

(1) Number of pages 2
(2) Date of repair 27.3.86
(3) Initials of the Referencer hmb

TAMIL NADU ARCHIVES

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU

Revenue DEPARTMENT

G.O. No.	2017	Press.
B.P. No.		Mis.
Dated	17.8.1878	197

99
Not to be folded or roughly handled

MINUTE BY THE HON. SIR W. ROBINSON, K.C.S.I.

I HAVE not seen the Government of India letter, dated 8th February, No. 1,138, but I learn from the Secretary's note that it invites expression of views as to any additional points to be inquired into by the Famine Commission—other than those indicated in the Secretary of State's Despatch.

2. So far as this Presidency is concerned, the very fatal issue of the calamity with our evident failure to meet it adequately, and the causes of that failure, must, I fear, engage the Commission's attention in the interest of the future, for whatever may have been the saving of human life alluded to in paragraph 2 of the Secretary of State's Despatch, however laudable the exertions made, facts incontrovertibly prove that the loss of human life has been enormous throughout the famine,—a fact which has been kept sufficiently and steadily before our eyes by the monthly mortuary returns,—defective though these necessarily are, and is corroborated by the partial census recently taken. Results so wide of our hopes will require minute and impartial investigation in order that preventable disaster may be avoided in the future.

3. Again, prices have placed sufficient and wholesome food absolutely beyond the reach of the poorer and laboring classes throughout a long period, and the effects of this fact must command special inquiry.

4. The existence and severity of famine and the adequacy as well as the nature of the administration of its relief have no true test except the death-rate, and this test must be faced, if anything like a trustworthy lesson is to be learnt, for the future from the calamity through which the population of South India has passed. The death-rate, together with the true state of prices, wherever the poor were to be found, must become the gauge of the sufficiency or otherwise of those measures of relief, which, it is assumed, are the duty of the Government.

5. On paragraph 8 of the Secretary of State's letter, I would remark that I earnestly trust that the inquiry of the Commission will extend beyond what I will call "working a famine,"—getting a full *quid pro quo* for relief given to a famine-stricken and enfeebled poor,—for I think that our mortuary facts have proved beyond cavil that hard work (often untimely) in great tasked-gangs is not a paucity for those famished and lingering multitudes—of varied habits of life and calling, which a great tropical famine develops—more especially as respects women and children. The management of works is perhaps the easiest part of the management of famine; they are not one and the same thing as may perhaps be too readily assumed, for on works there ought, of course, to be no famine or abnormal mortality—that lies outside these escapes, where real unassisted famine may exist notwithstanding. The so-called "distance-test" and other things which, however unwittingly harass a famine-stricken population at such times, will doubtless command investigation at the hands of the Commission, but their attention should be specially invited to them.

6. The manner of gratuitous relief or aid, too, will require strict investigation in the light of mortuary facts and of the conditions and instincts of Indian populations. I do not myself hesitate to traverse a too indiscriminate policy of large unhealthy closed "camps" in preference to the relief in the villages and homes of the poor under a well-managed system of out-door or parish relief.

7. There is one point with regard to paragraph 9 of the Secretary of State's communication to which the Commission's attention should be specially invited—with reference to the mortality that has occurred. I have already alluded to it; it is this:—Has private trade been an unalloyed success in the face of the fact that the outlying poor could not procure what it supplied at three or four times the price of their ordinary means of subsistence, and that large numbers of our population have perished from whatever cause during the prevalence of famine and prohibitive prices? Such questions are exceedingly difficult of solution,—questions on which I should not

at present venture an opinion with reference to the danger of interfering largely with the ordinary operations of trade; but they must be faced by the Commission in the interest of the future.

8. As regards paragraph 10 of this communication I would invite attention to the remarks which I made as to the administration of famine relief when the License Fee Bill was introduced into our Legislative Council. I believe that our highly-officialised administration of famine relief has not been wholly successful, and I think that throughout too great an isolation from the higher classes of the people in respect to the management of their poor and afflicted has characterised our administration, and has, perhaps, thrown us too much on the lower classes of the people as our co-adjutors, with the necessary consequences of dishonesty and want of sympathy.

