

"BRITISH FAMINE AND AGRICULTURAL
POLICIES IN INDIA, WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO THE ADMINISTRATION
OF LORD GEORGE HAMILTON,
1895 - 1903"

by

Premansukumar Bandyopadhyay

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at the
University of London

School of Oriental and African Studies

November 1969



ProQuest Number: 11010349

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 11010349

Published by ProQuest LLC (2018). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

ABSTRACT

During the last decade of the nineteenth century India was subject to severe agricultural depression. She was hit by the two worst famines of the century, first in 1896-7 during Elgin's viceroyalty (1894-8) then in 1899-1900 during Curzon's (1899-1905). On both occasions government policy was dominated by concern for economy in relief expenditure and heavy mortality occurred. In the former famine Lord George Hamilton, Secretary of State for India, proposed some liberal measures and secured financial assistance from the Imperial Treasury for famine relief. But Elgin rejected such assistance. In the latter famine Hamilton's policy was illiberal and he prevented Curzon from seeking an Imperial grant. Hamilton did this because the Imperial Treasury was then hardpressed by wars in China and South Africa. The occurrence of these famines raised the question of the application of the Famine Insurance Fund which was popularly alleged to have been largely misappropriated by the government since its creation in 1877-8. The allegation was admitted by Curzon and Hamilton but their attempts to reorganise the Fund for its proper use were frustrated by the opposition of the Council of India.

Moved by the chronic economic distress in India and disappointed at the Government of India's failure to redress it, a group of liberal-minded Englishmen formed an Indian Famine Union in England

and urged the India Office and the Government of India to undertake measures to improve Indian agriculture and the economic condition of the masses. But this produced no effect. Another group, of retired Anglo-Indian officials together with R.C.Dutt, appealed to the government to reduce the land tax in India where it was excessive. The Government of India refused to do that but passed some remedial agrarian legislation which, however, failed to provide relief to the impoverished masses.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks are due, in the first place, to Dr. R. J. Moore, my supervisor who suggested the present study and showed constant interest for its improvement. I owe a great debt to him for his valued criticism and advice. I am indebted to the Scholarships Committee of the School of Oriental and African Studies for an award which enabled me to complete the present thesis. I am also grateful to the Trustees of the Edwina Mountbatten Fund for their grant. Lastly, I wish to thank the staff of the India Office Library, the British Museum, the Public Record Office and the Christ Church Library, Oxford, for their assistance.

ABBREVIATIONS

Appx.	Appendix
B.C.I.N.C.	British Committee of the Indian National Congress
Ch.Comm.	Chief Commissioner
Ch.Secy	Chief Secretary
Cir.	Circular
Corres.	Correspondence
C.P.	Curzon Papers / Central Provinces.
Dept. of Rev. & Agri.	Department of Revenue and Agriculture
Enclo.	Enclosure /Enclosed
E.P.	Elgin Papers
Fin. P.	Financial Papers
G.G. in C.	Governor General in Council
Govt.	Government
H.P.	Hamilton Papers
H.Q.	Headquarters
I.F.U.	Indian Famine Union
I.N.C.	Indian National Congress
IOL	India Office Library
IOR	India Office Record
L.C.I.	Legislative Council of India
L.P.	Lytton Papers

N.P.	Northbrook Papers
N.W.P. & O.	North Western Provinces and Oudh
P.P. (H.C.)	Parliamentary Papers (House of Commons)
Papers Re:	Papers regarding
P.R.O.	Public Records Office
Proc.	Proceedings
Resol.	Resolution
Rev.St. & Comr.	Revenue Statistics and Commerce
Rev. & St./R. & S.	Revenue and Statistics
Rev.	Revenue
S. of S.	Secretary of State for India
S.P.	Salisbury Papers
Telegr. (Pvt.)	Telegram Private

GLOSSARY OF INDIAN TERMS

<u>Bania</u>	merchant
<u>Kharif</u>	autumn crop
<u>Kist</u>	instalment
<u>Mahal</u>	estate
<u>Rabi</u>	spring crop
<u>Rayat</u>	peasant
<u>Sarkar</u>	government
<u>Shaukar</u>	moneylender
<u>Tashildar</u>	revenue collector

CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	4
Abbreviations	5
Glossary of Indian Terms	7
Introduction	9
Chapter I The Famine of 1896-7	24
Chapter II The Famine of 1899-1900	90
Chapter III The Famine Tax and the Famine Relief and Insurance Fund	155
Chapter IV The Indian Famine Union in England, 1901-3	207
Chapter V Problems of Land Policy: Assessment, Legislation and Finance	274
Conclusion	366
Bibliography	382
Appendices (including Maps)	399

INTRODUCTION

Born in 1845, George Francis Hamilton was from the first destined for a political career. His father, the tenth Earl and first Duke of Abercorn, was a Tory of wealth and eminence and twice Viceroy of Ireland. His mother was a daughter of the house of Russell. Hamilton was sent to Harrow but he did not show any outstanding intellectual inclination. After leaving Harrow he served for some time in the Rifle Brigade and the Coldstream Guards. At the age of twenty-three he earned the favour of Disraeli, who selected him as the Conservative candidate for the parliamentary constituency of Middlesex in the general election of 1868.¹ The two seats of that constituency were then held by a Whig and a radical. Hamilton was returned with a huge majority by dint of his patrimony.²

Conservative political ideas were ingrained in Hamilton. In his early parliamentary life he studied British Constitutional and Imperial history, and James Mill's History of India aroused his

¹The Times, 23 September 1927; see also Dictionary of National Biography, 20th Century, 1922-1930, pp. 388-90.

²G.F. Hamilton, Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflection, 1868-1886, London 1917, pp. 1-3. In his first election Hamilton had to purchase votes at £1 each, excluding the conveyance charges of the voters. Hamilton spent a total amount of £30,000 in his first three elections. The practice of purchasing votes was abolished in 1883.

interest in India.¹ He was also active in his constituency² and in high Conservative political circles. He soon came under the notice of Lord Derby and in the general election of 1874, when the Conservatives came to power, he was at first offered the post of Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. But because of his lack of French the offer was withdrawn and he was given the post of Under Secretary of State for India, with Lord Salisbury as his chief and Sir Louis Mallet as Permanent Under Secretary.³

The post of the Under Secretary of State is, according to Hamilton, "the blue ribbon of its grade".⁴ He has little opportunity for making policy but has a wide scope to display his initiative in departmental work. But Hamilton's advantage was that as Lord Salisbury was a peer the task of representing India in the House of Commons fell upon him. This enabled him to introduce several Indian bills and budget debates in the Commons. Hamilton assisted in piloting the Royal Titles Bill of 1876 by which the Queen assumed the title of the Empress of India.

¹Ibid., pp. 1-13.

²Hamilton to Salisbury, 17 May 1869, S.P., IOL, Microfilm, Reel No. 819.

³Hamilton, op.cit., pp. 66-8.

⁴Ibid., p.67.

The period of Hamilton's Under Secretaryship was equally distributed between the last half of Northbrook's liberal viceroyalty and the first half of Lytton's Tory viceroyalty. During this period Hamilton witnessed the conflicting famine and frontier policies pursued by the Government of India. He favoured the liberal famine policy that Northbrook followed in the Bengal famine of 1873-4¹ but subscribed to the "forward" frontier policy of Lytton.² During the tenure of his Under Secretaryship Hamilton sat on two parliamentary commissions on Indian affairs, the first on East India finance in 1874, as a member,³ the second on East India Public Works in 1878, as chairman.⁴

Hamilton's Under Secretaryship ended in 1878 when Salisbury went to the Foreign Office. Hamilton subsequently served as Vice-President of the Committee of the Council upon Education (1878-80), First Lord of the Admiralty (1885-92) and Chairman of the London School Board (1892-5). In 1895 when the Conservatives came to power under Salisbury Hamilton was appointed Secretary of

¹ Hamilton to Salisbury, 8 December 1877, S.P., op.cit.

² G.F. Hamilton, The Present Position of the Conservative Party, Edinburgh 1880, an address made at the inaugural meeting of the Conservative Association of the University of Edinburgh, 14 January 1880, pp. 1-20; see also a speech to the members of the Dalkeith District Conservative Association, 16 January 1880, ibid., pp. 1-16; see also his Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections, 1868-1886, pp. 139-40.

³ Reports from the Select Committee on East India Finance, 1874, P.P. (H.C.), 1874, Vol. 8.

⁴ Report from the Select Committee on East India Public Works, 1878, P.P. (H.C.), 1878, Vol. 12.

State for India. He served in the India Office for a record period of eight years. In October 1903 he resigned from the post as he could not agree with the tariff policy of *Joseph Chamberlain*.¹ Hamilton's parliamentary life ended in 1906 when the Liberals routed the Conservatives. Thereafter he was associated with certain public bodies until his death in 1927.

The Government of India Act of 1858 placed the East India Company's Indian administration under the direct control of the Crown in parliament. Responsibility devolved upon a Secretary of State for India in Council.² The Council consisted of fifteen members, eight being appointed by the Crown and seven nominated by the dissolved Court of Directors. By an amendment of 1869 the members of the Council were to be nominated by the Secretary of State for India. Council members had to have passed ten years in India and not to have left the country more than ten years before their appointment. Their term of office was ten years and they could be removed earlier only on petition of both houses of parliament. The Council of India was to aid and advise the Secretary

¹Hamilton to Balfour, 15 September 1903, cited in India, 2 October 1903; see also Hamilton to Mr. Wright, Chairman of the Conservative Council at Ealing, 25 September 1903, ibid.

²Acts 21 & 22 Vic., C.106. For details on the role of the Council of India see S.N.Singh, The Secretary of State for India and his Council, 1858-1919, Delhi 1962, Chs. I-III.

of State for India in the discharge of his duties, but the latter had the discretion to divide the Council into Committees and to entrust each of them with a particular aspect of administration. Despatches were sent to India in the name of the Secretary of State but all orders, except on matters of high imperial policy, such as war and peace, must be brought to the notice of the Council. The members might record their dissent from any decision. All decisions on financial matters must be taken by a majority vote in full Council.

The position and responsibility of the Secretary of State for India were complex with regard to the administration of India but simple so far as the Cabinet and the parliament were concerned. He was responsible for the stability of the Indian Empire as well as for the welfare of the people. Although he was constitutionally powerful he had to carry with him the viceroy on the one hand and his own Council on the other, in order to discharge his ultimate responsibility. As he also had direct correspondence with the Presidency Governments of Bombay and Madras, which enjoyed substantial local authority, the Secretary of State acted as an impartial judge in relations between them and the Government of India. At home the position of the Secretary of State for India was simpler than that of his Cabinet colleagues. Since his salary as well as the entire expense of the India Office

were virtually free from parliamentary control and adverse criticism of his authority in parliament or in the press could rarely impair his effective supremacy over Indian affairs. Nevertheless, a Secretary of State for India needed to be a politician of foresight with a vast knowledge of India, her people and their problems.

Hamilton's capability of holding the post of the Secretary of State should not be judged from his apprenticeship as a novice at the India Office as Under Secretary. But his career during the seventeen years preceding his appointment as Secretary of State did not indicate his possession of those talents of statesmanship which were necessary for a public post of such importance. His close association with Salisbury¹ and his rigid allegiance to right wing Conservative policies were the main reasons for his selection for the post. A few months before his appointment Hamilton's attitude was reflected in his speech in the House of Commons in support of the abolition of the protective tariff on English cotton goods imported in India. He held that, as the English people had "shed blood and money" for establishing a Government in India, the "Government of this country should take care that India did not set a fiscal system hostile to vast interests in this country, and which could not be tolerated in this country".²

¹See Salisbury to Hamilton, 22 April 1878 and 16 August 1892, S.P., Christ Church Library, Oxford, Vol. D/27.

²Hansard, 30, 21 February 1895, cols. 1357-58.

Hence, when Hamilton's appointment was announced soon afterwards, there was a general uproar in the liberal and radical British press against it. The Daily News wrote: "We have already pointed out the reason for regarding Lord George Hamilton as the worst possible Secretary of State for India. At a great crisis when the bulk of the Conservative party in the House of Commons subordinated faction to the welfare of India, Lord George, with the assent of Lord Salisbury, subordinated the welfare of India to the interest of faction."¹ The Star commented in the same tone: "Lord George Hamilton will make the worst Secretary for India we could imagine".² The Manchester Guardian wrote: "Lord George Hamilton's appointment to the India Office will no doubt scandalize the young Tories...."³ But The Times and the Standard took Hamilton's appointment without criticism and both hoped that he would be able to utilize at the India Office his previous experience in that department.⁴

Hamilton entered the India Office at a period when problems in India were gigantic and the political pressure at home was heavy. There was agricultural and economic depression.⁵ A new

¹ July 1895, quoted in India (London), August 1895.

² n.d., quoted in ibid.

³ n.d., quoted in ibid.

⁴ n.d., cited in ibid.

⁵ V. Anstey, The Economic Development of India, London 1936, p.436.

assessment of land revenue in the Central Provinces and in the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras was adding a fresh burden of taxation to the agricultural population who were already in debt. The wars on the North Western Frontier had absorbed a lot of the Indian revenue. The construction of irrigational works had been neglected while the rapid railway extensions offered no substantial benefit to the poor peasants. Though the decennial report on the moral and material progress of India was to claim various improvements in the country¹ the two great famines of 1896-7 and 1899-1900 were to expose the destitute condition of the agricultural masses.

Indian problems had repercussions in England. The starting of Congress propaganda work in England in 1887 through the private agency of Dadabhai Naoroji laid the foundation for a permanent source of opposition to the Indian policies of the Secretary of State for India. In 1888 this propaganda work was extended and William Digby was appointed a full time paid agent of the Indian National Congress.² The one man agency was soon found to be inadequate for the increasing volume of work and in 1889 a committee was formed under the name of the British Committee of the Indian National Congress, consisting of Sir William Wedderburn as Chairman, Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee as Secretary and Messrs. W.S.Caine, M.P., George

¹Moral and Material Progress Report, 1901-1902.

²India, 5 December 1890.

Yule, Naoroji, W.B.S.McLaren, M.P. and J.E.Ellis, M.P. as members.¹ The Indian National Congress had granted an annual sum of Rs. 45,000 to finance the work of the Committee. The objective of the Committee was to fight against the bureaucratic control of the Secretary of State for India, whose supremacy seemed immune from parliamentary criticism, and to launch a continuing movement of opposition from the platform, in the press and in parliament.² Extensive propaganda was carried on all over England through lectures and the distribution of literature on Indian problems. Prominent speakers like Charles Bradlaugh and Digby, besides Indian leaders like Naoroji and Bonnerjee, took active parts. With regard to the press, in February 1890 the British Committee began to publish a newspaper named India in order to supply trustworthy information about India to the British public. In the words of Wedderburn, India was the "store-house from which arms and materials are supplied to all those who are willing to strike a blow on behalf of India".³ Hamilton considered India a "pernicious little rag",⁴ for the newspaper attacked his

¹ Ibid. The office of the Committee was housed at 25 Craven Street, Strand, London, W.C.. In 1892 it was removed to 85 Palace Chambers, Westminster, London, S.W..

² W.Wedderburn, Allan Octavian Hume: Father of the Indian National Congress, London 1913, p.88.

³ Ibid., p.97.

⁴ Hamilton to Curzon, 22 January 1903, Hamilton Papers (hereafter H.P.).

Indian policies throughout his whole period of office.

In 1893, to fulfil the programme of the British Committee of the Congress, Wedderburn, Caine and Naoroji, then members of the House of Commons, set up an Indian Parliamentary Committee consisting of members "who are willing to cooperate on the broad grounds of a just and sympathetic policy towards India".¹ Wedderburn became its Chairman. A considerable number of members of the House of Commons, mostly liberals and radicals, joined it and within a year of its formation the Committee's importance in parliament became a subject of concern in the Conservative press. By 1896 the total membership of the Indian Parliamentary Committee rose to one hundred.² This Committee completely changed the scene in the Commons on the occasion of debates on Indian affairs. Only three or four years earlier debates on Indian affairs in an almost empty house had been a source of amusement to the British press. The Indian Parliamentary Committee kept the house tense by initiating sharply critical and well-informed debates and questions on Indian administration, and placed a strain on Hamilton. The British Committee intensified their Indian reform movement in England not only by enlisting the support of a great section of the retired members of the Indian Civil Service and of liberal and

¹India, August 1894.

²Ibid., April 1896.

philanthropic Englishmen, but also by inducing the National Liberal Federation and the Social Democratic Federation to include the question of Indian reform in their political manifestos.¹

The present thesis is a study of famine and agricultural policies during Hamilton's administration. It deals with Hamilton's policies against the background of those of Elgin and Curzon. The latter's viceroyalty (1899-1905) spans much of Hamilton's tenure of office. The present study also aims to cast light on the attitude of the British public towards famine and agrarian distress in India, with particular reference to the question of whether they put forward any constructive remedial policy contrary to those pursued by their trustees in Calcutta and Whitehall.

India is a predominantly agricultural country and the bulk of her people depend on agriculture for subsistence. The monsoon is all-important. Drought causes a decline in the harvest, famine and unspeakable distress. Famines have occurred in India since time immemorial. Details of famines during pre-British times are lacking but evidence suggests that great famine occurred in India once in fifty years.² During the period from the beginning of the eleventh century to the end of the seventeenth India suffered

¹ India, 5 December 1890.

² H. Loveday, History and Economics of ^{Famines in} India, London 1914, p.25.

fourteen famines.¹ The occurrence of famine was more common in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During the period of the East India Company's rule in India (1765-1858) there were twelve famines and four "severe scarcities" in India.² Famine conditions prevailed even more frequently in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In times of Hindu and Muhammadan rule the government would come forward to relieve the distress. People were employed in the construction of roads and canals. Children, the sick and the old were served with free meals from the state kitchen (langar khana). Remissions of land revenue were granted as an indirect relief to the peasants.³ Despite the frequency of famines during the administration of the East India Company famine policy had not been an integral part of the regular administration. The formulation of British famine policy and the Imperial government's regular attention to agricultural distress virtually dates from 1860, when a famine broke out in the North Western Provinces and for the first time an officer, Colonel Baird Smith, was deputed by the Government of India to investigate it.⁴ This famine was

¹W.Digby, Prosperous British India, London 1901, p.123.

²Report of the Famine Commission, 1901, P.O.(H.C.), 1902, Vol. 70, p.1; see also Report of the Famine Commission, 1880, P.P.(H.C.), 1880, Vol. 52, 3 Pts., Pt I, paras 42-48.

³H.S.Srivastava, The History of Indian Famines, 1858-1918, Agra 1968, pp. 13-29.

⁴Baird Smith's Report on the Famine of 1860-1, ICR, RD.No.(2) 863. Northern India was a large market for English cotton goods. In 1859-60

followed by several great famines, in Orissa (1866), Bengal (1873-4) and Madras and Bombay (1876-7). A Royal Commission was set up for the first time to enquire into the last. Its detailed reports and recommendations laid down the guiding principles of famine administration in India.

