

REVENUE DEPARTMENT,
FORT SAINT GEORGE,
15th March 1871.

No. 189.

No. 451.

To

THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA,
HOME DEPARTMENT.

Miscellaneous.

SIR,—Referring to your letter, dated 7th June 1870, No. 2,788, requesting the opinion of this Government on the suggestion of the Famine Commissioners for raising funds by local taxation to afford relief on extraordinary occasions of calamity, I am directed to forward, for submission to the Government of India, the accompanying copies of papers on the Proc. of Govt., 15th March 1871, Nos. 187, 188. subject noted in the margin, and to state that this Government generally concurs in the dissent therein expressed from the Commissioners' proposals.

2. In your letter under reply, it is observed that State help rendered before private charity; but this Government are strongly of opinion that special taxation for the relief of the poor would far more speedily and certainly produce this result, and with far more fatal effect, for in the former case, the worst that could result would be that what was no longer needed would be no longer given, while in the latter case, the Government would have deprived the sufferers of almost indispensable assistance by introducing a measure which must inevitably be least productive when the need is greatest; for it is not apparently contemplated that the measure of taxation should extend beyond the locality where extensive distress exists, or that more fortunate districts should contribute for the relief of those which may be suffering.

3. The system advocated by the Commissioners is that of "local taxation by which the richer persons of each neighbourhood * * may be made to bear the burden of local and partial famine." They argue that the obligation resting on the Zemindars, under the permanent settlement, to support the poor of their estates has always been asserted by the officers of Government, has never been denied by the organs of the Zemindars, but has practically "*been ignored or evaded.*" That this obligation attached to Government while it was the great landholder of the country, but was transferred to the Zemindars at the permanent settlement; and that this obligation "*which they have failed to fulfil*" should be enforced in the shape of a legal charge on Zemindari rights on the occurrence of scarcity of such a degree that the population are unable to support themselves.

4. It may be remarked in the first place that the system thus sketched would be of very limited application in this Presidency, where permanently settled Zemindaris are few in number, and where the obligation said to have been transferred

by Government to the Zemindars at the permanent settlement must still rest on the Government as regards the great bulk of the population who hold their land directly from the State; but for the credit of humanity this Government are glad to be able to say that the condemnation of Zemindars in the late seasons of famine is by no means applicable to those in this Presidency, whose conduct on the contrary was, as a rule, highly creditable and deserving of all commendation. This Government, however, cannot think that Zemindars as such are under any peculiar obligation to support sufferers by scarcity or famine. This duty rests on all the community alike in accordance with their means, and the Zemindars of this Presidency are not, as a rule, men of wealth, while in times of famine they are sufferers also to a serious extent by the failure of crops, and consequently the loss of rents payable both in money and in kind.

5. This Government are of opinion that the Native community do undoubtedly fulfil the obligation of supporting their poor in a most creditable manner, and that anything like compulsion would be most mischievous, and would defeat its aim. They consider that the proposal for a Famine-tax is not one that should be entertained, but that as the ultimate responsibility for saving life must rest on the State, such relief as is needed for this purpose should be provided from the general revenues aided by voluntary contributions. It must be borne in mind that a famine-stricken district has *prima facie* special claims for State aid, on the probable ground of previous neglect in a greater or less degree, owing to which safeguards against famine are there wanting which have elsewhere been provided in the form of irrigation works or perfected systems of communication, by means of which supplies can be readily thrown into the market whenever the demand offers inducement.

Sir,

Your most obedient servant.

W. HUDLESTON,

Secretary to Government.

7 copies with
an Encls. Despatch

Recd. Sept. 17
The Secretary to the Govt of India
Home Dept.

Sir

Referring to your letter dated 7th June 1876, at 2700 requesting the opinion of this Govt on the suggestion of the Hon. Secy. for raising funds by local taxation to afford relief on extraordinary occasions of calamity, I am directed to forward for submission to the Govt of India the accompanying copies of papers on the subject noted in the margin & to state that this Govt. is in general concurrence in the dissent therein expressed

NP

AP

Proc. of Govt of India

S. O.

expressed

expressed from the Com-
missioners proposals.

2. In your letter under
reply it is stated that State
help rendered before it has
become absolutely necessary
is likely to have the effect
of withering all private charity
but this fort one strong
of opinion that special
taxation for the relief of
the poor would far more
speedily & certainly produce
this result & with far more
fatal effect. For in the
former case, the worst
that could result would be
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3. The system advocated
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& partial paucity. They
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then

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That this obligation
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great bulk of the
population who hold
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the State, but for the
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This Govt are glad to be
able to say that the
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in the late seasons of
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safeguards against
famine ^{are} ~~are~~ wanting
which have elsewhere
been provided in
the form of irrigation
works

works or perfected systems
of communication by
means of which supplies can be
readily thrown up to
the markets whenever
the demand offers rise
sufficiently to require it.
The system is
described in the
documentary
which is
sent to you
by the
author of
the
work.

Sept. 1899

Sept. 1899

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Home Department.

From Government of

Port St. George.

Dated 15th March.

R.

No. 451.

Enclosures.

C. 2000 copies.

D. No.

L. No.

Progs.

D.

No.

189

FORWARDING for submission to the Government of India copies of papers relating to the suggestion of the Panch Commissioners for raising funds for local taxation to afford relief on extraordinary occasions of calamity.