

*Friday,  
20th October, 1899*

ABSTRACT OF THE PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
Council of the Governor General of India,  
LAW AND REGULATION  
LAW AND REGULATIONS

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ABSTRACT OF THE PROCEEDINGS  
OF  
THE COUNCIL OF THE GOVERNOR GENERAL OF INDIA  
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The Council met at the Viceregal Lodge, Simla, on Friday, the 20th October, 1899.

PRESENT:

His Excellency Baron Curzon of Kedleston, P.C., G.M.S.I., G.M.I.E., Viceroy and Governor General of India, *presiding*.

His Excellency General Sir W. S. A. Lockhart, G.C.B., K.C.S.I., Commander-in-Chief in India.

The Hon'ble Major-General Sir E. H. H. Collen, K.C.I.E., C.B.

The Hon'ble Mr. C. M. Rivaz, C.S.I.

The Hon'ble Mr. C. E. Dawkins.

The Hon'ble Mr. T. Raleigh.

The Hon'ble Rai Bahadur Pandit Suraj Kaul, C.I.E.

INDIAN TOLLS (ARMY) BILL.

The Hon'ble MR. RIVAZ moved for leave to introduce a Bill to amend the law relating to the exemption from tolls of persons and property belonging to the Army. He said:—"The object of this Bill is to combine in a single Act, of general application, the provisions relating to the exemption from tolls of persons and property belonging to the Army, which are at present scattered over a large number of local enactments in force in different parts of India, and to bring these provisions into harmony with those of the English Army Act. The details of the Bill are fully explained in the Statement of Objects and Reasons, and the only point which I need notice is that the list of proposed exemptions in clause 3 of the Bill is quite provisional and will receive further careful consideration."

The motion was put and agreed to.

The Hon'ble MR. RIVAZ introduced the Bill.

The Hon'ble MR. RIVAZ moved that the Bill and Statement of Objects and Reasons be published in the Gazette of India in English and in the local official Gazettes in English and in such other languages as the Local Governments think fit.

The motion was put and agreed to.

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## AGRICULTURAL PROSPECTS.

The Hon'ble MR. RIVAZ said:—" Before the Government of India leave Simla and re-assemble in Calcutta, the Governor General in Council considers it desirable to place before the public such information as to the probable character and extent of the approaching distress, and as to the measures taken to meet it, as is at present available. A similar forecast was made in October, 1896, when the failure of the South-West Monsoon made scarcity or famine over the greater part of India inevitable. Early in August last the weakness and fitfulness of the monsoon current led the Government of India to request Local Governments to place before them by the end of September full reports on the agricultural situation, and to include in these reports an estimate of the amount of relief which might be required in the event of unfavourable conditions continuing. Similar information was at the same time called for from Political Officers in respect of Native States. These reports have been received and examined in the light of the latest further intelligence as to rainfall, harvest prospects and prices. The reports are exceptionally full and clear, and the Governor General in Council is under obligation to the Local Governments and Political Officers for the care with which they have placed before him the chief features of a serious and critical situation.

" It is difficult at this early stage to institute a close comparison between the circumstances created in 1896 by the failure of the rains and the circumstances now existing. The present situation has this important point in its favour that the great and populous province of Bengal, and fully half, if not three-fourths, of the great and populous province of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, have good or fair rain crops, and fairly good prospects for the ensuing cold weather, and, save for the pressure of high prices on the labouring and urban classes, are practically outside the region of anxiety. This tract is the most densely inhabited and the most highly cultivated in India, and contains a population, roughly speaking, of 100 million souls. It is a matter of profound satisfaction that in this vast area the present outlook is immeasurably better than was the outlook in October, 1896, and that here at all events the food production of the year will be in excess of the requirements of the population. With Bengal and the Eastern Section of the North-Western Provinces may be ranked Burma, where a bumper rice crop is on the ground; Madras, where rain has fallen widely and most opportunely; and the Native State of Mysore. In all these the outlook at present is much more favourable than in 1896. To the absolutely secure area may be added, as in 1896, Sindh and the South-West Punjab which rely wholly on canal irrigation from the perennial snow-fed rivers of the Himalayas.

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“The second group comprises those Provinces, Districts, or States where prospects are mediocre, though marked failure of crops or general distress is not anticipated. In this group may be placed the South Mahratta and South Deccan districts of the Bombay Presidency, a large part of the Nizam's Dominions, the greater portion of the Central India Agency, the western half of the North-Western Provinces and the northern and submontane districts of the Punjab. In the three tracts last enumerated much will depend on the extent to which sowings for the winter crop may be found practicable. At present sowings on unirrigated lands are in these tracts impeded by the exceptional dryness of the soil. But the area commanded by wells and canals is very large, and if an inch of rain should fortunately fall between now and the 15th November in Central India and the western districts of the North-Western Provinces, and up to a much later date in the Northern Punjab, sowings outside the irrigated area would be undertaken. On the whole, a comparison of the existing situation in the tracts forming the second group with the situation there in 1896 is favourable to the present year.

