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TAMIL NADU ARCHIVES

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU

Revenue DEPARTMENT

G.O. No.	698	Press
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Dated	15.2.1800	197-

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Famine Relief.

No. 521. Received the following letter from the Hon. F. HOPE, C.S.I., Additional Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Revenue, Agriculture, and Commerce (Agriculture and Horticulture), to the Secretary to the Government of Bombay, Public Works Department, dated Calcutta, the 2nd February 1877, No. 116:—

THE attention of the Government of Madras has been drawn to the Resolution of the Government of Bombay, No. 50 F-1583 dated 25th January. This Resolution being in accordance with previous orders of the Bombay Government under which the district officers were directed to take care that no person should be allowed to die of starvation. It says that "this injunction was quite in conformity with the principle on which the Government was then acting, viz. that no person was to be allowed to die of starvation if it was in the power of the Government to prevent it;" and the Government of Bombay then proceeded to modify its instructions. The new orders are accompanied by observations which imply that there are circumstances in which relief is to be withheld, even though it may be necessary to save life, and the instructions lately issued to Sir Richard Temple by the Government of India are quoted as the reason for this change of policy.

2. The views of the Government of India appear to have been seriously misunderstood. The Government of Bombay seems to think that the Government of India has laid down the doctrine that there are certain circumstances in which the Government ought to allow people to die of starvation, although it has its power to prevent it. The Resolution to which reference has been made states that the instructions to Sir Richard Temple "do not lay down any general principles by which the district officers should be guided, but are merely directing the aid needed to preserve life, and that His Excellency in Council would view with satisfaction the issue of supplementary instructions on that point." It cannot be stated too strongly that the Government of India has never had any such views as those which the Government of Bombay supposes it to have expressed, and it is now necessary further to explain the opinions which His Excellency in Council actually holds, and which he believes have been fully understood by Sir R. Temple, in whose instructions it was endeavoured to state them with clearness and precision.

3. The second paragraph of those instructions contains a general statement of the principles by which our policy ought to be guided. Those principles may be summarised and repeated as follows: It is no more the duty of the Government to prevent all distress in time of famine than in other times, but it is the duty of the Government to spare no effort which may be possible to save the people from starvation and from an extremity of suffering dangerous to life. Paramount as this duty is, and fully as it is accepted by the Government of India, it is obvious that it could not be adequately performed if it involved the necessity of an expenditure beyond the power of the country to bear, and which might go far to render the future good government of India an impracticable task. This may seem to be a truism, but it was necessary to state it, because it has often

been assumed that the Government was placed in this dilemma, viz.: that in order to save life it must either allow people to die of starvation or incur expenses which might ultimately bring ruin upon the country. The Government of India has denied that any such dilemma exists, and has confidently asserted that the history of past famines shows that the duty of preventing loss of life and extreme suffering can be efficiently discharged without incurring charges disproportionately heavy. This opinion, however, will only be justified if every effort be made to prevent relief being given to those who do not actually require it, and to exact the application of the strictest practicable tests and rules, so that relief shall be afforded than is a solution necessary to the Government of India.

4. In laying down instructions of a public office character for the management of relief operations by the officers of Government, the Governor-General in Council thought it out of place and unnecessary to express sympathy with suffering, or to dwell on his determination to save life. It had already been made sufficiently clear, that no one shall die of starvation if it be in the power of the Government to prevent it. In regard to the duties which humanity imposes upon the Government, there has not been, and will not be, any change of policy. We say that human life shall be saved at any cost and at any effort; no man, woman, or child shall die of starvation. Distress they must often suffer; we cannot save them from this. We wish we could do more, but we must be content with saving life and preventing extreme suffering, and it taxes all our power and all our resources to accomplish even this. In regard, therefore, to the enquiry which has been made by the Government of Bombay as to the "general principles by which the district officers should be guided in refusing the aid needed to preserve life," the reply must be that there are no such principles, and that there are no circumstances in which such aid can be refused.

