

APPENDIX B

LORD SALISBURY'S 1875 DESPATCH TO GOVERNMENT OF INDIA*

(1) The emigration of Her Majesty's Indian subjects to the Colonies has of late years engaged general attention and has been the occasion of much correspondence with the Government in India and with the Colonial authorities.

It has been found that the Indian Government was till recently very imperfectly informed regarding the position and condition of the emigrants after their arrival in the various Colonies, and inquiries have brought to light some evils and shortcomings, for the removal of which her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies has undertaken action.

Complaints

(2) On the other hand, gentlemen representing the interests of those West India Colonies in which it is believed that the emigrants are now, on the whole, fairly and liberally treated, and that their condition is certainly much superior to that of ordinary labourers in their own country, have submitted to me complaints that emigration to those Colonies is not encouraged and facilitated by the Indian authorities as it fairly might be.

They complain that the regulations are such as unnecessarily to increase the expense of recruiting and transporting emigrants, that the emigrants are frequently of a class not^{at} all adapted to the work for which they are required, and that the stipulation for a back passage before the labourers a temptation and incitement to leave the Colony just when they have become most useful.

* As quoted in The Fiji Times. Wednesday, December 7, 1962. Pp.2,5.

Responsibilities

(3) The Indian Government has not hitherto in any degree assumed the function of promoting emigration to places beyond its own limits, and is in no way responsible for the class of labourers, fit or unfit, recruited for service in the Colonies, the labourers being engaged by the Agents of the Colonies, and not by the Indian authorities.

The Indian Government has done no more than permit the Colonial Agents to engage emigrants for service in the Colonies, under such regulations and restrictions as are calculated to protect ignorant people of a humble and uneducated class against deception and other abuses, to see that they thoroughly understand the engagements which they are making, and to secure proper sanitary and other arrangements previous to embarkation and during the voyage to the Colonies.

Both Sides

(4) Looking to both sides of the question, the present seems a fitting time to explain to you the views which I am inclined to entertain on the whole subject of emigration from India to the Colonies, and to invite your attention to the question whether, by some change of system, it might not be possible and advisable to afford greater encouragement to emigration on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to obtain fuller information regarding the treatment of the emigrants in the Colonies, and greater security against any unfairness towards them, either in the Colonial laws and regulations, or in the terms and conditions of their employment and treatment.

Outlet Desirable

(5) Having regard to the greatness of our Indian population and to the probability that, under the protection which the British Government affords from depopulation by war, and, as far as possible, from famine and other evils, that population must continue very greatly to increase, especially in the healthier and more than densely peopled parts of the country where the numbers already pressed on the means of subsistence, and the lowest classes are at all times little removed from want, it appears to me that, from an Indian point of view, it is desirable to afford an outlet from these redundant regions into the tropical and sub-tropical dominions of her Majesty, where people who hardly earn a decent subsistence in their own country may obtain more lucrative employment and better homes.

Advantages

(6) While, then, from an Indian point of view, emigration, properly regulated, and accompanied by sufficient assurance of profitable employment and fair treatment, seems a thing to be encouraged on grounds of humanity, with a view to promote the well-being of the poorer classes, we may also consider, from an Imperial point of view, the great advantage which must result from peopling the warmer British possessions, which are rich in natural resources and only want population, by an intelligent and industrious race to whom the climate of these countries is well suited, and to whom the culture of the staples suited to the soil, and the modes of labour and settlement, are adapted.

In this view also it seems proper to encourage emigration from India to Colonies well fitted for an Indian population.

Encouragement Asked

(7) Influenced by the above considerations, I would ask your Lordship in Council to consider whether there might not properly be a considerable change in the attitude of the Indian Government towards emigration, - whether the Government and its officers might not more directly encourage emigration and superintend the system under which it is conducted - provided it is fully satisfied on all points with regard to each Colony which avails itself of such a system.