9. In amplification of the Secretary of State's remarks on the irrigation works of South India in paragraph 12, and with reference to paragraph 18, attention will doubtless be invited to the condition of our great tank-system in this Presidency. On this point much interesting information was collected by the Commission which sat in 1869 and 1870, to whose report, &c., attention should be invited.

10. Some misapprehension is, I think, traceable in paragraph 17 of the Secretary of State's Despatch as respects assessment of land under wells, for in the main, land irrigated under private wells is now no longer liable to enhanced demand. The thing, however, requires further development in respect to certain limited classes of wells which are still subject to exceptional conditions. This matter is a most important one, for in seasons of drought, sub-soil waters prove a most valuable auxiliary, more especially as respects dry cultivation which with us is the staple of our agriculture and food-supply for the poorer classes.

11. In paragraph 19 the Secretary of State has drawn attention to the all-important matter of the alignments of an extension of our Railway system; and I think that this Government might consider this matter comprehensively and submit our collective views as to the requirements of the Presidency in this respect, to the Commission.

12. The other points to which the Commission's attention must be directed are the all-important improvement of agriculture in all its branches in this country, and the extension of agricultural and medical education; both of which are most important features of administration in alleviation of the consequences of recurring of tropical droughts.

13. All questions relating to the annual settlement of the Revenue demand for a year of exceptional drought, and affecting the suspension or strict enforcement of the demand at such times, will no doubt naturally and urgently occupy the attention of the Commission. For on these questions depend, in no small measure, the prospective prosperity or ruin of the poorer ryots in South India and the ready revival of the agricultural population after a season of drought and famine.

14. The finance of famine will require the careful attention and investigation of the Commission. I endeavoured to sketch briefly my own views on this important subject in my observations on the Bill above alluded to.

15. I am, for the reasons above stated, unaware whether observations are invited on the constitution of the Commission as affecting this Presidency. If the constitution is complete as it now stands, it is open to the remark that it is needlessly official and bureaucratic in its constitution; and I hold that it is absolutely necessary to use every endeavour to secure a seat upon it for one or two intelligent and able Natives of this Presidency, whose interests are so largely involved in the Commission's inquiries.

7th May 1878.

(Signed) W. ROBINSON.

From

C. A. Elliott Esq. C. S. I.

Secretary to the Famine Commission

To

The Chief Secretary to the
Government of Madras,
Revenue Department.

Dated Simla the 9th July 1878.

Sir,

I have the honour to request that you will be good enough with the permission of His Grace the Governor in Council, to forward to me for the use of the Famine Commission a copy of the report which contains the information on the tank system of the Madras Presidency collected by the Commission which sat in 1869 and 1870. The report is referred to in para 9 of Mr W. Robinson's minute dated the 7th May last.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

C. Elliott
Secretary to the Famine Commission

Warner 1878 Sept

N^o 3044

From

C. A. Elliott Esq. C.S.
Secretary to the
Famine Commission

Dated 9th July 1878
Recd. No. 5

N^o 66

S. L. C. No. 2017 - 17 August 1878

Requesting to be
furnished with a copy of
the report which contains
the information on the tank
system of the Madras Presy
collected by the Commission
which sat in 1869 and 1870

gent. me
replied
to the
Commissioner
for the
Madras
Presy
17 Aug 1878

Ind. Secy. and Secy. to Govt
20/7/78

27

N^o 2017

20/7/78

The Secretary to the
Famine Commission

Sir,

In compliance with the
request contained in your
letter of the 9th July 1878 No 66,
I am directed by His Grace
the Governor in Council to
forward a copy of the Report
of the Commissioner's ap-
pointed in connection with
the organization of the Pub-
lic Works Department which
contains the information on
the tank system of the
Madras Presidency.

W. M.

17 August 1878

Reserve 1878 Defects

by J. H. Jones (1878)

No. 2017-1

To The Secretary to the
Hammie Commission

Dated 17 August 1878. —

Res. Jones