5. The Resolution of the Government of Bombay, No. 26E-93 of 1877, dated the 18th January, "approved of certain orders issued by the Revenue Commissioner, Southern Division, prescribing the mode of dealing with laborers employed on relief works, who might think fit to leave them from dissatisfaction with the rules laid down by Government for regulating the rate of wages." The Governor-General in Council agrees with the Government of Bombay in generally approving the Revenue Commissioner's orders; but this approval is subject to one exception. By those orders the village officers were required to watch all persons who had left the works, and to "take care that no person is allowed through obstinacy to die of starvation." The Governor-General in Council does not believe that any one ever died of starvation through obstinacy, and certainly no rules for dealing with such cases can be necessary. Under almost all circumstances which, if the Government of India is rightly informed, are likely to hold good in the distressed districts of the Bombay Presidency, where the population is almost wholly agricultural, and accustomed to field and other manual labor, the rule laid down by the Government of Bombay appears quite proper. That rule is that "in the case of an individual refusing to perform work which he is capable of doing on the terms fixed by Government, no relief shall be afforded him at the public expense during the continuance of such refusal." The result of such

will, certainly, in the case of agricultural laborers, not be desirable. The Bombay Government, however, will doubtless bear in mind the fact that, unless circumstances are very different in Bombay from those in the Bengal Presidency, there may be exceptional cases which will require exceptional treatment. There is, for example, the class of respectable persons who can not appear in public, and for whom the ordinary labor tests are altogether inappropriate. There may also be men who, on account of age or other infirmities or feelings, would rather die than take employment on relief works. Ordinary rules are not applicable to such cases, which must be dealt with as they arise. In regard to the principle involved, identical with that laid down in the instructions of Sir R. Temple, which is that "in the case of an individual refusing to perform work which he is capable of doing on the terms fixed by Government, no relief shall be afforded him at the public expense during the continuance of such refusal," without the application of the ordinary tests.

It is in conclusion that, while the Governor-General in Council is in regard to the duty of sparing no efforts to save life, and that he has been misinformed, he feels sure that there is really no difference of opinion between the two Governments on this subject. He is satisfied that the Bombay Government and its officers are as anxious and as determined as he is himself, that no loss of life shall occur which can be prevented by the Government. The Governor-General in Council notices at the same time with much satisfaction the efforts which are being made to prevent the relief works from becoming too attractive, and to prevent relief being given to those who do not really require it.

Extract from the Proceedings of the Government of Bombay in the Public Works Department, No. 50-C.—158, dated 25th January 1877.

RESOLUTION.—By Resolution No. 20E-93 of the 18th instant, His Excellency the Governor in Council approved of certain orders issued by the Revenue Commissioner, Southern Division, prescribing the mode of dealing with laborers employed on relief works, who might think fit to leave them from dissatisfaction with the rules laid down by Government for regulating the rates of wages.

2. By those orders, the village officers were directed to "take care that no person is allowed, through obstinacy, to die of starvation." This injunction was quite in conformity with the principle on which the Government was then acting, viz., that no person was to be allowed to die of starvation if it was in the power of the Government to prevent it. But His Excellency in Council now observes that, in the instructions issued by the Government of India to Sir R. Temple on the 16th instant, the following very important qualification is introduced: "Even for an object of such paramount importance as the preservation of life, it is obvious that there are limits which are imposed upon us by the facts which we have to deal with."

3. The letter in question does not lay down any general principle by which the district officers should be guided in refusing the aid needed to preserve life, and His Excellency in Council would view with satisfaction the issue of supplementary instructions on that point. In the mean time, however, he feels convinced that in no case could assistance be more properly refused than in that of a man who wilfully and deliberately refuses to render the reasonable equivalent demanded by the Government for the means of subsistence which it is ready to afford him.

4. It is therefore ordered, in modification of the instructions issued by the Revenue Commissioner, that in the case of an individual refusing to perform work which he is capable of doing on the terms fixed by Government, no relief shall be afforded him at the public expense during the continuance of such refusal.

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
15th February 1877.

No. 117.

Copy of the above of the Resolution to which it refers forwarded to
Government for information.

(By Order,)

(Signed) T. C. HOPE,
Addl. Secy. to the Govt. of India.

No. 522.

ORDER THEREON, 15th February 1877, No. 522.

Miscellaneous.

Communication to Revenue Department
and to all Collectors.

(True Extract.)

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

To the Board of Revenue.
" all Collectors.
" the Financial Department.

Extract from the Proceedings of the Government of Bombay in the Public Works Department,
No. 50 E.—158, dated 25th January 187

RESOLUTION.—By Resolution No. 26 E.—93 of the 25th instant, His Excellency the Governor in Council approved of certain orders issued by the Revenue Commissioner, Southern Division, prescribing the mode of dealing with labourers employed on relief works, who might think fit to leave them from dissatisfaction with the rules laid down by Government for regulating the rates of wages.

