

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
17th August 1871.*

No. 93. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 3rd August 1871, No. 3,237:—

Read the following letter from the Acting Collector of Madura, to the Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated Periacolum, 24th June 1871, No. 186.

With reference to paragraph 2 of the Board's Proceedings dated 15th April 1871, No. 1,576, I have the honour to report on the system under which road-work has been undertaken to some extent in this district by the Revenue Department.

2. As I have little personal knowledge of the work hitherto done I enclose the Sub-Collector's report. The Head Assistant considers that constant personal supervision is essential to the efficient maintenance of roads, especially of those in the Zemindaries of Ramnad and Shevagunga, and states that in his case such supervision is quite impossible. The Deputy-Collector thinks that all difficulty in the execution of road-work by the Revenue-officers would be removed by abolishing the rule which requires Completion Certificates from the Department of Public Works.

3. The road-work done by Revenue-officers that I have seen in this district is certainly good. My opinion is that such work will be done well and cheaply by the Revenue Department when a European officer is able to supervise it himself and not otherwise. I therefore think that the Collector can best decide whether work can be well done by his department or not. The Sub-Collector here could probably supervise a good deal of road-work. The Head Assistant, when there is no passed Assistant in the district, evidently cannot, for he has so many cases, Revenue and Magisterial, to try, and so many witnesses to examine, that he is not at liberty to travel about in order to look after roads. His own charge includes the Ramnad and Shevagunga Zemindaries where there are no Tahsildars.

ENCLOSURE No. 1.

From H. W. BLISS, Esq., Acting Sub-Collector, to the Acting Collector of Madura, dated Kodaikanal, dated 6th June 1871, No. 178.

In reply to your letter No. 970, dated the 26th ultimo, (and received the 2nd instant,) I have the honour to report my opinion as to the system adopted in the sub-division of handing over road-work to the Revenue Department.

2. Since I joined the sub-division three years ago very considerable sums have been expended on roads in the Dindigul Talook by the Revenue Department, and, as far as I am able to judge, with the most beneficial results on the whole. The systems of constructing and of maintaining roads in repair that are adopted are somewhat different. I will notice them separately.

3. It has been an object to get all new works carried out by contractors according to the estimates furnished for them by the proper officers of the Department Public Works. The road from Batlagundu to Dindigul is now under construction in this manner by two contractors, one of whom has undertaken 5½, and the other 12 miles of the portion included in the Range officer's estimate. The work on this road has been somewhat slow, more I fear from the supineness of the Tahsildar and Local Fund Overseer, Mr. Taylor, who was in charge of it, than from any other cause, and is now considerably delayed by the fact that no provision was made for it in the current year's Local Fund Budget, as of course the contractors do not push on work for which they are not regularly paid every fortnight as stipulated. After all, however, judging from the slow progress of other roads in the sub-division which have been under construction by the

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Department Public Works since 1868, I think the road has got on pretty well, and will be finished every bit as soon as if under the charge of the Range officer. Most certainly, even if the work is a bit slower, and (as is probable) not quite so well finished off as work professionally supervised, it is much cheaper, for, in the first place, the rates allowed in the estimate were considerably lower than those then allowed by the Department Public Works for works to be carried out by themselves; and, in the second, one of the contractors has undertaken his work at a discount of 14, and the other of 12½ per cent. below the rates allowed. It may be hoped therefore that the road will be completed at a considerable saving on the estimate, even after allowing for extra works found necessary in consequence of the inadequate provision made in many places for metalling where the soil is bad, and for the bridging of streams.

4. Another saving of course to the Local Funds is the 10 per cent. for supervision (in the case in question 2,400 Rs.) charged by the Department Public Works on the estimated cost of all the road-works carried out by them.

5. What with cheaper work, and the saving of this 10 per cent., I think the Local Funds will save not less than Rs. 7,000 by the construction of this one road by the Revenue Department.

6. On the Caroor road, also constructed by the Revenue Department, petty contractors only were employed, as no one could be found, as things then were, to accept the rates offered for the whole work in a lump. On this road there was but a single tunnel provided in a length of 34 miles, and that was estimated to cost about Rs. 120 only. The balance of the estimated amount (Rs. 15,500) went in earth-work, gravelling and metalling, all of which was done by the local gangs of Waddlers or by petty contract with leading ryots, at rates much below those given in the estimate. Those rates were considerably lower than the Department Public Works allowed themselves. The savings were spent in bridging some of the worst nullahs, and more has since been done in the same way from the savings from the annual allotment for maintenance.

7. On this road also the 10 per cent. charged by the Department Public Works (Rs. 1,500) was saved to the Local Funds.

8. Considering this saving, the low rates, and the extra work done, I do not suppose that the gain to Local Funds by the supervision of this road being under the Revenue Department was less than Rs. 4,000 or 5,000.

