

**GENERAL REPORT REPRESENTING THE VIEWS OF THE  
OFFICIAL AND NON-OFFICIAL MEMBERS OF THE  
COMMITTEE**

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Owing to the wide difference between the official and non-official members on many very important points it has not been found possible to write a unanimous report, and the Committee have finally decided to submit two separate reports, one representing the views of the official members and the other those of the non-officials.

Part I contains the general report and is divided into I-A, representing the views of the official members and I-B, representing the views of the non-officials.

Part II deals with the grievances of individual districts and is divided into Part II-A, which contains a list of the grievances brought forward District by District ; II-B, which contains notes by the Chairman on the grievances circulated to the members for discussion ; and II-C, which contains the views of the non-official members on these grievances.

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**PART I-A**

**GENERAL REPORT REPRESENTING THE VIEWS OF  
THE OFFICIAL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

## REPORT OF THE OFFICIAL MEMBERS OF THE FOREST GRIEVANCES ENQUIRY COMMITTEE

On 30th July 1924 Mr. D. R. Patil, M.L.C., proposed the following resolution which was accepted by Government and adopted by the Legislative Council :—

“ This Council recommends to Government to appoint a Committee to visit important forest areas and to enquire into the grievances of the ryots with regard to forest matters and to submit suggestions for the consideration of Government.”

In Government Resolution, Revenue Department, No. L. C.—1374 dated 26th January 1925, Government announced the personnel of the Committee and the terms of reference as follows :—

### *Chairman*

Mr. A. G. Edie, Chief Conservator of Forests, Bombay Presidency.

### *Members*

Mr. D. R. Patil, M.L.C.

Mr. S. S. Dev, M.L.C.

Mr. M. D. Karki, M.L.C.

Dr. K. E. Dadachanji, M.L.C.

Mr. (now Khan Saheb) Abdul Latif Haji Hajrat Khan, M.L.C.

In addition to the above gentlemen the Conservator of the Circle to be visited was appointed a member of the Committee. The Committee was empowered to visit important forests situated in the Presidency proper and to enquire into the grievances of the ryots with regard to forest matters and to submit suggestions for the consideration of Government. Government desired that the proceedings of the Committee should be of an informal nature and that no formal evidence should be recorded. For the discharge of its functions the Committee was authorised to consult official and non-official gentlemen and call for the necessary information from the former.

2. On 20th February 1925 the Committee met in Bombay and decided to issue circulars calling on the people in forest Districts to send in applications stating their grievances to the Chairman. It was decided to confine enquiries to the presidency proper and not to extend these to Sind. The Honourable Members of the Legislative Council representing Forest Districts were asked to help in the matter of getting the people to state their grievances, circulars were widely distributed, and

announcements were made in the public press. As a result the following number of applications was received.

District				Number of applications
Panch Mahals	..	..	..	1
Thana	..	..	..	65
East Khandesh	..	..	..	63
West Khandesh	..	..	..	61
Nasik	..	..	..	26
Poona	..	..	..	22
Ahmednagar	..	..	..	6
Satara	..	..	..	18
Sholapur	..	..	..	1
Belgaum	..	..	..	8
Kanara	..	..	..	11
Kolaba	..	..	..	17
Bijapur	..	..	..	2
Total ..				301

3. The applications came in slowly at first, but large numbers were received during May and June 1925, and as soon as it was evident where there was most need for enquiry the tour of the Committee was arranged. Owing to the numerous engagements of the various members of the Committee it was found impossible to arrange a continuous tour and dates had to be fixed according to the convenience of the members ; even then it was not always possible to get all the members together. The following statement gives a brief description of the tour of the Committee :—

Date	Place	Work done
20th February 1925 ..	Bombay .. ..	Preliminary discussion and arrangements for publicity.
8th June 1925 ..	Poona .. ..	Discussion of applications received.
10th August 1925 ..	Do. .. ..	Arrangements for tour in Khandesh, Thana and Kolaba.
1st to 5th December 1925 ..	Jalgaon (East Khandesh).	Tour in East Khandesh District inspection of forests and examination of witnesses from a large number of villages.
6th December 1925 ..	To Nandurbar (West Khandesh).	Some of the members travelled <i>via</i> Dhulia and inspected forest and examined witnesses at Laling near Dhulia.
7th and 8th December 1925.	Nandurbar .. ..	Visited several villages and examined witnesses.
9th December 1925 ..	Left Nandurbar. ..	
10th December 1925 ..	Arrival at Manor (Thana).	Interviewed villagers at Manor.

Date	Place	Work done
11th December 1925 ..	Manor ..	Inspected forest and interviewed villagers.
12th December 1925 ..	Bassein (Thana) ..	Interviewed villagers.
13th and 14th December 1925.	Karjat (Kolaba) ..	Interviewed villagers at several places.
4th to 6th May 1926 ..	Kumta (Kanara) ..	Met at Kumta, visited several forests, and interviewed villagers of the below-ghat part of Kanara.
7th to 9th May 1926 ..	Sirsi (Kanara) ..	Visited forests and interviewed villagers of the above-ghat part of Kanara.
10th and 11th May 1926 ..	Belgaum ..	Interviewed villagers of Belgaum and part of Kanara District.
8th June 1926 ..	Nasik ..	Interviewed villagers of Nasik District and the Ghat part of Ahmednagar District.
10th June 1926 ..	Khed (Poona) ..	Interviewed villagers of the north part of Poona District.
11th June 1926 ..	Satara ..	Interviewed villagers of Satara District.
12th June 1926 ..	Poona ..	Interviewed villagers of Poona District and some from Thana District.
13th to 15th June 1926 ..	Poona ..	Consideration of the report.
28th June 1926 ..	Godhra ..	Interviewed villagers of Panch Mahals District.
29th June 1926 ..	Dohad ..	
18th to 20th July 1926 ..	Poona ..	

4. According to the instructions of Government the proceedings of the Committee were informal throughout. All who wished to put their views before the Committee were allowed to do so and full consideration was given not only to the written petitions received but to all points brought up during the meetings which took place in various offices and buildings and very often in the forest itself. The thanks of the Committee are due to the various Honourable Members of the Legislative Council, members of Local Boards and other public bodies, and to the agriculturists of all classes and degrees of wealth and poverty who appeared before them and helped them in their work of investigation.

5. Large numbers of petitions of grievances were brought forward, some of them common to nearly all the Districts of the Presidency, some peculiar to a few districts only, and some pertaining to single villages or even individuals. All of these were investigated, as many as possible on the spot and the rest either at Committee meetings or by members individually. The people of 11 out of the 13 Districts from which petitions were received were interviewed during the tour and matters were enquired into on the spot. It was not found possible to include Sholapur and Bijapur Districts in the tour; only three petitions were received from these two Districts and these have received consideration.

6. The complaints of grievances brought forward may be classified as coming under the following heads :—

- I. Restrictions on grazing and fodder.
- II. Restrictions on removal of timber, fuel and other forest produce for agricultural purposes.
- III. Government ownership of royalty trees standing on malki lands and, in some cases, of the regrowth after disposal of the original trees.
- IV. Pressure of forest upon cultivation.
- V. Cultivable land included in forest.
- VI. Difficulty in getting transit passes for private forest produce.
- VII. Delay in getting free grants of timber in cases where houses had been burnt.
- VIII. Delay in obtaining permission to saw up timber belonging to private persons within a mile of the forest boundary as laid down in rule 24, under section 41, Indian Forest Act.
- IX. Restriction regarding burning in minor forests, grazing grounds, and similar areas and burning rab, etc., near the boundary of reserved forest.
- X. Communal punishments, *i.e.*, enhancement of grazing fees, on account of forest fires.
- XI. Damage to crops by wild animals.
- XII. Miscellaneous.

7. The Committee realize that the three main objects of forest management are the following :—

- (i) To allow the present generation to derive the maximum possible legitimate benefit from the forests.
- (ii) To ensure that the forests are not laid waste by the present generation but are preserved for the benefit of posterity.
- (iii) To secure as high a legitimate revenue from the forests as possible consistent with meeting the reasonable requirements of the people and preserving and improving the condition of the forests.

To secure these objects, and especially the second of them, it is necessary to impose certain restrictions on the use of the forests; this is unanimously agreed to, but there is some difference of opinion as to the extent of such restrictions which is necessary. The question as to whether agriculturists should be allowed a full exercise of privileges free of charge or, if fees are charged, on what scale they should be charged have been very fully discussed at meetings of the Committee. It is agreed that in order to allow of the fullest possible use being made of the privileges in force the fees charged to agriculturists should be low; there is however some difference of opinion as to the scale which ought to be fixed.

The rest of this report represents the views of the official members of the Committee, *i.e.*, of the Chief Conservator and of the Conservators

of the three Circles (Northern, Central and Southern) visited by the Committee. Although all the members of the Committee are in agreement on some points it has not been found possible for the official and non-official members to come to an agreement on a number of very important points, on which in fact their views are so divergent that it has been found necessary to submit two separate reports, one by the official and the other by the non-official members. The report of the non-official members is sent to Government along with this report.

8. The main grievances will now be discussed in turn; the views of the official members are given herewith, while those of the non-official members are embodied in a separate report.

