

Revenue (1897) Department.

PRESS SERIES.

G.O., No. 10.

DATED 7th January 1897

[Despatch Abstract.]

Coming to the Bd of Rev for information & guidance, letter from Govt of India re the execution of a full task in famine relief operations & the want of ways on Famine Test Works.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.	G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

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Enc. 2187
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Circular No. ^{3 F.}
77-1

FROM DENZIL IBBETSON, Esq., C.S.I., I.C.S.,
Secretary to the Government of India.

To
*The Secretary to the Government
of Madras.*

Department of Revenue and Agriculture.
Famines.

Dated Calcutta, the 21th December 1896.

SIR,

I AM directed to address you with respect to the importance of exacting a full task at all stages of relief operations. It has been found by experience in several provinces that officers in charge of test or relief-works when they are first opened in a district are often inclined to be too lax in the matter. In this early stage firmness in this respect is perhaps even more important than later on; otherwise the works fail to answer the purpose for which they are intended, of gauging the existence and character of suspected distress. It is probable that some thousands of labourers would, at any time when work is slack, be attracted by a Government work on which remunerative employment is offered; and it is found that when once labour has been attracted to a work, more especially if whole families have settled down upon it, it tends to stay there even after the actual necessity which brought it there has ceased. The District Officer must remember that at this stage his object is not to relieve famine, but to test the presence of it; not to appease hunger, but to find out whether people are hungry. A man who is out of employment and pinched will accept work for a pittance, and it is by offering work at a pittance that the District Officer may certainly tell whether a pinch exists. The Famine Codes give discretion to fix wages at test works which do not exceed famine wages, and in fixing his scale the District Officer will be guided by his knowledge of the general condition of the people of the tract. But if the wage is to be a test of scarcity, it must be a low wage. As soon as it is certain that there is scarcity, the usual famine wages will be given.

2. It is true, and must always be borne in mind, that persons who are not accustomed to the kind of labour required cannot at first perform what will, after a few weeks' practice, be a reasonable task for them. The task to be exacted from them must therefore be adjusted to their capacity. But it must *at all times* be a task which no person would willingly perform in exchange for the famine wage unless impelled thereto by want.

3. This principle lies at the root of all famine relief operations, and the Governor General in Council feels assured that it is fully accepted and understood by all Local Governments. But the magnitude of the relief which Government will shortly be called upon to supply is such, that His Excellency in Council feels constrained to ask that Local Governments will remind their

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Government {1897} of Madras.
REVENUE.

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officers of the importance of a principle which it is clear that in some cases they have failed to realise sufficiently.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
Wm. G. G. G.
Secretary to the Government of India.

Recd. } 1897. Enclosures
Regd. } Spare copies

G.O., No. 10, 7th January 1897.

JANUARY.

Famine Test Works.
Communicating to the Board of Revenue, for information and guidance, letter from the Government of India regarding the exaction of a full task in famine relief operations and the grant of wages on —.

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.
REVENUE DEPARTMENT.

READ—the following letter from DENZIL IBBETSON, Esq., C.S.I., I.C.S., Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Revenue and Agriculture (Famine), to the Secretary to the Government of Madras, dated Calcutta, the 24th December 1896, Circular No. 3-F—77-1:—

I am directed to address you with respect to the importance of exacting a full task at all stages of relief operations. It has been found by experience in several provinces that officers in charge of test or relief works when they are first opened in a district are often inclined to be too lax in the matter. In this early stage firmness in this respect is perhaps even more important than later on; otherwise the works fail to answer the purpose for which they are intended, of gauging the existence and character of suspected distress. It is probable that some thousands of labourers would, at any time when work is slack, be attracted by a Government work on which remunerative employment is offered; and it is found that when once labour has been attracted to a work, more especially if whole families have settled down upon it, it tends to stay there even after the actual necessity which brought it there has ceased. The District Officer must remember that at this stage his object is not to relieve famine, but to test the presence of it; not to appease hunger, but to find out whether people are hungry. A man who is out of employment and pinched will accept work for a pittance, and it is by offering work at a pittance that the District Officer may certainly tell whether a pinch exists. The Famine Codes give discretion to fix wages at test works which do not exceed famine wages, and in fixing his scale the District Officer will be guided by his knowledge of the general condition of the people of the tract. But if the wage is to be a test of scarcity, it must be a low wage. As soon as it is certain that there is scarcity, the usual famine wages will be given.

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ORDER—No. 10, Revenue, dated 7th January 1897.

Miscellaneous.

Communicated to the Board of Revenue for information and guidance.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) G. STOKES,
Ag. Secretary to Government.

To the Board of Revenue (Revenue Settlement,
Land Records and Agriculture).

Exd. C. M. Thambuswamy.

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