Several works of research into the famine policy of the Government of India have been published. William Digby's Prosperous British India, London 1901, though it deals mainly with the economic distress of the agricultural population, supplies information on the incidence of Indian famines. A. Loveday's History and Economics of Famines in India, London 1914, is a general, well-documented survey on the famine policy of the Government of India during the second half of the nineteenth century. Of the recent works, B.M. Bhatia's Famines in India, 1860-1943: A Study in Some Aspects of the Economic History of India, New York 1963, makes the widest use of source materials and offers an economic interpretation of the famines in India. A recent work by H.S. Srivastava, The History of the Indian Famines, 1858-1918,

large stocks of English cotton goods were lying unsold at the Calcutta godown. Hence the European merchants appealed to the Government of India to investigate the causes of such depression. Baird Smith was deputed to do that and he discovered the prevalence of acute famine there and the loss of purchasing power of the people.

Agra 1968, deals especially with the organisation of relief operations and the evolution of the famine codes, besides giving a general account of the famine and agricultural policies of the Government of India from 1858 to 1918. Studies of particular famines appear in three recent London doctoral theses. E.C.Moulton has considered the Bengal famine of 1873-4 under the liberal viceroyalty of Northbrook,¹ and L.M.Gujral the Madras and Bombay famine of 1876-7 under the Tory viceroyalty of Lytton.² P.L.Malhotra has considered some aspects of the famine of 1896-7,³ the subject of the first chapter of the present thesis.

However fresh facts remain to be revealed and a new interpretation to be made with regard to the 1896-7 famine policy. Furthermore except for T.W.Holderness's official observations in 1902⁴ no detailed study has yet been made of the famine of 1899-1900, the subject of the second chapter of the present thesis. With regard to the policies on the permanent financial provision for the prevention of famine, detailed study is also required to

¹Lord Northbrook's Indian Administration 1872-76, now published, London 1968.

²"Internal Administration of Lord Lytton, with special reference to Social and Economic Policy, 1876-1880", unpublished 1958, Ch.II.

³"The Internal Administration of Lord Elgin in India, 1894-1898", unpublished, 1966, Ch.IV.

⁴"Indian Famine of 1899", Society of Arts, Vol. 50, 1902.

reveal the undercurrents of events behind the imposition of the famine tax in 1878 and the creation of the Famine Relief and Insurance Fund. The third chapter of the present thesis is an attempt in this direction. H. Cumpston's "Some Early Indian Nationalists and their allies in the British Parliament, 1851-1906"¹ has projected a field of study which requires extension. There is no work on the British Committee of the Indian National Congress and the Indian Parliamentary Committee or the activities of the British public on Indian problems. The fourth chapter of the present thesis is intended to cover some of these aspects. B. Chandra's The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India: Economic Policies of Indian National Leadership, 1880-1905, New Delhi 1966, has explained the basic principle of the demands of the Indian National Congress, R.C.Dutt and the retired Anglo-Indian officials in England with regard to the land tax in India, but has left a wide gap in examining the objective justification of their demands. Section I of the fifth chapter of the present thesis is devoted to filling this gap and the remaining two sections of the same chapter examine the measures of the government in this direction.

¹English Historical Review, LXXVI, April 1961, pp. 279-97.

Chapter I

THE FAMINE OF 1896-7

Within a year of Hamilton's becoming the head of the India Office India was gripped with a severe famine far more serious than that of 1876-7. From the administrative point of view the famine of 1896-7 was different from the preceding famines. In the former famines there was no preplanned and uniform system of famine administration. After the famine of 1876-7 two important arrangements were made to deal with the future famines. First, the formation of the Famine Relief and Insurance Fund in 1877-8 was intended to provide a fund for famine relief in years of famine and for the construction of protective public works as preventive measures in non-famine years.¹ Secondly, the Famine Commission of 1880 prescribed² for the formulation of uniform code instructions to be followed by all the local governments so that they might be vigilant of an impending famine and tackle the situation effectively when it appeared. In 1883 the local governments formed Famine Codes, which were revised in 1893 and in 1895-6.³

¹For details see Chapter III.

²Report of the Famine Commission, 1880, Pt. I, para 112, P.P. (H.C.) 1880, Vol. 52. This Commission was set up by the Government of India after the great famine of 1876-7.

³See N.W.P. & O. Famine Code (revised) 1895, India Famine Proceedings, (hereafter referred to as India Fam. Proc.) 1896, Vol. 4982, pp. 51-114; Bengal Famine Code (revised) 1895, *ibid.*, pp. 139-190; Central Province Famine Code (revised) 1896, *ibid.*, pp. 525-600; Bombay Famine Code (revised) 1896, *ibid.*, pp. 923-982; Madras Famine Code (revised) 1896, India Fam. Proc., Vol. 5205, 1897, pp. 3589-3702; see also H.S.Srivastava, The History of Indian Famines 1858-1918 (Agra 1968), pp. 168-184.

The Famine Code provided that in ordinary times in each village there was to be a government agent, or Patwari, who was to report periodically upon the crops, rainfall, rise and fall in prices of food grain and any other matter worthy of notice to his immediate superior, the Kanungo. The Kanungo was to submit all these reports to the sub-divisional officer, from whom they were to be passed to the Collector of the district and then on to the Commissioner of the Division, who was the highest executive officer below the Governor or Lieutenant Governor. From the Commissioner all records were to be sent to the Director of Land Revenue and Agriculture of the province concerned. He would periodically test the accuracy of the reports and note any imperfection and suggest measures for improvement of the system. Secondly, every Collector was to keep a list of public works for his district. Public works were to be divided into two classes, (a) works specially intended for the relief of the agricultural population in the vicinity of their villages, and (b) works of a larger character not designed for the agricultural population near their homes but part of a regular programme of administrative works. The lists of these works and the number of people for whom they would provide employment were to be annually revised by the Public Works Department, whose business was to assess the sufficiency and suitability of the work sanctioned. This revised list was to be sent to the Commissioner.

But when scarcity became imminent then special reports were at once to be made as to prospects of crops, movement of people, condition of grain stock, failure of fodder and mortality of cattle. Upon the receipt of these reports every Commissioner was to put forward proposed measures of relief, the extra expenditure to be incurred, the source from which it could be defrayed, the remission of revenue to be made, the advance to the rayats to be sanctioned, the number of test relief works to be opened and the employment of additional staff required. When the actual famine occurred then orders were to be sent to every district officer as to objects and methods of expenditure and its administration to the special consideration of saving life. At the same time the Public Works Department was to be contacted so that necessary supplementary works might be opened and classified, and, when opened, reports were to be constantly and periodically sent on the condition of those seeking relief, on the price of food, on the sufficiency of wages paid and on the regulation for the transfer of works from one place to another. Report was also to be made on the sanitation of relief camps, market arrangements and hospital accommodation. In addition to these arrangements the Famine Code envisaged providing gratuitous relief to those men, women and children who, either by age or infirmity, were physically incapable of doing work in the government work centres. For those who would be absolutely unable

even to cook their own meals state poor houses and kitchens were to be constructed and cooked meals were to be served. The Famine Code also provided that for the efficient administration of famine relief every district was to be divided into several famine circles. Each circle was to be under the charge of a special officer whose duty was to supervise all the relief arrangements and to visit from village to village within his circle to watch the migration from one village to another in order to prevent persons from going to places where they would be unable to support themselves.

The Famine Code classified those employed on government relief works into four groups:

- A Professional labourers
- B Labourers not professional
- C Able bodied but not labourer
- D Weakly but fit for light work

The daily wages were fixed by the Famine Code at a rate equivalent to the existing market price of a quantity of food grain that could barely maintain the physical condition of the labourers. There was provision for a minimum wage for every category of worker. The rate of wages for the various categories of workers and also for gratuitous wages varied slightly from one province to another.

The famine of 1896-7 spread over almost all India: Bengal, Bombay Deccan, Central Provinces, North Western Provinces and Oudh, the Deccan districts of the Madras Presidency and the Punjab. It covered an area, excluding the Native States, of 225,000 square miles with a population of 62 m.¹ The main cause of the famine was drought. There was little rain in the spring of 1896 in the above mentioned areas, which prevented ploughing and sowing for the spring crops like wheat, barley grain and pulse. The absence of rainfall during the autumn of 1896 had become fatal to the crops. There was no rain from August to November 1896, during which period more than one third of the rainfall was usually expected. The failure of the rainfall destroyed the growing autumn food crops like millet, rice, and pulse, the yield of which on unirrigated lands was estimated to range from nothing to nearly half an average crop.² Of the affected areas the condition of the Central Provinces and the North Western Provinces and Oudh was most acute. Both the provinces had been suffering from deficient rainfall and bad harvest since 1893.³ In the Central Provinces the

¹Report of the Famine Commission (hereafter referred to as R.F.C.) 1898, para 339, P.P. (H.C.) 1899, Vol. 31. See Appx. A, Map I, at the back for this area where famine conditions prevailed.

²G.G. in C. to S. of S., 23 December (Famine No. 64) 1896, India Fam. Proc., 1896, Vol. 4982, pp. 1575-7.

³A note on the crops of the C.P. during the three years 1892-3 to 1894-5, India Fam. Proc., 1896, Vol. 4982, pp. 449-77; Resol. N.W.P. & O., 20 October (No. 3945S-1-58) 1896, India Fam. Proc., 1897, Vol. 5203, pp. 79-87.

crop production of 1896 was 45 per cent of the normal, in North Western Provinces and Oudh 60 per cent, in Bengal 67 per cent, in Bombay 65 per cent, in Punjab 75 per cent and in Madras 80 per cent. The average loss of crop in that year was estimated at one third of the normal average production or 18 to 19m. tons.¹

High prices of food grain, its acute scarcity and the distress of the people of the North Western Provinces and the Central Provinces were reported from July and August 1896. Hungry and emaciated men, women and children were reported to be flocking into the streets of the principal towns and cities of the Central Provinces and North Western Provinces.² People resorted to looting grain shops and godowns in Delhi, Agra, Nagpur and Muzaffarnagar and Kanpur in the desperate attempt to get food.³ Distress in the Bombay Presidency became acute from October 1896. Grain riots took place in Hubli, Karad, Sholapur and some other towns of the Bombay Presidency.⁴ Distress also spread over Bengal and was especially

¹T.W.Holderness, "Narrative of the Famines in India in 1896-7", para 27, P.P. (H.C.) 1898, Vol. 62; see also R.F.C., 1898, loc. cit., para 585.

²Rahbar (Moradabad), 8 August 1896, N.W.P. & O. N.N.R., 1896; see also Anis-i-Hind (Meerut), 12 August 1896, ibid.; Bharat Jewan (Benares), 24 August 1896, ibid.

³B.M.Bhatia, Famines in India, (New York 1963), p.240. In Nagpur troops had to be called out to quell the grain riot. Telegr. Viceroy to S. of S., 6 October 1896, P.P. (H.C.) 1897., Vol. 64, p.3.

⁴Notification of the Bombay Govt. 19 November (Rev. No. Fam. 37) 1896, India Fam. Proc., 1897, Vol. 5203, p.1433.

severe in Bihar. Everywhere in the affected areas there was a cry for decisive action on the part of the government to deal with the famine. All the vernacular newspapers urged the Government of India to open extensive relief works in order to avoid mortality.¹

Up to December 1896 the Government of India was indifferent to the alarm raised by the newspapers. Elgin did not cancel his tour of the native states in October-November 1896 despite repeated appeals from the Indian newspapers.² Only on the 15th October 1896 did he recognise the impending scarcity and declare that the Government of India would take action to save life.³ Most of the local governments were very slow in their action to relieve the distress of the people. The Government of the North Western Provinces and Cudh was only a little more prompt in opening relief work. In the third week of August 1896 the number of people on relief in the affected areas of the province was 21,173 only. In the Central Provinces no systematic relief operations were undertaken by the Government even in November, when the only decision taken was to

¹Riaz-ul-Akhbar (Gorakhpur), 1 August 1896, N.W.P. & O.N.N.R., 1896; The Azad (Lucknow) 7 August 1896, ibid.; Almora Akhbar (Almora) 8 August 1896, ibid.; Jami-ul-Ulum, 14 August 1896, ibid.

²Capital, 7 October 1896, Bom.N.N.R.1896; The Bengalee (Calcutta) 17 October 1896, B.N.N.R., 1896; Maratha, 18 October 1896, Bom. N.N.R., 1896; Kesari, 20 October 1896, ibid.; Hitabadi (Calcutta) 11 November 1896, B.N.N.R., 1896; Bangabasi (Calcutta), 14 November 1896, ibid.

³Proc. of the Governor-General-in-Council, 1896, Vol. XXXV, p.387.

open the government reserved forests to the poor people so that they could get the roots of the mohua tree free of cost.¹ The Government of Bengal was watchful of the situation. Early in November 1896, referring to the scarcity in Bihar, Alexander Mackenzie, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, warned Elgin, "We have not declared famine or serious distress yet anywhere but the wolf is at the door".² Mackenzie paid a visit to Bihar and on 20 November 1896 conferred with the Commissioners, Collectors and the leading Indians of the locality and decided to make extensive relief arrangements in that region.³ By the second week of December 1896 the total number of people on government relief was 494,200.⁴ Despite the above situation the Government of India did not declare the existence of a famine. On the contrary, Elgin wrote to Hamilton that the Indian newspapers were exaggerating the situation.⁵

The famine of 1896-7 had repercussions in England. Ever since the Bengal famine of 1873-4 the British press, especially its radical and liberal section, had been constantly reminding the British public of the collective responsibility of the Indian and Imperial

¹Report of the Comm. of the Nagpur Division 7 November 1896, India Fam. Proc., Vol. 5203, 1897, p.175.

²Mackenzie to Elgin, 2 November 1896, E.P.

³The Pioneer, 1 December 1896.

⁴Telegr. Viceroy to S. of S., 18 December 1896, P.P. (H.C.) 1897, Vol. LXIV, p.7.

⁵Elgin to Hamilton, 23 December 1896, E.P.

Governments and the British public to save the Indian peasants from famine. Appeals for private charity for the Indian Famine Relief Fund were made in the famines of 1873-4 and 1876-7 on the initiative of Hamilton himself, when he was the Under Secretary of State for India, through the Lord Mayor of London. Substantial amounts were raised on both occasions. But to the famine of 1896-7 the public reaction in England was far more sympathetic. This was because of the growing emergence of radical and socialist forces and of the establishment of the British Committee of the Indian National Congress.

In view of the grave situation in India early in December the Lord Mayor of London became anxious to start a charitable relief fund for Indian famine. As such an appeal could not be made without the formal approval of the India Office he appealed to Hamilton for his permission. But Hamilton requested him to delay action pending the receipt of further communication from the Government of India. Hamilton informed him that the Government of India was then still observing the situation with hopes of winter rain, and recommended that until the situation had more fully revealed itself no action should be taken to appeal for private charity in England.¹ The same reply was sent to the

¹Hamilton to Lord Mayor of London, 21 December 1896, cited in India (London), February 1897.

Lancashire Indian Cotton Duties Committee, which sent a memorial to Hamilton seeking his permission to start a relief fund.¹

The Indian communities in London were angered at the indifference of the India Office as well as of the Government of India in starting the charitable relief fund both in India and England. At a meeting in London on 28 December presided over by Naoroji, they adopted a resolution calling upon the Lord Mayor of London to open the Mansion House Fund. An Indian deputation was sent to the India Office to request the Secretary of State to start the relief fund in England.² Sir William Wedderburn, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee of the British Committee of the Congress, strongly criticised Hamilton's action "in keeping back the proffered aid". He observed: "... I affirm that he does so from a delusion and from a misconception of facts ... it is the same persistent and pernicious optimism with which the India Office is saturated and which blinds successive Secretaries of State to the real condition of the masses in India".³ The Socialist leader, Henry Hyndman, advocated a widespread agitation

¹ India Office to Lancashire Indian Cotton Duties Committee, 22 December 1896, cited in India, February 1897. *This Committee was formed by the Lancashire Cotton and Spinning Association.*

² India, February 1897; see also The Daily Chronicle, 29 December 1896.

³ The Daily Chronicle, 29 December 1896.

against the India Office instead of making a "plain spoken" memorial to Hamilton.¹ Lord Kinnaird, a Scottish philanthropist, also attacked Hamilton for impeding the flow of charitable aid and he held that in view of the severe distress in India the appeal for charity in England should be made without delay.² In reply Hamilton did not deny the gravity of the situation but he maintained that before making any appeal for charity the machinery for the collection and distribution of the charitable fund should be constituted.³ William Digby, who was the Secretary of the Indian Famine Relief Committee of 1877-8, offered his services to the constitution of such a committee, and he also requested Hamilton to start the fund.⁴ The India Office refused this offer on the ground that the Government of India was reported to be engaged in the composition of a committee anew.⁵

The reasons given by the India Office for the delay in starting the campaign for a relief fund was also strongly resented by the British press.⁶ Strong and indignant language was

¹Hyndman to Naoroji, n.d., cited in R.P.Masani, Dadabhai Naoroji (London 1939), pp. 398-9.

²Kinnaird to Hamilton, 29 December 1896, cited in Hamilton to Kinnaird, 1 January 1897, The Times, 4 January 1897.

³Hamilton to Kinnaird, 1 January 1897, ibid.

⁴Digby to Hamilton, 4 January 1897, The Times, 7 January 1897.

⁵India Office to Digby, 6 January 1897, ibid.

⁶The Daily News, 4 January 1897, cited in India, February 1897; see also The Manchester Guardian, 5 January 1897, ibid.

hurled against Hamilton as the sole perpetrator of this delay. All were anxious to start the campaign. The Daily Chronicle made an ironical attack on Hamilton: "We do not envy him the responsibility he has assumed in stopping the flow of the charity of the British people when American newspapers are appealing to their readers for help to the Indian ryots."¹ The Star demanded an appeal with a note of warning: "We can assure the Lord Mayor of this - that unless he acts immediately the matter will, for the time being at any rate, be taken out of his hands. He must therefore do, without delay, one of the two things. Either he must persuade Lord George Hamilton to remove his monstrous veto upon the charity of the nation or he must ignore the India Office and follow the promptings of humanity. We strongly urge him to take the second course without another day's delay".² So strong was the reaction of the British press that even the organ of the Tory party, The St. James Gazette, turned against Hamilton.³ Hamilton silently bore this storm against him. Only in the famine meeting at Acton did he declare the charges against him to be unfounded.⁴

¹The Daily Chronicle, 5 January 1897, quoted in ibid.

²The Star, n.d., quoted in ibid.

³The St. James Gazette, 4 January 1897, cited in ibid.

⁴The Times, 14 January 1897.

This leaves room for doubt as to the responsibility of Hamilton in delaying the campaign for charitable relief fund.

