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TAMIL NADU ARCHIVES

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU

Revenue DEPARTMENT

G.O. No. / B.P. No.	2681A	Press. / Mis.
Dated	10.9.1877	197 .

Not to be folded or roughly handled

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

REVENUE DEPARTMENT.

10th September 1877, No. 2,686-A.

Famine Relief.

Read the following paper:—

No. 153-A. From Surgeon-Major W. R. CORNISH, F.R.C.S., Sanitary Commissioner for Madras, to J. H. GARSTIN, Esq., Additional Secretary to Government, Revenue Department, dated Madras, 29th August 1877, No. 1,234.

I have the honor to report, for the information of Government, that I have visited the head-quarters and sub-division of the South Arcot District, and have conferred with the Civil Officers on the subject of distress in that district.

2. I went to Cuddalore by the South Indian Railway on the 15th. The country through which the railway passes is badly off for water. The cumboo crops are generally thin, the ragi under wells appeared to be thriving, but there was hardly any indigo or paddy cultivation. A large area of land was sown with cumboo after the rains in May, but this crop, which is now being generally harvested, will yield but badly. In the Tindivanum taluq, the Tahsildar informed me that he did not expect more than one-sixteenth of a full crop, as the plants had been blighted, and in many of the ears no corn at all had formed.

3. In regard to the condition of the people met along the line, there was very little evidence of famine about them. The passenger traffic is large, and the travellers—women especially—exhibit plenty of jewels, and all classes looked to be thriving. The same may be said of the inhabitants of the bazaars and suburbs of Cuddalore. The people here seem to be very well off.

4. On the mornings of the 16th and 17th, I inspected the prisoners in the old Jail, Cuddalore, and in the temporary jail at "Mount Capper." The prisoners for some time in jail were sleek and evidently well fed, but as regards the new admissions, it was easy to pick them out by the roughness of their skins, and prominent ribs, without reference to the wooden tickets showing the date of admission and expiry of sentence. From the condition of the recently-incarcerated prisoners, it was obvious that the great majority of them had undergone much privation before admission. The number of prisoners present was over 1,000 (the average is between 300 and 400). Extra temporary accommodation at Mount Capper will have to be provided for the fast increasing prison population, who have been temporarily converted into criminals by the dearth and high prices of food.

5. The physical condition of recently-convicted prisoners is usually a pretty fair test of the state of the lower orders of the population, and in this respect the indications are, that distress amounting to actual famine has already seized upon the poorer classes, especially of the dryer parts of the district.

6. I understand from Mr. Sharp, the Collector, that very little has been done as yet in opening relief works for the maintenance of the able-bodied poor of the district. The last return of the Board of Revenue shows less than 1,000 persons on "works," and more than 30,000 on "gratuitous relief," in camps and relief centres. The South Indian Railway is giving some employment in the southern portion of the district, and a few able-bodied are employed on the unfinished bridges of the line; but with the usual agricultural operations to a great extent in abeyance, it seems clear to me that local and temporary employment is urgently needed in this district to tide the poor over the present period. Indeed, if works had been provided at an earlier date, many of those now in a state beyond the ability to labor might have been kept up in health and strength.

7. Mr. Sharp informs me that he has sanctioned various works to be commenced, and that divisional officers have been called upon to submit estimates for others, so that I hope the first obvious necessity of the district will now be provided on a scale to prevent the able-bodied laboring poor from clamouring for admission to relief houses.

8. Relief camps are being formed at the head-quarters of each taluq and in some other places, but for the proper management and supervision of these establishments, I am afraid the superior revenue officers are too few, unless some extra European Superintendents can be placed at Mr. Sharp's disposal for the special duty of supervising famine relief.

