

REPORT

ON THE

REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

OF THE

CENTRAL PROVINCES

FOR THE YEAR

1910-11.

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CENTRAL PROVINCES ADMINISTRATION.

Revenue and Scarcity Department.

Nagpur, the 29th March 1912.

READ—

Report by the Financial Commissioner on the Land Revenue Administration of the Central Provinces during the year 1910-11.

Report on Land Records and Settlements by the Commissioner of Settlements and Director of Land Records for the year 1910-11.

RESOLUTION.

A change has been made this year in regard to the preparation of the Land Revenue Administration Report. The District and Divisional Reports have been examined and summarized by the Financial Commissioner, instead of being merely reviewed by him before forming the subject of a Resolution by the Chief Commissioner. The Divisional Reports therefore will no longer be incorporated in the official issue dealing with the Revenue Administration of the year.

2. The year 1909-10 was described as one of very general prosperity, of which the chief feature, agriculturally, was the excellence of the cotton and wheat crops. During the year (1910-11), now under review, much of what the cotton crop lost in bulk owing to excessive rain was made good to the cultivator by the very high prices which this staple commanded in the market, while the rice districts also came in for their turn of good fortune. The province has thus been fortunate in enjoying another year favourable both to the work of revenue administration and also to the welfare of all classes of the agricultural community. The area occupied for cultivation increased by 75,000 acres; there was a rise of 63,000 acres in the extent of tenant holdings, and rental collections were uniformly good; while as regards land revenue, in spite of an addition of over four lakhs to the malguzari demand, the total arrears on this account, both suspended and unsuspending, which amounted to Rs. 81,000 at the beginning of the year, were practically obliterated by its close except in the single district of Damoh. This, with a total demand of over 97 lakhs for revenue on the roll including cesses, was a strikingly satisfactory achievement.

3. District revenue administration was of course much facilitated by the favourable harvests. There was a satisfactory decrease in the number of coercive processes needed for the collection of land revenue arrears, even though recoveries, as has been said, were exceptionally full. Attachments and sale decreased by 33 per cent and arrests and imprisonments by more than half as compared with the previous year. Collections under the Loans Acts naturally presented less difficulty than usual, and there were smaller amounts to be distributed. The number also of sale cases transmitted to Collectors for disposal in the Revenue Courts was smaller than before. But the relief thus afforded to executive officers was counterbalanced by the increased activity demanded of them in other ways as a concomitant of the prevalence of prosperity. The number of suits for arrears of rent from previous years was, as might have been expected, large. Income-tax and mutation cases increased. Land acquisition work

was heavy owing to railway and irrigation developments; and, mainly owing to attention to questions of right and title aroused in Chhattisgarh by the settlements just concluded, there was a general increase in the total volume of revenue business to be disposed of in the year. The work was satisfactorily dealt with in all Divisions of the Province and the Chief Commissioner notices with pleasure the list of officers subordinate to Deputy Commissioners whose names have been favourably mentioned at the close of the Financial Commissioner's Report.

4. The failure of 1907-08 has been succeeded now by three satisfactory harvests (two of which have been something more than satisfactory) and there is an assured prospect of another normal year before the Province. It is not surprising therefore, after the careful and yet progressive administration of late years, to find not only a quantitative improvement in the statistics of the year but indications also that the people are being educated to an appreciation of new methods and of new ideas. Their confidence in Government has increased and yet their determination to better themselves by spontaneous effort so far from being undermined thereby is being strengthened and developed. The process of education is slow, and sustained effort is required, particularly in the matter of persuading cultivators to take advantage of irrigation facilities. But developments of the widest importance both to Berar and to the Central Provinces proper are already foreshadowed in the programmes of the Irrigation, Agriculture, Co-operative Credit, Veterinary and other Government departments. Many new schemes have been inaugurated, and some have already passed the initial or experimental stage, and need only time to bring their promise to fulfilment. Co-operation between the Government and the people, and among the people themselves, gives the keynote to the situation. A striking instance is the new productive irrigation work at Asola-Mendha in the Chanda district (to be followed hereafter by the far larger Mahanadi and Wainganga projects) which will shortly give this Province its first experience of a Government Irrigation colony. Other examples of the spirit abroad are the Agricultural Associations and Co-operative Credit Societies of the value of which there is so much evidence in a number of the District Reports. The progress that these organizations have already made is emphasised by the Financial Commissioner and is indeed a matter of the first importance. As Mr. Crump points out, the benefits of these associations and societies are not limited to the agricultural improvements actually introduced or to the financial rehabilitation of a fraction of the indebted peasantry. It is unquestionable that their mere formation, as living organisms, would have been impossible not many years ago. They indicate at once a growing perception by the people of the importance of self-help and the ready confidence they feel in the soundness and sincerity of Government's administrative policy.