From the very beginning Hamilton personally was fully in favour of such an appeal in England. Early in November 1896, when the Lancashire Cotton and Spinning Association had decided to raise a fund, Hamilton repeatedly requested Elgin to initiate the campaign of such fund both in India and England with his formal declaration of the existence of the famine.¹ But Elgin thought it to be a premature appeal and asked Hamilton to defer it for some time.² Hamilton reminded Elgin that when the situation got out of control then an appeal under public pressure must be made.³ He again informed Elgin of the urgency of opening the relief fund when both the Lord Mayor of London and the Lancashire Cotton and Spinning Association appealed to Hamilton for the second time in the matter.⁴ This time Elgin put forward another ground to defer the campaign. He wrote that before making an appeal a committee for the receipt, collection and distribution of funds subscribed must be formed so that the government expenditure and

¹Hamilton to Elgin, 9 November 1896, H.P.

²Telegr. (Pvt.) Elgin to Hamilton, 24 November 1896, E.P.

³Hamilton to Elgin, 19 November 1896, H.P.

⁴Hamilton to Elgin, 26 November 1896, H.P.

the charitable fund might not overlap each other.¹ The Famine Commission of 1880 recognised the importance of private charity besides government expenditure on famine relief.² But regarding the method of collection and distribution of the charitable fund Elgin recalled the procedure concurrently laid down by Lytton and the then Secretary of State for India during the famine of 1876-7. It was then decided that Government would recognise the importance of private charity only on condition that the operation of the private charity must not conflict with the government system of relief. Secondly, an appeal for charity to the British public should be made only with the consent of the Viceroy, and the object to which subscription would be applied should be carefully laid down. Thirdly, the collection and distribution of the charitable fund should be conducted by a central committee aided by local committees in every province, and their composition should be such that harmonious relations between government relief officers and the private relief committee were maintained.³ Elgin also informed Hamilton that he was engaged in the constitution of such a committee in consultation with the provincial authorities without which he did not feel it expedient to start an appeal.⁴

¹Elgin to Hamilton, 7 December 1896, E.P.

²R.F.C., 1880, loc.cit., Appx. I, para 187-8.

³Elgin to Hamilton, 7 December 1896, E.P.

⁴Ibid.

Hamilton was put into a dilemma. On the one hand he was bitterly criticised by the British press, on the other his repeated requests to Elgin were silenced by one reason after another. He again put up his request, in a new form. He wrote to Elgin that the subscription from the British public, especially the Lancashire Cotton and Spinning Association for the famine relief of India, would be "beneficial to soften any feeling which still exists in India" in connection with the cotton tariff question.¹ Hamilton also assured Elgin that while appealing to the British public he would particularly mention the clear demarcation between the spheres of action of the private charity and the government expenditure. Elgin remained unmoved. At last, he declared in a despatch that on principle the Government of India was against making an appeal for private charity for a responsibility which the government had undertaken. Here too, he referred to the relevant policy of Lytton, approved by the then Secretary of State, that "Government is responsible ... for the saving of life by all the available means in its power ... it is not proper or expedient that the government should ask for private subscription to supplement its own expenditure on famine especially as it is clear that such subscription can made no appreciable difference on the amount

¹ Hamilton to Elgin, 17 December 1896, H.P. Under pressure of the Lancashire Cotton merchants the Government of India had abolished in 1894 the protective tariff on English cotton goods imported in India. There was a strong reaction in India at that time as such measure was detrimental to the interests of the Indian cotton industry and it involved

of expenditure which must be reckoned by millions."¹ In the famine of 1896-7 the Government of India strictly followed the above principle and Elgin's despatch went on:

"To this principle we steadfastly adhere. To invite subscriptions which are to be spent in the performance of a task for which we have undertaken the responsibility would be to invite them for the relief of the Indian Exchequer - an end towards which we could neither ask nor receive contribution with propriety. For this reason we think that anything that might bear the appearance of an appeal for assistance on the part of the Government of India to the people of England should be scrupulously avoided as being liable to serious misconception."²

But the Government of India was not reluctant to accept any charitable help if offered spontaneously on the ground that "to ask, however, is one thing and to receive with gratitude and apply to the best possible advantage money which may be spontaneously offered

heavy loss in Indian revenue. See for detail P. Harnetty, "The Indian Cotton Duties Controversy 1894-1896", English Historical Review, LXXVII (1962), pp. 684-702. In this famine the Lancashire merchants showed much interest in raising funds in aid of the famine relief in India as she was their best customer, The Times, 16 January 1897.

¹G.G. in C. to S. of S., 21 December 1877, and S. of S. to G.G. in C., 18 May 1878, quoted in G.G. in C. to S. of S., 23 December (Rev. & St. No. 64) 1896.

During the famine of 1876-7 Lytton tried utmost to stop an appeal for private charity in England. He wrote to Louis Mallet, Permanent Under Secretary of State for India: "I anxiously hope you will not encourage any humanitarian hysterics in England about this famine. That is now our greatest danger. If the British public insist on our keeping ryots alive, 'regardless of expense' and impose on us a 'life at any price' policy, the British public ought in fairness to find us the money (which we have not) for satisfying the commands of its cheap sentiments." Lytton to Mallet, 11 January 1877, L.P. Lytton also requested Hamilton, then Under Secretary of State for India, not to open the famine fund in England. Hamilton to Salisbury, 3 September 1877, S.P. microfilm Reel No. 819.

²G.G. in C. to S. of S., 23 December 1896, ibid.

is another."¹ The Government of India maintained that in the collection and distribution of such fund if spontaneously offered government should not take any part. However, despite his formal opposition to opening a charitable relief fund, Elgin made a draft constitution for the Indian Charitable Famine Relief Fund Committee both central and local and had it ratified by the provincial governments.²

Meanwhile the Queen became anxious to make an appeal for private charity. She sent a message to Hamilton urging him to expedite a campaign.³ It was during this time that Hamilton was severely criticised by the British press. He urgently cabled to Elgin to fix a date for holding a meeting to open the campaign for a charitable fund in Calcutta so that it might be followed by a similar meeting in London. He specially mentioned that parliament was due to meet on 19 January 1897. The meeting to campaign for a relief fund must be held before that date; otherwise he feared that the hand of the Government of India would be forced by parliament.⁴ At last Elgin decided to hold and preside over a meeting in Calcutta.

¹Ibid.

²Telegr. (Pvt.), Elgin to Hamilton, 24 December 1896, E.P.

³Hamilton to Elgin, 31 December 1896, H.P.

⁴Telegr. (Pvt.), Hamilton to Elgin, 5 January 1897, H.P.

It is evident from the above that the Government of India was solely responsible in delaying the campaign for the charitable fund and that the charges levelled against Hamilton are mostly unfounded. Moreover, Elgin's personal responsibility carried much weight in delaying the campaign. Early in October 1896 John Woodburn suggested to Elgin an appeal for private charity.¹ A similar suggestion was made to Elgin by Alexander MacKenzie, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal.² Elgin did not pay any heed to their counsel. In December The Times raised its voice against Elgin and his government for not inaugurating the campaign for famine funds.³ Indian newspapers owned by both Indians and Anglo-Indians accused the Government of India, not the India office, of delaying the opening of the relief fund. In Bengal the Charu Mihir observed that "he Elgin declines to accept England's aid simply to avoid the humiliating admission that there is famine in India".⁴ The Times of India warned: "This is a matter in which history ought not to repeat itself. Lord Lytton's Government established a vicious

¹Woodburn to Elgin, 23 October 1896, E.P.

²Mackenzie to Elgin, 8 December 1896, E.P.

³The Times, 14 December 1896.

⁴Charu Mihir, 22 December 1896, B.N.N.R., 1896; see also Bangabasi, 26 December 1896, ibid.; Sahachar, 30 December 1896, ibid.; Hitabadi, 1 January 1897, ibid.; The Bengalee, 16 January 1897, ibid.; see also The Indian Spectator and Voice of India, 27 December 1896, Bom.N.N.R., 1896; Maratha, 27 December 1896, ibid.; Indu Prakas, 28 December 1896, ibid.

precedent when it resented the appeal that was sent from Madras to the Mansion House in 1877 and openly discouraged the organisation of a famine relief fund in Calcutta. Lord Elgin should regard these things as warnings not as examples."¹ The Indian National Congress at its sessions in Calcutta on 30 December 1896 held the Government of India responsible for blocking the flow of private charity both in England and India.²

The inaugural meeting of the campaign for famine relief fund was held in Calcutta on 14 January³ 1897 and in London on 16 January. In London the meeting was presided over by the Lord Mayor of London. The Duke of Connaught moved the resolution appealing to the British public to contribute to the Indian famine relief fund. Hamilton seconded it and explained the respective spheres of function of the government expenditure and the charitable fund. The former was to be devoted to relief works, gratuitous relief and hospitals only in times of famine and the latter to restore the victims of the famine to their normal lives when the famine was over i.e. to provide hospital facilities for those requiring nursing, homes for the orphans and to advance money

¹The Times of India (O.E.), 9 January 1897.

²Resol. No. XII, Calcutta Session, 1896, India, February 1897.

³Elgin to Hamilton, 20 January 1897, E.P.

for seeds, cattle and agricultural implements to the cultivators already exhausted due to famine.¹ The appeal for private charity was widely responded to, in India, in Britain and abroad. The total subscriptions received up to 3 April 1897 was £667,246, distributed as follows: U.K. - £545,240; India - £79,731; and the British Colonies and other countries of the world - £42,275.²

In this famine the Christian missionaries in India wanted to start a movement for a separate famine relief fund. A deputation of them saw Hamilton at the India Office. Hamilton rejected their proposition.³ Earlier he had had talks with Mr. Spicer, a radical M.P. and a leading non-conformist. Both were agreed in the un-wisdom of such a division of funds. But Mr. Spicer suggested to Hamilton that the demand for a separate fund by the Christian missionaries could have been safely avoided had they been allowed to be represented in the Indian famine relief fund committee. Hamilton agreed with him and informed Elgin of this.⁴ Elgin was opposed to any proposal to bring the missionaries into the local committees. He maintained that in expending the subscribed funds they attached special importance to the work of maintaining

¹The Times, 18 January 1897. At this meeting the Socialist leader, Henry Hyndman, tried to move an amendment to the resolution to the effect that since a substantial portion of the Famine Insurance Fund was diverted to cover the cost of frontier expeditions, the home charges for the current year should be suspended and the whole amount be devoted to expenditure on famine relief. Before he could finish his speech Hyndman was ejected from the dias and turned out of the meeting hall forcibly with the help of policemen.

²Hansard, xlvi, 6 April 1897, cols. 613-4.

³Hamilton to Elgin, 29 January 1897, H.P.

⁴Ibid.

orphans and bringing them up as Christians.¹ A.P.MacDonnell observed that government should not get mixed up with the missionaries. He alleged that the Christian missionaries had caused confusion amongst the masses in the relief operation to the extent of defeating the whole plan of the government.² Ultimately the Christian missionaries were neither allowed to organise a separate famine relief fund nor included in the local bodies of the Charitable Famine Relief Fund Committee. As desired by Elgin, they were only entrusted with the task of distribution of relief in their own communities. This attitude of the government towards the Christian missionaries especially in times of famine is not justified. Whatever their motivations might be, the missionaries had a permanent programme of philanthropic works amongst the destitute communities in some parts of India, and so they ought to be represented in the local bodies of the Indian Charitable Famine Relief Committee. This attitude of the Government of India towards the missionaries is mainly due to the fact that in August and September 1896 the missionaries raised the alarm of the heavy mortality in the Jubbalpur Division of the Central Provinces and the absence of any relief operation there undertaken by the government.³

¹Elgin to Hamilton, 3 February 1897, E.P.

²A.P.MacDonnell to Elgin, 4 February 1897, E.P.

³J.P.Goodridge, "Famines in Central Provinces", The Pioneer, 30 December 1896 and 9 March 1897.

During this famine Hamilton came into severe conflict with Elgin in connection with the food grain policy, which is one of the most important aspects of the famine administration. As explained earlier, famine is immediately caused by the failure of crops which naturally cause the fall in the supply of food grain. In a free trade economy, as was prevalent in British India, prices of a commodity are determined by the interaction of the supply of and demand for it. Hence, the demand for a commodity remaining the same, any shortage of its supply automatically raises the prices. Moreover, taking the advantage of the situation, the private traders, motivated by making more profit, artificially raise the prices. In times of famine, therefore, prices of food grain become exorbitantly high. But this high price cannot encourage the private traders to import food grain from the foreign countries. There is acute need for food grain, but the need of the poor cultivators, the main victims of the famine, cannot create an effective demand in a free economic system. For their purchasing power in time of famine is almost nil. If the saving of human life becomes the chief consideration for the formulation of famine policy then it becomes imperative on the part of the government to decide whether it should come forward in the grain trade, prohibit export and resort to importing food grain on its own account and take charge of supply or, without

going into wholesale intervention, whether it should import food grain on its own account and distribute to the affected people at a price not beyond their purchasing power and to those on government relief. In formulating such policies the government should overlook financial considerations and the extra administrative responsibilities involved.

After the famine of 1860 in the North Western Provinces and Oudh Baird Smith advocated the policy of non-interference in the grain trade in times of famine.¹ This principle was accepted by the Government of India on the basis of the support of Sir John Strachey.² The same principle was followed in the Orissa famine of 1866 when about 1m. people died. The evils of the absolute policy of non-intervention in the food grain trade in the famine period were pointed out by John Stuart Mill. In general he was in favour of free trade principle but in exceptional circumstances he preferred the policy of limited state intervention. He observed: "Direct measures at the cost of the state, to procure food from a distance are expedient when, from peculiar reason, the thing is not likely to be done by private speculation."³ Famine is an

¹Baird Smith, Report of the Famine of 1860-1, Sec. II, para. 22.

²Resol. Govt. of India, P.W.D., 24 September 1864, cited in G.G. in C. to S. of S., 7 November 1873, para 16, Corres.No. 7, Corres. Relating to the Famine of Bengal & Bihar (Calcutta 1874).

³J.S.Mill, Principles of Political Economy, 7th edition, 2 vols. (London 1871), Vol. II, Book V, p.549.

exceptional circumstance. In the saving of life, limited state intervention in food grain trade is a prime necessity. Moreover, as such intervention is temporary in duration and limited to a particular trade, it does not mean the departure from the general free trade policy of the government.

At the approach of the Bengal famine of 1873-4 the above argument was recognised by the then Secretary of State for India. He maintained that: "... repeated experience sufficiently proved that when scarcity and danger arises in India the ordinary process of supply and demand cannot be relied on for any adequate supply of food to the affected districts.... that without the active intervention of the government the worst consequences are likely to ensue."¹ So in the Bengal famine Northbrook, then Viceroy of India, first followed the policy of limited state intervention in food grain trade. He not only imported food grain on government account from beyond the seas in order to secure supply to the labourers employed on government relief work, but also advanced money to the zamindars so that they could import food grain and distribute to their tenants at a reasonable price.² The Government of India under Northbrook came to the conclusion that: "Where there

¹ S. of S. to G.G. in C., 1 December 1873, para 2, Corres.No. 79, Corres. Relating to the Famine of Bengal & Bihar 1874, op.cit.

² G.G. in C. to S. of S., 7 November 1873, paras 17-18, Corres.No. 7A, *ibid.*

is a great deficiency ... there is also good reason to believe that the traders will be unable to meet their deficiency ...

[and] it is right for the state to interfere for the purpose of supplementing the general food policy."¹ This policy was highly successful in the Bengal famine. Though the execution of the policy involved heavy expenditure it was quite justified in view of the success it attained.²

During the Madras and Bombay famine of 1876-7 Lytton followed the policy of absolute non-interference in the grain trade.³ He objected to the Madras Government's decision to purchase food grain on government account. In his famine policy Lytton was prompted by the principle of economy in relief expenditure which was followed by the loss of 6m. lives.⁴ A majority of the members of the Famine Commission of 1880 favoured relying on the private trade for the supply of food grain in time of famine and they

¹Resol. Govt. of India, 18 February 1875, India Fam. Proc., Vol. 686, quoted in E.C.Moulton, "Lord Northbrook's Indian Administration", 1872-76, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of London 1964), p.183. (Published London 1968)

²For details see E.C.Moulton, ibid., Ch. IV.

³Lytton to Mallet, 11 January 1877, L.P. For detail see L.M.Gujral, "The Internal Administration of Lord Lytton with special reference to Social and Economic Policy", unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of London 1958), Ch. II.

⁴R.F.C., 1880, loc.cit., para 81.

advocated, in general, the policy of non-intervention in the grain trade. in time of famine.¹ But in extreme circumstances the Famine Commission of 1880 recognised the importance of government intervention in the food grain trade.² But two dissident members considered that in time of famine the government intervention in food grain trade was an urgent necessity.³ These two somewhat conflicting ideas were put into effect while Hamilton was the Under Secretary of State for India and they were well known to him. Thus in the famine of 1896-7 he was to give a considered opinion with confidence as to which of the principles was best suited for a successful famine administration.

During the famine of 1896-7 the supplies of food grain were short, prices were rising and the prospects of imports from foreign countries were gloomy. In Bengal the usual price of rice was Rs. 2-3 per maund while in September 1896 it was selling at Rs. 7-8 per maund.⁴ Early in 1896 wheat was selling at 16 seers or 32 lbs a rupee in Kanpur, North Western Provinces, while in October the price was 8 seers or 16 lbs a rupee.⁵ On the 30 September

¹Ibid., paras 150-58.

²Ibid., paras 159-60.

³J. Caird and H.E.Sullivan, A note on dissent on certain points from the R.F.C., 1880, para 9-13.

⁴Bangabasi, 12 September 1896, B.N.N.R., 1896.

⁵Holderness, "Narrative of the Famines in India in 1896-97", op.cit., para 21.

1896 the Lieutenant Governor of the North Western Provinces and Oudh observed that the prices had been "driven up altogether out of the reach of the large number of poor ryots (cultivators with holding of their own), agricultural labourers, artisans and others".¹ In October 1896 the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces was alarmed at the high prices and distress of the people. He maintained that "with exhausted stock, deficit harvest and the pressure of a load of debt which had steadily grown during the succession of unfavourable years, it is not surprising that the feeling of the agricultural population should be one of great despondency, almost of despair, and that the position of landless classes should cause the gravest anxiety."² The Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab also reported the combination of grain dealers and the raising of prices.³ The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal reported a deficit of 550,000 tons of food grain in Bihar where the prices were between 15 and 18 lbs per rupee as against the normal price of 32 to 30 lbs. In view of this the Maharaja of Dwarbhanga on his own initiative arranged for the importation of 5,000 tons

¹Quoted in Hansard, 45, 1 February 1897, col. 889.

²Ibid., cols. 889-890.

³Ibid., col. 890.

of rice, from Burma for sale on easy terms to his tenants.

