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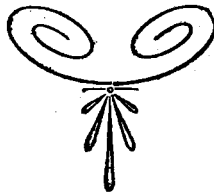
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OF THE .

BARDOLI ENQUIRY COMMITTEE.

BOMBAY.

1928.



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MEMBERS:

- 2 Mr. HOOSEINBHOY A. LALLJEE, M.L.C. (Muhammadan Urban, Bombay City),
- 3 Mr. H. B. SHIVDASANI, M.A., M.L.C. (Non-Muhammadan Rural, Surat District).
- 4 Rao Bahadur BHIMBHAI R. NAIK, M.L.C. (Non-Muhammadan Rural, Surat District).
- 5 Dr. M. D. D. GILDER, M.D., M.L.C. (Non-Muhammadan Urban, Bombay City, North).
- 6 Mr. N. B. CHANDRACHUD, B.A., LL.B., M.L.C. (Non-Muhammadan Urban, Poona City).

SECRETARY:

- 7 Mr. B. G. KHEB, B.A., LL.B., Solicitor, Bombay High Court.
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To

THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF

THE COALITION NATIONALIST PARTY

IN THE BOMBAY LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

DEAR SIR,

We constituted ourselves into a Committee with the following terms of reference:

- (a) To investigate into and report on the methods adopted by the officials in the Surat District in respect of the collection of revised assessment in the Bardoli Taluka and in particular the allegations that irregular, illegal, harsh and vindictive measures have been taken by them in the said matter ;
- (b) To investigate into and report on the conditions to which the peasants in the Bardoli Taluka have been reduced by reason of the said methods ;
- (c) To report on such other matters germane to the above general questions as may be considered necessary ; and
- (d) For the purpose aforesaid, to take evidence, oral or documentary.

2. By a resolution dated the 8th July 1928, the Coalition Nationalist Party of the Bombay Legislative Council ratified the appointment of the Committee and sanctioned the terms of reference.

3. We have held 11 sittings, at Bardoli and at Bombay. Those at Bardoli occupied several hours, on most occasions two consecutive days. In the course of our sittings, we received 153 written statements. The Committee examined 126 witnesses and examined such documents as were made available to them.

4. In response to the invitations of the Committee a large number of people came forward to give evidence. A still larger number were willing to make their statements and give evidence but the Committee decided to examine only typical cases and only a few instances of each kind of illegality or irregularity or other alleged misconduct were selected and after examining these witnesses, it was not necessary to have further evidence on the same points and to multiply instances. This was obviously necessary as otherwise as there were many hundreds of attachments, distrains, forfeitures and sales, we would have had to prolong our inquiry for several months. It was not even possible to examine at length all the witnesses, owing to the limited time at the disposal of the Committee and therefore the work of taking down their statements in a concise form after putting them questions was entrusted to several lawyers from Surat and Bombay,

who kindly offered their services. The Committee then examined the witnesses, who appeared with these statements and they were very carefully and closely questioned with regard to their statements and as far as possible, the rules of evidence were followed and hearsay evidence was excluded. The procedure followed by the Committee is the usual procedure followed by all investigating Committees and in fact the only procedure which can be followed if the inquiry is to be kept within reasonable bounds and restricted to relevant issues.

5. We invited Government as well as Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel and his associates to assist us in the inquiry. The former declined, but the latter, we must gratefully acknowledge, rendered every assistance. Except when evidence was taken in camera we found the C. I. D. officer regularly in attendance. We are conscious that the materials placed before us could have been better sifted had we an opportunity of getting the Government's point of view. The inquiry being unofficial and *ex-parte* has brought with it the incompleteness which is inherent in every inquiry not conducted in a contested case in a court of law. We have however devoted scrupulous care to exclude unreliable or indirect testimony and to scrutinise the evidence before us and to see that the conclusions which we have formed are warranted by the facts placed before us. And though our conclusions may not be as satisfactory as they would have been had we been assisted by Government, in their general nature they are fully supported by an overwhelming volume of unimpeachable evidence in our possession.

6. On the 6th August 1928 the Bardoli struggle ended by a very honourable settlement. All the evidence was taken and the draft report was ready; we had therefore to consider whether we should now pursue our labours on the same lines as before and to complete the report. We have no desire to open the sore which had been closed by a happy settlement. But at the same time, we felt that a record such as our report may serve to prevent a repetition of the situation. From other points of view also we considered it necessary to publish our report, now that for all practical purposes we have completed our work. The Land Revenue policy of the Bombay Government is in a most unsatisfactory condition. The relations between Government and the agriculturists are dangerously vague, the principles of assessment highly unsatisfactory, the methods of recovery stringent in the extreme. And the growing dissatisfaction towards the policy, the legislative efforts that are being made to bring it under popular control, the expected transfer of Land Revenue from the Reserved to the Transferred side make it imperative that the working of the policy as seen in Bardoli, the dangerous extent to which it could be pushed even within the limits of existing law, the points at which it is likely to travel outside these limits should be placed before the general public as well as before the higher authorities. We therefore at a meeting of the Committee on the 19th August 1928 resolved to adhere to the lines as we had set before us, and at the same time so to alter certain parts of the report as to serve this wider object. In particular, we have as far as possible omitted specifying names of the victims of the policy to save bitterness.

In conclusion we have to thank Mr. Purshottam Tricumdas, Bar-at-Law, who has at great sacrifice so ably assisted us in our work. We are also indebted to Mr. D. T. Vakharia, Solicitor, Mr. Batubhai Umarvadia, B.A., L.L.B. and Mr. N. M. Marfatia, B.A., L.L.B. for valuable assistance, to Mr. N. H. Belgamwalla who has kindly undertaken to publish the report and to Mr. M. C. Chhagla, Bar-at-Law for going through the final proofs.

Yours sincerely,

K. M. MUNSHI.
HOSEINBHOY A. LALLJEE.
H. B. SHIVDASANI.
BHIMBHAI R. NAIK.
M. D. D. GILDER.
N. B. CHANDRACHUD.
B. G. KHER.

Bombay,
23rd September 1928.