5. In conformity with the instructions conveyed in last year's Resolution the District Reports have this year paid somewhat closer attention to the relations existing between landlords and tenants. This has disclosed certain general causes of friction such as competition for labour and the extension of cultivation at the expense of areas usually reserved for village nistar. There is no doubt that the development of the country is inducing a more commercial relationship between landlord and tenant, and as this develops the personal authority of the former will decrease (the decline of *beth begar* in the Chhattisgarh Division is a case in point), and their dealings with their tenants come to be regulated more and more by rule and contract. At the same time conditions of village life are, and will long remain, such that the personal equation must predominate in any arrangement affecting village administration, and this can always be strongly influenced by a District Officer who uses to the full the opportunities that his position gives him. The Chief Commissioner believes that in personal government of this kind the district officers of the Central Provinces have always been and will continue to be successful. Meanwhile it is satisfactory to find that more searching investigation has disclosed no reason to suppose that the long prevalent idea of the generally harmonious relations existing between tenants and landlord is in any way erroneous. This is the more a matter for congratulation because there is no doubt that the people are growing year by year more ready to bring matters of dispute to the test of revenue and

civil courts, and less careful to conceal their village differences from those who would wish to learn of them.

6. One small matter, the recent orders issued with a view to the curtailment of touring by subordinate officers, the minimizing of trouble to the people by restricting officers' encampments as far as possible to central villages, and the closer regulation of payments for *rasad* will, it is hoped, command public approval as a clear indication of Government's desire to deal fairly by the people. The system of touring is one which is absolutely essential to efficient district administration, but it is liable to abuses, and at the best must sometimes cause inconveniences to the people. It is for the District Officer, who is armed with power under the Mukaddam Rules to enforce reasonable and necessary assistance, to be constantly on the watch to remove the abuses and to minimize the inconveniences, whether these are caused by his own camp and those of his subordinates or by those of officers and subordinates of other departments. The new rules coupled with the recent improvements in the pay and travelling allowances of so many of the lower grades of Government officials, especially those in Revenue employ, should contribute something towards settling the problem of how, in the absence of sufficient roads and rest-houses, adequate attention can be paid to the interior of districts without inflicting on the people more inconvenience than is necessary.

7. Mention of the relations of Government to the people leads naturally to a consideration of the work of settlement—an operation which more than anything else brings the policy and authority of Government home to the villager in the practical form of rent and revenue enhancements. The year under review saw the virtual completion of settlement in no fewer than five districts—Jubbulpore, Wardha and the three districts of Chhattisgarh excluding the ryotwari settlement of Balaghat. Progress was rapid, the attitude of the people was complacent, and the standard of work was well maintained. The concession to the malguzari interest contained in the formal declaration of a half assets standard of assessment has been brought into practical effect during the year, and revised instructions in regard to revenue-assessment are shortly to be issued. The rent and revenue enhancements imposed, though in some cases, especially in Chhattisgarh, considerably higher than would have been thought advisable some 20 years ago when ordinary tenants' rents were believed to be economically competitive, have met with such ready acquiescence as to suggest that even now they have erred on the side of leniency. There is, however, good reason to believe that a happy mean has been achieved. Plentiful harvests and moderate prices have tended to increase the grain stock in the country. The industrial development of the Province has raised the wage of labour, as it has increased the capital available, and has thus given strength in many places to the poorest class of tenant-labourer. The mass of the people have attained, as was pointed out in an important resolution of last August, a standard of agricultural stability hitherto unknown. The new assessments have been scrutinized in detail both by the Financial Commissioner and by the head of the Administration, and of their suitability there can be no question. The Department generally is to be congratulated on the results of the year's work.