The planters of Muzaffarpur imported 1,500 tons of rice for giving to their villagers. Even in the district of Khulna, Bengal, which is very near Calcutta with good communication, the price was as high as 12 to 15 lbs per rupee.¹ The Government of Bengal became anxious at the shortage of food supplies and desired government intervention in supplementing the supplies. It wrote to the Government of India with a note of warning: "It is necessary to repeat that in view of the unparalleled highness in prices and of the extent of area over which there has been shortness of crops throughout India, the situation as regards the food supply is not free, even in Bengal, from elements of doubts and anxiety."²

There was a strong reaction in almost all Indian newspapers against the Government's food policy. The Bangabasi appealed to the government to stop exporting food grains and suggested importing on government account. It urged upon the government the emulation of the policy of Northbrook not the "dangerous policy" of Lytton.³ The Bombay Gazette maintained that the government should not rely on the private trade for

¹Ibid., cols. 890-1.

²Ibid., col. 891.

³Bangabasi, 12 September 1896, B.N.N.R., 1896.

the supply of food grain.¹ The Indian Mirror commented: "The plain reason why government has decided not to enter the market and purchase grain to sell it at moderate rate is that it could not let its instinct of philanthropist get the mastery of that of the merchants. There can be no doubt that, if the government could enter the arena as a grain trader, the artificial inflation of the price would go down in no time, to the relief of the millions who have now to exist on insufficient food."² In London India also held that the government must take the grain trade into its own hands.³ Besides the newspapers, important public bodies like the Poona Sarbhajanik Sabha⁴ and the British Indian Association of Calcutta⁵ urged the government to stock food grain on its own account. But the Indian National Congress in its famine resolution did not advocate government intervention in the food grain trade.⁶

The merchant communities of Calcutta panicked because of this public demand for government intervention. Their fear was

¹The Bombay Gazette, 18 November 1896, Bom.N.N.R., 1896.

²The Indian Mirror, n.d., quoted in India, January 1897.

³"Expected Famine", India, December 1896.

⁴India, January 1897.

⁵Cited in Hansard, 45, 8 February 1897, cols. 1530-1.

⁶See Resol. No. XII, December 1896, Calcutta, op.cit.

heightened by the pressure of the Government of Bengal upon the Indian Government to undertake measures in this direction. In December the Bengal National Chambers of Commerce sent a memorial to the Government of Bengal, holding that the private trade would be quite able to supply food grain in the affected areas at reasonable prices if its normal flow remained unobstructed by any "mischievous" government action. It also appealed to the Government to curtail/^{railway}freight charges for the transportation of food grain as well as to give police protection to the godowns of the grain merchants against attempted looting by the agitated people.¹ This reaction of the merchant communities is obvious. Any type of government interference in their trade would be "mischievous" so far as their interests were concerned. But the government action in the importation of food grain on its own account during the Bengal famine of 1873-4 did not produce any mischievous effects on the famine policy itself. The Government of Bengal later reported the Bengal Chambers' views to the Government of India.

The Government of India was convinced by the arguments of the Bengal National Chambers of Commerce and believed that the food stock in India was sufficient and that there were prospects

¹Bengal National Chambers of Commerce to Govt. of Bengal, 15 December 1896, India Fam. Proc., Vol. 5203, 1897, pp. 469-71.

of imports from Burma, Madras and Siam. It therefore, decided to rely on the private trade for the supply of food grain in the affected areas and made public its decision to abstain from any government interference in the operation of private trade. The Government of India also decided to reduce the railway freight charges and to pay a portion of it for the transportation of grain in the affected areas by the private traders.¹ But Hamilton could not rely on Elgin's assumption of the sufficiency of food stocks in India. In a despatch he expressed his doubt as to the prospects of imports: "I do not gather that the supplies of food are yet coming into distressed districts from Burma, Madras or Siam."² Meanwhile Northbrook, who was keenly alive to this famine, requested Hamilton to suggest to Elgin to procure food grain on government account in order to avoid any risk of mortality.³ Hamilton then personally requested Elgin for immediate government interference in the food grain trade. By government interference Hamilton meant that the government should buy direct by which the government would know what they had bought and upon what they could rely. He believed that a bonus or bounty to the private traders

¹Govt. of India to Govt. of Bengal, 16 January (No. 260 F.) 1897, India Fam. Proc., Vol. 5203, 1897, pp. 471-2; see also G.G. in C. to S. of S., 23 December (Fam. No. 64) 1896, loc.cit; Telegr. Viceroy to S. of S., 10 January 1897, P.P. (H.C.) 1897, Vol. LXIV, pp. 8-9.

²S. of S. to G.G. in C., 15 January (Rev. No.10) 1897, Rev. & St., Vol. 18, 1897.

³Hamilton to Elgin, 21 January 1897, H.P. ... to ...

would not be effective in stimulating imports and supplies unless they were added to a fixed price guaranteed by the government, and this he thought to be the same as buying direct, except that government would have no control over the quality or the quantity of articles imported. Hamilton mentioned that in importing food grain on government account the Council of India would not object to any expenditure involved and he even assured Elgin that, if necessary, arrangements should be made for assistance from the Imperial Treasury.¹ He urgently pressed Elgin for making direct purchase of food grain on government account without taking the risk of heavy mortality.

Just at that time it was rumoured in commercial circles in London that imports of Burma rice to India were declining and that shiploads of rice were being sent to foreign countries. Hamilton was deeply concerned at this. He immediately cabled to Elgin to ask whether there was any substance in the report.² He also got in touch with the London office of Messrs. Rally and Brothers, one of the largest importers and exporters of food grain in India, as to the food stock in India. They admitted the existence of high prices and partial shortage of food supplies

¹Hamilton to Elgin, 29 January 1897, H.P.; see also Hamilton to Elgin, 5 February 1897, ibid.

²Telgr. (Pvt.) Hamilton to Elgin, 4 February 1897, E.P.

but observed that the position was not such as demanded government intervention.¹ This is the same view as expressed by the Bengal National Chambers of Commerce. Hamilton was not satisfied with this view. In a cable to Hamilton Elgin confirmed the rumour that Burmese rice was being exported to European countries, as the Indian markets did not seem to be profitable to the Burmese merchants. Nevertheless, Elgin was wedded to the principle of non-intervention and he still relied on the imports from Siam.²

The Council of India was critical of the food policy of the Government of India. Mr. Hardie, its commercial member, prepared a note on the policy. He observed that high prices were not enough to stimulate the action of the private trade in supplying food grain to the affected areas. Reliance on private trade would cause terrible distress to the people. He maintained that in effect the policy of non-intervention was little else than a policy that government "should do nothing at all". Hardie also advocated government purchase at all costs. He observed that by this measure the demand for food grain on government relief would be supplied from the government stock imported from outside sources, and it would leave the operation of the private trade undisturbed to serve the rest of the population not on relief.

¹Hamilton to Elgin, 5 February 1897, H.P.

²Telegr. (Pvt.) Elgin to Hamilton, 6 February 1897, E.P.; see also Elgin to Hamilton, 10 February 1897, ibid.

Further, he thought that government purchase from outside would hold the prices of the private grain dealers in check to the benefit of the people not on government relief.¹ Hardie's observation was sent to Elgin for his consideration and action. But Elgin was not convinced by Hardie's suggestion. He was still optimistic of imports by private traders. He received reports that the British India Steam Navigation Company had shipped to Indian ports 42,000 tons of Burmese rice in February and had booked 40,000 tons for shipment in March 1897. Elgin was determined to adhere to the policy of absolute non-intervention.²

The food policy of the Government of India was seriously discussed in the House of Lords. Lord Kinnaird violently attacked Elgin's policy. He warned the government of its inevitable consequences since such a policy was essayed in both the famines of 1866 and 1876-7 with disastrous results. Kinnaird alleged that in their food policy the Government of India had not followed the Famine Code instructions, which prescribed that in the exceptional cases when the private trade failed to supply food grain at reasonable prices in the affected areas, the government should take direct action to import the food grain. He thought that the exceptional circumstances already existed and that the time

¹A note by Hardie, 9 February 1897, enclo. Hamilton to Elgin, 12 February 1897, H.P.

²Elgin to Hamilton, 3 March 1897, E.P.

was ripe for government action. Kinnaird also opposed the views of the government that high prices would stimulate imports. Since the victims of the famine had no purchasing power, food grain, if imported by the private traders, would not be sold out with a margin of profit.¹ In this connection he referred to a communication between the Bengal Government and the Government of India in which the former reported to the latter that Californian wheat could be landed at the Calcutta port at Rs. 5 to 5.1 per maund, but the merchants of Calcutta could not sell it beyond Rs. 4.10 to 4.11 per maund. Hence there was no incentive to the traders to import food grain; yet foreign grain must be imported for the supply to the affected areas.² Since no private importer would import at such a loss, Kinnaird observed that the government was the "only" importer who could afford that loss and who was bound to incur it".³ As a strange coincidence Lord Northbrook joined in this debate in the House of Lords. But what is more surprising is that he strictly reserved his opinion. Although early in January he advised Hamilton to import food grain on government account, in this debate he said nothing either to support or oppose the policy of Elgin and simply left the question at the discretion of the Government of India.⁴

¹Hansard, 45, 1 February 1897, cols. 886-93.

²Ibid., col. 892.

³Ibid., col. 893.

⁴Ibid., cols. 896-7.

No argument could influence the Government of India in giving up the policy of non-intervention. Elgin finally closed this long controversy by a despatch to the India Office. He clung to the policy of non-intervention. Here he also referred to the non-intervention policy, with economy in famine expenditure, that Lord Lytton applied in the famine of 1876-7. In justifying this policy Elgin argued first that government action would be less effective than private action and that it would disturb the normal operation of private trade; secondly, that it would involve heavy expenditure; and thirdly, that it would put additional burden on the government officers already overburdened with relief administration.¹ Government purchases of food grain were only made in the Palamau district of Bihar, Bhadrachalam taluk of the Godavari district of the Madras Presidency, Shetpul relief work centre in Poona and in the Mandla and Balaghat districts of the Central Provinces.² These purchases were made at a very late stage. Moreover compared with the amount of distress and the area affected by this famine the area covered by the government interference was insignificant.

Dr. Bhatia is perfectly right in his assertion that the food policy of the Government of India was "carried to an absurd limit".³

¹G.G. in C. to S. of S., 18 May (Fam. No. 33) 1897, East India (Famine & Relief Operation), P.P. (H.C.) 1898, Vol. 62, pp. 213-18.

²R.F.C., 1898, para 585.

³B.M.Bhatia, op.cit., p. 240.

On the whole, economy in famine expenditure and concern not to disturb the interests of the private traders, European and Indian, were among the main considerations that led Elgin to stick to the policy of non-intervention even at the cost of heavy mortality. Hamilton showed his practical sense by ignoring the views of Messrs. Rally & Brothers about the food stock in India, while Elgin and his government allowed themselves to be duped by the assurance given by the Bengal National Chambers of Commerce, which extorted from the government a 60 per cent reduction in railway freight charges without making the assured increase in imports. The Famine Commission of 1898 calculated that out of 19m. tons shortage during the famine year only 600,000 tons of food grain were imported throughout India during the same period,¹ which was barely $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of the total shortage. Such was the disastrous result of government reliance on the ability of private trade for the supply of food grain in times of famine. Hamilton sensed the situation in right earnest and since his suggestion of the importation of food grain on government account was supported by the influential members of his council he could have directed officially to the Government of India to undertake measures accordingly, which Elgin could not have ignored.

¹R.F.C., 1898, para 585.

In this famine Elgin put emphasis on economy in relief expenditure.¹ But Hamilton held a comparatively reasonable view. The two principles in which Hamilton believed were, first, that relief works should be started in time and that the people should be employed before their condition was beyond recuperation,² and secondly, that the relief wages should be fixed at a subsistence level, not so high that they might interfere with the industrial and economic system.³ With regard to the types of relief works Hamilton approved the Government of India's proposal for opening large works for employment of famine-stricken people.⁴ The advantages of the large relief works are that they are of permanent utility and capable of employing a considerable number of people both skilled and unskilled for a considerable period of time. As such works are situated far away from the village, they serve to test the real need of the people for work. For only those who are in need will go a long way for work. But this process of testing the need of those who are weak, emaciated and unable to walk a long way for work is dangerous. That is why Hamilton suggested that if sufficiently large relief works were not available then village

¹G.C. in C. to S. of S., 23 December (No. 64) 1896, loc.cit.; see also G.G. in C. to S. of S., 18 May (No. Fam. 33) 1897, loc.cit.

²Hamilton to Sandhurst, 8 January 1897, H.P.

³Hamilton to Sandhurst, 28 December 1899, H.P.

⁴S. of S. to G.G. in C., 15 January (Rev. No.10) 1897, loc.cit.

work, such as construction of village roads and embankments, and the digging of tanks etc., should be undertaken.¹ The effects of the small vilage works for relief were highly satisfactory in the Bundelkhand famine of 1895.²

In this famine the relief operations started at a very late stage. Up to the end of October 1896 the total number of people on government relief, both relief works and gratuitous relief, was only 49,780, of which the North Western Provinces and Oudh claimed 40,880. In December 1896 the figure rose to 1,104,367 all over the affected areas; in January 1897 it was 2,375,752, in April 3,272,758³ and in the week ending 18 June 1897 the total number rose to 4,174,000 which was the highest level reached.⁴ The number of people began to fall rapidly from June as soon as the monsoon rain set in and the relief operation was discontinued completely in September. Of the population affected in the British districts only 6.5 per cent was in receipt of relief from January to August 1897 and 8 per cent in two months of May and June 1897.⁵

In the North Western Provinces and Oudh the highest number of people on relief was 1,500,000, of which 60,000 were relieved

¹S. of S. to G.G. in C., 15 January (Rev. No.10) 1897, op.cit.

²R.F.C., 1898, loc.cit., paras 92-93.

³Holderness, "Narrative of the Famine in India in 1896-97", loc.cit., para 48.

⁴Telegr. Viceroy to S. of S., 18 June 1897, P.P. (H.C.) 1898, Vol. 62, p.5.

⁵Holderness, op.cit., para 98.

by private charity and the rest by the government.¹ The type of the relief works was mainly village tanks, embankments and road works. With regard to relief wages the Government of the North Western Provinces and Oudh had made a departure from its Famine Code instructions. The Famine Code's fourfold classification of the relief workers was replaced by a threefold classification: (a) Diggers; (b) Carriers; (c) Working children. The system of minimum wages was abolished and fines for shortfall on works were introduced.² In the revised code, the scale of wages of each category was reduced. The following table compares the scale of daily wages on relief works before and after the code was revised:

¹Telegr. Viceroy to S. of S., 18 June 1897, op.cit.

²Notes of an inspection of famine relief works in the North Western Provinces & Oudh by Mr. T. Higham, Deputy Secretary to the Govt. of India, Dept. of Public Works, on special duty, 18 August 1897 (henceforth Notes by T. Higham), P.P. (H.C.) 1898, Vol. 62, pp. 770-793.

Table I

Scale of wages under the N.W.P. & C. Famine Code¹

N.W.P. & C. Famine Code 1895	Revised Code of the N.W.P. & C. 5 December 1896			
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Class A (Professional labourer)	21 chh.*	19 chh.	Diggers	19 Chh. 16 Chh.
B. Labourers not professional	19 "	17 "	Carrier	14 " 13 "
C. Able bodied not professional	16 "	15 "	Adult dependent	12 " 10 "
D. Weakly, but fit for light work	14 "	13 "	Working children above 12 and under 16	10 Chh.
Adult dependent	14 "	13 "		
Child under 14	3/4 to 1/4 of adult male wages i.e. from 14 to 5 Chh. according to age and requirements		Working children over 7 and under 12	6 "
			Child not in arms and under 7 and infants in arms	1 pice to mother (the value of 2 Chh. grain)

* 1 Chhatack = 2.051 oz.

In Bengal the highest number of people on relief was 831,000 in the week ending 18 June 1897.² The type of relief works was

¹R.F.C., 1898, para 100.

²Telegr. Viceroy to S. of S., 18 June 1897, op.cit.

mainly village tanks, road works and embankments. The average wage per male unit was 1.54 annas per day and the rate of each individual worker was 1.24 annas per day. In Bengal a low work and low wage system was introduced so that the weakly members of a family both adult and children could earn some money.¹

In Madras the total number of people on relief rose to 465,000 in the week ending 18 June 1897.² The relief operations were highly satisfactory both with regard to timing and adequacy. This was ostensibly done by the local government in view of the great tragedy of 1876-7. The type of relief works was road works, clearance of irrigational canals etc. The wages on relief works were higher than those prescribed by the Bengal and North Western Province Governments and in particular the dependents of the workers received larger rations than in any other province.³ But Elgin felt disturbed by the liberal relief measures adopted by the Madras Government. He considered the relief expenditure in Madras to be wasteful and asked the Governor of Madras to restrict it. He wrote: "... it is our positive duty to prevent wasteful expenditure, and it is wasteful expenditure, if the people

¹Notes by T. Higham, 4 September 1897, op.cit., pp. 833-853.

¹Notes by T. Higham, 4 September 1897, op.cit., pp. 833-853.

²Telegr. Viceroy to S. of S. 18 June 1897, op.cit.

³Notes by T. Higham, 28 July 1897, op.cit., pp. 915-931.

who demand relief are not subject to tests sufficient to show the reality of their needs..... The evidence that the tests in the Madras districts are not sufficient is accumulating, and I venture to express an earnest hope that you will direct your personal attention to this very important matter."¹ The Government of Madras does not seem to have attached much importance to this "very important matter". It continued to give relief without enforcing stringent tests.

In Bombay and Punjab the highest number of people on relief was 328,000 and 105,000 respectively during the week ending 18 June 1897.² In Bombay the relief wages were higher than those in the North Western Provinces and in the Punjab lower than those of Bombay but higher than those of the North Western Provinces.³

The great tragedy that occurred in Madras during the famine of 1876-7 was repeated in 1896-7 in the Central Provinces, where the affected people received niggardly treatment both from the local and the supreme governments. Since the autumn of 1895 the Central Provinces, especially the Jubbulpur division, had been badly hit by famine. From February 1896 the mortality figure in

¹Elgin to Havelock, 16 July 1897, E.P.

²Telegr. Viceroy to S. of S., 18 June 1897, op.cit.

³Holderness, "Narrative of the Famines in India in 1896-97", op.cit., para 99.

the five districts and one Tashil of the Jubbulpur division began to be alarming. In 1895 the resolution of the Government of the Central Provinces on the report of the Sanitary Commissioner of that province, gave the death rate for that year as 36.75 per mille per annum and described the year as "abnormally unhealthy".¹ Hence it could be assumed that the normal death rate was much below the above figure. The following table shows that the death rate of the five districts and one Tashil of the Jubbulpur division from February to October 1896 was far higher than the figure for 1895.