“The last group comprises the seriously affected area in which scarcity or famine conditions either already exist or must be expected. This area is unhappily large. It comprises about 100,000 square miles in British territory, with a population of 15 millions, and about 250,000 square miles in Native territory, with a population also of about 15 millions. In 1896 the seriously affected area comprised about 200,000 square miles in British India, with a population of 45 millions, and 80,000 square miles in Native States, with a population of 7 millions. It includes about  $\frac{1}{4}$ ths of the Central Provinces, nearly the whole of the Berars, the North Deccan and Guzerat in the Bombay Presidency, and the South-East and Central Punjab. It further includes the territories of large and important Native States in Central and Western India. The large group of Native States in North Bombay, the Baroda State, the greater part of the Indore State, and virtually the whole of Rajputana, and some minor States in Central India, are very seriously affected. In this great expanse of Native territory between the Sutlej and the Nerbudda, pasturage has failed for the herds which largely represent the wealth of these States, and great losses of agricultural stock are inevitable. Fortunately, the population is comparatively sparse. In extent and intensity the present drought in Rajputana and North Bombay equals, if indeed it does not exceed, the memorable drought of 1868, the year which affords the nearest parallel to the present year within this century. In the British Districts of Guzerat scarcity of water and fodder is also great, and though great exertions to

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import fodder and to provide central relief camps for cattle on the banks of rivers are being made by the Bombay Government, much loss, it is feared, will befall the agriculturists. Otherwise, the districts of Guzerat are better fitted by their wealth and prosperity than almost any other part of India to tide successfully over the difficulties caused by a loss of the year's harvests. The failure of the rain crops in the Central Provinces is probably not as great as in 1896, but it is feared that unless rain speedily comes, the prospects of a cold weather crop will be poor. The gravity of the situation here is much increased by the depressed condition of the population, which has not recovered from the disasters of the great famine of 1896-98. The South-East Punjab, especially the districts of Hissar, Gurgaon and Rohtak, which were affected by the drought of 1896-97, are again affected, and in a worse degree. Conditions here are similar to those existing in Rajputana, and great loss of cattle is anticipated.

" The net result of these comparisons is that a much smaller area and population in British India are this year seriously affected, and a much larger area and population in Native States, as compared with the affected area and population in 1896-97. The total population of the area in which the harvests are seriously deficient in British and Native territory may be put at 30 millions against 52 millions in 1896-97. There is no reasonable doubt as to the sufficiency of the food stocks of India as a whole for the requirements of the country up to July next, when the rains of 1900 will, it is hoped, be established. How far the existing stocks will be replenished by the outturn of the cold weather crops is a matter of uncertainty, as the outturn will depend on the presence or absence of rain during the next three months. But in the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab the perennial canals may be relied on to irrigate 4½ million acres, and the area protected by wells in both provinces is also very large. Even assuming that no rain falls in these provinces in time to aid the cold weather sowings, the crops raised with the help of irrigation in the driest districts will be very considerable, and there is besides a great and fertile area especially adapted for cold weather crops between the eastern borders of Bihar and the western confines of Oudh, where the soil has retained sufficient moisture to admit of sowings generally. The stimulus which the high prices of a year of scarcity give to cultivation in India, wherever cultivation is possible, was strikingly illustrated in 1896-97, and it is quite certain that, however adverse the coming season as regards rain may be, the same influence will operate to bring every possible acre of land under a winter crop of some kind.

" Prices of grain in the famine affected tracts, and indeed throughout India, have risen very much, and are now as high as they were in October, 1896.

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"It is probable that, as in 1896, the extreme limit has already in most places been reached, and that as panic and speculation abate, and the possibilities of importing wheat and maize from America and other countries (to say nothing of rice from Burma and Bengal) are more fully recognized by the trade, a decline will set in. It is a significant fact that a considerable quantity of foreign wheat has already been sold to up-country buyers in the Calcutta market at a rate which would enable it to be laid down at Ajmer, in the very heart of Rajputana, at the price of 16 lbs., or 8 seers, the rupee. At the close of the famine of 1896-97 the American maize received by the Indian Charitable Relief Fund Committee from the United States was very highly thought of and eagerly accepted by the people in the Central Provinces and the Punjab. There would seem to be a good opening for the importation this year of maize in large quantities on remunerative terms, and there is a large market for it in many parts of the country.