### I.—RESTRICTIONS ON GRAZING AND FODDER

#### *Grazing fees*

9. At present the grazing rules are in a state of transition. Up till recently the standard rate of fee for village cattle in most districts was annas 2 per head, but since 1922 this has been raised district by district to annas 4, which is now the standard rate in the Central and Southern Divisions except in Kanara District where it remains at annas 2 and in a few other areas where special rules are in force. The reason for the recent enhancement in the rate of grazing fees is the rise in the price of all commodities, including agricultural produce, which is thought to have put the agriculturists in a position to pay a higher fee than the purely nominal one of annas 2 formerly charged. The whole question of the revision of the grazing rules is now under the consideration of Government, who are awaiting the report of the Committee before coming to a decision in the matter.

Some petitions have been received asking for the abolition of grazing fees and many more for their reduction from annas 4 to annas 2. The Committee is not in favour of the abolition of fees, which bring in a very considerable revenue to Government (Rs. 3,53,655 for village cattle in 1923-24 and Rs. 3,83,989 in 1924-25) and which represent only a fraction of the value of the privilege enjoyed. It is recognized that in most districts the value of a year's grazing is a good deal more even than the fee charged to non-village cattle, *viz.*, Re 1; but the question as to whether the increase in the rate from annas 2 to annas 4 was justifiable has given rise to much discussion. It has been pointed out that, in the words of Government, "The agriculturist pays land revenue on the land which he cultivates and it is proper to charge him only a nominal fee for the valuable privilege of grazing on Government land in order that he may get at a low price the grazing necessary for the cattle which are required for cultivating the land on which he pays land revenue.

While the professional grazier is charged a fair price for the grazing since he pays no other revenue, the agriculturist who does pay other revenue is let off with a nominal fee" (*vide* Bombay Forest Manual, Volume I, page 322). If it was the intention of Government to impose a purely nominal fee on village cattle in order to prevent the establishment of a claim to the right of free grazing, and if there was no desire to look on the



grazing fees for village cattle as a source of revenue liable to expansion along with other sources, then there would be no justification for the raising of the fee from annas 2 to annas 4. It is agreed that in most cases even annas 4 is a low charge for the privilege enjoyed, and that a reduction in the charge from annas 4 to annas 2 would involve Government in a loss of revenue of about Rs. 1,50,000 annually. It is for Government to decide whether they are willing to forego this amount of revenue for the benefit of agricultural classes.

The Committee are of opinion that in view of the fact that annas 4 is in most cases much below the real value of the grazing enjoyed it may justifiably be considered to be a nominal fee. In the districts in which it has been imposed it has been paid without demur. In these days of financial stringency Government cannot afford to forego an item of revenue of this kind, which does not impose any more hardship on the people than the ordinary forms of taxation.

The Committee consider that the present rate of fees for the cattle of professional graziers is reasonable; and that where there is at present a right or privilege or free grazing it should be continued. Mr. Karki has put in a claim that free grazing should be allowed in Kanara as it is allowed in Thana and Pauch Mahals for agricultural cattle in villages which have contributed gairan to forest. As fees have been paid for such cattle in Kanara since 1883 the Committee are unable to support this claim.

It has been suggested that the collection of grazing fees should be carried out by the village officers, who live in the village, as this would be more convenient to the people than the present system of collection by Forest officials who can only visit each village at long intervals. The collection by Village officers is carried out in part of Kanara, and should be extended if it is found not to lead to a loss of revenue to Government.

#### *Grazing Unit*

10. The Committee are of opinion that the District should be the grazing unit for village cattle, subject to the customary right of villagers to the first claim on the grazing in the forest of their own village. Where necessary cattle belonging to border villages should by executive order be allowed to graze in the forests of both Districts. It is recognized that the fixing of the District as the unit is a great advance on the present rule which fixes the taluka or petha; but it is felt that it is unfair to charge more than one fee for agricultural cattle in their own district, and the concession will greatly mitigate the hardship at present felt by agriculturists living in areas where the grazing is insufficient, who have to pay an additional fee for taking their cattle to another part of the same district.

#### *Exemption of calves*

11. The Committee are of opinion that fees should not be charged for calves. There is some difference of opinion as to the age up to which calves should be exempted, and an age of one year at the time of collection of fees is suggested.

*Cattle liable to payment in forest villages*

12. It was suggested that in forest as in non-forest villages only such cattle should be charged for as actually graze in forest ; but it was pointed out that in nearly every forest village all the cattle make use of the forest at some time or other and that the introduction of such a rule would make the proper collection of fees an impossibility, and on consideration of this the Committee decided to recommend that matters be allowed to remain as at present on condition that an exception be made if in any particular case it could be proved that a large proportion of the cattle of a forest village made no use of the forest.

*Sheep and goats*

13. Complaints were received on the one hand from shepherds that their sheep and goats were not allowed to graze in forests and on the other hand from cultivators that sheep and goats were allowed to graze on the same areas as their cattle, thus spoiling the grazing. The Committee recommend that wherever possible separate areas should be allotted to the two categories of animals and that preference should be given to agricultural cattle.

*Insufficiency of grazing ground*

14. Complaints were received regarding the insufficiency of the grazing areas in some localities. The Committee hope that this state of affairs will be remedied if Government accept their recommendation that the District should be the grazing unit. In some cases it may be possible to curtail the period of closure to grazing, when this is compatible with successful regeneration of the forest after felling, but this must depend entirely on the state of the young growth, and no hard and fast rule can be laid down.

*Impounding of cattle*

15. It appears that the rule that there should be no closure to grazing within a quarter of a mile of a village has not invariably been carried out. This rule should be rigidly enforced. There should be no impounding of cattle which have accidentally strayed a few yards across the boundary into closed forest from the fields or from a road or watering place, provided there is a herdsman with the cattle and he has tried to prevent them from trespassing. It is, however, very common for cattle to be turned into the forest with no herdsmen in attendance, and in such cases the owners must take the consequences if the cattle stray into closed forest. The Committee do not approve of the system in force in some districts of levying a fixed rate of compensation in addition to the pound fee per head of cattle impounded. They think that every case should be decided on its merits, that a panchnama of the damage done should be held in the forest and not in the village as seems usually to be the case, that the Divisional Forest Officer should assess the compensation to be levied, if any, separately in each case, and that

compensation should not be levied in addition to the pound fee except in cases of deliberate trespass, absence of a herdsman, or damage to young plantations. In some cases it was found that rewards were paid to forest subordinates out of compensation recovered in grazing offence cases. The Committee think that such rewards should be paid in very exceptional cases only.

#### *Fencing*

16. To prevent trespass of cattle from rights of way to water the villagers should be encouraged to fence such paths by the grant of thorns free of charge, and they should be allowed to keep the 50 feet path, to which they are entitled by the rules, clear of all undergrowth. Similarly they should be encouraged to fence closed forest wherever they wish to. It is recognized that it is impossible for the Forest Department to undertake this work.

#### *Extra fees*

17. In East Khandesh it was found that a system had grown up of charging "hut fees" for each hut erected by herdsmen in forest and "Chula fees" on account of firewood used in the huts by the herdsmen for cooking purposes. These fees bring in very little revenue to Government and are a source of trouble to collect. It is understood that they have lately been temporarily abolished, and they should not be revived. Complaints were received in the same District that grazing fees were charged on cattle passing through the Khandesh forests on their way to graze in the Holkari forests, and on cattle which had brought carts for the removal of grass from the forests. As however there is no limit to the time such cattle are allowed to graze in forest there seems no hardship in charging fees for their grazing; any relaxation would be sure to lead to abuse.

#### *Sale of grass*

18. Complaints were received, chiefly from East Khandesh where there happened to be a shortage of grass at the time, that the purchasers of the grass in kurans and other areas charge exorbitant rates for grass and also for cattle grazing after the grass has been cut. It is understood that efforts are being made to sell grass areas to local villagers, village panchayats, Taluka Local Boards and other public bodies at the average price of the last three years, and the Committee hope that this system will be extended as far as possible. In all cases where grass areas are sold mainly for the use of the cultivating classes a maximum retail sale price for the grass and a maximum rate of grazing fee should be specified at the time of sale and entered in the agreement.

#### *Military Kurans*

19. In Poona District complaints were heard that grass areas required by the people are allotted to the Military authorities who, it is alleged;

do not require them all. This matter, it is understood, is under investigation by the Conservator. The Committee recommend that all such areas not required by the Military authorities should be resumed and made available for the public.

#### *Anjan leaves*

20. Anjan leaves are a valuable source of fodder supply in the hot weather and early rains, especially in years of famine, in Khandesh and Nasik. Complaints were made as to the high rate of fees charged for anjan leaves. Enquiries show that in the past the plucking of these leaves was prohibited except in years of famine, when it was allowed free. Of late a scale of fees has been introduced for normal years, subject to remission in years of famine. In Nasik District the fee is annas  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per headload and annas 12 per cartload; whilst in East and West Khandesh a system of *monthly* permits has been introduced at rates varying from Rs. 3-8-0 to Rs. 4 per headload and Rs. 28 to Rs. 60 per cartload, roughly annas 2 per single headload and Re. 1 to Rs. 2 per cartload on the assumption that each permit holder takes one load per day. The revenue from anjan leaves in the three districts is from Rs. 25,000 to 30,000 per year, which shows that the privilege is largely taken advantage of. It is admitted that anjan leaves are a much more nutritious form of fodder than forest grass and as a cartload of anjan leaves fetches Rs. 11-4-0 in Dhulia bazar it cannot be said that the fees now charged are too high. In years of famine or severe scarcity of fodder the leaves should be given free.

