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TAMIL NADU ARCHIVES

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU

Revenue DEPARTMENT

G.O. No.
B.P. No.

919A

Press
Mis.

Dated

2. 3. 1877

197

Not to be folded or roughly handled

919A

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
3rd March 1877.*

No. 121A. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 23rd February 1877, No. 823:—

Read the following letter from R. E. NORFOR, Esq., Executive Engineer, Salem Division, to C. T. LONGLEY, Esq., Collector of Salem, dated 15th February 1877, No. 5-1,000.

WITH reference to your demi-official note, and our conversation on the subject of the working of the contract or task-work system in the execution of famine relief works, it would perhaps be as well if I put down on paper exactly what my views in the matter are; and as I have the experience of eighteen years' service in the Public Works Department, it may be assumed that I am pretty well acquainted with the advantages or disadvantages attending the various systems adopted in the execution of public works.

2. There are three systems for obtaining work, the relative merits of which may here be discussed:—

(1.) The daily cooly system where large gangs are employed under the supervision of petty Maistries, Gumastahs, &c., who are supposed to see that the coolies do not idle; the coolies being paid daily, bi-weekly, or weekly, as the case may be, by Paymasters, necessarily entrusted with large sums of money for the purpose of making regular payments according to nominal rolls.

(2.) The system of giving the contracts to village officials, viz., Monigars and Munsifs, at fixed estimated rates.

(3.) The system of giving out the contracts to a large number of independent petty contractors (not belonging to the villages) with moderate means to undertake the execution of two or three works each at fixed estimated rates.

3. The object aimed at is, I presume, to give employment to all those who are absolutely in need of State relief, and who would be in danger of starvation if not supported by Government.

4. To begin with the first system, all I can say is it has already had a very fair trial when relief works were first started, and has proved a complete failure. I can show that under this system works estimated at Rupees 400 have cost close upon 4,000 Rupees, the disadvantage of this system is not confined to the extreme costliness of the work; it is a fact beyond dispute that hundreds go away after having worked without being paid at all, and there is really an unfair amount of temptation thrown in the way of the Paymaster over whose transactions there is but nominal control. I can instance a case which came under my personal observation at Serukalay. Returning to my tent one evening after inspection duty my passage was completely obstructed by 2 or 300 men, women, and children, miserable-looking wretches, who complained that they had been working a whole fortnight and were sent away without any cooly; the Paymaster, who, I observed, had been paying coolies all day, was still at that duty. I worked my way up to him through a mass of people, and there I saw the Paymaster, about as intelligent a man of that class as you are likely to meet, with a heap of rupees, annas, and pias in front of him, but in a hopeless state of confusion; he could not make head nor tail of the nominal rolls; had no idea who had been paid or who had not been paid; thought he had paid some several times over, and in self-defence drove a lot of them away, and refused paying any more.

5. There were over 1,000 people collected for payment, and even for this small number the nominal rolls and accounts appeared to have been very imperfectly kept; the fact is the work is of a novel character and the establishments employed were not equal to it, though I believe the best arrangement possible was made by selecting the Paymaster from the staff of Gumastahs employed in the Taluq Cutcherry.

6. All Deputy Collectors and Tahsildars I have spoken to condemn this system *in toto*; though thousands flock to the works on this system, which they find easy, a large number, and perhaps those who are feeble and most need relief, do not obtain it.

7. The second system is better than the first; but there are objections to the adoption of this system too, and the Special Deputy Collector, Rajagopala Chariar, who must possess considerable experience, fully recognized the objections put forward by me when in consultation with you on this subject. I believe myself that it would not meet the requirements of the case to adopt this system: no doubt the Munsifs will get the work done; it is, of course, an understood thing that these village authorities in a measure rule the laboring class of their village as their subjects, and though these may be ill-treated and defrauded by the headman of the village, it is as much as their future existence is worth to complain against them. I have, therefore, no doubt that under this system the labor will be enforced, and that the gainers will really be the contractor (Munsif), and many a poor wretch will be starved and dare not say a word against their headman, when either the Public Works Department or the Revenue authorities visit the works.

8. A proof sufficient that this system is likely to be terribly abused, is the fact that the village gratuitous relief system has had to be abandoned, because the village *Not exactly.* They did and always would keep authorities could not be depended upon them *alive.* even to feed the poor half-dying wretches.