Table II

Death rate per mille in the Jubbulpur division
from February to October 1896.²

Districts	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June
Jubbulpur	35.05	42.94	82.88	31.60	41.46
Saugor	53.27	43.38	63.64	71.61	72.03
Damoh	54.47	64.86	115.63	74.73	66.52
Seoni	34.14	43.23	53.86	105.61	69.04
Mandla	37.29	43.17	59.59	80.30	113.21
(Tashil) Murwar	74.99	32.96	63.40	40.44	55.04

¹J.P.Goodridge, "Famine in the Central Provinces", The Pioneer, 30 December 1896.

²The Pioneer, 13 December 1896.

Table II (cont)

Districts	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.
Jubbalspur	53.35	90.82	97.38	88.72
Saugor	78.39	97.88	96.93	NA
Damoh	81.58	128.64	138.07	NA
Seoni	59.00	88.01	NA	NA
Mandla	106.14	140.30	NA	NA
(Tashil) Murwar	56.68	88.69	96.96	90.84

In some towns the figures are appalling. In September the death rate was 110.02 in the Jubkalspur town, 182.66 in Murwar town and 225.59 in Sihora town.¹ But neither relief work centres nor poor-house were opened by the local government. The distress of the people was relieved by the meagre private charity organised by the local people and the Christian Missionaries.²

The situation in the Jubbalpur division escaped the attention of Elgin. On his return from the visit to the Native States Elgin passed through Jubbalpur on 7 December 1896 with a brief stopover. Addressing a public gathering there he observed: "I can only say that travelling during the last few days in Indore and Gwalior and now in these provinces up to the gates of your city I have been struck by the prosperous appearance of the country even with the

¹J.P.Goodridge, op.cit., The Pioneer, 30 December 1896.

²Ibid.

small amount of rain that has come lately."¹ The speech of the Viceroy was strongly criticised by the correspondent of The Pioneer who in a long despatch remarked: "This probably was the view formed by the Viceroy/in embracing that other view of the 'prosperous appearance of the country' beheld from the saloon window of the viceregal train. Is it the view with which he left Jubbalpur after a visit to the first poor house he is reported to have inspected on his tour?"² The correspondent demanded the immediate action of the government in relieving the distress of the people. This press criticism roused the attention of A. Lyall, the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, who paid a visit to the district of Damoh on 15 December.³ On 22 December a meeting of the people of Jubbalpur town pressed the local government to open relief work centres and a poor house.⁴ It was after the third week of December that the Government of the Central Provinces became alive to the situation. The poor houses hitherto managed by private charity were taken over by the government.

The total number of people on government relief in the Central Provinces during the last week of December was 167,189.

¹The Pioneer, 8 December 1896.

²13 December 1896.

³The Pioneer, 23 December 1896.

⁴The Pioneer, 27 December 1896.

In January 1897 the number rose to 284,287, in April to 581,963¹ and on 18 June 1897 it was 647,000 which was the highest level.² Of the population affected 7 per cent was on relief from January to August 1897 and in May 9 per cent.³ The type of relief work was mainly large works, such as construction of roads, and the breaking of metal (basalt) and sandstone - the work was harder than in any other province. The large works were situated 15 to 20 miles from the villages and where there was little arrangement for accommodation. The workers had to pass the night under the forest sheds. The grain equivalent of the relief wages was fixed at a rate around the scale prescribed by the revised code of the North Western Provinces and Oudh and the system of hard tasks and fining for shortfalls of work introduced. The money equivalent of the wages in the Central Provinces was a little higher than elsewhere because the prices of food grain there were higher.⁴ The delay in starting relief operations, low wages and hard tasks resulted in heavy mortality in this province.

The heavy mortality in the Central Provinces shocked the people of England. Hamilton was deeply concerned as he was certain

¹ Holderness, "Narrative of the Famine in India in 1896-97", op.cit., para 48.

² Telegr. Viceroy to S. of S., 18 June 1897, op.cit.

³ Holderness, op.cit., para 98.

⁴ Note by T. Higham, 1 August 1897, op.cit., pp. 733-741.

that he would be attacked both inside and outside parliament.¹ His fear proved correct when Reuter's special correspondent in the Central Provinces reported high mortality and terrible distress there. Both the radicals and the British Committee of the Congress launched a protest campaign against the India Office and the Government of India.² In the House of Commons Wedderburn demanded an enquiry into the mortality in the Central Provinces.³ In reply Hamilton declared that the death rate in the Central Provinces was 36.03 per mille in 1895 and 49.03 in 1896.⁴ He did not specify the death rate in the Jubbalpur division during the period between February and September 1896 which, as stated earlier, was very high. The famine mortality in the Central Provinces during the period from January to June 1897 is yet to be discovered. The Government of the Central Provinces estimated it to be 91,397,⁵ which was not substantiated by the Famine Commission of 1898.⁶ But that commission could not estimate any alternative figure. Nor could it indicate any

¹Hamilton to Elgin, 7 January 1897, H.P.

²Hamilton to Elgin, 12 February 1897, H.P.

³Hansard, 46, 11 February 1897, col. 177.

⁴Hansard, 46, 23 February 1897, col. 979.

⁵Report on the Famine in C.P., para 22, India Fam. Proc., Vol. 5207, 1898.

⁶R.F.C., 1898, para 298.

figure for total mortality in this famine. According to Elgin's estimate up to April 1897 about 4.5m. lives were lost in India during this famine.¹ This estimate was accepted by Digby.² Such being the total mortality figure, it does seem likely that the mortality in the Central Provinces could be counted in hundreds of thousands.

J.P. Goodridge,³ the late Settlement Commissioner of the Central Provinces, who had been present in the Central Provinces throughout the period of famine and organised relief operations in the Jubbalpur division, in collaboration with the local people and the Christian Missionaries, held the local government responsible for this great loss of life. Goodridge witnessed the Madras famine of 1876-7 when he was in charge of the relief operations in the Cuddapah district and he observed that the famine in the Central Provinces was far worse than that of Madras. His charges against the local government were three: First, most of the district officers were ignorant of the area and its problems under their jurisdiction. This was mainly because of the fact that there were frequent changes in the post of district officer.

¹Elgin to Hamilton, 28 April 1897, E.P.

²W. Digby, Prosperous British India (London 1901), p.129.

³On his return to England Goodridge joined the British Committee of the Congress. He was one of the signatories to the memorial to Hamilton with regard to reform in the land revenue administration in India. For detail see below p. 300.

In one district he referred to, there were 24 changes in the post of district officer in 12 years. Secondly, there were frequent and sufficient warnings of the approach of the famine long before it reached an acute stage. These were either disregarded or ignored by the local government. Thirdly, when the wandering of emaciated persons set in and heavy mortality ensued the measures adopted were inappropriate and inadequate.¹

The first charge was substantiated by the Government of the Central Provinces, which admitted to the Government of India that many of the district officers in charge of the relief operations had no experience in famine work.² The Deputy Commissioner of Chanda wrote to the Commissioner of the Nagpur Division: "I must confess I am at a loss to estimate for expenditure under this head [poorhouses and kitchens]... I have had no experience in famine work..."³ When the crisis became acute and out of control the whole burden of relief operations fell upon these inexperienced officials who were unable to cope with it. Secondly, it was a fact that the previous warnings of the approach of famine were disregarded by the authority. The Commissioner of the Nagpur division received reports from the collectors of the widespread

¹"Famine in the Central Provinces", The Pioneer, 9 March 1897.

²Govt. of C.P. to Govt. of India, 11 February (No. 848) 1897, India Fam. Proc., Vol. 5203, 1897, p.1391.

³31 October (No. 6053) 1896, ibid., p.177.

distress all over the division but he did not think of opening relief works and poor houses.¹ Thirdly, there were few or no arrangements for village work and the preparations for large works were insufficient. They were administered effectively only when the civil authorities were reinforced by the military personnel, by which time death took heavy toll of human lives.²

The negligence of the Government of the Central Provinces in the administration of famine relief was also pointed out by the Famine Commission of 1898.³ The said Commission alleged that even at the approach of the famine neither poor houses nor relief work centres were opened and that had that all been done in the Jubbalpur division at an early stage much distress would have been relieved and a considerable number of lives saved.⁴ Moreover, the Government of the Central Provinces enforced rigorous tasks upon the workers irrespective of weakness and infirmity. Criticising this action of the government the Famine Commission of 1898 observed: "... at the end of the famine some pressure may legitimately

¹Report of 7 November 1896, India Fam. Proc., Vol. 5203, 1897, p.175.

²Holderness, op.cit., para 39.

³R.F.C., 1898, para 274.

⁴Ibid., para 276.

be used if the relief works show a tendency to hang unnecessarily, but in the present case the pressure was applied when the famine was entering upon its severest stage."¹

The Famine Commission of 1898 overlooked the duty of the Government of India to the Central Provinces. In sanctioning agricultural grants to the Government of the Central Provinces the Government of India showed much apathy to the distress of the province. In the winter of 1896 the prospects of the rabi crop were good in some parts of the Central Provinces. The Chief Commissioner had made several requests to the Government of India for sanctioning a grant of Rs. 10 lakhs in order to make advances to the cultivators, for cattle, seeds and implements.² In reply the Supreme Government informed the Central Provinces government that they were unable to provide any fund for agricultural loans as distinct from the relief of distress.³ The Chief Commissioner sent another appeal for the grant, mentioning specially that unless at least Rs 4¹/₂ lakhs were sanctioned the entire rabi crop in the Jubbulpur and Nagpur divisions and in some parts of the Chhatisgarh division would be severely affected.⁴ After waiting

¹ Ibid., para 291.

² Govt. of C.P. to Govt. of India, 26 November (No. 4697) 1896, cited in Govt. of India to Govt. of C.P., 4 January (No.111-27-23-F) 1897, P.P. (H.C.) 1897, Vol. 64, p.351 ; see also Govt. of C.P. to Govt. of India, 16 December (No. 4988) 1896, cited in ibid.

³ Govt. of India to Govt. of C.P., 4 January (No.111-27-23-F) 1897, op.cit.

⁴ Govt. of C.P. to Govt. of India, 20 January (No. C-138) 1897, P.P. (H.C.) 1897, Vol. 64, pp. 523-25.

for weeks the Chief Commissioner sent a telegraphic reminder. This time he reduced his demand from Rs. 4¹/₂ lakhs to Rs. 3 lakhs only.¹ At last, in the second week of February 1897, the Government of India sanctioned Rs. 3 lakhs.² It was then too late for sowing the rabi crop which was due to start at the end of December.

In the 1896-7 famine Rs. 727 lakhs were spent on direct relief apart from the loans and advances to the rayats and the remission and suspension of land revenue. Relief was given to 820m./persons^{unit} at an average cost of 1.42 annas a day for each person relieved. This is equivalent to an average of 2,222,000 persons relieved day by day for a period of one year at the rate of Rs. 32.7 per head per annum.³ This expenditure on direct famine relief was much below the amount necessary for giving adequate relief to the distress. In the Bengal famine of 1873-4, which affected 14m. people, Rs. 661 lakhs were spent on direct relief. In the Madras and Bombay famines, affecting 20m. people, the expenditure on direct relief was Rs. 744 lakhs.⁴ But in the famine of

¹Telegr. Govt. of C.P. to Govt. of India, 8 February 1897, ibid., p.526.

²Telegr. Govt. of India to Govt. of C.P., 10 February (No. 672A) 1897, ibid.

³R.F.C., 1898, para 339.

⁴Holderness, "Narrative of the Famine in India in 1896-97", op.cit., para 97.

1896-7, affecting 62m. people, 34m. of them severely, the total expenditure on direct relief was Rs. 727 lakhs. The Famine Commission of 1898 commented that this amount was inadequate. It calculated on the basis of the past famines that during a famine affecting 30m. people if 2,500,000 persons required relief then the average cost of adequate relief should be Rs. 50 per head per annum. On that basis the Commission calculated that instead of Rs. 727 lakhs, Rs. 1,145 lakhs should have been spent during the famine of 1896-7 on direct relief.¹ In fact, had that been done from the early stages of the famine, many of the 4.5m. deaths could have been averted.

During this famine a great controversy between Hamilton and Elgin arose in connection with the question of a free Imperial grant to the Government of India for supplementing the expenditure on famine relief. Famine imposed a heavy burden on the Indian Exchequer. Whether a grant from the Imperial Exchequer was to be given to the Government of India depended primarily upon the attitude of the Imperial Government towards the problem for which the grant was sought and secondarily upon the capacity of the exchequer to afford that grant. If the problem was of vital Imperial interest then such a grant might be considered. If it were of mainly local

¹R.F.C., 1898, para 339.

concern then it was simply a matter for her discretion whether such a grant should be sanctioned. On the other hand, whether or not an offer of financial assistance from Imperial Government was to be accepted by the Government of India depended more upon the latter's attitude towards the problem for which the grant was offered than on the nature of the obligation associated with such assistance. Since Indian famines were the local problem of the Government of India it did not matter much to the broad interest of the Imperial government until its impact was felt to be detrimental to the integrity of the Indian Empire. During the period of the famine and immediately before it the Government of India had spent Rs. 380 lakhs in connection with the military expedition on her north western frontier.¹ This expedition was prompted by the forward policy on Afghanistan,² an issue of Imperial concern, and the money spent was entirely borne by the Indian revenue. So in this famine the prospect of financial assistance from the Imperial government towards the expenditure on relief was hopeful.

In the early stages of the famine such help was not contemplated. The Budget of the Government of India for the year 1896-7 was showing

¹Telegr. (Pvt.) Elgin to Hamilton, 13 December, 1897, E.P.

²The whole affair has been discussed in detail in C.C.Davies, The Problem of the North-West Frontier (1890-1908) (Cambridge 1932); see also L. Harris, "British Policy on the North Western Frontier of India", unpublished Ph.D.thesis (University of London 1960), Chs. II, III, IV and V.

a surplus. Hamilton thought that the extra expenditure to be incurred on relief would be covered by the surplus and also by postponing the various remissions of taxes contemplated in that year.¹ But the expenditure on relief operations threatened to disrupt the finances. Elgin proposed to Hamilton the reduction of the drawings for home charges. He also suggested curtailing the railway expenditure in order to devote funds to famine relief.² This proposal was discussed in the Council of India. Despite Hamilton's support for this proposition, a majority of the members was against any sort of disruption in the normal railway programme. Hamilton suggested to Elgin that he should dissociate the famine relief question from the railway programme and use the Rs. 2 crores reserved by the Government of India to meet sudden contingency.³ But after one month the heavy expenditure on relief exhausted all the surplus amount and the reserve of Rs. 2 crores. Sir James Westland, financial member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, was alarmed at the steady deterioration of the money market with a rapid fall of government securities.

The financial crisis of the Government of India in the midst of famine had repercussions in England. The Socialist leader,

¹Hamilton to Elgin, 22 October 1896, H.P.

²Telegr. (Pvt.) Elgin to Hamilton, 23 October 1896, E.P.

³Hamilton to Elgin, 4 December 1896, H.P.

⁴Elgin to Hamilton, 6 January 1897, E.P.

Henry Hyndman, proposed the suspension of the drawing of the Secretary of State upon India for the current year so that the amount might be devoted to relief expenditure.¹ The Daily Chronicle questioned why the British Government was not coming forward to help the Government of India. This newspaper, of course, considered the suggestion of Hyndman extreme but proposed a free Imperial grant. It observed: "After the Afghan War the British Government contributed £5,000,000 towards the total cost, paying the money by instalments to the Government of India. Why should not some such contribution be made by the British Government today? If our Imperial interest in the Afghan War was rateable in money, it is not easy to see why we should not give practical expression as a government to our Imperial interest in India's struggle with a deadlier evil than many Afghan Wars?"² The Spectator proposed that Parliament should vote a grant and if that be a "dangerous precedent" it should lend £10m. to the Government of India at 2¹/₂ per cent interest.³ Early in 1897 Hamilton requested the creation of a large stock of grain through government purchase and advised Elgin to overlook the financial side in doing so. He also assured

¹Letter to Editor, The Times, 18 January 1897.

²18 January 1897.

³16 January 1897.

him financial assistance from the Imperial Government if necessary.¹ But there was no intention on the part of the Government of India to accept such a grant. Hence, when question was raised in parliament whether the Imperial Government was prepared to grant financial assistance to the Government of India to cover the cost of famine relief Hamilton informed the house that such assistance was not asked for by the Government of India. Hamilton told the house that the Government of India had decided to bear the extra expenditure on famine relief from its own resources. The Government of India had proposed to borrow Rs. 4m. from India and £3.5m. from England besides incurring £1m. short term debt for famine expenditure.²

Even at the close of the famine Hamilton was deeply concerned at the terrible distress in the Central Provinces which was much publicised in England. He felt the need for careful nursing of the exhausted people of the Central Provinces. This required the extension of the government expenditure for some time after the famine for those who were still weak, emaciated and incapable of resuming normal life.³ Considering this Hamilton took the initiative for financial assistance from the Imperial Government. He approached the Chancellor of the Exchequer and was assured of a grant of

¹ See above, p. 55.

² Hansard, 47, 22 March 1897, cols. 1123-24.

³ Hamilton to Elgin, 16 September 1897, H.P.

£2-3m.¹ Hamilton then asked Elgin for the estimated deficit of the budget for the year 1897-8 and also the expenditure incurred on famine relief and frontier war.² Elgin replied that at an exchange rate of 15d. a rupee the deficit of the year 1897-8 was estimated at Rs. 663 lakhs and the surplus of 1898-9 at Rs. 250 lakhs. The total cost of expenditure in 1897-8 charged to Revenue was Rs. 10,330 lakhs. It included famine relief of Rs. 544 lakhs and Rs. 380 lakhs for frontier war, totalling Rs. 924 lakhs. But Elgin rejected the idea of accepting any financial assistance from the Imperial Government.³ Hamilton further telegraphed that the assistance from the Imperial Exchequer was proposed not only for financial reasons but also on political grounds: "The wish to contribute appears to be common to all parties, and I gather that in India generally some contribution is expected and would have good effect. From a political standpoint I strongly press acceptance. Would you, having regard to these considerations and to condition of public feelings in India be prepared to decline officially offer of financial help?"⁴ It is true that a free grant of £2-3m.

¹Hamilton to Elgin, 26 November 1897, H.P.

²Telegr. (Pvt.) Hamilton to Elgin, 6 December 1897, H.P.

³Telegr. (Pvt.) Elgin to Hamilton, 13 December 1897, H.P.

⁴Telegr. (Pvt.) Hamilton to Elgin, 14 December 1897, H.P.

from the Imperial Exchequer towards the famine relief would soothe the Indian people who were agitated because of the frontier war at the expense of Indian revenue. Elgin replied that if such assistance was offered officially, it would be difficult for him officially to decline and he still maintained that: "Our object was to state serious character of objection before idea of offer was entertained."¹ Elgin did not explain his "serious character of objection". It seems likely that Elgin and his Council wanted to keep the Indian exchequer free from parliamentary criticism by not accepting any gift from the home government. Meanwhile Hamilton was informed that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had agreed to offer the assistance of £2m. as part of the expense of the frontier war. Hamilton requested Elgin to accept the offer.² He further telegraphed that the offer of financial assistance to the Government of India would be mentioned in the Queen's speech opening the session of the parliament of 1898 and he particularly asked for his opinion.³ Elgin made no reply. In the meantime the Chancellor of the Exchequer decided that unless the Imperial assistance was asked

¹Telegr. (Pvt.), Elgin to Hamilton, 16 December 1897, H.P.