9. I paid two visits to the relief camp which has been established near Cuddalore—one at the time of the evening meal, and one in the early morning. The camp is about two miles from the Cuddalore Court house, on the bank of the Poreyar River. The space is somewhat limited, and includes a palmyra tope; which, if great care be not taken, will soon become an unbearable nuisance owing to the people using it as a latrine. In this camp, I found three classes of people all mixed up and treated in the same way, viz.—

1. Able-bodied persons for whom no work could be found.
2. Local poor coming to the camp for their meals, but non-resident.
3. Indigent poor of the taluq, living in the camp, and fit objects of relief.

10. There was not a large proportion of able-bodied present; and the great majority of the inmates were proper cases for relief. Sheds had been provided for the shelter of paupers coming from a distance, and it is said that about 700 sleep in them, while the daily number relieved is about 1,500. Separate hospital sheds for males and females have been put up. Latrines had been provided, but had not been used.

11. The feeding arrangements, as I saw them, were very defective. In the first place, the quantity of grain issued was below the sanctioned amount. I weighed the contents of one of the tin measures. The rice was sodden with water, and not drained as it should have been. The weight, instead of being from 80 to 90 tolahs (which is the ordinary weight of *ten* ounces of raw rice after boiling), was only 65 tolahs. As to the dhall, the Superintendent said he used only six measures (about 19 lb.) for the whole meal of the camp, instead of in the proportion of one ounce for an adult, and half an ounce for each child, according to the scale. I do not know if the accounts of this camp show issues of raw grain in accordance with the scale of twenty ounces of rice, and two of dhall per adult, but if they do, it is clear that the starving poor have been defrauded to a considerable extent of their dues. (I shall bring this subject to the notice of the Collector for such enquiry as he can institute).

12. In the issue of food, the greatest confusion prevailed. Before serving out the meal, the paupers were collected in an enclosure and made to sit down in rows. They were then called up, ten or twelve at a time, and after receiving their food were turned out into the road approaching the enclosure to do as they pleased. They here obstructed the way, and jostled and fought among themselves, some losing their rice in the endeavor to get to a quiet place to eat it in.

13. I have explained to Mr. Sharp that the arrangements are quite inadequate, and that an endeavor must be made, first to provide employment for the able-bodied, second to feed at the gate, without admission to the camp, the non-resident poor, and third to make the camp residents sit in rows, and have the food taken to them, allowing none to leave their places until the meal is finished. In this arrangement, the caste customs of the people in eating by themselves can be respected. Children can be separately placed, and the food servers can do their work regularly and without interruption. A supply of drinking water must be provided for each enclosed space.

14. In feeding two distinct classes of people, *i. e.*, those wholly dependent on Government aid, and those living outside the camp, it is necessary to have two kinds of tickets. None but residents with the proper tickets should be fed inside the camp.

15. The Superintendent of this camp, a native, did not give me the idea of being up to his work. On my morning visit to the camp, he was not present, nor was the dresser (who had reported sick and gone in to Cuddalore). It is very rare to find natives who have the power of organizing and systematizing arrangements for feeding on a large scale, and I am afraid that matters will be mismanaged until an active European or East Indian Superintendent is appointed.

16. In this camp, there were many persons very far advanced in privation. The hospital sheds were full, and more of the inmates might have been added to the list of hospital patients.

17. On the 19th instant, I went out with Mr. Thomson, the Head Assistant Collector, to see a relief camp at Panrutti, about 14 miles north of Cuddalore. The camp is rather too far away from the station, but well placed in a fine tope, with river-water close at hand. Here there were assembled about 1,200 persons to be fed. The sheds are being put up as fast as possible.

18. The feeding arrangements here were, I understand, devised by Mr. Sharp himself, but they seemed to me to be eminently unsuitable either for counting the numbers relieved, or for distributing meals with order and method. The people were admitted at seven separate barriers, and passed on after receiving their food to a second enclosure, where they squabbled and fought, and hustled one another, and there seemed to be nothing to prevent the more active of them from returning to the barriers and asking for a second portion.

19. On enquiry, it was found that the quantity of rice issued here up to date was not much more than half of the twenty-ounce scale. The Superintendent did not seem to know, within two or three hundred, how many he had to feed.