#### *Anjan trees*

21. Requests were made that anjan trees should not be cut in forests, as the cutting of these trees tends to diminish the supply of a useful source of fodder. Enquiries show that the Forest Department now recognize that the leaves are the most valuable product of the anjan tree, which also yields good fuel and indifferent timber. They are therefore stopping the cutting of anjan in the coupes, except of old trees which are decaying, from the stools of which fresh shoots will spring up, and of trees which are too crowded to allow of proper development. They are also encouraging the growth of young anjan as much as possible.

#### *Sale of grass in Panch Mahals*

22. In Panch Mahals District complaints were made that the sale of grass to contractors deprives the villagers of grass required by them. It appears however that in ordinary years the supply of grass is more than enough for the use of the District. The surplus grass is baled and stored as an insurance against scarcity in times of famine, and in the past season has proved of the greatest value to the people, who have bought large quantities of it for their cattle which would otherwise have starved.

## II.—RESTRICTIONS ON REMOVAL OF TIMBER, FUEL AND OTHER FOREST PRODUCE FOR AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES

### *Timber*

23. Requests regarding supplies of timber to agriculturists were received from Kanara, Belgaum, Thana, Kolaba and Nasik Districts. Conditions vary considerably in these districts and each will be dealt with separately.

In Kanara the privilege code is very liberal, but requests were received (a) that the number of reserved trees in Minor Forest should be reduced from 15 to 7 and (b) that the royalty rates on timber should be reduced. As regards (a) it is found that the number of reserved trees was lately reduced from 25 to 15, and that the unreserved kinds include all the timbers which are essential for the use of the cultivating classes. As regards (b) the present royalty rates are much lower than the prevailing market rates. Teak and Blackwood, which are not usually sold on royalty, and which are used by the well-to-do classes only, are available for purchase in timber depots and from coupe contractors.

In Belgaum in the thickly wooded areas of Belgaum and Khanapur talukas timber for agricultural purposes is allowed free to cultivators who pay up to Rs. 50 assessment and at half the usual rates to those whose assessment does not exceed Rs. 150. Elsewhere the forests contain no timber, only fuel, and it therefore seems impossible to grant any further concession.

In Thana District forest villagers ask for dead timber free, also for material left in the coupes at the end of the contract period ; and generally for free timber for houses, cattle-sheds and agricultural implements. The removal of fallen dead timber, excluding reserved species and Ain, might be allowed ; and timber left by contractors might also be allowed for removal before plantation work is taken up. There is a large amount of timber suitable for agricultural implements cut annually in thinnings and not sold ; this might be made available free to forest villagers.

The villagers of Kolaba District ask for permission to enter the forests at any time and remove timber free for agricultural implements. It appears that such a privilege has not been enjoyed up to now and it is reported that the forests of Kolaba District are in such a poor state as not to be able to yield this timber. There are moreover extensive wooded areas outside forest in this District from which the people can get their requirements.

In Nasik District junglewood is asked for free for building and agricultural purposes. Except in Peint Taluka, from which no application was received, it is reported that there is little or no timber, owing to excessive cutting in the past, and it would be impossible to give such a concession.

In Panch Mahals complaints are made regarding the cutting of mhowra trees, which supply food and liquor to the people. In future a certain number of these trees is to be reserved in coupes, and mhowra seed is

being sown in closed areas. The number of mhowra trees in forest is a small proportion of the whole number in the District, as it is a very common tree in the open lands outside forest.

### *Fuel*

24. Enquiries showed that agriculturists of forest villages are everywhere allowed to remove dead fuel free by headloads for their own use, whilst in Thana and Kolaba the hill tribes are allowed to remove it for sale. Other methods of supply are purchase from coupe contractors, purchase from fuel depôts, and free removal of branchwood under a specified girth from coupes, which the contractors are bound to stack separately, and, in Kanara District, the permit system.

Requests have been made that the removal of deadwood be allowed free on cartloads and not on headloads only, the argument in favour of this being that the use of carts renders the removal easier and more economical. On the other hand the Forest Officers consulted point out that the privilege of free removal is intended for the benefit of poor people who do not possess carts and that extensive removal on carts would soon lead to the exhaustion of the supply, and there is no doubt that there is much truth in this.

As regards purchase from coupe contractors, complaints are made that they charge exorbitant prices. Prices charged by contractors are bound to be governed by the law of supply and demand. Where export by rail or sea to large centres is easy and cheap the price is likely to be higher than would normally be the case in a forest District; this applies chiefly to Thana, Kolaba, and the coastal tract of Kanara. Fuel depôts have been established where required in these Districts, at which fuel is sold at cost price, which is generally considerably below the market price. Government loses a large amount of revenue by selling fuel at a reduced rate in these depôts, and it is difficult to see what more can be done in this matter.

As regards the free removal of small branchwood from the current year's coupe, enquiries show that this is sometimes interfered with in Thana and Kolaba Districts. On the one hand the contractors want the branchwood for sale, on the other hand the Forest Department wants it for the burning of rab beds for the teak plantations in the coupe, as without such burning it is impossible to create a good teak plantation. It is said that whilst the contractors remove some wood of under the stipulated size the villagers remove some of over that size and the matter is equalized in that way. This may be so, but at the same time strict supervision is necessary to ensure that the contractors observe the terms of their agreement. In Kolaba District the removal of this branchwood is allowed for purposes of rab only, and there is more than enough available for this purpose; it is suspected that much of the material removed is taken for fuel or for sale. Efforts are, we hear, being made to supplement the supply of small wood to the people from thinnings and, in some cases, by allowing them to lop the trees in the coupe before it is felled.

As regards the permit system, this is said to be destructive to the forests and likely to lead to extensive looting, owing to the impossibility of supervision. The permit system should not be introduced unless there is no other convenient method of supplying cheap fuel to forest villagers.

*Fuel for manufacture of jagri*

25. Whilst on the subject of fuel, the question of the supply of fuel for the manufacture of *jagri* in Kanara may be considered. The Kanara Privilege Rules expressly lay down that the free collection of fuel is not allowed for the manufacture of *jagri*, although it is allowed on headloads for domestic purposes. This charge for fuel is evidently looked on as an old grievance by the cultivators of Kanara and the matter was brought prominently to the notice of the Committee. The Committee were informed by a prominent cultivator that the profits from an acre of sugarcane are Rs. 150, and that the expenditure on fuel for the manufacture of *jagri* from that area is Rs. 5 only ; but it seems hard that in a forest District like Kanara a charge should be imposed on fuel used for what is more an agricultural than a manufacturing process. The Committee have ascertained that the approximate area under sugarcane in Kanara is 3,000 acres. Reckoning the expenditure on fuel at Rs. 5 per acre a revenue of Rs. 15,000 would be realised annually if all the fuel used for the purpose were paid for. As a matter of fact only about Rs. 2,000 is realised from this source, from which it appears that most of the fuel used for the preparation of *jagri* is taken free. To regularise this the Committee recommend that fuel be allowed free in Kanara District only for the manufacture of *jagri* as for domestic purposes.

*Minor Forest Produce*

26. Applications were received from most Districts regarding the supply to the local population of minor produce of many kinds, *e.g.*, bamboos, canes, karvi, thorns, grass, stones, earth, fruits, tali palms, etc., etc. The general complaint was that the fees for these products had been enhanced of late and the prayer was that the fees should be abolished or restored to the former level. The amount of revenue involved is considerable, whilst the rates charged are very moderate, and there seems no genuine reason for any reduction.

III— GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP OF ROYALTY TREES STANDING ON  
MALKI LANDS AND, IN SOME CASES, OF THE REGROWTH  
AFTER DISPOSAL OF THE ORIGINAL TREES

*Poona and Satara Districts*

27. Petitions on this point were received from Poona, Satara, and Thana Districts. (In Poona and Satara districts a demarcation line has been drawn between the forest country in the west and the open country to the east). In the western parts of the districts where there are many wooded Survey Nos. interspersed with forest lands, Government exercise a restriction over the cutting of teak trees in malki numbers, and in part of Poona district even reserve their right to the aftergrowth, the idea being that some of the private lands in the western part of the

two districts may eventually be acquired for inclusion in forest. People complain that they are not allowed to cut the royalty trees standing on their malki lands even when they are willing to pay the royalty price ; and the people in four talukas of Poona district complain that the aftergrowth of the royalty trees in their survey numbers is reserved to Government.

The Committee understand that the demarcation line was drawn some 40 years ago and that little afforestation has taken place since then. They consider it a hardship that the people inside the demarcation line should not be allowed the full use of their lands on account of there being a possibility of some of the lands being acquired for forest. As it is unlikely that funds will ever be provided by Government for the purchase of malki lands for inclusion in forest they consider that Government should fix a time limit of, say, five years within which period lands required for forest may, if possible, be acquired by exchange ; after which the demarcation line should be abolished, royalty trees standing on malki lands cut as soon as convenient, and their aftergrowth ceded to the occupants.

