—they give us a rule to go by and say we are not to compel labor—

What is meant by this is asked—what is the Collr to do—He makes are to be left to adjust Assessments &c—they should be cleared from the duties hitherto exercised by the Collr & Dist to Nilgiris

Powers with the Surveyor

Revenue 1859 Deptt
Pro: of Govt 20th Decr.

No 1701.

Pro: of the Madras Govt
D/ 16th Decr 59.

Regarding the
supply of Coolies
&c to travellers to and
from the Nilgiri Hills.

Fo Leo 70-72 RD
31-10-59

No 56 & 57.

C 12 December 1859