20. Mr. Thomson and myself waited while the morning food was served out, and before half of the people had been got through, the rice gave out, and about six hundred had to wait for some hours while more rice was being boiled. It seems the Superintendent, to mark the honor of our visit, began to give out a double ordinary meal to each person. (It was no wonder that the rice was used up before half of the people had been served.)

21. There was no medical aid at this camp, but some bad cases of disease depending on privation. The suggestions in regard to the distribution of food at Cuddalore apply to this camp also.

22. The management was certainly very bad, and I am afraid untrustworthy, bearing in mind the objects of the Government relief.

23. On the 20th instant, I went to Tindevanum, the head-quarters of the subdivision of the district, where I met Mr. Bird, C.S., and inspected with him the feeding-house on the outskirts of the town, and the site of a new camp now in course of construction. At the latter place, from 300 to 400 coolies were employed in cleaning and deepening a tank for the use of the camp. These laborers, on inspection, were found to be in very fair condition. They belong to neighboring villages, and are mostly agricultural people.

24. At Tindevanum, from 700 to 900 people are fed daily under Mr. Bird's personal supervision. Many of them are in an extreme state of destitution, and arrangements have been made for treating the sick in the Civil Dispensary, which is near at hand. The numbers are daily increasing, and Mr. Bird is hastening the completion of the camp to give shelter to the people, who lie about under trees, or haunt the town and add to its unsavoriness.

25. The drought around Tindevanum appears severe. Water is scarce, and the cumboo crops are withering.

26. Both Mr. Sharp and Mr. Bird agree, and their observations are confirmed by independent reports, that the distress is worse in the western taluqs, Trinomalay, Kullacoorchy and Tricalore. With the sanction of Government, I propose deputing Surgeon Lancaster, of the North Arcot Sanitary Inspecting Circle, to visit systematically the relief-houses in this part of the district.

27. But I have no doubt that more European assistance is needed in this district to superintend the relief operations which have been growing so rapidly, and which under native superintendence are not doing the good we could wish. I venture to hope that it may be possible to strengthen the hands of the chief administrator of the district in this respect; and that measures for giving employment to the people may be devised wherever there may be a dearth of ordinary agricultural employment.

No. 153-B. ORDER THEREON, 10th September 1877, No. 2,686-A.

Miscellaneous.

THE Sanitary Commissioner's proposal to depute Dr. Lancaster to visit the relief-houses in South Arcot is approved.

2. Some of the officers expected from the North of India will be deputed to South Arcot at as early a date as possible.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) J. H. GARSTIN,
Additional Secretary to Government.

To the Sanitary Commissioner.
„ the Collector of South Arcot.
„ the Board of Revenue.
„ the Financial Department.

Exd. A. Raitt.

REVENUE DEPARTMENT

F Nos 7120 & 7170

2687 [illegible]

~~From~~ Pro. of the Bd. of Revn. & from the Sanitary Commissioner

Dated 28th & 29th August 1877.

FOR ORDERS.