"It is scarcely necessary to say that the Government of India will adhere to their policy of absolute abstention from any interference with private trade in the matter of grain imports from abroad. The wisdom of this policy was thoroughly established in the famine of 1896-97. It is also anticipated that, as in 1896-97, the internal trade of the country will be fully equal to supplying local requirements throughout British India. The extreme activity of the grain traffic on every railway at the present moment is the best evidence of this. In the Rajputana famine of 1868 the cost of carrying grain from Agra to Ajmer was Rs. 2-4-0 the maund. The sole means of conveyance was by camels, and even camels failed. The cost of railway carriage between these places is now only two or three annas the maund. In 1868 the Rajputana-Malwa Railway was not built, and in Jodhpur and Meywar there was absolute dearth of food. The South-East Punjab was similarly unprotected. The railway map of India for the present year will show how totally conditions in these regions have changed. So far as the Government of India are aware, no Native State has expressed apprehension that food will not be obtainable in its territories, or that private trade will be unequal to the task of importing whatever quantity is needed.

"The estimates of expenditure on direct relief returned by the Local Governments point to a probable outlay of 1 crore or 1½ crores of rupees up to the 31st March, 1900. These estimates have to be received with all caution, as it is too early to foresee how events will run. There will be further outlay on account of loans and advances to agriculturists. On the receipt side of the account the

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land-revenue collections will necessarily show some falling off. On the other hand, there will be increased railway earnings and increased irrigation receipts.

“ The principles and practice of famine relief are now so generally known that it is unnecessary to explain them in detail. The Famine Commission which sat last year, while making a number of useful suggestions on minor points, had to admit that the general method of relief procedure had stood the test of practice. The Famine Commission's recommendations have not yet been formally embodied in the local Famine Codes, but they have been for some time under the consideration of Local Governments, and in many respects they are being acted on. In all the Provinces relief organization is complete and ready to cope with distress, as distress becomes apparent. According to the latest reports 63,000 persons are on relief in Bombay, 71,000 in the Punjab, 121,000 in the Central Provinces, 28,000 in Berar, and 70,000 in Ajmer-Merwara. In all, 250,000 in British India. In October, 1896, the number of persons on relief was only 50,000. The difference in numbers is due partly to the earlier date at which distress has unmistakably declared itself, but in a large measure also to the greater vigilance and promptitude engendered by the experiences of 1896-97.

“ With regard to Native States, the primary responsibility for affording relief to their subjects rests with the Rulers. They have to assist them in the discharge of this responsibility, a simplified edition of the Famine Codes of British India, and the friendly help and advice of the Residents and Political Officers. The larger Native States have competent engineers in their employ, who can undertake the supervision of any important public works undertaken for relief purposes. The Government of India have volunteered the loan of any other officers who may be needed to supervise relief measures, and have offered to assist with loans of money any State in Rajputana whose resources are unequal to the strain of famine relief. From the reports which have reached him the Governor General in Council feels assured that in Rajputana and elsewhere the ruling Chiefs of Native States fully recognize the exceptional responsibilities devolving on them, and are animated with an earnest wish to succour their people.”

His Excellency THE PRESIDENT said :—“ I should like to supplement the detailed statement to which we have just listened from the Hon'ble Member in charge of the Revenue and Agricultural Department by a few observations of a more general character upon the attitude and policy of Government. It has been a source of great distress to me—and my feelings in this respect are those of all my Colleagues—that in my first year of office, while plague, the first great



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Indian scourge, has remained a persistent visitor, the second, which is famine, should once again be threatening this sorely tried country and its patient and unmurmuring population. For months past it is no exaggeration to say that the daily meteorological report has been to everyone of us, who are in our different spheres responsible for Indian government, the document to which we have turned with the most anxious interest each morning; and day by day as we have contemplated a sky of brass and an unclouded sun, we have longed bitterly, and would have sacrificed much, for the sight that met the watcher upon Carmel, of the little cloud no bigger than a man's hand.

"If, in our regrets at the ill fortune that has attended us, we may nevertheless recognize some grounds of legitimate alleviation, they will consist in the facts that we had upon the present occasion long warning of the coming scarcity, and have, in consequence, been able to formulate our plans of campaign in advance; and, secondly, that while the area of certain distress is unfortunately large—much too large—it is yet considerably smaller than the corresponding area in the famine of 1896-97, and, if Providence should favour us with late autumnal rains, is still capable of contraction. In Rajputana it is to be feared that the suffering will be in excess of any since the sad year of 1868-69; and in the Central Provinces, I regret to think that a portion of the ordeal of three years ago may again have to be endured by the same poor people who have barely had time to recover from the last shock. But elsewhere, as Mr. Rivaz has shown, the situation, though grave, affords less ground for acute apprehension; while in many parts of India the sufferings of the unfortunates elsewhere will, to some extent, be balanced by exceptionally favourable conditions.

