

(1) Number of pages 3

(2) Date of repair

(3) Initials of the Referencer

TAMIL NADU ARCHIVES

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU

Revenue. DEPARTMENT

G.O. No.	<u>238. 281</u>	Press.
B.P. No.		Mis.
Dated	<u>15-1-1877</u>	197

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Archives 1-5,806-24-2-78.

Handwritten mark

No. 3,184.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF REVENUE, dated 14th December 1876.

Read endorsement of Government, dated 2nd December 1876, No. 2,020.

Read the following letter from W. LOGAN, Esq., Collector of Malabar, to the Hon. W. HUDLESTON, Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, dated Calicut, 29th November 1876, No. 90 :—

I HAVE the honor to forward a letter, dated 28th instant, from the Honorary Secretary of the Planters' Association in South Wynaad to your address.

2. I have also consulted the District Engineer on the subject therein referred to, viz. :—

(a) the apprehended consequences so far as they affect Wynaad of —

(1) the prevailing scarcity of grain ;

(2) the stoppage of all but the most necessary expenditure on public works ;
and

(b) the measures to be undertaken for alleviating the apprehended distress among the coffee estate coolies.

3. So far as the prevailing scarcity of grain is concerned, I see no reason to apprehend that the Wynaad markets lying so close to the coast and connected with the ports of Calicut and Tellicherry by good roads, will ever be insufficiently supplied with grain. That prices will run high is to be expected ; but so far as I can at present see, I do not think that prices will rise much higher than they are at present, unless, of course, there is a failure of supply from abroad. A week ago, the price of rice (which by the way is not in ordinary years the staple food of the estate coolies) was only a little higher than it usually is in the Wynaad markets. Raggy, which is usually the staple food of the coolies, is of course much dearer than it usually is, owing to the scantiness of the crops in Mysore. The coolies have taken to consuming rice ; and I may mention, as a fact, repeatedly brought to my notice in a recent tour, that they prefer purchasing rice even if raggy is available, and even if they can obtain for 1 Rupee two measures more of raggy than of rice.

4. There is no distress at present in Wynaad, because every available cooly is at present busily engaged on good wages in picking the coffee crop ; but (and the fact should be noted) the coolies are, of course, unable in this season to lay by out of their wages the same amount that they usually do ; that they are at present saving something is undoubted, but it is much less than usual, and it will suffice for their support for a very much shorter time, when they are thrown out of employ after the coffee crop has been picked. The planters, who know their own interests best, are extremely loath to discharge coolies even during the seasons of the year when there is least work for them to do, but (as pointed out in paragraph 3 of Mr. Winterbotham's letter) it is an undoubted fact that, chiefly owing to the coffee leaf-disease, the generality of the planters find themselves in such a position financially that they will not be able to afford to do what it is manifestly their interest to do in a season like this, viz., to find employment for their coolies all through the dry months of the year, and so tempt them to settle permanently in Wynaad.

5. This last point deserves, by the way, more detailed notice here. I had the honor to submit to you in my letter, No. 78, dated 12th ultimo, my views on the labor question in Wynaad, and I therein brought prominently to the notice of Government

that one of the chief obstacles to the success of the coffee industry was the insufficient local supply of labor. A labor law would be quite unnecessary if local labor abounded. The policy of Government should, therefore, be to encourage in every way the Canarese laborers to come and settle permanently in the country, and *this* in the present season of scarcity, there is more hope of accomplishing than in ordinary years, because, as remarked by the District Engineer, whose experience of Wynaad is very extensive, and who has just completed a tour in that part, the proportion of women to men among the immigrant coolies is, this season, very much larger than usual, and the coolies are this year also, contrary to custom, bringing their children with them. In fact, whole families are coming in instead of bands of men alone. The reason is very natural; the pressure is already being felt in Mysore, and the men bring their families with them because they can feed them more easily in Wynaad than in their own country.

6. The object, both of the Government and of the planters is, therefore, to keep them here now that they are coming in, and this, no doubt, would be much facilitated if the Government were to come to the planters' aid, and endeavor to find employment for the coolies through the dry months.