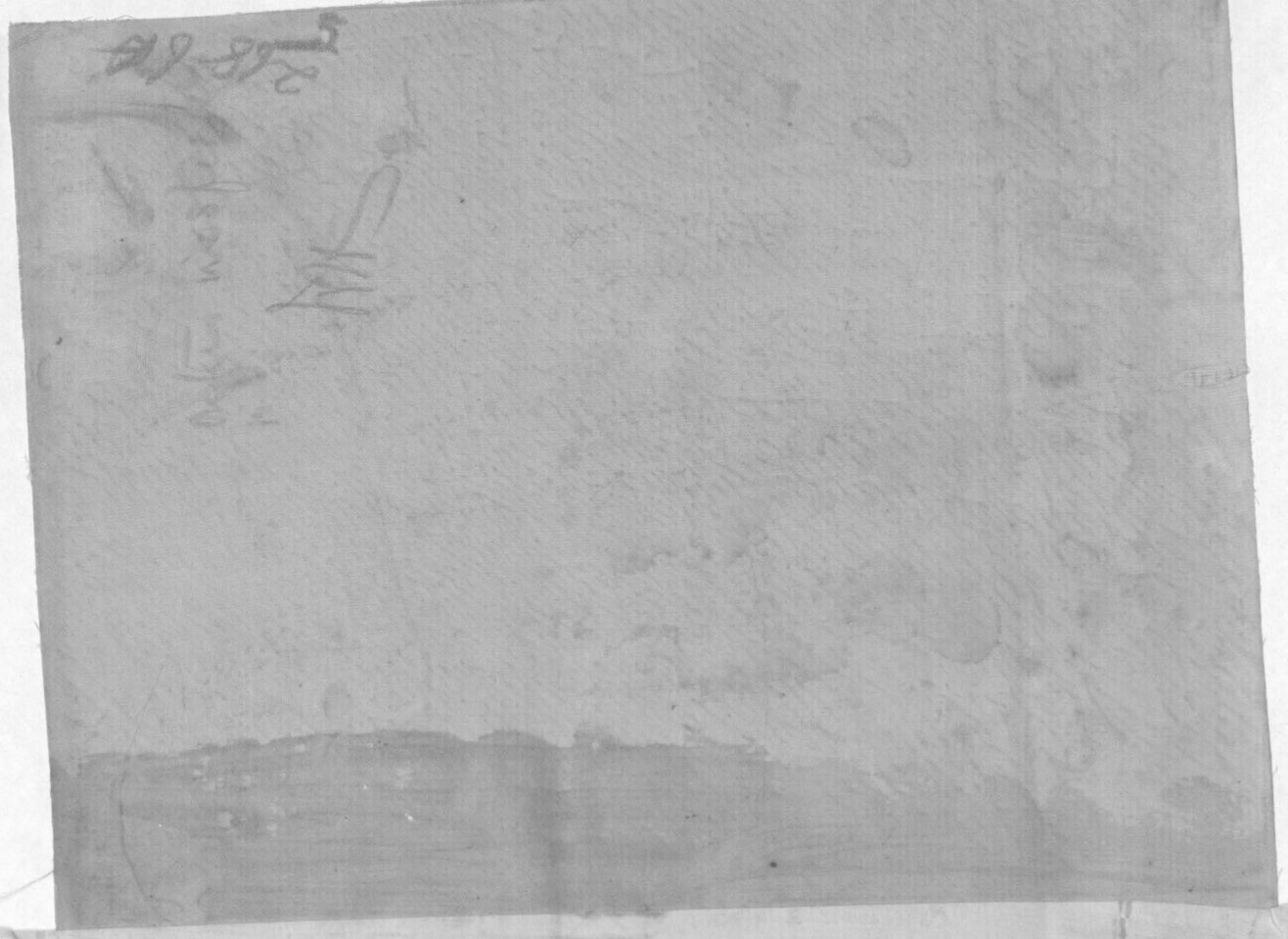
Sanitary [illegible] [illegible] o. propose [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] from Madras [illegible] [illegible] for S. Arcot

[illegible] ask Bd. to [illegible] [illegible] D L at once [illegible]

[illegible]

Coll. ought to be warned abt. camps

[illegible]



FOR ORDERS.

7/

[illegible]

Office of Sanitary Commissioner
Madras, 9th August 1877.

No 1234

From The Sanitary Commissioner
for Madras.

To The Additional Secretary
to Government.

Sir, I have the honor to report for the information of Government that I have visited the head quarters and sub-division of the South Arcot District, and have conferred with the Civil Officers on the subject of distress in that district.

2. I went to Cuddalore by the S. I. Railway on the 15th. The country through which the railway passes is badly off for water. The Cumboo crops are generally thin. The ragi under wells appeared to be thriving, but there was hardly any indigo or paddy cultivation. A large area of land was sown with Cumboo after the rains in May, but this crop, which is now being generally harvested will yield but badly. The Sub-Collector of Cuddalore informed me that he did not expect more than 1/16th of a half crop, as the plants had been blighted, and in many of the ears no corn at all had formed.

