Revenue (1898) Department.

MISCELLANEOUS SERIES.

G.O., No. 1812

DATED 25th April.

[Despatch Abstract.]

Recording B.P. Considering that the practice of Revenue Officers furnishing reports on the Solvency of sureties offered by Postal officials should continue and directing the insertion in the Village Officers' Manual of a rule to the effect that such reports should be furnished in the prescribed form by village officers through the Tahsildars.

BACK PAPERS.

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

FURTHER PAPERS.

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

Revenue (1898) Department.

CURRENT No. 2890.

e 25/4/98

Order Recd No: 1812 d/25th April 1898.

From

Board of Revenue
Land Rev

Recorded.

No. 83

Dated 25.3.98

Received 15 April

Registered 16

Enclosures

Spare copies

SECRETARIAT
15 APR 98
REV. DEPT.

SUBJECT.

Considering that the practice of Rev: Officers furnishing reports on the solvency of sureties offered by Postal Officials should continue and directing the insertion in the Village Officers' Manual of a rule to the effect that such reports should be furnished in the prescribed form by village officers through the Tahsildar.

21/4/98

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As the practice has become inconvenient, there is perhaps no objection. But it seems wrong in principle

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13/4/98

(Rev Officers so called are not merely "Rev. Officers" they conduct the general admin & are the numerical referees for all information that requires authentication)

Sd/- 17/4/98

G.S.

BACK PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

FURTHER PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

REVENUE DEPARTMENT.

1898.

Board of Revenue

(Land Revenue),

MADRAS.

Printed April th.

Proceedings, No. 83, 25th March 1898.

MARCH.

Considering that the practice of Revenue officers furnishing reports on the solvency of sureties offered by Postal officials should continue, and directing the insertion in the Village Officers' Manual of a rule to the effect that such reports should be furnished in the prescribed form by village officers through the Tahsildar.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF REVENUE
(LAND REVENUE).

READ—the following letter from G. S. CURTIS, Esq., Officiating Postmaster-General, Madras, to the Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 4th December 1897, No. S.C.-2-87—26483:—

A practice has been in force for some time by which Superintendents and Inspectors of Post offices in the mufassal have been accustomed to obtain through Tahsildars information regarding the respectability and solvency of sureties of subordinate Postal officials. It is not known when the practice was first introduced, but it has undoubtedly been in force for many years; and it is a great convenience to the Postal Department inasmuch as it ensures that references to village officers receive proper attention and the replies are furnished with a proper degree of responsibility.

2. I have however recently been called on by the Acting Collector of Ganjám to state the authority for this practice, and on my stating my inability to quote any specific order on the subject I have been informed (*vide* letter No. 1553, dated 6th November 1897) that he cannot allow the time of Tahsildars and taluk officers to be taken up in this way, when they have more important work to do, and that in future all inquiries must be made by officers of the Postal Department direct. As this decision involves a departure from a long established custom and will occasion very serious inconvenience to the Postal Department, I have the honour to refer the matter for the orders of the Board of Revenue and to ask that, if possible, the Collector's order may be overruled and the existing practice allowed to remain unchanged.

3. In making this request I would point out that—

(i) It is very doubtful whether the inquiries involve a material increase of work either to the Tahsildar or to the taluk officer. The share of the former is probably confined to the signature of a few additional papers. The latter may not escape so easily but even he enquires personally into very few cases. In many cases the sureties must be personally known to him and in many more he merely passes on the village officer's report. It is not as if the number of references made to the Tahsildars was large. In the Ganjám district there are only 208 Postal officials all told who have to furnish security. Even supposing that all these persons have two sureties (which is unlikely as some have only one and some furnish security in cash) and that all inquiries are made through the Revenue authorities (which is not the case as in all towns and larger places the local postmaster makes inquiries himself), this would only give 416 sureties among three Tahsildars or an average of 139 apiece. An investigation into the circumstances of these few persons once a year cannot, I would submit, entail much extra work.