7. But apart from the question of policy, another and more pressing aspect of the question should always be kept in mind, viz., that the coolies have, by bringing their families with them, severed to some extent their connection with their own country, and it is extremely doubtful if they will return thither so soon as they are thrown out of employ on the estates. This point engaged my attention during my recent tour, and further inquiries on the subject are still being made. The conclusion in my own mind, at present, is that a large proportion of the coolies *will* return to their own country, particularly about the time of the gouri festival which takes place in March; but a much larger proportion than usual will remain in Wynaad, and those who do go will return much sooner than is customary. And, under these circumstances, I think we ought to be prepared to give employment to those who would otherwise starve. Moreover, it must be remembered that the pressure in Mysore is likely to increase rather than to diminish as time goes on; and we may on any day be called upon to provide relief for a large influx of starving people attracted to Wynaad by exaggerated reports of the good wages usually obtained there, and of the comparative cheapness of food. I may here mention that I have already made arrangements for watching narrowly the traffic in grain by sea and land, and the establishment thus employed, as well as all the Tahsildars, have orders to watch the movements of population in search of work and food. Observations are being made in Wynaad at 1, Bavalli bridge, 2, Sultan's Battery bazaar, and 3, on the Tippakadu and Ootacamund roads at Gudalur. The results will be summarized weekly in my telegraphic season reports, and I shall, therefore, be in a position to afford the earliest information to Government of any such movements of population. Meanwhile, it is manifest that we must be prepared with some definite scheme for giving relief so soon as it is required.

8. Passing to the next point, viz., the stoppage of expenditure on public works, the Honorary Secretary refers to recent orders of the District Engineer affecting south and south-east Wynaad alone. North Wynaad being in the Tellicherry Circle, the orders in question do not touch that portion of the talug. These orders were rendered necessary in consequence of the instructions contained in Board's

Proceedings, No. 2,534, dated 9th October 1876, published with G.O., Financial Department, No. 1,962, dated 4th November 1876. In Board's Proceedings, Miscellaneous No. 10,124, dated 21st November 1876, communicating the above Government Order to me, I was directed to at once take measures "for restricting expenditure in the current year." Meanwhile, however, and in anticipation of the receipt of such orders, the District Engineer had, from the 1st instant, already stopped *all* expenditure from the Road Fund in the whole of the Calicut Circle, except only on such works as were absolutely necessary. In the Board's Proceedings, No.—, dated 24th instant, received yesterday, the stringent orders above given were reiterated, and an emergent meeting of the Local Fund Board has been summoned for Tuesday next to consider the question.

9. This sudden collapse is solely due to the withdrawal in July last of the large sum of Rupees 85,088 from the Calicut Circle Funds to meet Provincial Fund expenditure. That sum was erroneously supposed by the Board of Revenue to be the unallotted balance at the credit of the Road Fund on 1st April 1876; whereas the unallotted balance of that fund on that date was in reality only Rupees 11,000. It seems to be very hard that this Circle should alone be made to suffer under such circumstances, and more especially in such a year of scarcity as the present. The manifestly equitable plan would have been, on discovery of the mistake, to have withdrawn from this Circle only the actual unallotted balance on the 1st April, viz., Rupees 11,000, and to have distributed the rest of the sum, viz., Rupees 74,000 odd by small retrenchments over all the Local Fund Circles in the Presidency.

and have had the effect of enabling this Circle to complete the repairs of the whole sum from this one Circle has been simply disastrous. I trust that it may still be possible to avert the extreme hardship of the case by distributing the amount over all the Circles in the Presidency, and I press this point the more because it seems at present as if other Circles were very largely benefiting by the immense expenditure in them of Imperial Funds on famine relief works.

10. As it is, the coolies thus thrown out of employ by the Public Works Department have gone to throng the already sufficiently supplied labor market and to aggravate the situation, especially in Wynaad. Whereas had the source of employment been open to them, I should not have been under any particular fear of distress in Wynaad for at least two months more, as there are still some 27,000 Rupees unexpended in the Calicut Range, of which the larger portion would have been, in due course, spent in Wynaad.

11. I have the honor, in conclusion, on this point very respectfully to suggest that the retrenchment may be reconsidered, and, if possible, withdrawn; or at least that the sum *erroneously* debited to this Circle may be spread over all the Circles of the Presidency.