#### *Thana District*

28. In Thana District Government have reserved the right to the aftergrowth of teak trees in malki Nos. and 20 per cent. of the sale price is given to the occupants. The malki teak in this District is of enormous value and during the period in which it was cut over, from 1899 to 1909, realized some 23 lakhs of rupees. In the next rotation it is thought that the value will be much higher, owing to the rise in price of teak and the scientific methods of management now to be introduced. Government consider that this property has grown up without any help or protection on the part of the malki owners and that its existence now is entirely due to the protection afforded by Government to teak as a royalty tree. The people complain that they pay assessment for the lands on which these trees stand and get no benefit in return. The latter part of this complaint is not in accordance with the facts, as there is a thick growth of injaili trees in these survey numbers which belongs to the occupants ; the grass also is of very considerable value ; and the payment to the occupants of 20 per cent. of the sale price will, where there is a thick growth of teak, more than repay the assessment for the total period between the times of felling. Where the growth of teak is not thick little or no inconvenience is felt by its presence. On the whole the Committee consider it better to leave the management of such a valuable property in the hands of Government and are convinced that the occupants are fully recompensed for any inconvenience that may be caused to them by the presence of these trees on their lands.

#### IV—PRESSURE OF FOREST ON CULTIVATION

##### *Kans*

29. Complaints under this head were received from Kanara District and the Committee visited several places where this pressure was



complained of. It appears that whilst a strip of forest from 44 to 100 yards in width around cultivation and village sites is handed over to the villagers for clearing, this privilege is not allowed in Kans, *i.e.*, high evergreen forests. The people complain that in consequence of this where a Kan adjoins cultivation or a village site there is a dense growth of trees and undergrowth right down to the boundary, giving cover to wild animals, overshadowing the crops, and causing unhealthiness to the inhabitants by dampness and want of air. There is a widespread request that the privilege of clearing strips be extended to areas covered with Kan. The Forest Officers state that Kans are necessary for the preservation of water in the soil and for preventing denudation, and that if the Kans are cleared the betel-nut gardens and "waingan" rice lands, which require a steady supply of water, will deteriorate and die out, and there is no doubt that this view is correct. The two points of view are diametrically opposed and the Committee are of opinion that these Kans are essential for the well-being of the cultivation. It is however undesirable to have village sites too closely surrounded by dense jungle and where this is the case the people should be allowed to clear away the undergrowth to a distance of 44 yards all round the village site, even if it consists of Kan.

#### *Strips*

30. As regards the strips around cultivation, complaints were made about delay in the demarcation of these and it was stated that if the strips were not cleared within a short time their grant was cancelled. This statement was however not substantiated. The Committee consider it essential that the strips be demarcated without delay and in such a permanent manner that it will not be necessary to cancel their grant even if clearing is postponed for a few years. The demarcation should be carried out by the cultivators concerned under the control of Revenue authorities to whom the work of assignment is entrusted. Strips are usually given of a width of 44 yards at first and are subsequently extended to 100 yards if this is found necessary. Requests were received that the strips be given to a width of 100 yards at once, to prevent duplication of work; but the Committee see no reason for this, as up to now very little clearing of strips has been done, although they were given out years ago, and it is doubtful if the people are capable to keeping such an extensive area clear. The people ask permission to clear tree growth, burn, and cultivate in their strips; provision is already made in the rules for the exercise of these privileges under certain safeguards.

#### *Minor Forest*

31. Complaints were received in Kanara that the area of minor forest is insufficient and that in some cases it is situated at a long distance from the village, and requests were made that the lopping of trees and shrubs and burning of the grass should be allowed, in order to provide a supply of leaf manure in the rains and to improve the grazing supply. The

Committee consider that Kanara is infinitely better off than any other District in the way of concessions regarding timber, fuel, leaf manure, and other forest produce, and in view of the fact that an area of 32,000 acres was recently added to the minor forest already existing near the coastal tract, are not prepared to recommend any further general concessions. Cases of individual hardship should be investigated by the local authorities.

#### *Bettas*

32. The subject of Bettas in Kanara may be touched on here, Complaints were made that the area assigned is not always the full amount to which the gardeners are entitled, or that it is unsuitable and inconveniently situated. The Committee can do no more than make a general recommendation that cases of complaint should be enquired into by the local authorities and put right as far as possible. A general wish was expressed that all bettas should be assigned to individuals and not communally, and handed over to the gardeners as their own property, just as the gardens are. As the bettas are intended entirely for the supply of leaf manure to the gardeners the Committee recommend that this be done under some guarantee against the destruction of the tree growth. The Forest Department should remove all royalty trees from the bettas as soon as possible.

#### V—CULTIVABLE LAND INCLUDED IN FOREST

##### *Cultivable Land*

33. Many requests were received for forest land for cultivation in West Khandesh and Nasik Districts, and it is understood that the Forest Department are giving out extensive areas of suitable land there and elsewhere. In some places complaints were made about the insufficiency of grazing ground owing to large areas having been given out for cultivation. The Committee are of opinion that as a rule it is more profitable to cultivate land suitable for growing crops than to keep it as grazing ground; but at the same time the need for grazing ground should receive due consideration in every case.

##### *Kumri*

34. The question of giving out hillsides for Kumri was raised in the Kanara, Belgaum and Satara Districts. It is understood that kumri is allowed in parts of these districts and that Government have the matter constantly under consideration. Whilst recognizing that kumri is a destructive form of cultivation the Committee would like to recommend that the people who practise it should be provided for until they can find some other means of livelihood near their homes.

#### VI—DIFFICULTY IN GETTING TRANSIT PASSES FOR PRIVATE FOREST PRODUCE

35. Complaints were made in several districts about difficulty and delay in getting transit passes for material which villagers are allowed to remove from forests under privilege or for material from malki lands. The Committee recommend that wherever possible the necessity for such

passes should be dispensed with and when such necessity exists the village officers should be authorised to issue passes where there is no forest establishment in the neighbourhood.

VII—DELAY IN GETTING FREE GRANTS OF TIMBER IN CASES  
WHERE HOUSES HAVE BEEN BURNT

36. Cases were brought forward where hardship had been felt owing to delay in giving free grants in such cases, necessitating the people living without shelter for considerable periods. The Committee recommend that in cases of destruction of houses by fire in forest areas timber of inferior species required for temporary huts should be made available without delay by the Range Forest Officer on production of a certificate from the Mamlatdar. This will enable the people to shelter themselves until they have time to build permanent houses, timber for which should be applied for to the Collector or Divisional Forest Officer in the usual way.

VIII—DELAY IN OBTAINING PERMISSION TO SAW UP TIMBER BELONGING  
TO PRIVATE PERSONS WITHIN A MILE OF THE FOREST BOUNDARY  
AS LAID DOWN IN RULE 24 UNDER SECTION 41 OF THE INDIAN  
FOREST ACT

37. Some complaints were received under this head. The Committee realize that whilst some check is necessary on these sawing operations the long delay which occasionally takes place may cause inconvenience and loss to the people. They recommend therefore that when an applicant does not get a definite reply to his written request for permission to saw within one month he should be allowed to begin sawing work without waiting any longer. This will not absolve him from the risk of proceedings being taken against him if it is found that any of the timber is Government property.

IX—RESTRICTIONS REGARDING BURNING IN MINOR FORESTS,  
GRAZING GROUNDS AND SIMILAR AREAS AND REGARDING  
BURNING OF RAB NEAR THE FOREST BOUNDARY

38. Permission is asked in one District (Kanara) for the burning of minor forests, grazing grounds, and strips round cultivation with a view to getting rid of the undergrowth. Whilst recognizing that the removal of undergrowth is desirable in some circumstances the Committee realize that the main objection to clearing away jungle growth is the danger of lantana coming in and rendering the area unfit for any use. Instances of this have been seen in Kanara, and the danger from lantana is very serious in that District as well as in Belgaum and Dharwar. The Committee therefore does not wish to make any recommendation on this point until the people have proved that they are able to cope with the lantana pest, which they evidently are not at present.

X—COMMUNAL PUNISHMENTS, I. E. ENHANCEMENT OF GRAZING  
FEES ON ACCOUNT OF FOREST FIRE

39. Complaints regarding these were received from East Khandesh, Thana, Kolaba and Satara Districts. When the offenders in a forest

fire case are not found it is customary to punish the villagers in the neighbourhood by the enhancement of the grazing fees for their cattle ; lists are however drawn up of the people who give help in cases of forest fires and these people are exempted from payment at the enhanced rate. The chief arguments against the system are (i) that it is unfair to punish people for an offence which they did not commit ; (ii) that people are punished for not turning out to help even if they are unaware of the existence of the fire. The people ask that there should be no compulsion to help in extinguishing a forest fire, as is laid down in section 78 of the Indian Forest Act ; that people who give help should be rewarded ; and that people who go long distances to put out fire, say over five miles, should be paid for doing so. The view of the Forest Department is that fire protection is essential for the well-being of the forests and that if people will insist on setting fire to them public opinion must be aroused against the system of firing ; that this can be done only by a combined system of punishments and rewards ; that the villagers are quickly made aware of the existence of a fire and that their failure to help must be deliberate. They claim that a system of rewards alone is not enough to induce people to help and say that if such help is not made compulsory fire-protection will come to an end. There was more argument on this point than on any other raised during the meetings of the Committee. In view of the great importance of fire protection the Committee do not feel justified in advising the abolition of compulsion and penalties. They think however that the system of rewards for good fire and general protection and for help in cases of fire be extended as far as possible. It should be possible to offer considerable inducements to villagers who are really helpful, such as free grazing, opening of closed forests in certain cases, increased facilities for obtaining timber, fuel and other produce ; but if the offer of these is not sufficient to secure the necessary co-operation the imposition of penalties for failure to help will become necessary.

