M.R.O. 14—13,000—27-9-24

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Revenue DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 1207 Press ~~Mis.~~

52-53

Dated 2 - 5 - 1868.

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department, 2nd May 1868.

No. 52. Read the following letter from the Collector of Tinnevelly, to the Secretary to Government, Revenue Department, Fort St. George, dated Tinnevelly, 22nd April 1868, No. 181 :—

1. In reply to the Proceedings of Government, No. 1,023, dated 17th instant, I have the honor to furnish an explanation of the circumstances that led to complaint being made.

2. The subscribers to the Strivycuntam Anicut applied for permission to cut a channel from the river, at their own expense, to carry water to the eastward, when the freshes come down in June. Permission was granted by Government in Proceedings, No. 2,143, dated 11th September 1867, but labor was so scarce in that neighbourhood that the ryots, who are to benefit by the channel, could only muster 700 men. As the work might have lingered on for a year with this number, I called on the ryots of other villages to furnish their quota also, and I met with a ready response. Many of the principal ryots attended and supervised the work, and every arrangement was made that the funds would allow of to ensure the health and comfort of the laborers. Shedding was put up for them, and cooking utensils and firewood were provided gratis. Of course, they were paid for their labor though the price of earth-work had to be fixed with reference to the funds in hand, which Mr. Shepherd, who laid out the line, calculated were just sufficient to complete the work, at the rate of eight Pies per cubic yard for the surface, ten Pies for the second, an Anna for the third, an Anna and a half for the fourth, and two Annas for the fifth yard of cutting; but on the ryots concerned guaranteeing to meet any additional expense, these rates were raised to nine Pies for the surface, an Anna for the second, an Anna and a quarter for the third, an Anna and a half for the fourth, and two Annas for the fifth yard of cutting—rates that the Superintending Engineer now at the work considers high.

3. The only laborers in the irrigated villages are the Pullers, formerly the slaves of the land-holders, but now their agricultural servants. These Pullers receive yearly wages, which are continued to them, though paid over again for their labor just now; the masters supply the labor; with the men I have now nothing to do beyond seeing to their comfort as stated above, and paying them something extra as batta for coming to the work. At first I tried to pay the men myself to make sure that the money reached them, but I found this had no good effect, so I ordered the money for earth-work to be paid to those who provided the labor, with the exception of those engaged on the head sluice on daily wages; the rest are employed on digging the channel by contract, and all is going on most satisfactorily. In a work on so large a scale and of so novel a character (perhaps the first ever projected, paid for, and carried out by the ryots themselves,) it is too much to expect that there would not be some misconception at first; the laborers doubtless imagined that they were being sent to the work to labor on a mere subsistence allowance, and in collecting men of course petty spite was shown in calling on some who could not conveniently leave home; but all this has long since been got over; the men have been paid full rates for their labor, and the land-holders have been told only to send their private servants, and these only in turn as may be most convenient.

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
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4. In some villages there are Christian Pullers, and they take every opportunity of trying to play off the Missionary against their masters. As a general rule, the Missionaries exercise a wise discretion and withhold from interference; but in the neighbourhood of the village, from which the telegram referred to me is dated, there has been much dissension between the landholders and a Missionary, who, on this very occasion, personally interfered, and prevented the Christian Pullers from contributing their quota of labor to the Pudukudi channel; hence, in all probability, the telegram, which seems to have been composed by some Native Schoolmaster or Catechist.

5. It is a misrepresentation throughout. First, the Pullers are not like other ryots, but are the ryots' laborers; secondly, they are not compelled by the local authorities to labor as coolies, as the labor is supplied by the ryots, and not by the local authorities; and, thirdly, no one employed on the work as a daily laborer ever received less than two Annas; while all alike, whether day laborers or men working by contract, at first received half an Anna a day as batta over and above what they earned, as an extra inducement to come to the work.

6. In a country like this, where party feeling and malice exist in every village, it can hardly be expected that all will view unmoved the successful completion of a work that is to benefit only a certain community; but this much I am sure of, that party feeling has been very much laid aside, and the better disposed agree that the district is likely to benefit largely by the movement now commenced by the ryots to help themselves. I am just now beset by applications to assist in carrying out works on a similar system in almost every talook, but I can only take up one at a time, and if successful in completing the work now in hand, I will apply for permission to take up others in the same popular manner.

No. 53. ORDER THEREON, 2nd May 1868, No. 1,207.

Miscellaneous. Ordered to be recorded.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) W. HUDLESTON,
Secretary to Government.

To the Collector of Tinnevelly.

Rd. F. R. Bantleman

Pro 11 Septr/67 Nos 199-200
17 April/68 Nos 382-383.

Trustee C No 1462/68

W-1207.

Recorded

2 May/68

Rev. 1868 Septr
Pros of Govt for May
Nos 1388

The Collector of
Tinnevelly

To The Secretary to Govt
Revenue Depart
F. S. G

Dated 22 April 1868

Recd 27 Recorded

No 181
W 1207 of May
Copy & Extract from
Madras

Furnishing an explanation of the circumstances that led to complaint being made charging the Collector with extorting Compulsory labor

W 52453