(ii) It would be very difficult for the Postal officials to obtain the necessary information from the village officers direct. It is easy for the Collector to say that failure on the part of the latter to reply to references will be suitably noticed, but it is a matter of common knowledge that of his many masters the village officer respects two only—the Tahsildar and the Chief Constable—and that requests for information from Postal officials would either be answered without any care or more probably ignored altogether. In the latter case it would be necessary to report the offenders to the Tahsildar, and then would follow a long correspondence between the Postal and Revenue officials which would cause the latter far more trouble than if the inquiry had passed through them in the first place.

(iii) Enquiries are, as I have mentioned above, already made by Postal officials direct in all towns and larger places where the Postal officials are of sufficient standing to be relied on. It is only in the villages where the postmasters are poorly paid men and in many cases not regular servants of the department at all that the aid of the Revenue authorities has to be invoked. In these places the Postal Department has

no agency on which it can depend. There are, it is true, Inspectors, but they are very few in number and are already overworked. In Ganjám, for instance, there are only two, one of whom has charge of part of Vizagapatam as well and they have between them to look after forty offices handling between 106 and 107 thousand rupees a month. It is quite impossible to pass this work on to them.

For these reasons I would ask that the Board may be moved to direct that the Revenue authorities in the Ganjám district should continue to render assistance to the same extent as heretofore. I may add that two other Collectors (those of South Arcot and Anantapur) who also raised this question have in deference to my representations stated their willingness to retain the present practice.

ENCLOSURE.

COPY of a communication from the Collector of Ganjám, to the Postmaster-General, Madras, dated 6th November 1897, No. 1553.

With reference to your letter No. S.C.-2-87—21637, dated 20th October 1897, I have the honour to state that I do not see why the time of Tahsildars and taluk officers should be taken up in this way when they have other more important work to do.

2. You say that you fear that village officers will not answer communications of your own subordinates, but it must be borne in mind that the work you ask for has to be done by taluk officers and no reliable report can be expected to be received from village officers even by taluk officers without personal verification, which Postal officers are quite as well able to conduct. Any refusal on the part of a village officer to supply information will be duly noticed.

Reference on the above, dated 7th December 1897.

Forwarded to the Collector of Ganjám for early remarks.

(Signed) R. C. C. CARR,
Secretary.

To the Collector of Ganjám, with letter and enclosure to be returned.

READ—the following letter from H. D. TAYLOR, Esq., I.C.S., Acting Collector of Ganjám, to the Secretary to the Commissioners of Land Revenue, dated Chatrapur, 17th December 1897, Dis. No. 2183-Eng.

Adverting to Board's Reference on Gl. No. 5904, dated 7th December 1897, forwarding for my remarks letter from the Postmaster-General, Madras, dated 4th December 1897, No. S.C.-2-87—26483, I have the honour to state that I consider that the work asked for is not work which can be legitimately thrown upon the Revenue Department. The grounds urged by the Postmaster-General are that the Postal supervising staff is too much taken up with other work to have time to devote to inquiries of this nature. The argument cuts both ways and I do not see why the time of the Revenue establishments which are already overworked should be taken up in working for a totally independent department. The proper course would, in my opinion, be to increase the strength of the Postal Inspection staff.

2. It will be observed that from question 6 of the form of answers to be filled up (copy enclosed), a reference on the part of the Revenue official to the Registration Department is involved. I consider that this should be made by the Postal Department direct.

3. I do not consider that the mere word of a village officer on the question of security can be accepted without some personal verification on the part of the taluk officer himself. This means time spent in travelling to places where otherwise his immediate attendance is not required, while it is assumed that the various post offices are inspected from time to time by the superior Postal officials, or it seems to me that the inquiry and references to Registration officers can be better conducted by those officers on the spot.

4. I have no objection to a mere continuance of the practice of forwarding references to village officer *through* the taluk official concerned, provided that it is not intended that the replies of the village officer should be checked by the taluk officer, but may be merely forwarded to the Postal authorities as received from the village officer. What I do object to is the present proposal which seems an attempt to shift the responsibility for testing the accuracy of the information supplied from the shoulders of the Postal Inspecting staff to the taluk officers.

5. If all that is wanted is a mere rough statement of a village officer without further verification there is no objection to mere communication between Postal and village officers passing through the taluk officer.