#### XI—DAMAGE TO CROPS BY WILD ANIMALS

40. A good many complaints were received under this head. This matter was investigated by a Committee some years ago and some benefit has resulted from the carrying out of recommendations framed by them, but evidently the evil still exists. The Committee recommend that the shooting rules should be relaxed where much damage is caused by wild animals to crops and cattle and that every possible facility be given to the people to obtain fencing material free or at nominal fees.

#### XII—MISCELLANEOUS

41. A number of miscellaneous complaints of grievances was received, some of which have already been or are being attended to in departmental orders. The chief of these are noted below :—

(a) In some districts fees are charged for digging channels through forest to bring water to the fields. The Committee think

that the fee charged should be a nominal one not as a rule exceeding annas eight in each case. Permission should be given free to clear tanks and channels which have got choked up and to remove any forest growth obstructing the flow of water.

(b) Lack of water facilities in forest was complained of, chiefly in Khandesh. It is understood that Government is doing what they can to improve matters and it is hoped that funds for this work will be made readily available.

(c) Forest work carried out by the villagers such as plantation works, burning of fire lines, and clearing of boundaries is not, it is said, always paid for in cash. Where the people are not bound to do such work in return for specified privileges it should invariably be paid for either on daily wages or by piece work rates calculated to give a decent daily wage.

(d) A few complaints of oppression by forest subordinates were received, but none definite enough to justify any action being taken. In Panch Mahals district the complaints were more definite than elsewhere and the Committee were informed that there is a regular system of exactions in force by the subordinates there. All cases of such exactions should be brought to the notice of the authorities, and educated people should do all in their power to teach the poorer classes that any such exactions are illegal and should be reported to the higher authorities. In this connection it must be borne in mind that the subordinates whose exactions are complained of are nearly all selected from the inhabitants of the districts in which they serve and are therefore serving amongst their own people. It is curious that the mere fact of a man being appointed as Forest Guard should at once change him from a downtrodden uncomplaining serf to an arrogant oppressor, and a little reflection leads one to think that these complaints of oppression are grossly exaggerated, to say the least of it. On the other hand cases of assault and even of murder of Forest Guards are not at all uncommon.

(e) In Kanara requests were made for the abolition of the casuarina plantations near Honawar. This is a matter which should be enquired into by the local officials.

(f) It is alleged that the forest rules and privilege codes are not widely known amongst the people. It seems that all such are published in the vernacular, and there should be no difficulty in any one interested in the matter acquainting himself with the rules.

(g) It is suggested that the Indian Forest Act be provincialised and that any amendments to it and rules under it should be passed by the Local Legislative Council. It is suggested to Government that this is a matter for consideration.

(h) Suggestions were made that local Forest Committees should be appointed in each district to consist of non-officials who would be empowered to investigate any important matters affecting the welfare of the people and act in an advisory capacity to the Forest and Revenue authorities. This suggestion may be sound in theory, but if adopted in practice it would lead to endless trivial complaints

against local forest officials calculated to deter them from the performance of their duty, and would take the forest staff from their proper place and work in the jungles to attend enquiries which could every bit as well be conducted by the Revenue and Forest authorities themselves. With the spread of education the people are becoming more alive to their rights and privileges, and there has undoubtedly been a vast advance in this respect in the last thirty years.

### XIII--CONCLUDING REMARKS

42. Owing to the extensive area to be covered and the limited time at their disposal the Committee were not able to make minute enquiries into all the matters brought to their notice, but they have given careful attention to what seemed to be the most common and most important subjects of complaint.

The Chairman wishes to express his thanks to the non-official members of the Committee for their hearty co-operation in the enquiries, which had often of necessity to be carried out in circumstances entailing considerable hardship and discomfort.

Poona,

5th August 1926.

A. G. EDIE,

Chief Conservator of Forests and  
Chairman, Forest Grievances  
Enquiry Committee.

Poona,

9th August 1926.

E. M. HODGSON,

Conservator of Forests,  
Central Circle.

Nasik,

12th August 1926.

G. E. MARJORIBANKS,

Conservator of Forests,  
Northern Circle.

Dharwar,

16th August 1926.

H. L. NEWMAN,

Conservator of Forests,  
Southern Circle.

**PART—I-B**

**GENERAL REPORT REPRESENTING THE VIEWS  
OF THE NON-OFFICIAL MEMBERS OF THE  
COMMITTEE**

## REPORT OF THE NON-OFFICIAL MEMBERS ON THE FOREST GRIEVANCES ENQUIRY COMMITTEE

### PART I

1. As we differ on certain important points from the official members on the Committee and as we have to notice certain other important points, it has become necessary for us to submit our separate report.

2. In the July session of 1924 there were several resolutions on the agenda having something to do with the various aspects of the Forest Department, prominent among them being three, one strongly recommending the appointment of a Committee to inquire into the grievances of the rayats, the other urging the reduction of fees for various kinds of forest produce which had been recently increased, and the third recommending Government to formulate a scheme to be worked out in instalments for the exploitation of our forests so as to realize the maximum revenue that they are capable of yielding.

On 30th July Mr. D. R. Patil, M.L.C., East Khandesh, moved the following resolution :—

“This Council recommends to His Excellency the Governor in Council to appoint a Committee consisting of official and elected non-official members, with a majority of the latter to inquire into the grievances of the rayats with regard to forest matters and to suggest remedies for their redress.”

To this the Honourable Minister moved an amendment as follows :—

“This Council recommends to Government to appoint a Committee to visit important forest areas and to inquire into the grievances of the rayats with regard to forest matters and to submit suggestions for the consideration of Government.”

This amendment was accepted by the Honourable mover of the original resolution and by the House. In consequence of this resolution the present Committee came to be appointed by Government.

3. The Committee visited important forest areas in the Districts of East and West Khandesh, Thana, Kolaba, Kanara, Belgaum, Nasik, Poona, Satara and Panch Mahals. In our enquiry we noticed two things more prominently than any other. The first is the complaint of universal harassment of the rayats by the subordinates in the service of the Forest Department. Almost everywhere villagers directly or indirectly conveyed to the Committee that the lower subordinates in the Department practised zooloom in manifold ways. Some of these methods were narrated in more detail by the people of Dohad in Panch Mahals through their representative Mr. R. D. Pandia, who gave his evidence in a manner which impressed everyone on the Committee. Illegal exactions appear to be the order of the day. Some of these exactions are so regular that they are looked upon as almost customary. Others are occasional. These occasions are sometimes real and very



often created by the subordinates with a view to extort money. We don't think all these ways have been revealed to us. For, people were very often reluctant to mention them. They entertained little hope of the ways being stopped but felt almost sure of being subjected to more harassment for their audacity in having talked of them before the Committee. Before referring to any such illegal extortions some asked for protection by the Committee, others insisted upon their own names not being taken down. Such is the fear that has been created in the people and such is their hopelessness about getting any redress.

4. In view of what happens everywhere when such complaints are made who will say that the fear of the rayats is not justifiable? The Committee urges this complaint upon the attention of Government most earnestly.

5. We have come to hold a firm opinion that the subordinates in the Forest Department are mainly responsible for much of the discontent prevailing among the rayats. We would suggest two remedies to check this evil.

- (i) Officers of the rank of Divisional Forest Officer should be asked to keep a strict watch over their subordinates. Any instance of any kind of harassment of the people should be severely dealt with.
- (ii) District Forest Committees should be formed in all Districts. These Committees should have the power to hear forest grievances and to report thereon.

6. The second thing that we prominently noticed is the people's belief that no redress would ever be given to them, that the appointment of a Committee, the taking of evidence, and reporting thereon is all formal. They hold that there is no forest grievance of the people which is not known to Government or at least to superior officers of Government in the Forest Service. They argue that all their grievances are too well-known to Government and if Government are really sincere, they could have removed these grievances without having appointed a Committee. Confident that nothing is to come out of the Committee, people would often ask us whether any useful purpose was going to be served by the Committee. As an illustration of this mentality of the people we cite two instances.

- (i) In one of the written applications we find the applicants saying—  
 "Any man with sense of self respect will feel so much annoyed at the forest grievances that he would come to think that these grievances would never be redressed without violence. Sir, please sit for five minutes at the place where passes for grass and fuel are issued on receiving payment. You should be a real saint if the conduct of the subordinates would not fill you with disgust. \* \* \* It will take years of enquiry and decision in this matter. No improvement can be expected from the Committee. The more we think about the matter, the more despondent we feel."