²Hamilton to Elgin, 30 December 1897, H.P.

³Telegr. (Pvt.), Hamilton to Elgin, 5 January 1898, H.P.

for by the Government of India, the offer should be withdrawn. Hamilton pressed Elgin for a decision.¹ But Elgin stuck to his previous decision and the offer was withdrawn. Elgin's refusal of Imperial assistance was not only impolitic but highly unjustified. It was another of the many blunders he committed in dealing with this famine. The acceptance of this offer even at such a late stage of the famine could have enabled agriculturists to replenish resources that had been exhausted by the famine.

At the end of the famine a commission under the chairmanship of Sir James Lyall was set up by the Government of India with the approval of the India Office to enquire into this famine. Mr. B.K.Bose was selected as an Indian member.² The scope of the enquiry of this Commission was narrower than that of the Famine Commission of 1880. For the general policy of the government with regard to the famine administration and prevention was already laid down in that report. It was only the details of the schemes of relief which the Government of India considered for revision. The subjects for enquiry were mainly two. First, to examine the relief operation with reference to its success or failure and how

¹Telegr. (Pvt.), Hamilton to Elgin, 8 January 1898, H.P.

²Other members of the Commission were: Surgeon Colonel J. Richardson, T.W.Holderness, T.Higham and H.J.McIntosh. J.Lyall and J.Richardson were selected by Hamilton from England.

far the Famine Code instructions were followed or ignored in the administration of relief. Secondly, to record any recommendation that might be useful in the case of any future famine.¹ The Commission started work in January 1898 and submitted its report in March.

The Commission of 1898 observed that the relief wage rate in Bombay and Punjab followed closely Famine Code instructions. The wage rate in Madras was much higher than the Code rate. Children over 12 in Madras were classed as adult.² The Commission of 1898 complained of low wage rates in Bihar, North Western Provinces and Oudh and Central Provinces. It observed that the actual grain wage received by the workers in the Central Provinces was much below that which was given to the workers in the North Western Provinces.³ The grain rate per adult unit in kitchens and poor houses was highest in Madras and Bombay, lowest in Bengal and Central Provinces, while in North Western Provinces a medium rate was maintained.⁴ The Commission recommended a liberal wage scale with a system of minimum wages irrespective of the task

¹Resol. Govt. of India, Dept. of Rev. & Agr., 23 December (No.35-245-26-Fam.) 1897, quoted in R.F.C., 1898, paras 1-4; see also S. of S. to G.G. in C., 23 December (Rev. No. 229) 1897, cited in ibid.

²R.F.C., 1898, para 363.

³Ibid., para 361.

⁴Ibid., para 369.

performed which is as follows:

Table III

Wage scale per day recommended by the F.C. 1898.¹

		<u>Chhataks</u> ^c *
Class I	Digger	20
Class II	Carrier	15
Class III	Working Children	8
Class IV	Adult dependants & ; Minimum wage	12
Class V	Non-working Children:	
	i) over 8 years	7
	ii) under 8 years	5

* 1 Chhatak = 2.051 oz.

The Commission recommended that a nursing mother should receive the full wage of 20 chhataks^c for herself and her child. One of the most important recommendations of the Commission was that it indicated the tremendous possibilities of irrigation all over the country, the exploitation of which would prevent drought, increase the productivity of land and improve the condition of

¹R.F.C., 1898, para 456.

the people.¹ The Commission further recommended the proper application of the Famine Relief and Insurance Fund.²

The above observations of the Famine Commission of 1898 with regard to the relief operations were quite consistent with facts and the main recommendations were worthy of immediate application in order to tackle and prevent future famines. The Commission was also perfectly justified in holding the Government of the Central Provinces responsible for heavy mortality there. But the Commission avoided some important points which are closely related to the responsibility of the Government of India in dealing with this famine. First, the Commission did not raise the question why famine was declared so late as 7 January 1897, whereas famine conditions had been prevalent in the affected areas, especially in the Central Provinces and the North Western Provinces, since July-August 1896. Secondly, the Commission did not point out the failure of the Government of India in sanctioning timely and adequate agricultural grants to the Government of the Central Provinces despite the latter's repeated appeals to do so. Thirdly, the Commission discovered that the private traders had failed to import food grain during the famine period as out of 19m. ton shortage only 600,000 tons were imported during the said period; but its observation on the food policy of the government during

¹ Ibid., paras 540-83.

² Ibid., paras 532-39. For detail see Chapter III.

famine leads to one conclusion that the Government of India was justified in not importing food grain on its own account. Fourthly, the Commission calculated that the cost of direct relief in this famine was far below the actual requirement but it did not mention its connection with the terrible distress and heavy mortality. Rather, it concluded that: "Our general conclusion is that, as compared with the past, a considerable degree of success as regards economy has been attained in the relief measures of the late famine."¹

In his famine administration Elgin did not attach importance to humanitarian and political considerations. In giving relief to the weak, the emaciated and the dying Elgin was more concerned with the principle of economy than with that of saving life, which should be the chief consideration of a famine policy. It would not be an exaggeration to draw the conclusion about this famine that the Government of India's stringent famine policy was responsible for ~~the loss of~~ ^{many of the} ~~4.5m.~~ ^{lost.} lives/ This cannot be excused. That heavy mortality could be averted by timely, efficient and liberal relief measures was proved by the administration of the Bengal famine of 1873-4. But Elgin did not take it as his example, nor did he regard the disastrous effects of the famine of 1876-7

¹R.F.C., 1898, para 340.

as a warning. In his famine policy he stepped into the shoes of Lytton and caused the repetition of the same tragedy. On the other hand, Hamilton's understanding of this famine was realistic as he was aware of the famine of 1873-4 and 1876-7 and under pressure from the radical public opinion in Britain. The measures proposed by him to Elgin were humane, liberal and capable of practical application. His assurance of financial assistance to Elgin at the outset of the famine, advice to make a large stock of food grain on government account at all expense, and his insistence on the acceptance by the Government of India of the proposed free grant from the Imperial Government were as much as could be expected from a Tory Secretary of State. The acceptance of the above proposals was within the easy competence of the Government of India and their execution would have greatly arrested the mortality. But all were refused by Elgin. Elgin might be an appointee of the Liberal Government but he lacked liberal convictions, at least so far as his famine policy^{is} concerned. His blind adherence to the famine policy of Lytton revealed his inherent incompetence and inability to judge the facts and formulate an effective policy objectively and independently, and therefore his famine policy was a failure.

Chapter II

THE FAMINE OF 1899-1900

The viceroyalty of Lord Elgin ended with the close of 1898. In January 1899 Curzon succeeded him. The beginning of Curzon's term of office was marked with another great famine, far more devastating than that of 1896-7. Its spell continued up to the end of 1900. The year of 1899-1900 was also marked with two Imperial Wars - one in China, another in South Africa. The famine of 1899-1900 was the worst famine of the century.¹ It broke out only two years after the former famine. The visitation of these two great famines with an interval of two years broke the established official speculative principle about the visitation of the great famine in India. The Famine Commission of 1880 had analysed the history of the famines in India, their intensity and duration, from 1769 to 1876-77² and observed that great famine might be expected at average interval of twelve years.³

As usual, the immediate cause of this famine was drought and the absolute failure of crop both rabi and kharif. The average

¹Hansard, LXXXVI, 26 July 1900, col. 1347.

²R.F.C. 1800, Pt. I., P.P. (H.C.), 1880, Vol. 52, p.23.

³Ibid., p.25.

annual rainfall in India calculated upon the data during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century was 41 inches. In 1896 the deficiency was 5 inches. In 1899 the deficiency was 11 inches or 27 per cent. The worst affected areas were the Central Provinces, the Punjab, Bombay Presidency, Berar, Rajputana and central Indian native states where the crop failure was total and unprecedented.¹ The affected area was described as a "vast, bare, brown, lonely desert".² This famine affected an area of 420,000 square miles and a population of 85,000,000 of whom 62,000,000 were severely affected. Of 85,000,000, 43,250,000 were the inhabitants of the native states and 41,750,000 of British districts.³ But the correspondent of the Standard writing from Simla on 12 April 1900 estimated that the actual number of people affected by this famine was no less than 93,500,000.⁴

One of the most notable features of this famine is that the failure of crop was immediately followed by fodder famine .

¹Speech of Viceroy, L.C.I., 20 October 1899, published in India, 17 November 1899; Crop forecast from the India Office, 10 December 1899, India, 19 January 1900; Report of Mr. Ibbeston in Viceroy's Council, 19 January 1900, India, 26 January 1900; S. of S. to Lord Mayor of London, 2 April 1900, The Times, 9 April 1900; Viceroy to Lord Mayor of London, 23 May 1900, India, 15 June 1900.

²Reuter's telegram from Bombay, 7 April 1900, India, 13 April 1900.

³S. of S. to Lord Mayor of London, 2 April 1900, op.cit.; see Appx B (Map II) at the back.

⁴Cited in India, 11 May 1900.

which resulted in the mortality of plough cattle, buffaloes and milch cows on a mass scale. Gujrat and Kathiawar, the best cattle breeding parts of India, suffered terribly where more than 70 per cent of the cattle died.¹ The Times of India estimated that in Gujrat alone the famine had swept off more than two million of the four and a half million cattle owned by the poor rayats.² On the human side the tragedy of the famine was horrible. According to an eye witness account,

"The suffering is fearful. In many places dead bodies may be seen lying here and there. Mr. Inglis has just returned from the very worst districts and tells me that it was a common sight to see bodies being devoured by dogs and that he and Dr. Huntley took a walk one evening and counted forty bodies and on another evening twenty, thirty-three and so on. He could not go through a field without seeing several skeletons by the wayside, the bones bleaching in the sun."³

Veghan Nash, correspondent of the Manchester Guardian, wrote from Gujrat, "Skeleton mothers were trying to keep the life in their babies - anatomies rather than living creatures; rows of emaciated children sat in silence, some of them clasping their heads in their hands and with eyes tight shut, others asleep in the dust. There were old women shrivelled and sunken beyond belief, turned to mummies almost, by the famine; ..." ⁴

¹ Evidence of Mr. Lely, Commissioner of Gujrat, before the Famine Commission of 1901, cited in India, 8 March 1900.

² The Times of India, n.d., cited in India, 30 March 1900.

³ L.E. Marks (from Ajmere) to Samuel Smith, M.P., 26 February 1900, quoted in Hansard, LXXXI, 3 April 1900, col. 1085.

⁴ The Manchester Guardian, n.d., quoted in India, 4 May 1900.

The great calamity began within a month of Curzon's assuming office. But despite the existence of the grave situation the Government of India did not declare famine until the third week of October, 1899. On 20th October Curzon officially proclaimed the famine and formulated plans for relief operations. There was a fourfold scheme for the affected areas of the British territory, as under:

- a) In large villages and towns, poorhouses for the reception and sustenance of famishing waifs and strays;
- b) In country hamlets, distribution of gratuitous relief weekly or fortnightly to sick and aged, to widows and orphans;
- c) Employment of impoverished but willing hands upon relief works in making roads, digging of tanks and canals, and the construction of embankments;
- d) Appointment of additional staff to strengthen the local supervision.

Apart from this, when the famine was almost over the Government of India thought that if sufficient funds were available from the Imperial treasury, the impoverished rayats should be given advances so that they could buy seeds, plough cattle and agricultural implements and also remission and suspension of land revenue. As regards the famine in Native States, the policy of the Government

of India was different. There the Government of India would do nothing that would reduce the responsibility of the Chiefs and the Darbars of the Native States. But the Indian government would assist them in their relief administration by giving expert advice and loans in men and, if available, money also.¹

Relief works were opened immediately after the declaration of famine by the Government of India. By the first week of November the number of people on assistance rose to 790,000² and during the week ending 22 December there were over two-and-a-quarter million people in receipt of relief both in the British territory and the Native States.³ The rate of progress of the famine was dangerous, but it did not receive serious response from Hamilton. He became much concerned about the war in South Africa and the quick despatch of Indian troops there.⁴ Long after its declaration by the Government of India famine remained a secondary reference in Hamilton's communication with Curzon.

It has been explained in the preceding chapter that the relief

¹Curzon's first speech on famine in Viceroy's ^{Legislative} Council, 20 October 1899, India, 17 November 1899.

²Hamilton to Curzon, 9 November 1899, H.P.

³The Times of India, 23 December 1899, cited in India, 12 January 1900.

⁴Telegr. (Pvt.), Hamilton to Curzon, 2 September 1899, 6 September 1899, 17 September 1899, 20 December 1899, 21 December 1899, 24 December 1899, 25 December 1899 and 30 December 1899, H.P.

operations undertaken by the government were followed by the efforts of raising private relief funds virtually sponsored by the Government of India through an appeal both in India and England. It was a fact that the private fund helped the government discharge some of their obligations. But during this famine the prospect of private charity both in England and India was gloomy. Hamilton wrote to Curzon that the whole attention of the British people was devoted to helping the refugees from Transvaal and to relieving the wives of the soldiers who had gone to the war in South Africa.¹

In India the raising of a famine relief fund was not, by the end of 1899, seriously taken up by the government or by the influential people. The Calcutta Correspondent of The Times reported: "The grave situation arising from the famine is of entirely secondary interest as compared with the war. Donations in men and money are being daily received towards the war fund and the equipment of Lumsden's Horse."² Actually the maharajas, rajas, nawabs, zamindars etc. were much interested in raising the war fund. The Maharaja of Cowalior had donated £200,000 to the war fund.³ Donations were received from the teachers and

¹Hamilton to Curzon, 9 November 1899, H.P.

²The Times, 29 December 1899.

³The Hitabadi (Calcutta), 2 February 1900, B.N.N.R., 1900.

students of the government schools and colleges.¹ Appeals were made to the retired government employees to donate one day's pension to the war fund.² The Hitabadi attacked the Indian people for their misdirected spirit of charity. On principle the newspaper had full sympathy with the families of the British soldiers wounded or killed in action but observed that since they would not die without that charity, the cause of the famine-stricken people of India should be given priority.³

It is strange to observe that when the country was being ravaged by a great famine some people of her soil were so sympathetic with the Imperial war in South Africa. Was this only out of sympathy towards the wounded soldiers or the families of those who were killed in action? Some Calcutta newspapers hinted at a sinister indirect official pressure on the Indians to pay up for the war.⁴ Similar hints were also given by some British newspapers. The Investors' Review commented: "There is a meanness about the whole thing that words fail us to describe. Some secret pressure must have been put upon the Natives, whether by court influences there

¹Sanjibani (Calcutta), 11 January 1900, ibid.

²Rahbar (Moradabad), 24 January 1900, N.W.P. & O. N.N.R., 1900.

³The Hitabadi, 2 February 1900, loc.cit.

⁴Sanjibani, 11 January 1900, loc.cit.; see also Pratibasi (Calcutta), 29 January 1900, B.N.N.R., 1900.

or from the Colonial Office, we cannot say, in order to obtain these subscriptions.... they are being pressed to do this through the Viceroy at a time when every rupee they can spare ought to be devoted to keeping their own fellow-countrymen alive..."¹ The Speaker attacked the Imperial Government for an alleged sinister move: "There is a fine field at home for this benevolence of Calcutta, and if the Empire cannot find men, horse and money for a war with the two Republics without diverting that benevolence from the needs of the sixty millions of starving Indians, it is high time to put up the shutters in Downing Street."² The suspicion of these newspapers seems to have some foundation. Early in December 1899 Hamilton suggested to Curzon that he should consider whether the launching of a war fund campaign on an official basis might be feasible.³ Curzon telegraphed that from the practical point of view the campaign for the war fund in India had already been in operation. But he was opposed to any official appeal in India for such a fund and he thought it to be very unfair in view of the distress in India.⁴

¹27 January 1900, quoted in India, 2 February 1900.

²27 January 1900, quoted in ibid.

³Telegr. (Pvt.), Hamilton to Curzon, 21 December 1899, H.P.

⁴Telegr. (Pvt.), Curzon to Hamilton, 22 December 1899, ibid.

In England the radical and liberal newspapers, though pre-occupied with the wars in China and South Africa, were equally concerned with the famine in India. Early in December, 1899 The Investors' Review demanded the opening of the Indian famine relief fund in England.¹ When at the end of December 1899 the number of people on relief rose to 3 million Samuel Smith, M.P., appealed for starting the Mansion House Fund for Indian famine relief.² But Hamilton stuck to his previous decision. He reiterated that the appeal if made would not meet with adequate response because of the war situation.³

Meanwhile the Government of India was alarmed at the increasing distress. On 19 January, 1900 in a speech in the Viceroy's Legislative Council Curzon took it for granted that no charitable help could be expected from England. "I am afraid," he said, "that it is too much to expect that England can again come to our rescue this time as she did so splendidly in 1897, or that so far as can at present be judged, we can anywhere outside this country expect more than passive sympathy with our misfortune".⁴ Curzon's speech attracted the attention of the Lord

¹The Investors' Review, 9 December 1899, quoted in India, 15 December 1899.

²The Times, 9 January 1900.

³Speech of Hamilton at the banquet given by the Association of the Chambers of Commerce, U.K., to Sir Stafford Northcote on his voyage to India for Governorship of Bombay, 10 January 1900, India, 12 January 1900; see also Hamilton to Curzon, 11 January 1900, H.P.

⁴Quoted in the Manchester Guardian, 23 January 1900, reprinted in India, 26 January 1900.

Mayor of London. He wrote to Hamilton that he was ready to open the Mansion House Famine fund provided the latter approved it.¹ But Hamilton was still entirely opposed to the appeal for charity in England on the ground of his previous belief.²

In view of the opposition of the Secretary of State the Viceroy's Executive Council could ^{not} approach the Lord Mayor of London for an appeal for charity in England. But the Council decided that as soon as the excitement in India over the war fund subsided a meeting for opening of the Indian Famine Relief Fund should be held in Calcutta. This should not be earlier than 14 February 1900. The Lord Mayor of London should be requested to hold a similar meeting in London to open the English branch of the fund.³ However, Hamilton wrote to the Lord Mayor of London in such a fashion as to suggest that the objection to the appeal for charity in England was actually raised by Curzon. Stating the unfavourable condition in England Hamilton said, "... in the circumstances, Lord Curzon tells me he proposes that India instead of Great Britain, should be the centre of collection for the appeal".⁴ Curzon made

¹ Lord Mayor of London to Hamilton, 23 January 1900, India, 2 February 1900.