12. As regards the measures proposed by the planters for the relief of the coolies, I have consulted the District Engineer, and we both agree that there will be no difficulty in efficiently organizing large relief works. We also are both agreed that the proper way to effect this is by accepting the liberal offer made by the planters as set forth in paragraph 7 of the enclosed letter, and by giving out piece work to be paid for in the usual way. The Wynaad roads will never be in a satisfactory state

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till they have been metalled and remetalled, and metalled again. The breaking metal for the roads (to be paid for by measurement), therefore, at once suggests itself as the most useful, and, at the same time, the most effective way of utilizing the labor. The ghauts and those portions of the main lines that lie adjacent to the estate more especially, I may mention, that portion of the Tambercherry line lying between the head of the ghaut and Kalpathi, that portion of the Mupynaad District road lying between Choondale and Meypadi and the Terioot road, all are in want of heavy metal ling. There is earthwork also to be done on the Terioot line, and, as Canarese coolies understand blasting work, they can be also usefully employed in that way.

13. If it should be found possible, as suggested in paragraph 11 above, to redistribute the large sum *erroneously* debited against this Circle, so as to admit of the public works being resumed at an early date, I am of opinion, after consulting the District Engineer, that a sum of Rupees 30,000 should be allotted for relief work in Wynaad in what remains of the current official year. If the suggestion cannot be adopted, we are of opinion that Rupees 50,000 will be required; and I have the honor to solicit that that sum may be speedily put at my disposal. The Government may rely on the money being usefully and efficiently spent.

ENCLOSURE No. 1.

From H. B. WINTERBOTHAM, Esq., Honorary Secretary, Wynaad Planters' Association, to the Hon. W. HUDLESTON, Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, dated Vythery, 28th November 1876.

I HAVE the honor to inform you that I am requested by the Committee of this Association to draw your attention to the fact that a very serious state of things will shortly obtain in this district, as a consequence of the scarcity now prevailing throughout the country.

2. Owing to the high prices ruling in Mysore we have this year had a far larger number of Canarese coolies than usual working on our plantations. These high prices having culminated in a regular famine, people are still flocking into Wynaad, and they will not, as is the usual custom, be able to return to their villages at the beginning of the year.

Grain from the western coast can be supplied here at moderate rates, and this is, of course, a great extra inducement for the Mysore people to come to Wynaad and to remain here for the present.

3. Unfortunately, for the last three years, partly owing to leaf-disease and partly to climatic influences, the crops throughout Wynaad have been very indifferent; so that planters have to be exceedingly cautious in their expenditure, and on the majority of estates none but the most necessary works can be carried on. It follows therefore that, though extremely loath to do so, we shall, unless Government come to our assistance, be compelled to refuse the coolies employment, and their only alternative will be distress and starvation in Wynaad, or a return to their famine-stricken villages.

4. We have been given to understand that all funds for public works in this district have been stopped. Under present circumstances, this is a step most deeply to be deplored, and one that is likely to prove most inimical to the interests of the district, and to the welfare of the people employed in it. The state of the communications throughout Wynaad, though improved, is still a source of constant trouble and difficulty to the planters, and were funds available more work could be done in this one season than has been accomplished in some years past, thus resulting in great good to the country and affording work and food to some thousands of coolies who would otherwise be forced to return to their villages to starve.

5. I have the honor, therefore, to request that you will lay these circumstances before His Grace the Governor in Council, and to hope that funds will be placed at the disposal of the Collector of Malabar for distribution by him on relief works in Wynaad.

6. I am here to point out, that it would be difficult to divert all the surplus labor to the Public Works Department, nor would the planters, in most cases, care to sever their connection with their own gangs, so that the funds should, as far as possible, be given for expenditure by the planters themselves, of course under the control of the Collector of the district.

7. I am further requested to particularize the following works, viz., the Ulopanad district road, on which the work has always been carried out by the planters. This is a line of much importance: a great deal of heavy work is now needed on it, and there are a very large number of coolies available. Another is the road from Vythery to Manantoddy *via* Terioot, which taps a large and important district. There is much work urgently needed on this road, numbers of people will be in want of employ, and the works could be easily attended to by the planters.