(ii) When on 3rd May 1926, we reached Kumta in Kanara District, the first thing that we heard there was, that the people of Kumta had decided to boycott our Committee, and that a public meeting was going to be held the same evening. Two of us met the local leaders and also attended the meeting, to convince the people how it would be suicidal to boycott the Committee and to persuade them to say before the Committee all that they had to urge as their reason for boycotting the Committee. Their chief argument was that all their grievances were not only known to Mr. Edie, the Chairman of the Committee, but that at the conference at Yellapur, held on 18th May 1919 and subsequent days between Mr. Copleston, Conservator of Forests, S. C., Mr. Edie, Divisional Forest Officer, E. D., Kanara, and Mr. J. H. E. Tupper, Collector of Kanara, Mr. Edie had admitted the genuineness of all those grievances and had taken a very sympathetic view. They summed up all their grievances in one sentence. Let the Forest Grievances Enquiry Committee redress the grievances which Mr. Edie had admitted in the Yellapur Conference, and they would have nothing more to complain of. We told the people that they were entitled to say before the Committee all that they felt, but that it would serve no good purpose if they did not appear before the Committee. Accordingly next day many people were present at the meeting and one witness produced before the Committee a copy of the lengthy note on the Yellapur Conference over the signatures of the three officers mentioned above including Mr. Edie. Our point in noticing these incidents is to show that the people have grown greatly despondent of getting their grievances redressed.

7. Having briefly put down two important general observations that we had to make, we proceed to report on the main grievances of the people which are almost general in the Presidency proper, upon which we cannot agree with the opinion of the Chairman and then we would take up the particular grievances of the Districts we visited.

#### I.—GRAZING

8. In our inquiry, grazing was an important item of public grievance. Half a dozen grievances, in one form or another, related to grazing. They may be classified as (1) Grazing fee, (2) Grazing area, (3) Anjan trees and their leaves, (4) Grazing unit, (5) what cattle to be charged grazing fees, and (6) grazing for sheep and goats. Of these six grievances, we agree with the recommendations of the Chairman upon the last three. We differ from him on the first three, and we propose to consider these points in more detail.

##### *(1) Grazing fee and incidentally other fees*

9. Wherever the Committee moved and asked the people to state their forest grievances, their first complaint was about the grazing fees. They asked for free grazing, at any rate, they contended that the rates of grazing fees, wherever they had been recently increased, should be reduced. It is these grazing and other fees recently increased, that had caused great discontent among the masses and resolutions were tabled

session after session in the Council for their reduction, by several Honourable Members of the Council.

10. The history of these fees may be briefly stated in general terms. Originally there was mostly free grazing. Then some restriction of time came to be imposed, viz., it would be free from such and such a month to such and such a month and after that some nominal fee would have to be paid. Then a restriction as to the number of cattle was introduced. No fee would be charged upon a certain number of cattle and if the number exceeded, then only they would be charged. Then professional graziers owning lands assessed up to Rs. 20 only were exempted, the rest were charged. In course of time all professional graziers came to be charged irrespective of the extent of the land they held. After some years, a nominal fee of annas two all round was first introduced, then it was increased to four annas and in some cases to six annas. There was some legal agitation and in 1909 the fee was brought down to annas two, probably in the confidence that one day it would again be increased. That day came in 1921 when it was increased in one or two districts and Government waited to see how the increase was received by the people. We know our people better. They groan but submit, they do not complain unless someone is found to take their cause. There was murmuring but no loud noise. Emboldened by the helpless submission of the people Government raised it in few more districts in 1922-23 and everywhere in 1923-24. Income went on increasing, as the following figures will show :—

*Income from grazing*

1920-21	1921-22	1922-23	1923-24
Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
2,79,846	3,13,408	4,85,804	5,21,835

11. There was agitation. Applications were made to Government, questions were asked and resolutions tabled in the Council. The present Committee came to be appointed under the circumstances mentioned above.

12. Everyone that the Committee met and asked, pressed that the fees ought to be restored to their old level if the contentment of the people counted with Government. The Committee cannot forget the piteous manner in which some of the villagers they met urged the reduction. The Committee strongly recommends that these fees, grazing and other fees on forest produce, such as, grass, Anjan leaves, thorns, fuel, stones, etc., which have been recently increased, be at least brought to their original level, if not lower still, in all places and districts in which they have been increased.

	Old rates	New increased rates
Grazing fees per head of cattle	.. 2 annas	.. 4 annas,
Cartload of grass	.. 4 annas	.. One rupee in some places. 8 annas in all other places.

	Old rates	New increased rates
Headload of grass .. ..	.. ½ anna	.. 2 annas in some places. 1 anna in others.
Anjan leaves per headload per month .. ..	.. 2 rupees	.. 4 rupees.
Anjan leaves per cartload per month.	30 ,,	.. 60 ,,
Thorns .. ..	.. 4 annas	.. 8 annas.
Fuel .. ..	.. 8 ,,	.. 1 rupee.
Kilchan .. ..	.. 4 ,,	.. 8 annas.
Bamboos per 100 .. ..	.. Rs. 2-8	.. 4 rupees.
White clay .. ..	.. 2 annas	.. 4 annas,
Salt earth (Khari) .. ..	.. 2 "	.. 4 "
Stones-round surface .. ..	.. 1 anna	.. 4 "
Quarried stones .. ..	.. 2 annas	.. 8 "
Lime stones (Chunkhadi) .. ..	.. 2 "	.. 8 "
Karvi .. ..	.. 2 "	.. 4 "
Sand .. ..	.. 2 "	.. 4 "

and so on.

These rates, however, are not uniform everywhere.

13. The Committee relies on the policy of Government when it urges that grazing fees should be brought to their original level and should never be increased. This policy has been laid down in Government Resolution No. 650, dated 26th January 1891—

“ In its management of forests the ease and contentment of the people is an object of greater solicitude to Government than the realization of revenue, and while no relaxation of precautions necessary for the conservation and reproduction of the timber and firewood supplies can be permitted and the Forest Officers must be vigorously supported in resisting unauthorised encroachments, Government have no desire to increase their forest revenue by the curtailment of conceded privileges or of local supply, or by the levy of excessive charges for grass and other minor forest produce.”

The resolution proceeds—

“ The benefit of any revenue so obtained would be altogether insufficient to countervail the hardship and irritation that would be caused were the rayats unduly pressed in the matter of obtaining rab and firewood, grazing for their cattle or grass for thatching and other household purposes.” (*Vide* Bombay Forest Manual, Vol. II, pages 217 and 312.)

14. It is this policy of Government so distinctly and generously laid down in this resolution that guides and will guide us in recording our opinions on the various complaints and grievances of the rayats that have come before us in our inquiry, and all that the Committee desires to do is to urge upon Government that this policy so wisely embodied in this resolution on paper be strictly and scrupulously followed in practice.

15. If Government do not care to obtain revenue by causing irritation among the rayats and disturbing their ease and contentment, we urge that without a moment's delay the recent increases in grazing fees and

fees for other minor forest produce be stopped wherever they have been made. During our tour we have witnessed distinct and clear signs of the discontent and irritation that have been caused by these recent increases in fees. The Committee has not been able to discover why these fees were increased except the desire of Government to get more revenue. Khan Saheb Abdul Latif of our Committee had put to the Chairman a question—"whether the present condition of the agriculturists had improved" to which he replied "Difficult to tell; as the price of all commodities has risen the position of producers is probably stronger than before." But at the same time it will have to be remembered that the prices of all articles required by agriculturists have also gone up and thus what they gain in field produce, they lose in purchasing other necessary articles required. Their lot continues to be the same, if not worse. That is why a Royal Commission on Agriculture has been appointed to examine and report on the present conditions of agriculture and rural economy and to make recommendations for the improvement of agriculture and the promotion of the welfare and prosperity of our rural population.

16. The same question had arisen in 1909 when Government had made their first attempt to raise the grazing fees from two to four annas in some districts. Popular agitation influenced Government then in bringing down the fees and while doing so the line of reasoning which Government adopted obtains good even to-day, when the same question is before Government for the second time. We quote from Government Resolution No. 8952, dated 15th September 1909—

"There is good reason to believe that it is not the payment of a fee but the amount of it when it exceeds two annas in the case of cattle of agriculturists which is felt as a hardship. The fee at present levied exceeds two annas in the forest villages of a few districts only and beyond the sacrifice of revenue involved, there is no objection to its being fixed at that amount in all districts. The Governor in Council is accordingly pleased to direct that in all districts where the Kanara system is now in force the grazing fee to be levied *shall in future be* at the all-round rate of two annas a head for horned cattle and one anna a head for goats and sheep." (*Vide* the Forest Manual, Vol. II, page 321.)

17. We urge that the Governor in Council may be pleased to reduce the grazing fee and to direct once for all that *it shall never again be raised.*

18. And there is a sound and valid justification for this demand of the people. To quote from the same resolution—

"The agriculturist pays land revenue on the land which he cultivates, and it is proper to charge him only a nominal fee for the valuable privilege of grazing on Government land in order that he may get at a low price the grazing necessary for the cattle which are required for cultivating the land on which he pays land revenue." (*Ib.* page 322.)

19. It is only a nominal fee. Nominal means not real, and when it is once conceded that the fee is nominal, all that argument based upon the proportion between the price of grass that each head of cattle consumes and the fee that is charged is altogether out of place.