3. In regard to the condition of the people

out along the line, there was very little evidence of famine about them. The passenger traffic is large, and the travellers, women especially, exhibit plenty of jewels, and all classes looked to be thriving. The same may be said of the inhabitants of the bazaars and suburbs of Cuddalore. The people here seem to be very well off.

4. On the mornings of the 16th and 17th, I inspected the prisoners in the old jail, Cuddalore, and in the temporary jail at "Mount Capper". The prisoners for some time in jail were clean and evidently well fed but as regards the new admissions, it was easy to pick them out by the roughness of their skins, and prominent ribs, without reference to the wooden tickets showing the date of admission and expiry of sentence. From the condition of the recently incarcerated prisoners it was obvious that the great majority of them had undergone much privation before admission. The number of prisoners present was over 1000, (the average is between 300 and 400). Extra temporary accommodation at Mount Capper will have to be provided for the fast increasing prison population, who have been temporarily converted into criminals by the dearth, and high prices of food.

5. The physical condition of recently convicted prisoners is usually a pretty fair test of the state of the lower orders of the population, and in this respect the indications are that distress amounting to actual famine has already arisen upon the poorer classes, especially of the dryer parts of the district.

6. I understand from Mr. Sharp, the Collector, that very little has been done, as yet, in opening relief works for the maintenance of the able bodied poor of the district. The last return of the Board of Revenue shows less than 1000 persons on works, and more than 30,000 on gratuitous relief, in Camps and relief centres. The South Indian Railway is giving some employment in the southern portion of the district and a few able bodied are employed on the unfinished bridges of the line, but with the usual agricultural operations to a great extent in abeyance, it seems clear to me that local and temporary employment is urgently needed in this district to tide the poor over the present period. Indeed, if works had been provided at an earlier date many of those now in a state beyond the ability to labor might have been kept up in health and strength.

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necessity of the district will now be provided, on a scale to prevent the able bodied laboring poor from clamouring for admission to relief houses.

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1. Able-bodied persons for whom no work could be found.
2. Local poor coming to the camp for their meals but non-resident.
3. Indigent poor of the taluq living in the camp and fit objects of relief.

10. There was not a large proportion of able bodied present, and the great majority of the inmates were proper cases for relief. Sheds had been provided for the shelter of paupers coming from a distance, and it is said that about 700 sleep in them, while the daily number relieved is about 1500. Separate hospital sheds for males and females have been put up. Latrines had been provided, but had not been used.

11. The feeding arrangements, as I saw them, were very defective. In the first place the quantity of grain issued was below the sanctioned amount. I weighed the contents of one of the tin measures. The rice was sodden with water, and not drained as it should have been. The weight instead of being from 80 to 90 tolahs (which is the ordinary weight of the ounce of cooked rice after boiling) was only 65 tolahs. As to the dhall, the Superintendent said he used only 6 measures (about 19 lbs) for the whole meal of the camp, instead of in the proportion of 1oz for an adult, and ½ an ounce for each child according to the scale. I do not know if the accounts of this camp show issues of raw grain in accordance with the scale of 20 ounces of rice, and 2 ounces of dhall per adult, but if they do, it is clear that the starving poor have been defrauded to a considerable extent of their dues. (I shall bring this subject to the notice of the Collector for such enquiry as he can institute).

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13. I have explained to Mr. Sharp that the arrangements are quite inadequate, and that an endeavor must be made, 1st to provide employment for the able bodied, 2nd to feed at the gate without admission to the camp, the non-resident poor, and 3rd to make the camp residents sit in rows, and have the food taken to them allowing none to leave their places until the meal is finished. In this arrangement the caste customs of the people in eating by themselves can be respected. Children can be separately placed, and the food servers can do their work regularly and without interuption. A supply of drinking water must be provided for each enclosed space.