9. The third system is that which I have adopted so far as the execution of earthwork is concerned. I have a large number of petty contractors employed over the range, each man is given a group of three or four works as near together as possible. I pay the contractors 2 Annas a cubic yard for what in ordinary seasons I should pay from 1 Anna 2 Pies to 1 Anna 6 Pies, according to lead and lift. I have inquired at every work what the contractors exact from the coolies, and find they get ten cubic yards where lumps are broken up, and twelve cubic yards where the contractor has to employ separate coolies for this purpose. I have been over nearly all the works in progress and have heard no complaints from the coolies; the fact that a large proportion of the people employed are old and not usually seen on such work is a favorable feature, and shows that the contractors employ all who come for work. I have observed, also, all through that the village authorities keep a sharp look-out over the contractor and the work he is doing, as they have not shown themselves slow at finding fault and showing up any imperfections in the work; some of their complaints have been reasonable, and I make it a point to encourage a careful watch on their part—being the tanks of their village they naturally consult their own interest in being vigilant. If the coolies are not fairly paid and properly treated by the contractors, I know, as a fact, they do not hesitate to howl out when the Dorai goes on the work; but I have no hesitation in saying there has been a singular absence of all complaint, and the people are working contentedly and satisfactorily.

10. All my works are carefully sectioned out with ropes and pegs, and the pits are marked out in one uniform line admitting of easy measurement, and I have two independent European subordinates to help me to measure up and check measure the Overseer's measurements.

11. The contractors pay, some once a week (*in advance*), some twice a week, and in many instances *daily*, and as far as I have been able to estimate the earnings of a gang so employed (they arrange the gangs themselves, probably many of one family in a gang), the division of earnings I arrive at is a man earns 1 Anna 9 Pies to 2 Annas, a woman 1 Anna to 1 Anna 3 Pies, and a child 9 Pies.

FORWARDED for the information of the Board and Government. The system advocated by Mr. Norfor is working excellently, and, as Mr. Norfor has shown, is much better than payment by daily wage. The enclosed are the revised rates at which payments are made.

SALEM, (Signed) C. T. LONGLEY,
19th February 1877. Collector.

ENCLOSURE No. 1.

Rates at which Work will be paid.

Earthwork.—Ten cubic yards a rupee thrown up at site, eight if carried to a distance of not more than fifteen yards; 3 pies additional for every ten yards in excess of fifteen yards.

2. Gravel dug and heaped up at the quarry, eight cubic yards a rupee.

3. Gravel dug and taken to the road-side, if the distance is within fifty yards, six cubic yards a rupee.

4. Gravel dug and taken to the road-side, if the distance is above fifty and within 100 yards, four cubic yards a rupee.

5. Prickly-pear, twenty-four square yards a rupee buried or burnt.

6. Pricking roads and spreading gravel, sixty-four square yards a rupee.

7. Removing brushwood, from thirty-two to five and-a-half squares per rupee, a square being equal to 100 square feet.

Rates of Daily Wages.

	RS.	A.	P.
Male	0	1	6
Female	0	1	3
Child	0	0	9

N.B.—Daily wages are to be paid upon small village relief works where the gangs are small.

(Signed) C. T. LONGLEY,
Collector.

17th February 1877.

(Signed) P. MONTGOMERIE, Major, R.E.,
District Engineer.

SUBMITTED to Government.

2. The system adopted by the Collector and District Engineer seems to work very satisfactorily, and the daily earnings approximate closely to the famine scale of wages.

3. But under the recent orders of Government task-work is to be enforced on all works, though existing arrangements for contract and piece-work are not to be

disturbed. The Collector will arrange to carry out the task-work system on all works undertaken hereafter. The organization in the district has been on the whole good hitherto, and the Board are sure that the district officers will have no difficulty in managing a task-work system.

(True Copies and Extract.)

(Signed) H. E. STOKES,
Secretary.

No. 121B. ORDER THEREON, 3rd March 1877, No. 919A.

Miscellaneous.

RECORDED.

(True Extract.)

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

To the Board of Revenue.
„ the Financial Department.

Exd. A. Grubert.

Am. May

Revenue Department.

20/11/3

Proceedings of the Board of Revenue.

Dated 23rd February 1877.

No. 823.

Read the following:—

No. 5/1000

From

The Executive Engineer
Salem Division.