"The narrowness and the comparatively precise definition of the areas affected should enable us to devote our energies to their relief with all the greater concentration. I do not pretend that, in so doing, we have any novel or startling methods of procedure to announce. Perhaps the worst and least re-assuring declaration that a Viceroy could make upon an occasion like this would be that the Government of India proposed to experiment in respect of scarcity and famine. Our proceedings must be, and will be, founded upon the very opposite extreme of principle. All that we have acquired from the recorded observations of a century; all that we have learned from the experience of the past 25 years, during which India has three times been visited by serious famines; all that we have been advised or warned by the recent Famine Commission: these must be the bases of our action. They will furnish the pocket-book for field service, with which our soldiers of peace will enter upon their humane and bloodless campaign.

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“ If I be asked to summarize the action which it is in the power of the Government of India to take against famine, in respect either of executive intervention, of sympathetic assistance, or of local control, I would make the following reply. In our own territories we have a fourfold scheme of operation : in the larger villages and towns, we open poor-houses for the reception and sustenance of the famishing waifs and strays ; in the country hamlets, we distribute gratuitous relief, weekly or fortnightly, to the sick and aged, the widow and the orphan ; we employ tens of thousands of impoverished but willing hands upon relief works, the making of roads, the digging of tanks, the construction of embankments for future lines of railway. The Hon'ble Member has in his speech given you some idea of the numbers who are already thus engaged ; and they represent but a small fraction of the total for whom our existing organization would enable us, with scarcely a hitch, to provide paid employment of this character, should the emergency arise. Finally, by the appointment of special officers, selected for their training or experience, we supplement the existing staff, and endeavour both to supply a stimulus and to strengthen local supervision.

“ These are our more immediate measures. Prospectively, we always have in contemplation *Taccavi* advances, to enable the peasant to sow his seed before the next rains, and—that ultimate stand-by of the distressed agriculturist in all lands—remission of rent, or as we call it in India, land revenue. I do not think that in any period of scarcity or famine, the Government of India has shown an inclination to be ungenerous in these particulars.

“ If we turn to the situation as it affects Native States, we are necessarily upon somewhat different ground. Here we must be careful to do nothing that would diminish the responsibility or slacken the energies of the Native Chiefs and Durbars. The Government of India should not step in either to usurp their proper functions, or to relieve them of an obligatory duty. On the other hand, we may do much, and in the case of Rajputana we are endeavouring to do much, by the loan of officers, and by the offer of expert advice, to systematize and to co-ordinate local action. We can further help Native States with loans from the Imperial Exchequer ; and I believe that my Hon'ble Colleague, the Finance Member, is prepared to show a far from obdurate disposition in this respect ; and we may, by individual acts of assistance or relief, contribute to lessen the strain. For instance, I may mention that a little while ago I offered to remove and to maintain at the expense of the Government of India one of the two Imperial Service Cavalry Regiments of Jodhpur during the present and forthcoming distress ; and that this offer was gladly accepted by the State.

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“ May I venture to add that there must be many localities—populous districts or large cities in which men of substance reside—where some local effort for the assistance of their suffering countrymen would be most acceptable. I have already heard of such private charity having been started in some cases—of a local Famine Relief Fund, of a subscription list, and of a Committee of Distribution. There are large classes of the native population who are not touched either by relief works or by gratuitous relief; but who may be saved from perishing by the timely exercise of such philanthropy. In detailing the liberal and sustained plan of action with which the Government of India is prepared to meet the emergency, I feel that I have a peculiar right to call also upon India’s own sons to come to her rescue in the hour of her trial.

“ My own knowledge of Famine Work and Famine Relief is necessarily at present, owing to the short time which I have spent in the country, only in an incipient stage. May I add that I propose to invest it, in so far as I can, with a more practical and beneficial complexion, by visiting in the course of my forthcoming tour a large number of the principal areas of distress in Northern and Central India. The experience which I shall thereby gain may, I hope, enable me both to render useful help on a future occasion, should such arise, and to enter more closely into the sorrows, as well as the joys, of the Indian people.”

The Council adjourned *sine die*.

SIMLA; }  
The 20th October, 1899. }

J. M. MACPHERSON,  
*Secretary to the Government of India,*  
*Legislative Department.*