The mass of work to be dealt with by the Commissioner of Settlements during the past two years has been enormous, but Mr. Blenkinsop's unremitting labours have now reduced it to manageable proportions and the programme for the next few years should be worked up to without difficulty.

8. One matter bearing on the economy of District offices deserves a special mention. A striking reduction in the clerical work of registration in the English Department was achieved in all Divisions of the Province during the year under review. The scheme was initiated by the Commissioner, Nerbudda Division, and although there has been, and was bound to be, a certain amount of friction in introducing the new scheme simultaneously into all Deputy Commissioners' offices, the Chief Commissioner is very well content with the general approval with which the innovation has been received. This, in fact, is only a part of a wider programme already outlined for the enhancement of clerical efficiency in response to an improvement in the prospects of non-gazetted officials in District

offices, which is with confidence expected to lead to a marked change for the better in the general standard of work.

9. The Chief Commissioner has examined the District reports, and thinks that the criticisms of the Financial Commissioner in paragraph 17 of his report, though justified in some cases, are a little too sweeping: most of the reports contain evidence of the writer's personal interest in the more important heads of revenue administration, and they are as a whole a great improvement on the style of report that Mr. Fox-Strangways can remember a few years back. They might no doubt be improved in the directions indicated, but the rule restricting their length is a salutary one, which must be observed, and discussions and comments must be germane to the matter in hand, and should not, as in one or two of these reports, range over matters only remotely connected with Land Revenue administration.

The acknowledgments of the Administration are due to the Financial Commissioner, the Commissioners of Divisions, and to the officers mentioned in the Financial Commissioner's report. All the Deputy Commissioners are said to have done well, but Messrs. Clarke and Leftwich have been specially mentioned in the Divisional report of the Nerbudda Division.

ORDER.—Ordered that a copy of this Resolution and its annexures be submitted to the Government of India, in the Department of Revenue and Agriculture, that copies be forwarded to all Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners, the Commissioner of Settlements and Director of Land Records and Settlement Officers, and that the Resolution be published in the Supplement to the *Central Provinces Gazette*.

C. U. WILLS,

Third Secretary to the Chief Commissioner,

Central Provinces.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

*Report by the Financial Commissioner on the Land Revenue Administration
of the Central Provinces during the year 1910-11.*

Serial No.	Subject.	No. of paragraph in the report.
1	Character of the season ...	1
2	Area and rental statistics ...	2 & 3
3	Condition of the agricultural and labouring classes ...	4
4	Relations between landlords and tenants ...	5
5	Relations between the Government and people, Agricultural Associations, Co-operative Credit Societies, &c. ...	6
6	Loans under the Agriculturists' and Land Improvement Loans Acts ...	7
7	Changes in the demand of ordinary land revenue on the roll and collections, suspensions and remissions of land revenue and coercive processes ...	8
8	Ryotwari estates ...	9
9	Transfer of proprietary right ...	10
10	Partitions ...	11
11	Cases under the special provisions of the Land Revenue and Tenancy Acts ...	12
12	Civil litigations between landlords and tenants ...	13
13	Land Acquisition work ...	14
14	Collectors' cases ...	15
15	General Revenue business ...	16
16	Character of the reports received from District Officers. ...	17
17	Lambardars, Mukaddams and Kotwars ...	18
18	Tours and Inspections ...	19
19	Appeals, &c., to the Financial Commissioner ...	20
20	Land records ...	21
21	Settlements ...	22
22	Notice of officers ...	23