To

The Collector of Salem.

Sir,

With reference to your semi official note, and our conversation on the subject of the working of the contract or task work system in the execution of famine Relief Works, it would perhaps be as well if I put down on paper exactly what my views in the matter are; and as I have the experience of

Relief Works in the Salem District.—According to the Proceedings regarding the working of — and directing the Collector to carry out the task work system on all works under his inspection.

REVENUE DEPT. NO. 823 B.

MAR. 12/11/1877.

MARCH.

G.O., 3rd March 1877. No. 9124.

THE BOARD OF REVENUE.

REVENUE.

GOVT. OF (1877) SUMMER.

of 18 years service in the Public Works Department it may be assumed that I am pretty well acquainted with the advantages or disadvantages attending the various systems adopted in the execution of Public Works.

2. There are three systems for obtaining work the relative merits of which may here be discussed:—

1st The Daily Cooly system, where large gangs are employed under the supervision of petty Moaishties, Gymastahs &c who are supposed to see that the coolies do not idle; the
Coolies

coolies being paid daily bi-weekly ^{or} weekly as the case may be, by paymasters, necessarily entrusted with large sums of money for the purpose of making regular payments according to Nominal Rolls.

2^{ndly} The system of giving the contractors to village Officials viz Moaingars and Moonsiffs at fixed estimated rates.

3^{rdly} The system of giving out the contractors to a large number of independent petty contractors (not belonging to the villages) with moderate means to undertake the execution of 2 or 3 works each at fixed estimated rates.

3. The object aimed at is
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I presume, to give employment
to all those who are absolutely
in need of State Relief, and who
would be in danger of starvation
if not supported by Government.

4. To begin with the first
system, all I can say is it
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where relief works were first started
and has proved a complete
failure; I can show that
under this system works estimated
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my personal observation at
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they had been working a
whole

whole fortnight and were sent away
without any ~~cool~~ the paymaster,
who, I observed, had been paying
coolies all day, was still at
that duty. I worked my way
up to him through a mass of
people and there I saw the pay-
-master about as intelligent
a man of that class as you
are likely to meet, with a heap
of rupees, annas and pice in
front of him, but in a hopeless
state of confusion, he could
not make head nor tail of the
nominal rolls, had no idea
who had been paid or who had
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5 There were over 1000 people
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for this small number the
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Chariar

Chariar who must possess considerable
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these may be ill-treated and
depraved by the Headman of
the village, it is as much
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a word against their Head
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8
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11. The contractors pay, some
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CD
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to 2s - a woman 1 to 1-3 and
a child 9 pice.

Salem Range office - I have seen
16th February 1877 } of R. E. Sturfor
Executive Engineer
[True Copy]

Forwarded for the information
of the Board and Government. The
system advocated by Mr. Sturfor
is working excellently, and as
Mr. Sturfor has shown, is much
better than payment by
daily wage. The enclosed are
The

the revised rates at which pay-
ments are made.

Takur Collis Office } 1204 C. F. Longley.
Takur 19th February }
1877 } Collector.

Enclosure

Rates at which work will be paid

Earth-Work - 10 cubic yards a Rupee
thrown up at site, & if carried to
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3 pie additional for every 10 yards in
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Gravel dug and heaped up at
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Gravel dug and taken to the road
side if the distance is within
50 yards 6 cubic yards a Rupee.
Gravel

919A
11
Gravel dug and taken to the road side
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Picking roads and spreading
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Rates of Daily Wages

	Rs.	A.	P.
Male	1	6	
Female	1	3	
Child			9

N.B. Daily wages are to be
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Relief Works where the
Gangs

Gangs are small.

Wm. L. Longley
Collector

Wm. P. Montgomery Major R.E.
District Engineer.

Submitted to Government

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919A
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True Copy Extract

Wm.

Secretary

To
The Additional Secretary
to Government P. D.

Wm.
Copy D

There are no more
 sent out in at -
 furnished with
 27/9/97

27/9/97
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Rev: 15) 8pm
 7.8.875
 Meetings of the
 Board of Revenue

23rd of February
 1877
 23-2
 24--

Submitting a letter
 from the Secy of
 Police regarding the
 working of the
 big tanks and re-
 -vised heads of wages
 and drawing the
 Secy to carry out
 the fact work done
 on all works under -
 the Secy of Police
 24/9/97