6. It will be observed that questions 4, 5, 6 of the form laid down by the Postmaster-General involve a great amount of inquiry and research If for these is substituted a single question "What is the reputed value of his moveable and immoveable property?" the form may be approved.

Failing this, it would be better to insist on Postmasters furnishing security in the form of Postal Savings Bank deposits.

The tendency of the present system is practically to shift the responsibility for the financial security of Branch Post officers from the Postal to the Revenue Department, as subordinate Inspecting officers are not likely to pay the same minute attention to details of inspection, or to inspect the post offices as frequently as they otherwise would do, if they consider that the Revenue official can ultimately be made responsible for any shortcoming should the security given not prove satisfactory.

ENCLOSURE.

FORM to be used when enquiries are to be made into the worth of individuals nominated as sureties.

Questions.	Answers.
(1) Give the name of the surety in full.	
(2) Give his father's name in full.	
(3) Give his occupation and permanent residence.	
(4) Particularise the immoveable property possessed by him and give the estimated value of each. *Note.*—The place where each property is situated should also be mentioned.	
(5) Particularise the moveable and immoveable property owned by him and give the value of each.	
(6) Are there any encumbrances on any of the above properties and, if so, give particulars?.	
(7) Is he willing to stand a surety ?	[Signature of the officer answering the questions to be affixed here with dates.]

Reference No. 94, dated 28th January 1898.

The letter from the Acting Collector of Ganjám, No. 2183, dated 17th December 1897, is forwarded to the Postmaster-General for the favour of remarks. He is requested to state whether he accepts the Collector's proposal to substitute the single question, "What is the reputed value of his moveable and immoveable property?" for questions 4, 5, and 6 in the present form of report. If the Postmaster-General considers it necessary, another question might be added to this, viz., "Has he a patta, and if so, for what amount?"

(Signed) R. C. C. CARR.
Secretary.

To the Postmaster-General with Collector's letter and enclosure in original to be returned.

READ—the following letter from G. S. CURTIS, Esq., Officiating Postmaster-General, Madras, to the Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 25th February 1898, No. S.C.-2-87—34458.

In replying to your references Nos. 5904 and 6136 of 1897, forwarding a letter No. 2183, dated 17th December 1897, from the Acting Collector of Ganjám, I have the honour to make the following remarks.

2. *Paragraph 1 of the Collector's letter.*—I quite admit that theoretically speaking it would be better if the inquiries into the solvency of sureties were made by Postal officials direct. But I contend that in practice this is impossible and undesirable—impossible because the inspecting establishment of the Postal Department is kept at the lowest ebb compatible with efficiency in order to provide as large a balance as possible for the relief of the general tax-payer (in 1896-97 this balance amounted to 12½ lakhs of rupees), and undesirable because village officers recognize two masters only—the Tahsildar and Chief Constable—and any attempt of a Postal official to secure attention for himself or his references would be treated with more or less contempt and inevitably tend to produce friction between the Revenue and Postal Departments.

Paragraph 2.—No reference to the Registration Department was contemplated. Village headmen and accountants are generally acquainted with the affairs of the people in their villages and can say with a fair amount of accuracy whether property is or is not encumbered.

Paragraph 3.—I feel some diffidence in answering the Collector's objection in this paragraph owing to my ignorance of the details of Revenue administration in force in this Presidency. But from experience on the other side of India, I should be inclined to submit that it ought not to be difficult for the Revenue (or Circle) Inspector in charge of a group of villages who has a fair knowledge of his "circle" to say at once without further enquiry whether a surety is or is not a reliable person. He certainly is in a better position to answer the question than a Postal Inspector who has no local knowledge and may be called on to serve in any district from Chilka lake to Tuticorin. The Postal Inspector has, it is true, to visit villages to inspect rural post offices, but there are hundreds—in Ganjám probably thousands—of villages with no post offices at or near them and it is physically impossible for the Inspector to visit villages off his beaten track in order to inquire into the worth of sureties resident in them.

Paragraph 4.—The Postal Department has no wish to impose any undue burden on the Tahsildar. It is anxious to ensure that references from Postal officials receive proper attention and are answered with a proper degree of responsibility. If this is secured, it will be quite content.