2. By those orders, the Village Officers were directed to "take care that no person is allowed, through obstinacy, to die of starvation." This injunction was quite in conformity with the principle on which the Government was then acting, viz., that no person was to be allowed to die of starvation, if it was in the power of the Government to prevent it. But His Excellency in Council now observes that, in the instructions issued by the Government of India to Sir R. Temple on the 16th instant, the following very important qualification is introduced: "Even for an object of such paramount importance as the preservation of life, it is obvious that there are limits which are imposed upon the facts with which we have to deal."

3. The letter in question does not lay down any general principles by which the District Officers should be guided in refusing the aid needed to preserve life; and His Excellency in Council would view with satisfaction the issue of supplementary instructions on that point. In the meantime, however, he feels convinced that in no case could assistance be more properly refused, than in that of a man who wilfully and deliberately refuses to render the reasonable equivalent demanded by the Government for the means of subsistence which it is ready to afford him.

4. It is therefore, ordered, in modification of the instructions issued by the Revenue Commissioner, that in the case of an individual refusing to perform work which he is capable of doing, on the terms fixed by Government, no relief shall be afforded him at the public expense during the continuance of such refusal.

FROM

THE HON'BLE T. C. HOPE, C.S.I.,
Additional Secretary to the Government of India

TO

THE SECY. TO THE GOVT. OF BOMBAY, P. W. DEPT.

Dept. of Revenue,
Agriculture & Commerce.
Agriculture & Horticulture.

Dated Calcutta, the 2nd February 1877.

SIR,

THE attention of the Government of India has been drawn to the Resolution of the Government of Bombay, No. 50 E—158, dated 25th January. This Resolution begins by referring to previous orders of the Bombay Government under which "the village officers were directed to take care that no person is allowed through obstinacy to die of starvation;" it says that "this injunction was quite in conformity with the principle on which the Government was then acting, viz., that no person was to be allowed to die of starvation if it was in the power of the Government to prevent it;" and the Government of Bombay then proceeds to modify its former instructions. The new orders are accompanied by observations which imply that there are circumstances in which relief is to be withheld, even though it may be necessary to save life, and the instructions lately issued to Sir Richard Temple by the Government of India are quoted as the reason for this change of policy.

2. The views of the Government of India appear to have been seriously misunderstood. The Government of Bombay seems to think that the Government of India has laid down the doctrine that there are certain circumstances in which the Government ought to allow people to die of starvation, although it may be in its power to prevent it. The Resolution to which reference has been made states that the instructions to Sir Richard Temple "do not lay down any general principles by which the district officers should be guided in refusing the aid needed to preserve life, and that His Excellency in Council would view with satisfaction the issue of supplementary instructions on that point." It cannot be stated too strongly that the Government of India has never had any such views as those which the Government of Bombay supposes it to have expressed, and it is now necessary further to explain the opinion which His Excellency in Council actually holds, and which he believes have been fully understood by Sir R. Temple, in whose instructions it was endeavoured to state them with clearness and precision.

3. The second paragraph of those instructions contains a general statement of the principles by which our policy ought to be guided. Those principles may be summarised and repeated as follows: "It is no more the duty of the Government to prevent all distress in times of famine than in other times, but it is the duty of the Government to make no effort which may be possible to save the people from starvation and from an extreme of suffering dangerous to life." Paramount as this duty is, as fully as is accepted by the Government of India, it is obvious that it could not be adequately performed if it involved the necessity of an expenditure beyond the power of the country to bear, and which might go far to render the future good government of India an impracticable task. This may seem to be a truism, but it was necessary to state it, because it has often been assumed that the Government was placed in this dilemma, viz., that in times of severe famine it must either allow people to die of starvation, or incur expenditure which might ultimately bring ruin upon the country. The Government of India has denied that any such dilemma exists, and has confidently asserted that the history of past famines shows that the duty of preventing loss of life and extreme suffering can be efficiently discharged without incurring charges disastrously heavy. This opinion, however, will only be justified if every effort be made to prevent relief being given to those who do not actually require it, and to exact the application of the strictest practicable tests and rules, so that no more relief shall be afforded than is absolutely necessary to ensure the fulfilment of the object in view.