At the same time the Committee beg me to state that the planters will willingly undertake work any where in the neighborhood of their estates that the Collector may suggest, and that they will be most glad to assist in any way in their power by procuring food, providing shelter and tools for the coolies and supervising the work.

8. In conclusion, I would most respectfully point out to His Grace in Council that any funds to be of use should be granted immediately, as the work of picking the present coffee crops will soon be completed, and by the end of the current year work, or relief of some sort, will be absolutely necessary for the distressed laborers.

No. 2,020.

REFERRED to the Board of Revenue for their remarks.

To the Board of Revenue.

WITH reference to Mr. Logan's proposals for the organization of relief works in the Wynaad, the Board, whilst fully admitting the great advantage to the Planters and to the district of securing a permanent supply of labor, are of opinion that the Government with the present strain on the finances are not called upon to find work for the mere purpose of inducing the coffee coolies to remain during the slack season, when ordinarily they would return to their homes in Mysore. It is assumed that if they go back to Mysore they will starve, but this involves the supposition that the Mysore Government are more backward in their duty than the Madras Government, which the Board believe is not the case. The work proposed would, no doubt, be very useful, and the aid of the Planters would be very valuable for its execution; but at present Government cannot afford to undertake it, and the Board are of opinion that no inducement should be held out to the estate laborers to deviate from their usual habit of returning to their villages when the coffee season is over. To promise them employment on relief works would be tantamount to inviting them to remain.

2. Mr. Logan states that he has made arrangement for watching narrowly the movements of grain and of population, and has entertained some establishment for the purpose. The Board observe that similar proceedings on the part of the Collector of South Canara have been disapproved by Government, and have been discontinued; and the Collector of Malabar will be good enough to report at once and in detail what are the arrangements to which he refers, what establishments he has entertained, and how he proposes to pay them.

3. With regard to the large retrenchment made from the Provincial grant to the Calicut Circle, it would have been from the first, and is now impossible to make it good by retrenchment of the small grants left to other Circles; and it by no means follows that had the true unappropriated balance of the Calicut Circle been known when the retrenchment ordered by Government was being carried out, the deduction would have been confined to that amount of such balance. The Board, of course, first selected the Circles in which there were unappropriated funds, but this resource proved insufficient, and retrenchments of sanctioned grants for works have had to be made in many Circles. For such retrenchments, the enormous grants which have year by year been made to the Calicut Local Fund would have marked it as a fit subject, had not a large deduction from the grant already been made. Mr. Logan appears to think that the greater the grant, the greater the hardship in the retrenchment.

4. As to the way in which the error arose, the Board have already stated that the balance was taken from the Collector's account. The audited figures were not available at the time, but the large balance did not excite the Board's suspicions as they were aware that loan funds to a considerable amount had been drawn. The Board have now ascertained the nature of the adjustments with which the mistake appears to be connected. The sum of Rupees 55,000 odd was spent on loan fund works in 1874-75. The loan was not credited till 1875-76; and when the credit was made, the Examiner, Public Works Accounts, to bring the expenditure and receipts together, made a write-back entry; i. e., the outlay of 1874-75, (with the establishment charge thereon) was credited as a recovery, and again debited as expenditure of 1875-76. The Collector, in the accounts submitted to the Board for March 1876, credited the Rupees 77,510.

debit the expenditure. Hence his balance was, allowing for other adjustments, wrong by some 74,000 Rupees. It is possible that he was not fully advised of the adjustments, but the mistake cannot now be rectified.

(True Copies and Extract.)

W. H. French
Acting Secretary.

To the Chief Secretary to Government, Financial Department.
" Collector of Malabar.

Copy to the Secretary to Government, Revenue Department.

Exd. W. H. French

Board of Revenue,
MADRAS.

Proceedings, 14th Dec. 1876, No. 3,184.

Received

10. Jan 1877
10. Jan 1877

DECEMBER.
No. 3,184.

Relief Works—in Wynad, in Malabar District.—Submitting Board's views with reference to Collector's proposals for organization of—and the large retrenchment made from Provincial grant to Calicut Circle; and requesting that officer to report further regarding arrangements made by him to watch the movements of grain and population.

Rev. 1877
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1876.

W. H. French
10. Jan 1877