Paragraph 6.—It is impossible to insist on the class of persons who do postal work in villages furnishing security in the form of Savings Bank deposits. Most of them are Local Fund schoolmasters on a salary of Rs. 10 or less per mensem who can often furnish ample security in land but hardly ever in cash. The objection taken by the Collector in his last sentence that "Postal Inspectors are not likely to pay the same minute attention to details of inspection, or to inspect post offices as frequently as they otherwise would if they consider that the Revenue officials are ultimately to be made responsible for any shortcoming should the security given not prove satisfactory" seems a little far fetched. It would have force if the practice to which I solicit sanction were a new or strange one. But it is not. It has been in force for many years, not only in this Presidency but also in Bombay and, I have been recently informed, in the North-Western Provinces and Punjab without, as far as I am aware, any of the disastrous effects contemplated by the Collector. Besides at its best the easy and speedy recovery of any sum due from a surety is only equivalent to shutting the door of a stable after the horse is stolen; it cannot in any way diminish the blame for the neglect of duty on the part of the inspecting staff which led up to the original loss.

3. However, as regards the form of questions prescribed for use by the Postal Department, I gratefully accept the suggestion of the Honourable Board to substitute for questions 4, 5 and 6 the following:—

What is the reputed value of his moveable and immoveable property?
Has he a putta? If so, for what amount?

I would at the same time suggest that a rule specifying clearly the duty of village officers with regard to these inquiries should be laid down in the Village Officers' Manual. This would have an excellent effect.

4. The two enclosures of the Board's Proceedings are herewith returned.

RESOLUTION—No. 83, dated 25th March 1898.

The papers read above relate to the question whether Revenue officers should be required to furnish reports on the solvency of sureties offered by subordinate officials in the Postal Department. At present such reports are furnished to the Postal Department by village officers through Tahsildars; but the Collector of Ganjám objects to the practice on the ground that the time of taluk officers should not be taken up in this way when they have more important work to do. In his letter No. 2183, dated 17th December 1897, Mr. Taylor further pointed out that the form of report required by the Postal Department, especially questions 4, 5 and 6 relating to particulars of property possessed by the sureties, involved considerable enquiry on the part of Revenue officers and also compelled them to visit places where their presence would not otherwise be necessary. The Collector considered that the enquiries in question should be made by the Postal Inspecting staff direct. In the alternative the Collector proposed to substitute the single question "What is the reputed value of the surety's moveable and immoveable property?" for questions 4, 5 and 6 in the present form of report.

2. The Board requested the Postmaster-General to consider the last-mentioned proposal, and suggested that, if he thought it necessary to prescribe another question, the following might be added, viz., "Has the surety a patta, and if so, for what amount?"

3. In the last letter read above the Postmaster-General agrees to adopt the questions suggested by the Board and requests that a rule specifying clearly the duty of village officers with regard to the enquiries made of them may be laid down in the Village Officers' Manual.

4. The Board considers that the practice of Revenue officers furnishing reports on the solvency of sureties offered by Postal officials should continue. At the end of paragraph 4, section 36, page 85 of the Village Officers' Manual, the following will be inserted:—

"Reports required from village officers regarding the solvency of sureties offered by subordinate officials of the Postal Department should be furnished in the prescribed form through the Tahsildar."

(True Copies and Extract.) Lionel Davidson

Acting Secretary.

To the Collector of Ganjám.
„ all other Collectors.
„ the Postmaster-General.
Copy to the Secretary to Government, Revenue Department.

Exd. A. F. Eccleston.

When given for copying ____
When copied ____
When examined ____ } 189
When signed ____

READ AGAIN G.O., No. DATED
189

CURRENT No.

ENCLOSURES TO C. No.

ORDER OF GOVERNMENT	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
LETTER OF GOVERNMENT.								
STATEMENT WITH DITTO.								
PAPERS NOT FILED UP, BEING MEANT FOR DESPATCH IN ORIGINAL.								

N.B.—
A = Copy in full.
B = Not to be copied.
P = Copy abstract only.
Q = Copy heading only