

THE



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PART V.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE GOVERNOR GENERAL OF INDIA.

Abstract of the Proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India, assembled for the purpose of making Laws and Regulations under the provisions of the Act of Parliament 24 & 25 Vic., Cap. 67.

The Council met at Simla on Friday, the 26th May 1871.

PRESENT:

His Excellency the VICEROY and GOVERNOR GENERAL OF INDIA, K.P., G.M.S.I., *presiding*.
 His Honour the LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR of the Panjáb.
 The Honourable JOHN STRACHEY.
 The Honourable Sir RICHARD TEMPLE, K.C.S.I.
 The Honourable J. FITZJAMES STEPHEN, Q.C.
 The Honourable B. H. ELLIS.
 Major-General the Honourable H. W. NORMAN, C.B.
 The Honourable F. R. COCKERELL.

LOCAL RATES (PANJA'B) BILL.

His Honour the LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR of the Panjáb introduced the Bill to provide for the levy of local rates in the Panjáb, and moved that it be referred to a Select Committee with instructions to report in three weeks. He said—

“MY LORD,—I move to introduce a Bill to provide for the levy of rates in the Panjáb.

“This Bill was originally in charge of my honourable friend Mr. Ellis, who has contributed much to its present shape, and has been made over to my care to give me an opportunity of stating to the Council the actual condition of the newly-constituted provincial finances.

appointment of Deputy Inspector General. This, if effected, would give £6,300; but the question is one connected with administrative considerations, and under no circumstances could any relief be obtained at an early period.

“The necessity for additional taxation being admitted, is the mode prescribed by the Bill that which most recommends itself by its efficiency and adaptation to the habits of the people laid under contribution? As the principle on which it is founded has already been sanctioned in respect of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, I need not dilate on its effects. There is a general agreement that the people of the Panjáb, though quite as averse to all taxation as their neighbours, will more readily acquiesce in the imposition of a light rate on the land than in any other demand, for it is in accordance with their remembrance of old times, with their customs and usages, and with the immemorial practice of former rulers.

“The gross yield of the rate calculated on a land-revenue, stated according to the latest returns at £1,859,117, will amount to £132,557. But certain deductions have to be made on account of lands already paying the double road cess under the proceedings of the revised settlement, on account of the remuneration payable to the headmen of villages, to which is due some part of the comparative popularity of this system of fiscal contribution, and on account of unforeseen deficiencies to be expected in actual realization. Hence, I fear that it will not be safe to estimate the net income from this source at more than £110,000. The incidence of the rate will be—

Per head of agricultural population	2 annas 2½ pie.
„ acre of cultivated land	1 anna.
„ acre of málguzárí land	8·2 pie.

and the recital of these figures will, I think, demonstrate that no very heavy burden is being added to the taxes already payable.

“There remains the important question whether the general condition of the country warrants the imposition of any additional burden at all. Having consulted those most competent to judge of the capabilities of the agricultural community, I am enabled confidently to answer this question in the affirmative. I can point to the fact recorded in the census report of 1868 that, whilst population had increased only in the ratio of 11½, cultivation had increased in the ratio of 31½ per cent., as well as to the greatly-enhanced prices obtainable by sale of land. And there is a general consensus of opinion attesting the unprecedented prosperity of all classes connected with the soil. And, although I cannot contend that those classes are identical with the fortunate sections of the community benefiting through the relinquishment by the imperial exchequer of the greater part of the income tax, they nevertheless share in the general relief consequent on the remission of taxation, amounting, as it does in this Province, to £86,860.

“It may, perhaps, be urged that there is some inequality in confining the new demands to the agricultural classes. But I would point out that about two millions of the non-agriculturists are brought under contribution through the agency of the municipalities, and that the town-duties have recently been materially increased by the admission into the schedule of piece goods and metals.

“I am not aware, my Lord, that there is any other point to which I need now advert.

“Having explained to your Excellency in Council briefly, but I trust with sufficient distinctness, the leading objects of the Bill; having shown that, whilst it is necessitated by the prudent and politic limitation set by the Government of India to the pecuniary grants hitherto made in furtherance of purposes, illimitable in themselves, of provincial improvement, moral and material, it is at the same time designed to raise, by a procedure well understood by the populations concerned, the funds indispensable to the maintenance of even that abated speed of progress demanded by a yet backward civilization; and having further shown that it is impracticable by any mere process of redistribution and retrenchment to avoid additional taxation, and that the salient and vigorous agricultural industry of these Provinces can sustain, without injury, the moderate rates proposed, it only remains for me to move that the Bill be referred to the scrutiny and revision of a Select Committee.”

The Motion was put and agreed to.

CRIMINAL TRIBES BILL.

The Honourable Mr. STEPHEN moved that his Honour the Lieutenant Governor of the Panjáb be added to the Select Committee on the Bill for the Registration of Criminal Tribes and Eunuchs.

The Motion was put and agreed to.

The following Select Committee was named :—

On the Bill to provide for the levy of local rates in the Panjáb—The Honourable Messrs. Strachey, Stephen, Ellis and Cockerell, and the Mover.

The Council adjourned to Tuesday, the 30th May 1871.

H. S. CUNNINGHAM,

*Officiating Secretary to the Council of the Governor General
for making Laws and Regulations.*

SIMLA;

The 26th May 1871.