In this case it would seem desirable that the Indian Government should make itself directly responsible to the emigrants for the correctness of the information afforded to them, and for the due performance of the terms on which they are induced to leave their own country.

To enable us to do this we should require some security from the Colonial Administrations that these representations and guarantees should not be dishonoured.

Qualified Agents

This object might be effected if the Colonies would agree to receive and pay for a sufficient number of qualified agents familiar with the people from among whom the emigrants come, to be appointed by the Indian Government from its own servants, actual or retired.

Such agents should be stationed at suitable places in the Colonies, and should have the fullest opportunities of ascertaining the condition of the Indian labourers and settlers, and of making themselves acquainted with everything that concerns their interests and welfare.

They should be empowered to bring to the immediate notice of

the Colonial authorities everything which may, in their judgment, afford reasonable ground of complaint, either as regards the general laws and regulations affecting the Indian population or their treatment on any particular estate.

They would furnish to the Indian Government the fullest reports, making clear the exact conditions of the Indians resident in the Colony, whether under indenture or as free settlers, and would thus enable that Government to proceed with confidence in its dealings with people wishing to emigrate.

Redress

(8) Under such a system the authorities of the Colonies would necessarily pledge themselves to redress all reasonable complaints, and to secure the fulfilment of all the promises for which the Indian Government had become responsible.

It might be provided that, in the event of any difference of opinion on these subjects, reference should be made to her Majesty's Government in this country, whose decision should be final.

The machinery for giving effect to such decision in the Colonies must be secured.

It might possibly be arranged that the Government in this country, be the Secretary of State for the Colonies acting in communication with this office, should lay down certain main rules for the treatment of Indian immigrants and settlers to be observed in all Crown Colonies.

Help To Agents

(9) Under such a system as that here sketched out, while it may be doubtful if it would be prudent for the Indian authorities directly to undertake the task of recruiting emigrants under ordinary circumstances, they might well afford help and

countenance to Colonial Agents engaged in the work, whose character they have approved, and who work under a system which meets their approbation.

The local magistrates of districts containing a large population well fitted for emigration would be directed and required to do their utmost to make known the terms offered, and to encourage suitable persons to take advantage of them and everything would be done, consistent with the fair protection of the emigrant, to render the arrangements as easy and inexpensive as possible.

Government Action

(10) Under extraordinary circumstances, such as famine, flood, or other great calamities, when large numbers of the poorer classes are deprived of the means of subsistence, or are left without house and home, the Government Officers might themselves engage emigrants for those Colonies which have agreed to receive people recruited under such circumstances.

(11) Reverting to emigration under ordinary circumstances, while the Indian Government could hardly, as a rule, make itself directly responsible for the suitability of the persons engaged for the kind of labour for which the Colonists require them, and the acceptance of the individuals engaged must rest with the Colonial Agents, it may nevertheless be proper that the Indian authorities should exercise a certain general superintendence over the class of people recruited, and that, both in the interests of the emigrants and that of their employers in the Colonies, care should be taken that labourers are not recruited from classes ill adapted for the life they are to lead and the labour they are to perform.

Local Discretion

A discretion should be vested in the local officers who attest the engagements of the emigrants to reject those who are clearly unfit, and who should not be permitted to emigrate unless they are ^{for} special reasons accepted, as, for instance, when an aged dependent is permitted to accompany the family to which he belongs.

(12) In order to enable the Government to guarantee to the emigrants the terms on which they are engaged, it would seem to be necessary that those terms should be clearly defined before embarkation, and should not be left vague and uncertain till after their arrival in the Colony.

Wage Question

The principal difficulty appears to arise on the question of wages, as affected by the point whether the emigrant is classed as able-bodied or otherwise.

Hitherto a minimum wage has been guaranteed, but the reports show that, in very many cases, this wage was not in fact earned by the emigrants on their arrival in the Colony, the reason, from the employer's point of view, being that the labourers are either physically unfit to do a good day's work or are so inapt and unskilful as to be unable to do so till after a considerable experience.