9. In the case of both roads, payment has been made from time to time on measurements made by the Tahsildar or a Deputy-Tahsildar or (in the case of the Batlagundu road) by the Local Fund Overseer of the Range, on the Tahsildar's responsibility. The system on the Caroor road was not so well worked out, as it was the first thing of the kind attempted in the sub-division and all hands were wanting in experience; but on the Batlagundu road the system of certificates of measurement, etc., in force in the Department Public Works has been enforced, and no payments made except on direct orders from this Office.

10. As for the road-repairs the system adopted in the sub-division is necessarily different, because it is almost impossible to get repairs done by contract in the method in which the contract-system is worked in the case of new works. The plan in operation is, first, to make an estimate at the commencement of the year of the quantity of material required. This is done by the Tahsildar or Deputy-Tahsildar assisted by the Local Fund Overseer or Maistry. When ready it is forwarded to me. I then go over the road with the person who made the estimate, and judge for myself as to its adequacy or otherwise, and pass it for whatever quantity of material I think is necessary. The material is then procured on contract and stored on the road-side in heaps according to the judgment of the officer in immediate charge. The next step is to spread this material, and for this there is no fixed rule. Sometimes where a good deal of work is required in one place, and the Tahsildar or Deputy-Tahsildar has leisure to superintend it, daily labour is employed; but, as a rule, it is found to be the best plan to get a leading ryot in each village to undertake to spread and ram material where directed by the Maistries (of whom there is one for about each 10 or 12 miles of road) at so much per cubic yard. The rate per cubic yard is fixed liberally, and for this payment, the petty contractor is required to do all earth-work, turving, clearing of side-drains, etc.

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11. This system was in force last year in part of the sub-division, and I think with fair success. It certainly is far more economical than the wasteful and inefficient system of the employment of milmen, which the Department Public Works favour, and I venture to think that its results prove it to be more practically useful than the system hitherto in force in the principal division, with what effect a journey from Batlagundu to Periacolum will inform you.

12. From the above remarks you will understand that I think that, as a rule, ordinary road-works may advantageously be executed under the supervision of the Revenue Department. I do not for a moment mean to say that Revenue-officers are, as a rule, capable of competing in professional knowledge with the officers of the Department Public Works, but most road-works require, it may be said, no professional knowledge whatever, or, at all events, no more than is rapidly acquired by any man of ordinary intelligence who is frequently on the move, and is stimulated by anxiety as to the fate of the springs of his dog-cart. Nor do I mean to say that the Revenue Department can ordinarily spare enough time for supervision to ensure that the work they get done shall be as neatly turned out of hand as that which has the advantage of professional superintendence. But for all practical purposes, the work we can do is good enough. Our bridges do not tumble down, our roads are in quite good enough order to drive an ordinary dog-cart 7 or 8 miles in the hour, and the work of our department is *cheap*, no slight desideratum when we consider how much has yet to be done before the communications of the country will cease to be a *tracoe* to the Government, and how limited are, and must be, our means of doing so.

13. If therefore the divisional officer takes an active interest in such matters, and if he can (which I imagine he does not now) feel confident that he will be supported by his superiors in insisting on his Tahsildars doing their duty in this matter, instructing themselves, if they are ignorant, and making it their constant habit to travel on horseback or in an open vehicle in the day-time, so that they can see what is going on, instead of invariably moving from place to place in bullock-coaches in the night and seeing nothing at all, as nine out of ten do now, the Revenue Department may well continue to look after the roads, where they do now, and be made to do it, where they now do not. If otherwise, there can be no object in their making a pretence of doing that which they neglect: the leisure they will gain (though but little, since road-work is not supervised in office-hours) may possibly be better employed; and, in the end, the Local Funds will perhaps lose no more from wasteful extravagance than from incompetent negligence.

SUBMITTED to Government, with reference to Government Order dated 21st March 1871, No. 501.

2. The report from Mr. Bliss is decisive as to the excellent manner in which road-work can be managed by the Revenue Department.

No. 94. ORDER THEREON, 17th August 1871, No. 1,371.

Miscellaneous.

COMMUNICATED to the Department Public Works. The Government trust that the institution of Local Boards will excite more local interest in these important works.

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(True Extract.)

(Signed) A. DEC. SCOTT, Captain, R.E.,

Under Secy., P.W.D.,

for Secy. to Govt.

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1871. Dec.
BOARD of SUPERINTENDENTS
MADRAS.

PROCEEDINGS, 3RD AUGUST 1871, No. 3,237.

24th August 1871
 Encl.

Received. Aug.

AUGUST.
 No. 3,237.

Road work.—Report on system under which road work has been undertaken in Madras District by Revenue Department, submitted to Government.

1871-1872 August 1871

1871

1871

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Handwritten notes at the bottom left, including "1871" and "1872".

Handwritten notes at top left, partially illegible.

No 93-94

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1871. Sept.

BOARD of REVENUE
MADRAS.

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10/10/71 - 17th August 1871

No 1371

Memorandum of the Committee

Extensive handwritten notes in the middle section, discussing road work and revenue matters.

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