20. The Forest Department should never look upon the grazing fee with a covetous eye. It is against the policy and declared wishes of the Government of India. At page 225 of the same Volume, it is clearly stated that "it is to be distinctly understood that the Government of India do not desire that the grazing should be looked upon primarily as a source of income." The Government finds grazing fee as the simplest mode of getting revenue and probably in spite of their avowed objects they are tempted to add to their revenue by increasing the grazing fees. Our Presidency possesses very rich forests, and it should be the ambition of Government to turn these forests into a great source of revenue by developing them on scientific basis. Our forest financial returns are undoubtedly very meagre. For 1923-24 our forest revenue was Rs. 70,82,298 and our expenditure Rs. 43,60,998, leaving a poor net income of Rs. 27,21,300 only. Our forests are undoubtedly capable of yielding much more revenue provided steps are taken to bring all scientific and technical knowledge to bear on forest development. It is easy to increase fees and collect them, but success in forest administration does not depend upon exploiting the agriculturists, but it depends upon the application of scientific and technical knowledge so as to increase our forest wealth. As an instance of what can be done in this direction and what exactly we are not doing, we have to refer to what the Director of Industries has to say in his latest published annual report for 1924-25. It appears from that report that several enquiries were made of the Director regarding information about matchwood available in the forests of the Presidency, and he referred the enquirers to the Forest authorities. These authorities could supply very little useful information. The Director of Industries recommends that to satisfy the growing demand for more accurate and reliable information on the subject of matchwood, it is necessary to have forests explored and reported upon by a Match Technologist after having actually tried in a match factory the various species of matchwood that may be discovered. This is one of the many directions to which Government may turn for more revenue. We know all this is beside our inquiry, but our point is that instead of exploring the poor rayats of the Presidency by raising the grazing and other fees on forest produce, Government will do well to explore our rich forests so as to take the fullest benefit of their potentiality to replenish the Government coffers.

21. In the name of dumb cattle of the Presidency and in the name of their still more dumb owners, we recommend that if grazing cannot be made free, at least the fees that have been recently increased be reduced to their original level, if not lower still.

## (2) *Grazing Area*

22. Grazing area is hardly sufficient in many places. Practically everywhere we heard complaints about the grazing area being insufficient. The proportion of grazing area per head of cattle may vary with each locality. Local officers should be asked to determine what area per head of cattle would be necessary in every locality. In no case however, we think, it should be less than two acres per head of cattle. We have

not been able to get the proportion in every place and in every district, as it would probably have entailed more time and labour to get it. However we have been given the figures for some places under the jurisdiction of the Divisional Forest Officer, East Khandesh. They show that, in Jalgaon, Jamner, Edalabad and Chalisgaon Ranges under him, the acreage per head of cattle is 1·42, 1·22, 1·01 and 0·99, respectively. Same is the case in many places in almost all the districts. Insufficiency of grazing area formed a ground of bitter complaint by the rayats and if according to Government Resolution No. 7496 dated 22nd December 1881, forest interests are to be subordinated to the welfare of the agricultural population when there is any conflict between them, we urge upon the attention of the Government to devise means to allow sufficient grazing area in all places.

### (3) *Anjan trees and their leaves*

23. Difficulties in getting anjan leaves at a time when they are absolutely needed are keenly felt by the people of East and West Khandesh and Nasik Districts. Agriculturists resent it most that they should not be allowed to have recourse to anjan leaves at a time when they are most needed. Besides, fees required to be paid per head-load and cart-load of anjan leaves have been recently increased in East and West Khandesh and have been altogether newly introduced in the district of Nasik. Only till about two years back, the people in the Nasik District enjoyed exemption of fees for anjan leaves and the people of Khandesh would always envy their lot and would ask for similar exemptions. Instead of their getting any exemption, people of Nasik have been made to pay along with the people of Khandesh. As far as we see, there is no justification for this new imposition or for increasing the fees beyond the desire to make more revenue at the cost of agriculturists. We record it here as a fact within our knowledge that the irritation caused by these fees is far greater than can be compensated by the revenue that Government collects from these fees. Grass, grazing, and fodder are such sources of income as should never be coveted by any Government. The income from all these sources is surely very trifling, considering the contentment that would be secured among the rayats if these fees are remitted.

24. Besides the method of collecting monthly fees per cart-load works hard with the agriculturists. Cases of such hardships often occur and they are bitterly resented. For instance, an agriculturist pays the fees, Rs. 30 or 60 as they may be, for a month per cart-load but he works for a few days and heavy rain sets in. In such cases, he cannot visit the forests in the rains and has necessarily to forego the removal of anjan leaves during those days. We noticed cases in which people paid Rs. 60 for a month, but could work only for a week.

25. In May, June and July no fresh grass is available and it is imperative that permission to take anjan leaves almost free or on nominal fees should be granted. At other times the fees to be charged should be what they were before they were increased.

26. As to anjan trees, complaint was made that in some places these trees were cut. It was urged by the agriculturists that these trees should never be cut. They are more valuable for fodder than for fuel. It is contended that only a dying tree is cut, so that it may send forth fresh off-shoots. On the other hand we are told that such a thing hardly happens, not even in one out of a hundred cases. In view of these contentions by the agriculturists we would urge that all kinds of anjan trees should be reserved for fodder purposes.

## II.—COMMUNAL PUNISHMENT

27. Another main grievance and the most important one relates to the system of imposing communal punishment. Section 78 of the Indian Forest Act is very drastic. According to that section, every person exercising any right in a reserved or protected forest is bound forthwith to take steps, whether so required by any Forest or Police Officer or not, to extinguish forest fire in such forest of which he has knowledge or information, or to prevent any such fire from spreading. If any person fails to do so, he is liable to be punished with imprisonment. In such cases what generally happens is that if any fire is not extinguished or prevented from spreading in spite of the prompt efforts of some villagers in the vicinity, all villagers residing within the distance of a few miles are made to pay grazing fees at increased rates. This is what is known as communal punishment. This system of punishing is evidently unjust and it is rightly resented by the people. The power given to the Forest Officers by this section is more often abused than properly exercised. The abuse of this power has been so general in some parts, especially in Khandesh, that people have come to look upon these enhanced rates by way of punishment as normal. Year after year there are forest fires and villagers are made to pay these increased fees. People have come to look upon the vicinity of forests to their villages as a curse rather than a blessing. They suffer more on account of that vicinity than gain by it.

28. A curious instance of the abuse of the power came to our notice when we visited Yawal in East Khandesh on 2nd December 1925. That year there was a big fire in North Yawal strip in the month of March 1925. Sixteen villages were affected by it. It is alleged that excluding forest settlers, hundred and eighteen persons from four villages came to render help; and about 94 persons from six other villages came late and none from the remaining six villages turned up. The Department punished everyone from these 16 villages, those that came in time and rendered help, those that came late, and those that did not come at all, all were punished by having been made to pay grazing fees at varying enhanced rates. It is difficult to understand why even those that came and rendered help to extinguish the fire should have been punished. It was a big fire and it could not be controlled by the 118 persons that forthwith rendered help but why on earth should these 118 persons who literally complied with the provisions of section 78 suffer because they were few and the fire was uncontrollable. The total number



of persons affected by the punishment was 1,384 from the sixteen villages. The total grazing fees collected from these sixteen villages at the rates prescribed by way of punishment amounted to Rs. 4,065-10-0 whereas without the punishment at the usual rates the collection would have been only Rs. 1,736-2-0.

29. These punishments are inflicted year after year for one reason or another, *viz.*, it is alleged people did not come to extinguish fires, they did not render help in the work of fire-lines or they resorted to illicit grazing. All this causes great irritation. There is one more anomaly about this communal punishment. It is inflicted not per villager but per head of cattle a villager possesses. One man may have only two heads of cattle and another eight for instance. The first man pays the rates by way of punishment for two heads of cattle and the other for the eight heads of cattle. There is hardly any rhyme or reason in this system of communal punishment.

30. We may note that if grazing fees which have been recently increased are not reduced and the system of communal punishment is not abolished, people are prepared to think that this Committee might not as well have been nominated. That is how people consider these two questions as very vital. We urge that the system of communal punishment be done away with. The system of giving rewards is the only proper remedy possible, as the people themselves stand to gain or lose by the fires.

### III.—AFTERGROWTH

31. The law on this point has been embodied in rule No. 62 as framed by Government under sections 40 and 44 of the Bombay Land Revenue Code. It is a clear and just rule. It lays down that when once the right of Government to the trees in a holding has been disposed of to the occupant or when all the reserved trees have been once cut and removed, Government will have no further claim to trees which may afterwards grow in the holding or which may spring up from the old roots or stumps, that is to say Government will have no claim to the aftergrowth. This was laid down in November 1881. Rule No. 62 was originally rule No. 98 to section 214 of the Code. Effect was given to the rule throughout the Presidency. Then after about 18 months, that is, in June 1883, Government framed a new rule, old rule No. 98 A, present rule No. 63 to the effect that old rule No. 98 or present rule No. 62 shall not be deemed to apply to varkas lands in the districts of Thana, Kolaba and Ratnagiri and Betta lands in the district of Kanara or to any land in the Dindori taluka or the Peth taluka of the Nasik District and to some other places. This was all arbitrary. There can be no justification for it beyond the fact that Government had the power to enact such rules. It is difficult to understand how a right once conferred and recognised could be subsequently withdrawn except by the use of arbitrary power. Later on in 1892, the District of Kolaba and some other places were removed from the exemption and rule No. 62 was again extended to those places. At

present the people in the district of Thana are not given the benefit of rule No. 62 and we heard very bitter complaints from the people in that district. They complained plainly and without any hesitation that the rule No. 62 was extended to their district, but when after eighteen months Government discovered that people made a good profit out of the aftergrowth, Government cast a covetous eye on the legitimate gains of the people and because they had the power to deprive the people of their rightful gains, they enacted rule No. 63. This is a sheer act of injustice. Because the malki teak in that district is of enormous value and from 1898 to 1909 that is in about eleven years during which period it was cut over, Government realised some 23 lakhs of rupees that cannot justify the action of Government. Government once got the royalty and had no right to the trees that grew afterwards. In fairness, Government ought to return to the people of Thana all that they illegally realised during all these years. But people don't ask it because they don't hope to get it. They demand that hereafter at least their right to the subsequent growth be recognised by Government. Similar demand was made by the people in West Khandesh, Satara and some other districts.