The last arrangement proposed to get over the difficulty arising from this non-fulfilment of contracts made in India appears to be, that no specific wage should be promised to the individual emigrant, but that an entry should be made in his papers that the wages for an able-bodied man will be so-and-so.

Classed on Arrival

Under this system, it is only after arrival in the Colony, and when it is too late to retreat, that the labourer is classed as able-bodied or otherwise.

I consider that it would be better to class the emigrants in India, such classification to be accepted by the Colonial Agents there before embarkation.

In this case a man, before he leaves his country, would either be engaged as an able-bodied labourer and secured the wages of a labourer of that class, or put into an inferior class on terms suitable to that class, as offered by the Colonial Agent and accepted by the emigrant.

Guaranteed Terms

(13) Under such a system each man or woman would know exactly the terms on which he or she is engaged.

These terms would be guaranteed by the Indian Government to the emigrant and by the Colonial authorities to the Indian Government.

(14) It would still be at the option of the parties voluntarily to arrange for payment by way of task-work, under the system common in the Colonies, after their arrival there.

In the case of material change in the physical condition and powers of a labourer after his expatriation, it might be provided that he should not be degraded to a lower class without the concurrence of the resident Indian Agent, and in this case the means of healthy subsistence should be provided, and, if indispensably necessary, a return passage.

Safeguard

(15) On the general question of back passages, while the whole

tenor of this despatch will have made it evident that it is rather settlement and colonisation than mere temporary labour engagements that I desire to encourage, I see reason to fear that the stipulation for the right to a back passage from the more distant Colonies could not be abandoned without much diminishing the attraction of the system of emigration to the timid and ignorant classes from which Indian emigrants are chiefly supplied and also without withdrawing what is perhaps the best safeguard for the kind and considerate treatment of the Indian labourer, viz, the desire to keep him by voluntary arrangement after the term of his compulsory service has expired.

I shall be glad to know whether you consider that it could with safety be left open to the emigrant in each case either to stipulate for a back passage or to accept other terms.

Women Emigrants

(16) If it be accepted that the object of the system is to encourage permanent colonisation, I need hardly say it becomes more than ever desirable to promote to the utmost the emigration of a sufficient proportion of women of ^{an} honest and decent class.

The reports show that the habits of morality and decency of the Indian population of some of the Colonies are much affected by the scarcity of honest women and want of family life.

It will, therefore, be every way desirable that, in all that your Excellency's Government does to promote emigration, special effort should be directed to those classes whose women are most free from the social prejudices which prevent their emigrating, and that as far as possible, women of the agricultural and labouring classes should be induced to emigrate as well as men.

Education

(17) If we should succeed in promoting colonisation on an

increased scale, we may well insist that the Colonial authorities should make such provision for the education of the children, and for otherwise ensuring the improvement and well being of the emigrant population, as shall conduce to their ultimate elevation to a position far superior to that from which they have emerged.

If your Lordship in Council should concur generally in the views which I have expressed, and should be prepared to give effect to them, this view of the matter will be specially brought to the notice of Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Free Men

Above all things, we must confidently expect as an indispensable condition of the proposed arrangements, that the Colonial laws and their administration will be such that Indian settlers who have completed the terms of service to which they agreed as the return for the expense of bringing them to the Colonies, will be in all respects free men, with privileges no whit inferior to those of any other class of Her Majesty's subjects resident in the Colonies.

(18) In the foregoing observations I have not kept out of view that there are portions of Her Majesty's dominions in India which are greatly in want of labour, and migration to such parts would of course be an object that you would specially promote, whenever you are satisfied that the climate and the wages, or other advantages offered, are such as greatly to improve the condition of emigrant labourers.

(19) With these remarks I commend the whole subject to the very special attention of your Lordship in Council, and shall be glad to receive an expression of your views on the points which I have raised at as early a date as is consistent with their full discussion and consideration, after you have obtained the opinions of the most competent authorities whom you may deem it proper to consult.