² Telegr. (Pvt.), Hamilton to Curzon, 25 January 1900, H.P.; see also Hamilton to Curzon, 26 January 1900, H.P.

³ Telegr. (Pvt.), Curzon to Hamilton, 26 January 1900, C.P.

⁴ Hamilton to Lord Mayor of London, 29 January 1900, quoted in India, 2 February 1900.

a last attempt to persuade Hamilton to launch an appeal in England, for he believed that if appeals were made in England the amount of donation would be substantial.¹ But he was unsuccessful.

The British newspapers were anxious at the delay in starting the fund and most of them held Hamilton responsible for the delay.² At last the Lord Mayor of London opened the famine fund in the first week of February on his own initiative. By 16 February the Lord Mayor's Fund amounted to £44,000, which was beyond the expectation of Hamilton.³ The Investors' Review and the Manchester Guardian inaugurated separate funds.⁴ The Indian famine moved the outside world. The Indian Charitable Relief Fund Committee received donations from Germany, Canada, Turkey, Malaya and from the United States, where Dr. Klopsch, the editor-proprietor of the Christian Herald, Washington, founded an Indian Famine Relief Fund Committee and raised £80,000.⁵

In India the Charitable Relief Fund was opened at a meeting in Calcutta held on 19 February and presided over by Curzon. But

¹Curzon to Hamilton, 1 February 1900, C.P.

²The Morning Leader, 24 January 1900, cited in India, 26 January 1900; The Westminster Gazette, 29 January 1900, ibid.

³Hamilton to Curzon, 16 February 1900, H.P.

⁴The Investors' Review, 17 February 1900, cited in India, 23 February 1900.

⁵The New Age, 3 May 1900, cited in India, 11 May 1900.

in fact the fund had been opened long before. The Maharaja of Dwarbhanga donated £10,000 immediately after Curzon's speech in the Legislative Council on 19 January 1900. As regards the composition of the Indian Charitable Relief Fund Committee Curzon decided to follow the principle prescribed by the Famine Commission of 1898, of general, provincial and local committees.¹ As for the use of the charitable fund, the Government of India accepted the principle laid down by the Famine Commission of 1898, which recommended four objects: (a) provision of extra comforts in the shape of food and clothing over and above what was provided by the state; (b) maintenance of orphans; (c) relief of persons who though in want were unwilling to declare themselves publicly as applicants for charitable relief; and (d) provision of help mainly in the form of agricultural implements and cattle to those who might have lost their property in the famine and who, without such help, would be unable to make a fresh start in life.² In 1896-7 the four-fifths of the Charitable Fund was spent on object (d). This year it was also decided that the same portion of the fund would be devoted to that object.³ The famine fund in India

¹R.F.C., 1898, loc.cit., para 515.

²Ibid., para 527.

³Telegr. (Pvt.), Curzon to Hamilton, 16 February 1900, C.P.

was making good progress with the donation of £100,000 by the Maharaja of Jaypur which was later on increased by £10,000.¹

In this famine there was no move on the part of the Christian missionaries in India to launch a campaign for a separate famine fund as they wanted to do in 1896-7.

The famine grew on a gigantic scale. Towards the end of March 1900 the number of persons on relief both in the British districts and in the Native States rose to 4,879,000 of which six-sevenths were employed on relief works and one-seventh who, by reasons of age or infirmity were unable to work, were gratuitously relieved without being subjected to any labour test.² But still the government relief was inadequate. There was a cry for more funds to save the people. In May 1900 the total number of persons on relief both in the British territory and the Native States was increased to 5,607,000 as against 3,811,000 in the corresponding month of 1897. In the middle of May 1897 the Indian Charitable Relief Fund Committee received a total of £700,000 from the Mansion House Famine Fund whereas in the corresponding month of 1900 the amount received from the same source was £370,000.³ Led by the dire need

¹Curzon to Hamilton, 22 March 1900, C.P. Curzon made a separate fund called "Indian People's Famine Trust" with the donation of the Maharaja of Jaypur, Curzon to Hamilton, 6 June 1900; see also The Gazette of India, 2 June 1900, pp. 345-7.

²S. of S. to Lord Mayor of London, 2 April 1900, op.cit.

³Curzon to Lord Mayor of London, 23 May 1900, cited in India, 15 June 1900.

of money Curzon unofficially appealed to the Lord Mayor of London for more generous charity of the British public and no false pride could deter him from making the frank confession of the tragic reality of the famine.¹ At the same time Curzon requested the editors of The Times, The Globe and The Standard to give wider publicity to his appeal to the Lord Mayor of London.² It is obvious that Curzon took these steps having been disappointed at Hamilton's obstinate opposition to a national appeal in England. Hamilton was silent as to this particular effort of Curzon's. A sense of false pride and fear of public criticism that gripped Hamilton prevented him from giving his consent to a national appeal for charity in England for the second time within a period of three years.

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, food policy is one of the most important aspects of famine administration. In the famine of 1896-7 it was a most debated subject. During that time Hamilton advocated government intervention in the food grain trade but it was not accepted by the Government of India, which followed a policy of non-intervention in the food grain trade. The Famine Commission of 1898 justified the non-intervention policy of the Government of India. Hence it was the settled policy of the government that

¹Ibid.

²Curzon to Hamilton, 23 May 1900, C.P.

(a) even in times of famine and scarcity food supply in India was sufficient to meet the demand: (b) private traders were competent to distribute the food stuffs, and (c) save in exceptional circumstances, government intervention was unnecessary for the distribution of food grains.¹ Hence during the famine of 1899-1900 the question of food policy was held to be a matter of no importance. Both Hamilton and Curzon dealt very little with this aspect, and both fully relied on the official belief of the normal sufficiency of food grain in India, despite shortage due to drought in some areas of the country, and on the ability of the private traders to regulate it.

According to the estimate of the government of India the annual agricultural production in India and Burma in the last decade of the nineteenth century averaged in value between Rs. 300 and 400 crores. On an approximate estimate the food production in 1899-1900 had been at least one quarter if not one third below the average. At normal prices the loss was at least Rs 75 crores or £50 million.² It should be mentioned here that the above figures were approximate and, therefore, do not indicate the total shortage of food grain during the famine year, 1899-1900. In a speech in the House of Commons Hamilton could not definitely state the total deficit of

¹R.F.C., 1898, loc.cit., para 586.

²Viceroy's Statement on famine in the Legislative Council, Simla, 19 October 1900, P.P.(H.C.), 1902, Vol. 70, pp. 469-80.

food grain.¹ He tried to give an idea of the agricultural loss incurred during the year 1899-1900 by showing the fall in export of agricultural produce during those years as under:

Table I
Export of Indian agricultural produce²

Average export in normal years before famine	Export in 1899-1900
(a) Wheat: £21,000,000	£10,000,000
(b) Cotton: £12,000,000	£5,000,000
(c) Oil seed: £18,000,000	NIL (The crop perished in North Western Provinces, the great- est oil seed growing area in India.)

From the above table it is impossible to determine the total shortage of food grain in 1899-1900 and on this basis it is difficult to say whether food supply in India during the famine year 1899-1900 was sufficient or not. Nevertheless Hamilton echoed the official belief on the sufficiency of food grain even in years of drought, a belief with which he was not convinced in 1896-97. Hamilton specially

¹Hansard, LXXXVI, 26 July 1900, cols. 1347-8.

²Ibid.

mentioned that railway extensions had greatly facilitated the transportation of food grain to the affected areas.¹

The theory of the sufficiency of food in times of famine is fallacious as it is not backed by any authentic statistical data. Both Hamilton and Curzon were in the dark about the real position of food stocks in India. The improvement of communication through the extension of railways had greatly accelerated the export of commodities, including food grain.² The private traders having control over the market exploited the situation and by hoarding food grain caused an artificial rise in prices which was enormous and beyond the purchasing power of the people. In order to avoid this situation the government should have come forward in the grain trade to keep down the prices by controlling the nefarious practice of the private traders. On 17 October 1899 the citizens of Bombay in a meeting adopted resolutions demanding immediate intervention of the government in the food grain trade.³ Public opinion in India wanted temporary suspension of the free trade policy of the government in the affected area for the sake of saving

¹Ibid.

²The Bengalee (Calcutta), 26 April 1901, B.N.N.R., 1901.

³India, 10 November 1899.

lives. Stoppage of export of food grain from India, importation of food grain on government account and its distribution through government in the affected areas were among the various demands raised by the Indian newspapers.¹ But no action was taken by the government. Food grain was not imported by the government. Export of food grain continued² and the distribution was entirely left in the hands of the private traders. The Christian missionaries of Bombay attempted to form a joint Stock Company for importing food grains in India and selling them through the missionaries of the whole country at cost price so as to relieve the pressure of scarcity in the affected areas. They wrote to the Lord Mayor of London detailing their scheme in this regard so that he could persuade Hamilton to approve their proposal. The Lord Mayor of London wrote to Hamilton accordingly.³ But Hamilton

¹ Hindusthan (Kalakrankar), 12 January 1900, N.W.P. & O.N.N.R., 1900; Bharat Jiwan (Benares), 19 January 1900, ibid.; Al-Bashir (Etawa), 12 February 1900, ibid.; Sade-i-Hind (Lahore), 17 February 1900; P.N.N.R., 1900; Anjuman-i-Hind (Lucknow), 24 February 1900, N.W.P. & O.N.N.R. 1900; Sialkot Paper (Sialkot), 1 March 1900, 1 April 1900, P.N.N.R., 1900; Sri Sri Vishnu Priya O Ananda Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), 23 May 1900; B.N.N.R., 1900; Sanjibani (Calcutta), 26 July 1900, ibid.

² Export of Rice from India: (a) From April 1898 to January 1899
= 26,101,907 cwts.
(b) From April 1899 to January 1900
= 22,356,070 cwts.

quoted in Bharat Jiwan (Benares), 9 April 1900, N.W.P. & O.N.N.R., 1900.

³ Cited in India Office to Lord Mayor of London, 14 December 1899, published in India, 22 December 1899.

replied in the negative. He admitted the rise of prices of food grain but did not find any sign that food supply in India would not be carried out by the private traders.¹

The government intervention in the grain trade in the form suggested from various quarters was quite justified especially in view of the fact that such action was temporary in duration and therefore not harmful for free trade economy. But the government was determined not to intervene in the grain trade. This was not only due to their strict adherence to the free trade policy, not only due to the financial and administrative burdens involved, but also to a disinclination of the government to impair the interests of the British and Indian merchants connected with the grain trade.²

In the famine of 1899-1900 the relief policy of the Government of India was stringent. There are some cases in the relief operations where the experience of the famine of 1896-97 was neglected and the recommendations of the Famine Commission of 1898 were modified in the direction of economy.

On 20 October 1899 Curzon took a pledge to save life at all costs.³ Such a pledge was also taken by Hamilton when he first

¹Ibid.

²In the famine of 1896-97 the representative of Messrs. Rally & Brothers, one of the biggest merchants in India, advised Hamilton not to intervene in the private grain trade. See Hamilton to Elgin, 5 February 1897, H.P.

³Speech of Viceroy in L.C.I., 20 October 1899, loc.cit.

wrote to the Lord Mayor of London.¹ But the rapid increase in the number of people on relief caused the anxiety of the government. In the last week of December the number of people on relief rose to 2,451,000,² although the relief operation in most of the affected areas was still in a preliminary stage. At this the Government of India issued a circular to all provinces affected by the famine with a view to restricting the relief operation. It was feared by the government that if the existing rate of progress in the number of people on relief were maintained it would strain not only the financial but also the administrative resources of the government.³ The Famine Commission of 1880 was of the opinion that in a famine the proportion of the total population likely to be in receipt of relief in the worst month would not exceed 15 per cent, and for the whole period would not exceed 7 or 8 per cent.⁴ The circular of the Government of India pointed out this and observed that in the famine of 1896-97 these standards were

¹India Office to Lord Mayor of London, 14 December 1899, loc.cit.

²Telegr. Viceroy to S. of S., 25 December 1899, C.P.

³T.W.Holdermess, Secy. to Govt. of India, to Ch. Secy. to Govt. of Bombay, Secy. to Govt. of Punjab, Ch. Comm. to Central Provinces, Ch. Comm. of Ajmere and Resident of Hyderabad, 27 December (Famine Circular No. 2) 1899, Corres. No. 105, Papers Re: Famine & Relief Operation in India During 1899-1900, Vol. 1, P.P.(H.C.), Vol. 27, 1900, pp. 439-43.

⁴Ibid.

not exceeded except in very limited tracts. But in 1899-1900 the ratio of persons relieved to population in a number of districts had already exceeded the standard of 15 per cent. Hence the government maintained that relief was being distributed profusely and, therefore, thought it necessary to confine it to the destitute section of the people.¹ The government believed that people were too much attracted to the government relief and that had the natural and social obligation been discharged properly it would prevent many persons from needing such relief.² Under the circumstances the Government of India thought it necessary to redefine its pledge to save the lives of the people. The circular said, "First of all it appears desirable to reaffirm the underlying principle of famine relief that the state does not undertake to secure the people from all suffering in the event of failure of crops, but only to protect them from starvation. Secondly, the condition of relief should be such as to fully test the necessity of the recipient, and to impair as little as possible the traditional and family obligations of the social system of the country. In the administration of gratuitous relief... these principles should be insisted on with especial rigour..."

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

the curtailment of the gratuitous list in certain districts now appears to be a matter of urgent necessity."¹

The circular further considered the wage scale of the relief worker "dangerously high" and took a serious objection to the system of fixed task and minimum wage² as prescribed by the Famine Commission of 1898.³ It was decided that the fixed task and minimum wage should be strictly confined to cases where no other system was adequate and that "fines for short work should be strictly enforced, and the case of repeated failures to perform the allotted task due to causes other than physical inability should be dealt with rigorously".⁴ The Government of India took the wage scale prescribed by the North Western Provinces Famine Code as a model and advised the governments of the affected provinces to fix the wage scale accordingly. Let us see the comparative table of the wage scale for workers on relief prescribed by the North Western Provinces Famine Code⁵ and that recommended by the Famine Commission of 1898.⁶

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ R.F.C., 1898, loc.cit., para 245.

⁴ Circular of the Govt. of India 27 December (Famine No. 2) 1899, loc.cit.

⁵ N.W.P. Famine Code, 1899, paras 45-47, pp. 131-132.

⁶ R.F.C., 1898, loc.cit., para 456.

Table II

Scale of wages on relief works recommended
by the R.F.C., 1898 and the N.W.P. Famine Code.

Class of worker	R.F.C. 1898	N.W.P. Famine Code	
	Grain wages in Chhattak per day	Grain wages in Chhattak ^e per day	
Special	Uniform scale but a little higher than that allowed to Cl. I.	Male 2 pice more than Cl. I.	Female
I (digger)	20 Chh.	19 Chh. minimum 12 Chh.	16 Chh. minimum 10 Chh.
II (carrier)	15 Chh.	15 Chh. minimum 12 Chh.	14 Chh. minimum 10 Chh.
III working children above 8, under 12	8 Chh.		
working children above 10 and under 14		10 Chh. minimum 8 Chh.	
IV Dependents and other (Adults)	12 Chh.	12 Chh.	12 Chh.
V Children:			
(a) 8 years	7 Chh.		
(b) under 8	5 Chh.		
Children:			
(a) between 10-14		8 Chh.	
(b) between 7-10		6 Chh.	
(c) under 7 not in arms		4 Chh.	
(d) Infant in arms		1 pice extra to mother	

1 Chhattak = 2.05 l oz.

The circular of the Government of India was received by the provincial governments affected by the famine with protest. The Government of Bombay replied that the scale of wages as prescribed

by the Bombay Famine Code was not higher than those prescribed by the North Western Provinces Famine Code.¹ The Government of the Central Provinces wrote that the wages given to the workers on relief were not high, but it was mentioned that the workers belonging to the aboriginal tribes were provided a liberal wage in view of the fact that they suffered terribly in the famine of 1896-97. As regards the gratuitous relief, the Government of the Central Provinces observed that the proportion of such relief was not excessive and it was stated that 60 per cent of those gratuitously relieved were children and that the adults on the free list amounted to only 1.8 per cent of the total population of the province.² Mr. Frazer, the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, who toured the province, hardly found an instance where people losing their self-respect had come to the relief camp without much need.³ The Secretary for Berar wrote that the distress was severe in Berar and that instead of restriction, an extension of relief was necessary.⁴ The Government of the Punjab took the circular of the Government of India without protest but it observed that the distress in the Hissar and Rohtak districts

¹Ch. Secy. to Govt. of Bombay to Ch. Secy. Govt. of India, 15 January (Dept. of Rev. & Agri., Famine No. 235) 1900, Papers Re: Famine & Relief Operations during 1899-1900, Vol. I, Corres. No. 106, loc.cit., pp.443-46.

²Famine Secy. to Ch. Comm. of the Central Provinces to Secy. to Govt. of India, 3 February (Dept. of Rev. & Agri. No. F238) 1900, Corres. No. 108, ibid., pp. 448-456.

³The Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), n.d., cited in India, 6 April 1900.

⁴Secy. for Berar to Resident at Hyderabad to Secy. to Govt. of India, 14 February (Dept. of Rev. & Agri. No. 73) 1900, Corres. No.114, Papers Re: Famine and Relief Operation during 1899-1900, Vol. I, loc.cit. pp. 472-77.

was very acute.¹

At the meeting of the Legislative Council on 19 January 1900 Curzon defended the circular of the Government enjoining greater stringency in the application of the famine relief with a view to eliminating from the lists persons not really in need. He mentioned that indiscriminate charity would demoralise the self-reliance of the people and, therefore, the government would be guilty of public crime.² From the beginning Hamilton wanted to economise the expenditure on relief. Even in December 1899 he was in the belief that people were earning much in the famine work.³ Welcoming the circular of the Government of India he commented: "... I am glad you are tightening your grip upon this expenditure, because not only will the present year financially be a lean one, but the money market here is very tight and will continue tight for some time to come".⁴

The circular of the Government of India and Curzon's speech in the Legislative Council were startling to the whole country. For, the stringent relief policy was not only contradictory to the

¹Rev. & Fin. Secy. to Govt. of Punjab to Secy. to Govt. of India, 27 April (Dept. of Rev. & Agri. No. 644) 1900, Corres. No. 116, ibid., pp. 481-483.

²The Times, 22 January 1900.

³Hamilton to Curzon, 21 December 1899, H.P.

⁴Hamilton to Curzon, 26 December 1899, H.P.

declared policy of the government but the ground on which it was based was contrary to facts. Sri Sri Vishnu Priya O Ananda Bazar Patrika feared that heavy mortality would be the inevitable consequence of the enforcement of the circular.¹ The Hitabadi ironically regarded Curzon's advice of self help and his anxiety over the demoralising effects of the profuse relief on the people as unnecessary moral teaching to the dying people.² Recalling the liberal relief policy of Northbrook other newspapers urged that some waste rather than parsimony should be accepted in order to save the lives of the people which is the exclusive duty of the State.³ The Friend of India, a pro-government Anglo-Indian daily, bitterly attacked the government for its efforts to shirk the responsibility by bringing false allegation against the character of the people. The newspaper questioned: "... What ground have the government of India for the allegation made and repeated in this resolution with an assurance that implies absolute conviction that the people of the country have developed during the past three years, a readiness to have recourse to public relief

¹Sri Sri Vishnu Priya O Ananda Bazar Patrika, 3 January 1900, B.N.N.R., 1900.