32. When Government appointed this Forest Grievances Committee, the people of Umbergaon and Dahanu talukas in the District of Thana formed their own Forest Grievances Committee and the representatives of that Committee have made this act of injustice to them quite clear and they conclude their written representations by saying that "till these rights of occupants to after-growth are conceded the Thana occupants will never be satisfied and the fight for their claim will ever go on."

33. People dispute the proposition of the Chairman that the after-growth has grown up without any help or protection on the part of the malki owners and that its existence is entirely due to the protection afforded by Government to teak as a royalty tree. People maintain that the after-growth would have been impossible without the occupants having preserved the trees all along. They declare and rightly that the land covered by the shade of the trees does not yield any income to the occupants who however pay the assessment for it. Government say that they pay them 20 per cent. of the sale price, but people say, what is it to them when they are entitled to the whole price and when in the shape of assessment Government realises in forty years much more than what they pay. We hold with the people. The Chairman's defence of the conduct of Government in the matter is half-hearted and cannot convince anybody. Government have no right to the after-growth and we recommend that justice be done to the people of Thana and other districts in this connection as it is done to some other districts in the Presidency.

#### IV.—OTHER POINTS

34. There are a few more points of less importance upon which we disagree with the Chairman of the Committee and we propose to refer to them while considering the particular grievances of the districts. On

most of the other points we agree with the Chairman. We agree with him and we hope he agrees with us, that

- (1) If possible grazing fee should be collected by the village officers.
- (2) A District should be the grazing unit.
- (3) Fees should not be charged for calves up to the age of one year and a half.
- (4) Separate areas should be allotted for sheep and goats.
- (5) To remedy insufficiency of grazing ground it may be desirable to curtail the period of closure to grazing. Experiments should be made to see if the period of closure can be safely curtailed.
- (6) There should be no closure to grazing within a quarter of mile of a village ; if possible it should be more distant.
- (7) There should be no impounding of cattle which have accidentally strayed into closed forests.
- (8) No compensation should be levied in addition to pound fee.
- (9) No rewards be paid to forest subordinates out of compensation recovered in grazing offence cases.
- (10) Hut fees and Chula fees in Khandesh be abolished.
- (11) Instead of to contractors, grass areas should be sold to local villagers, village panchayats, Taluka Local Boards or such other public bodies at the average price of the last ten years.
- (12) Maximum retail sale price for grass and maximum rate of grazing fee (not more than the Government rate) should be specified at the time of sale and entered in the agreement.
- (13) All grass areas not required by the Military Authorities in the Poona District be resumed and made available to the public.
- (14) The removal of fallen dead timber should be allowed.
- (15) Timber left by contractors should be allowed to be removed before plantation work is taken up.
- (16) Wherever possible people should be allowed to remove free dead wood on carts.
- (17) There should be strict supervision to ensure that contractors observe the terms of the agreements and do not obstruct the villagers from removing small branchwood of the stipulated size.
- (18) Fuel should be allowed free for the manufacture of jagri.
- (19) Fees for minor forest produce, where they have been increased, should be reduced and "it should be clearly understood that Government are not anxious to make revenue from minor produce."
- (20) Where village sites are closely surrounded by dense jungle, people should be allowed to clear away the growth to a reasonable distance all round the village, even if it consists of *Kan*.
- (21) Strips around cultivation should be demarcated without delay and in such a permanent manner that it will not be necessary to cancel their grant even if clearing is postponed for a few years.

- (22) Local authorities should inquire into and as far as possible put right complaints about the area assigned as Betta not being full to which the gardeners are entitled or being unsuitable and inconveniently situated.
- (23) All Bettas should be assigned to individuals and not communally and handed over to the gardeners as their own property.
- (24) Hill sides may be given for kumri to people who have no other means of livelihood near their homes.
- (25) When possible, the necessity for transit passes should be dispensed with and where such necessity exists village officers should be authorised to issue such passes.
- (26) In cases of destruction of houses by fire in forest areas timber required for temporary huts should be made available without the least delay by the Range Forest Officer on production of a certificate from the Mamlatdar.
- (27) When an applicant does not get a definite reply to his request for permission to saw up private timber within one month, he should begin sawing work without waiting any longer.
- (28) Shooting rules should be relaxed and every possible facility afforded to people to obtain fencing material free and villagers should be allowed to pursue the wild animals into the forests.
- (29) Fees for digging channels through forests to bring water to the fields should not exceed, if possible, annas two in places where such fees are imposed.
- (30) Water facilities in forests to men and cattle should be given.
- (31) Forest work carried out by villagers must be paid for either on daily wages or by piece work rates calculated to give a decent daily wage.
- (32) Local Forest Committees should be appointed in each district with power to hear complaints and to investigate any important matters affecting the welfare of the rayats, and
- (33) The Forest Act should be provincialised.

#### V.—GENERAL

35. We do not think we have exhausted all the grievances of the people, for we do not think we have been able to hear all their grievances. We visited only places from which applications were received. We were not going to visit Panch Mahals, because no application was received from that district till the last day announced for receiving applications. The one application that was received from that district on that day contained very serious allegations and the Committee had to postpone its consideration of the final report till we visited the district. When we visited Godhra and Dohad, the Committee was flooded with applications and thousands of people were anxious to ventilate their grievances. It is therefore quite possible that similarly there may be other parts in the Presidency from which we may not have got any applications, but which may still have very serious complaints to make. Nor do we think that

we have exhausted the list of grievances of the people in the districts we visited. It was not possible for us to go everywhere and hear every complaint either of general or local importance. Much is left for the District Committees to be hereafter formed to do. We clearly see the necessity and the utility of having District Committees to permanently guard the interests of the rayats. The Honourable members of the Council representing the districts should be on the Committees and one of them should be an *ex-officio* Chairman. The Divisional Forest Officers and other officers ought to render every help to the Committees in their investigation. Local officers ought to be more sympathetic. They can themselves remove many of the petty grievances of the people, provided they are more sympathetic, tactful, courteous and ready to meet the people and to inspire confidence in them. We hope Government carries out our recommendations and in course of time, the disrepute that has come to be attached to the Department would vanish and the Presidency may feel proud of their Forest Administration.

36. We have no ambition that we can enunciate any new or better policy for Government in the administration of the Forest Department, than what we find laid down by Government and stated in Chapter XXVIII of the Bombay Forest Manual, Volume II. Who can think of a better policy than what has been briefly embodied in one sentence by the Government of India that "*the sole object with which State Forests are administered is the public benefit*"? On reading that chapter one may come to think how happy the people of the Presidency must be whose Government has laid down such a generous and liberal policy with the sole desire to do good to the people. We only wish that this policy is followed by Government and their officers in all their rules and regulations, orders and resolutions.

37. During our enquiry we noticed in many places that people possessed certain rights and privileges but they did not know them or use them. We recommend that wider publicity should be given to all these rights and privileges from time to time in the local languages. They should be communicated to all village officers with instructions to make them known to all villagers.

38. Wherever we went, hundreds of people, anxious to place their grievances before the Committee met us. Some of these people came on foot from long distances. That itself could not fail to impress us as the best evidence of the genuineness of their grievances and their keen anxiety to get redress. At Godhra on 20th June 1926 we saw before us a large gathering of people the like of which we had not seen at any other place during our tour. At the lowest estimate about 3,000 people had assembled there. They sat all the while in the heat of the sun or under such shade as the trees in the compound of the Collector's office could afford, while their representative in the Legislative Council was placing their grievances one by one before the Committee. Our sincere thanks are due to all the people that met us in the several places we visited. We are thankful to the Honourable members of the Legislative Council who placed their views before the Committee on behalf of the

people at Jalgaon, Erandol, Satara, Poona, and Godhra, and to all other gentlemen who, at great inconvenience to themselves, appeared before the Committee at all places.

39. Our best thanks are due to Mr. A. G. Edie, our Chairman. When the personnel of the Committee was announced, there was some dissatisfaction in the public press at the appointment of an official Chairman of the Committee. Whatever else one may have to say about this appointment on principle, we, the non-official members of the Committee, have great pleasure in recording that we could not have a better Chairman. Mr. Edie was extremely sympathetic, patient and ever willing to look to the convenience of the members on the Committee, and the people to be examined as witnesses. We cannot conclude without noticing the trouble and the care with which the camp clerk Mr. M. G. Mannige worked in the office and during the tours. We recommend that Mr. Mannige be given an extra allowance at Rs. 30 per month from February 1925 when the Committee commenced its work till the date of the submission of this report.

D. R. PATIL.  
M. D. KARKI.  
K. E. DADACHANJI.  
ABDUL LATIF HAJI HAJRAT KHAN.  
SHANKAR S. DEV.

COUNCIL HALL,  
Poona, 3rd August 1926.