4. In laying down instructions of a purely official character relative to the management of relief operations by the officers of Government, the Governor General in Council thought it out of place and unnecessary to give assurances of his sympathy with suffering, or to dwell on his determination, which he thought had already been made sufficiently clear, that no one shall die of starvation if it be in the power of the Government to prevent it. In regard to the duties which humanity imposes upon the Government, there has not been, and will not be, any change of policy. We say that human life shall be saved at any cost and at any effort; no man, woman, or child shall die of starvation. Distress they must often suffer; we cannot save them from this. We wish we could do more, but we must be content with saving life and preventing extreme suffering, and it taxes all our efforts and all our resources to accomplish even this. In regard, therefore, to the enquiry which has been made by the Government of Bombay as to the "general principles by which the district officers should be guided in refusing the aid needed to preserve life," the reply must be that there are no such principles, and that there are no circumstances in which such aid can be refused.

5. The Resolution of the Government of Bombay No. 26E-93 of 1877, dated the 18th January, "approved of certain orders issued by the Revenue Commissioner, Southern Division, prescribing the mode of dealing with labourers employed on relief works, who might think fit to leave them from dissatisfaction with the rules laid down by Government for regulating the rate of wages." The Governor General in Council agrees with the Government of Bombay in generally approving the Revenue Commissioner's orders; but this approval is subject to one exception. By those orders the village officers were required to watch all persons who had left the works, and to "take care that no person is allowed through obstinacy to die of starvation." The Governor General in Council does not believe that any one ever died of starvation through obstinacy, and certainly no rules for dealing with such cases can be necessary. Under almost all circumstances which, if the Government of India is rightly informed, are likely to hold good in the distressed districts of the Bombay Presidency, where the population is almost wholly agricultural, and accustomed to field and other manual labour, the rule laid down by the Government of Bombay appears quite proper. That rule is that "in the case of an individual refusing to perform work which he is capable of doing on the terms fixed by Government, no relief shall be afforded him at the public expense during the continuance of such refusal." The result of such refusal will certainly, in the case of agricultural labourers, not be death from starvation. The Bombay Government, however, will doubtless bear in mind the fact that, unless circumstances are very different in Bombay from those in the Bengal

Presidency, there may be exceptional cases which will require exceptional treatment. There is, for example, the case of respectable women who appear in public, and for whom the ordinary labour-tests are altogether unsuitable. There may also be men who on account of caste or other prejudice or feelings could rather than take employment on relief works. Ordinary cases will evidently not apply to such cases, which must be dealt with as they arise. These views in regard to the main principle involved, identical with those stated in paragraph 3 of the instructions to Sir R. Temple, which distinctly contemplate the possible existence of circumstances under which it may be necessary to give relief, are in full accordance with the application of the ordinary tests.

6. I am to state in conclusion that, while the Governor General in Council regrets that his views in regard to the duty of sparing no efforts to save life should have been misunderstood, he feels sure that there is really no difference of opinion between the two Governments on this subject. He is satisfied that the Bombay Government and its officers are as anxious and as determined as he is himself, that no loss of life shall occur which can be prevented by the Government. The Governor General in Council notices at the same time with much satisfaction the efforts which are being made to prevent the relief works from becoming too attractive, and to prevent relief being given to those who do not really require it.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient Servant,

sgd T. C. Hope

Addl. Secretary to the Government of India.

CV-117

Copy of the above and of the Resolution to which it refers, forwarded to the Government of Madras for information

By order

T. C. Hope

Addl. Secretary to the Government of India

7. N^o 370
 Received 1877. Sept
 GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
 DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE,
 AGRICULTURE, AND COMMERCE.

AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE
 Famine.

To
 THE SECY. TO THE GOV^t. OF
 BOMBAY, P. W. DEPT.

No. 116.

Dated Calcutta, the 2nd February 1877.

Recd 9 - En 1

Copy of letter addressed to Bombay
 Govt. regarding their Resolution on
 the policy of the Govt. of India in regard to
 Famine
 in relation.

No 698

Communicated to the
 P. W. Dept. & to the
 Collector
 (15/2/77)

J. H. Cantle

15 Feb 1877

And to the O. & S. D. of the
 Local Collector

The Financial Secy

SUBJECT.

Undersigned to the Govt.

Government Central Press, - No. 960, B. A. & C. - 22-77.

Received from the Secy
 of the Govt. of India

90-15 February/77 No 698.