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15. The Superintendent of this camp, a native did not give me the idea of being up to his work. On my morning visit to the camp he was not present, nor was the deceased who had reported sick and gone in to Cuddalore. It is very rare to find natives who have the power of organizing and systematizing arrangements for feeding on a large scale, and I am afraid that matters will be mismanaged until an active European or East Indian Superintendent is appointed.

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18. The feeding arrangements here were I

understand devised by Mr. Harris himself, but they seemed to me to be eminently unsuitable either for counting the numbers relieved, or for distributing meals with order and method. The people were admitted at seven separate barriers, and passed on after receiving their food to a second enclosure, where they squabbled and fought, and hustled one another, and there seemed to be nothing to prevent the more active of them from returning to the barriers and asking for a second portion.

19. On enquiry it was found that the quantity of rice issued here up to date was not much more than half of the 20 days scale. The Superintendent did not seem to know within two or three hundred, how many he had to feed.

20. Mr. Thomson and myself waited while the morning food was served out, and before half of the people had been got through the rice gave out, and about six hundred had to wait for some hours while more rice was being boiled. It seems the Superintendent, to mark the honor of our visit, began to give out a double ordinary meal to each person. (It was no wonder that the rice was used up before half of the people had been served).

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23. On the 20th instant I went to Tindivanum the head quarters of the subdivision of the district where I met Mr. Bird C.S. and inspected with him the feeding house on the outskirts of the town, and the site of a new camp now in course of construction. At the latter place from 3 to 400 coolies were employed in clearing and deepening a tank for the use of the camp. These labourers, on inspection, were found to be in very fair condition. They belong to neighboring villages, and are mostly agricultural people.

24. At Tindivanum from 4 to 900 people are fed daily under Mr. Bird's personal supervision. Many of them are in an extreme state of destitution, and arrangements have been made for treating the sick in the Civil Dispensary, which is near at hand. The numbers are daily increasing, and Mr. Bird is hastening the completion of the camp to give shelter to the people, who lie about

under trees, or haunt the town, and add to its unsavouriness.

24. The drought around Lindavanam appears severe. Water is scarce, and the Cumboo crops are withering.

25. Both Mr. Sharp and Mr. Bird agree, and their observations are confirmed by independent reports, that the distress is worse in the western talugs, Tirumalay, Kulla eoorchy, and Tiruvalore. With the sanction of Government I propose deputing Surgeon Lancaster of the North Arcot Sanitary Inspecting circle, to visit systematically the relief houses in this part of the district.

27. But I have no doubt that more European assistance is needed in this district to superintend the relief operations, which have been growing so rapidly, and which under native superintendence are not doing the good we could wish. I venture to hope that it may be possible to strengthen the hands of the chief administrator of the district in this respect, and that measures for giving employment to the people may be devised wherever there may be a dearth of ordinary agricultural employment.

I have the honor to be
Sir
Your most obedient servant
W. McCormick F.R.C.S.
Sanitary Commissioner
for Madras.

Rec'd 27 Aug
from Fort St. George
The Sanitary Commr
for Madras
To the Additional Secy
to Government
2686
Dated 29 Aug 1877.
Rec'd 31 —

N° 1234

Reporting on
the result of his inspection
of S. Arcot, with reference
to the distress prevailing in
that district.

Sanitary Commissioner's Office
Madras 12th Sept 1877
Forwarded
F. Cliffe

Sanitary Commissioner

2686a

The San. Comr is proposed to depute Dr. Lancaster to visit the relief works in S. Arcot is approved

G.O. 4th September 77

Mr. Grace the Governor desires that the Sanitary Commissioner will depute Dr. Lancaster to S. Arcot as proposed in his Condition 2 but if the officers selected from the Northern districts prefer to depute Dr. Hart at as early a date as possible

[illegible]

6.9.77. 10 September 77