²The Hitabadi, 5 January 1900, *ibid.*

³Bangabasi (Calcutta), 6 January 1900, 26 January 1900, B.N.N.R., 1900; see also The Madras Standard, 3 January 1900, quoted in India, 16 February 1900; The Times of India, 6 January 1900, quoted in ibid.; Maratha (Poona), 7 January 1900, quoted in ibid. ;

which is not only opposed to all past experience of their disposition, but implies a lack of proper pride and self-reliance entirely foreign to their character?"¹ The Basumati observed that when people were fully exhausted of their resources, as a last resort they come to the relief work centre.² Vaughan Nash, writing from Ahmednagar on 27 March 1900 sharply refuted the contention of the Government of India that the wages on relief work were high and attractive and said:

"... What evidence have the government got for the assumption that the villagers are leaving their homes for the works without compunction, and that the old feeling of pride and independence have yielded to the attraction of free quarters and light work? Attraction! Take the life in camps. At 3 o'clock in the morning the women get up and begin to grind the grain for midday meal. The refugees have spent the night in the open air... When the works begin, the attractions of stone breaking, however leisurely performed, are not so obvious. The people are unused to the work and the stones are hard and difficult to crack. I took the hammer from a little girl who was vainly trying to break a small lump of stone, but after thirty blows, directed as I thought with judgement, I gave it up and handed it to the ganger. It took the ganger another dozen strokes to split it into two or three bits and those bits had again severally assailed before they would pass through the 2 inch ring. But if I am wrong and the life really does attract the people, why have so many of them put off coming? Fifteen hundred fresh arrivals were registered last week at the camp alone, and on the morning of my visit, I found three or four hundred refugees squatted round the office waiting to be admitted."³

¹The Friend of India, n.d., quoted in India, 26 January 1900.

²Basumati, 8 February 1900, B.N.N.R., 1900.

³The Manchester Guardian, n.d., reprinted in India, 20 April 1900.

However, despite protests from various quarters, the governments of all the provinces affected by the famine had to restrict the relief operation as well as reduce the wage scale with the introduction of the system of penal wages. It was only the Government of the Central Provinces which maintained a fairly moderate scale of wages. According to the recommendation of the Famine Commission of 1898 the daily minimum wage for an adult person is $1\frac{1}{2}$ annas which is equivalent to 15 oz. grain, 2 oz. pulse, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. salt, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. edible oil and $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. condiments and vegetable with 5 per cent added for margin, which means over 19 oz. or barely 10 chhataks. The weekly minimum wages for an adult comes to $10\frac{1}{2}$ annas. After applying the instructions of the circular of the Government of India in practice it was found that people performing less than half the minimum task were paid 25 per cent below the minimum wage, so that instead of $10\frac{1}{2}$ annas, the former weekly minimum, men and women in the defaulting gang were getting $7\frac{1}{2}$ annas and the working children $4\frac{1}{2}$ annas. With $7\frac{1}{2}$ annas only 7 lbs of grain could be bought as food grain was then selling at the rate of 14 lbs a rupee and this means only a pound of grain a day as the sole subsistence of a grown up person.¹ It is quite evident that at the penal minimum wages people can neither subsist nor do any hard work, and if they are asked to

¹India, 27 April 1900.

perform further hard work their physical condition would dangerously deteriorate. Of this Mr. Nash writes,

"The cry, 'ye are idle, ye are idle', comes from almost every English official on famine duty, to which the people reply, 'give us more food, and we will do more work, this is our third year of famine within four years.' It is an ominous fact that whilst the minimum is being cut down by a quarter - a minimum which assumes that only 15 oz of solid food a day will go into the stomach of the people who must work nine hours between the rising and setting of an Indian sun - cholera is on the march in Khandesh and god help if cholera attacks the famine camps'."¹

Mr. Nash's prediction proved correct in the Bombay Presidency, especially in the Gujrat Division where cholera played havoc and swept the famine camps. The hard labour imposed on the terribly physically weak people, penal minimum wages, bad food, absolutely unhealthy sanitary arrangements in the famine camps, these were among the causes of the cholera epidemic and heavy mortality.

The relief policy of the Government of India was directed at economizing the expenditure and devoid of any humanitarian consideration. In practice both Curzon and Hamilton gave no consideration to the fact that the famine of 1899-1900, following hard on the heels of that of 1896-7, left the people weaker in body and poorer in resources and made many hasten to the relief works. Mortality in famine could be avoided if the relief works were

¹The Manchester Guardian, n.d., reprinted in India, 20 April 1900.

opened immediately after the first sign of the famine. Any slight reduction of wages long after the starting of the relief operation could not cause much harm. But in all the past famines, except that of 1873-74, relief operations began long after the starting of the famine condition. For instance, the famine of 1899-1900 made its appearance after the failure of the spring crops, that is from the month of June. But the relief operation began from the third week of October and people passed the long period between June and October with absolutely insufficient or bad food, or in most cases with virtual starvation. This caused their physical deterioration and in such condition they came to the relief work centre. At this stage any restriction in the entry to the relief work or imposition of penal wages and hard test of labour cannot but be fatal to the people.

As regards the type of works the circular of the Government of India instructed the local governments affected by the famine to employ people on large works which were within the programme of the Public Works Department.¹ The advantage of the large work was that it could employ thousands of people at a time for considerable periods, would be a work of permanent utility and more easy and less expensive to supervise than the small village works. But the many disadvantages of large works, especially in times of

¹Circular of the Govt. of India, 27 December (Famine No. 2) 1899, loc.cit.

famine, are that they are generally situated far away from the villages and, therefore, people have to leave their homes and live in camps huddled up together in thousands. The housing and the sanitary arrangements are absolutely inadequate and unhealthy and in the tropical climate these places easily become prone to epidemics like cholera. That is why the Famine Commission of 1898 recommended that where necessary large works should be greatly supplemented by small village works so that people could work near home.¹ But in this famine large works were preferred and the maximum number of people were employed at a particular work centre. The massing of 30,000 people in a single centre in the Bombay Presidency was protested against in parliament. It was suggested that the number of people to be employed at a particular work centre should not exceed 5,000.² But no action was taken in this matter. It was in Gujrat where cholera broke out in the large relief camps.

As for the famine of 1896-7 in this famine also there was a great tussle between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India with regard to an Imperial grant to meet the expenditure on famine. Gradually the relief operations became very expensive. But there was no official admission of the financial incapacity of the Government of India. Both the India Office and the Government of India

¹R.F.C., 1898, loc.cit., para 413.

²Hansard, LXXXVI, 26 July 1900, col. 1420.

were pressed by the public opinion in England and India to seek a financial assistance from the Imperial Exchequer. In February 1900 Wedderburn demanded in the House of Commons that the India Office should seek financial assistance from the Imperial treasury towards expenditure on famine. But Hamilton said that there was no necessity of an Imperial grant for famine as the means of the Government of India was sufficient to meet all expenditure for famine.¹ In March Samuel Smith asked A.J. Balfour, First Lord of the Treasury, in the House of Commons whether he was willing to make a financial grant from the Imperial treasury for famine relief in India. Balfour did not give any categorical answer but said that he was informed by the India Office that the Government of India was able to meet expenditure for famine.² Again on 3 April Henry Fowler urged an Imperial grant for India in view of the Indian people's contribution towards the Transvaal War Fund. Hamilton repeated his previous statement but added that he would seek for it only when the Government of India would be unable to cope with the expenditure.³ Just at this time Curzon wrote to Hamilton that when he would be in need of money he would expect financial assistance

¹Hansard, LXXIX, 15 February 1900, col. 89.

²Hansard, LXXXI, 23 March 1900, cols. 176-7.

³Hansard, LXXXI, 3 April 1900, cols. 1080-1125.

from the Imperial treasury.¹ Before receiving this letter Hamilton wrote to Curzon that in principle he was opposed to giving any financial assistance to the Government of India on two grounds. First, such an assistance from the Imperial treasury would destroy the independence of the Indian exchequer. Secondly, the acceptance of such assistance would lead to further interference by the parliament with the affairs of the Government of India. Hamilton, of course, believed that such a grant would be very popular both in India and England but he considered it to be "mischievous precedent" under which the Indian people would think that in any emergency like famine the Imperial government would come forward to help the Indian exchequer.² Nevertheless Curzon requested Hamilton to reconsider the question of the Imperial grant. He specially mentioned that when the foreign governments were contributing to the Indian Famine Relief Fund, the British parliament should not keep silent.³ Meanwhile on receiving news from Bombay that certain native states were at the end of their resources Hamilton wanted to know the total requirements of the Government of India for granting famine loans to the native states and also for expenditure in the British districts.⁴ Curzon telegraphed that

¹Curzon to Hamilton, 5 April 1900, C.P.

²Hamilton to Curzon 5 April 1900, H.P.

³Curzon to Hamilton, 23 April 1900, C.P.

⁴Telegr. (Pvt.), Hamilton to Curzon, 30 April 1900, C.P.

he would require Rs. 130 lakhs for granting loans and advances to the rayats of the British districts¹ and Rs. 550 lakhs on account of famine loans to the native states as well as the expenditure on famine in the British districts.²

The Government of India could have raised loans in India not exceeding Rs. 3 crores.³ Besides, in 1898 parliament had given the right to the Government of India to raise a loan in England to the extent of £10 million in case of any emergency such as war or famine, when the parliament was not in session. Out of £10 million only £1 million had been raised so far. So the Government of India had an untouched borrowing power of £9 million in England.⁴

Hamilton advised that if Curzon could raise a loan in India up to Rs. 3 crores, then he was ready to reduce temporarily the drawings for home charges by £1 million.⁵ But Curzon said that £1 million would not be sufficient and suggested that the whole amount of Rs. 550 lakhs could be raised as loan from the London money market.⁶ Of the Rs. 130 lakhs estimated to be given to the rayats as loans and advances only Rs 75 lakhs were provided in the Government of

¹Telegr. (Pvt.), Curzon to Hamilton, 8 May 1900, C.P.

²Telegr. (Pvt.), Curzon to Hamilton, 19 May 1900, C.P.

³Telegr. (Pvt.), Hamilton to Curzon, 8 May 1900, C.P.

⁴Hansard, LXXXIV, 19 June 1900, cols. 440-1.

⁵Telegr. (Pvt.), Hamilton to Curzon, 8 May 1900, op.cit.

⁶Telegr. (Pvt.), Curzon to Hamilton, 19 May 1900, op.cit.

India's estimate of ways and means and for the balance of Rs. 55 lakhs Curzon thought that he must seek for a gift from the British parliament.¹ Hamilton was still averse to seeking Imperial assistance and lest Curzon should send an official communication seeking for a parliamentary grant he telegraphed:

"I don't think that the circumstances as now known to us constitute an emergency warranting a gift or loan from the Imperial government. I propose to provide, by a loan in this country, for all probable requirements, on the assumption that the rains do not fail this year. If there is another failure of rain, the emergency above mentioned will have arisen, and I shall be prepared to apply to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for assistance in some form to be decided hereafter. I hope, therefore, that you will not officially apply for a grant by Parliament at present."²

Hamilton further wrote to Curzon that both the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the War Office had agreed to pay to the Government of India a sum of £293,000, including a further amount of £5,000 for Persia, in accordance with the recommendation of the Indian Expenditure Commission, 1897.³ Curzon agreed at that moment not to seek for a parliamentary grant but since the condition was very serious he retained the hope of assistance. He wrote to Hamilton, "I will not, however, after your last telegram of May 10, press these views at the present moment, since you give me an assurance

¹Telegr. (Pvt.), Curzon to Hamilton, 8 May 1900, C.P.

²Telegr. (Pvt.), Hamilton to Curzon, 10 May 1900, C.P.

³Hamilton to Curzon, 10 May 1900, H.P.

that if there is any failure of rain, I may come to you with definite hope of assistance."¹

There was no sign of rain in June, in the affected areas. The progress of famine continued unabated. Questions were raised again in the House of Commons in connection with an Imperial grant for Indian famine. Henry Fowler demanded a categorical reply as to whether the Secretary of State for India would seek for financial assistance from the Imperial Exchequer. Hamilton replied that since the Government of India had a borrowing power of £9 million in England, a portion of that amount would be utilized. Fowler pointed out that the borrowing would not solve the problem of India as this would further add to the Indian National debt and he asked whether any grant would be made before that borrowing power of £9 million had been exhausted. Hamilton replied that any grant made by the Imperial government towards India must be made by loan and that the Government of India should try to realise its own resources before it should come to parliament.² Hamilton virtually meant that complete utilization of the borrowing power was the precondition for seeking a financial assistance from the Imperial government. But the borrowing power had nothing to do with

¹Curzon to Hamilton, 16 May 1900, C.P.

²Hansard, LXXXIV, 19 June 1900, cols. 440-1.

the question of seeking a gift or assistance. Hamilton's statement attracted the attention of Curzon. He bitterly wrote to Hamilton that the Government of India was not at all interested in an Imperial loan and that the Government of India expected an Imperial gift straightaway. He said, "What I do think, however, is that the grant if it be made at all, should take the form in some shape or another of a gift and not of a mere trivial bonus in respect of a diminution of the rate of interest upon a loan."¹

Outside parliament a campaign was going on for granting financial assistance to the Government of India. Early in March 1900 the India Society of London sent a memorial direct to the Prime Minister requesting a liberal grant for India.² The same appeal was made to Hamilton by the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce.³ British newspapers also joined in the campaign. The Daily Graphic found no justification for refusing an Imperial grant to India in her great distress, while the Imperial government was spending over £60 million for wars in China and South Africa.⁴ The Morning Leader questioned if parliament was willing to vote a grant for Tirah Campaign why not for the famine stricken people of India?⁵ The Economist demanded

¹Curzon to Hamilton, 11 July 1900, C.P.

²India, 23 March 1900.

³Hansard, LXXXIV, 15 June 1900, cols.156-7.

⁴The Daily Graphic, 21 March 1900, quoted in India, 6 April 1900.

⁵The Morning Leader, 22 March 1900, quoted, ibid.

immediate repayment of all dues to India in accordance with the recommendation of the Expenditure Commission.¹ In India the Friend of India was irritated at the irresponsibility of Hamilton for not taking any initiative for an Imperial grant.² Other newspapers of India also accused Hamilton of his utter ignorance and indifference of the famine condition in India and pressed, at the same time, for a financial grant from the British Exchequer.³

During the debate on the Indian Budget in the House of Commons in July 1900 a motion for granting financial assistance to the Government of India was moved by some opposition members backed by the Parliamentary Committee of the British Committee of the Indian National Congress. The debate on that motion was centred round Hamilton's refusal of financial assistance.

While placing the financial estimate of the Government of India in the House of Commons Hamilton declared that because of the heavy expenditure due to famine the Indian budget during the financial year ending March, 1900 was running at a deficit of £826,000. The total expenditure of the famine in two years was estimated at £13,108,000 which included £6,190,000 on direct relief, £3,473,000 on remission of land revenue, £2,347,000 on loan to the Native States which was repayable and £1,098,000 on loans and advances

¹The Economist, 24 March 1900, quoted, ibid.

²The Friend of India, 5 April 1900, quoted in India, 18 May 1900.

³Almora Akhbar (Almora), 17 March 1900, N.W.P. & O.N.N.R., 1900; Hitabadi, 13 April 1900, B.N.N.R., 1900; The Public Gazette (Amritsar), 1 June 1900, P.N.N.R., 1900.

to the rayats, parts of which were also repayable. Of the £13,108,000, £4,561,000 were spent in the financial year of 1899-1900 and in the year 1900-01 the famine charges amounted to £8,547,000. Hamilton said that he had decided to raise a loan of £3 million in England in the first instance out of India's untapped borrowing power of £9 million. He also assured the House that he was ready to extend that loan to £9 million if necessary. But he was not at all inclined to seek for any assistance from the Imperial government. Hamilton was averse to mixing up the two exchequers and wanted to make the Indian finance self-supporting. He said,

"... the only hope of effective economy, the only hope of improving the financial system of India is to make India independent and self-supporting... . Therefore, I have objected to and opposed premature proposals to the Imperial Exchequer; it is not because I have not sympathy with the suffering of the Indian people, but because, I believe that the course I have adopted is for the truest wellbeing of India. I feel that a sound system of finance is a convertible term for the improvement of the material and industrial product of the country."¹

The significant aspect of the Indian budget debate was the debate on a motion for a free Imperial grant of £5 million to India towards the expenditure on famine. The motion was moved by Mr. Souttar. Wedderburn seconded it. While moving the motion Mr. Souttar advanced

¹Hansard, LXXXVI, 26 July 1900, cols. 1350-3.

some "selfish but forceful" reasons for the justification of such a free grant. First, India was the fourth best customer England had in the world as a commercial nation. In this connection Souttar observed, "We have made a great deal out of India in the past, we hope to make a great deal out of her in future, and we ought, therefore to come forward and help her in this hour of trial." Secondly, India's contribution towards the Imperial wars in China and South Africa was immense and in many past Imperial wars Indian troops participated at the cost of the Indian revenue.¹ Souttar strongly objected to Hamilton's style of teaching India self-help. He believed that there was no need to teach India that lesson. For, financially she had always been self-dependent. The Colonial Office was maintained by the British taxpayer, whereas every expense of the India Office, from the salary of the Secretary of State down to subordinate staff was borne by the Indian tax-payer. In the Imperial defence also, all other colonies subscribed in all £1¹/₂ million whereas India's subscriptions were from £22-25 million. Hence Souttar believed that the British Empire owed a debt to the Indian peasants of which this free grant of £5 million would be but a "payment on account".²

¹The Imperial Government received Indian troops at the cost of the Indian revenue in the following expeditions: Java and Mauritius, 1810-1; China, 1842; Crimean War, 1855; Persia, 1856-7; China, 1859-60; New Zealand, 1860-1; Abyssinia, 1867; U.S. of S.I. to War Office, 9 August (No. 367W) 1872, quoted in Appx. 6, P.P.(H.C.) 1874, Vol. 8, pp.250-1.

²Hansard, LXXXVI, 26 July 1900, cols. 1372-8.

In seconding the motion Wedderburn said that such a free grant was urgently necessary as the charitable fund this year was far less than the amount raised in the famine of 1896-97. He proposed that the free grant should not be used in support of the general finance of the Government of India, but should be placed at the disposal of the Viceroy to be utilized according to the local needs of the suffering provinces, in giving free grants to the needy rayats to buy seed, cattle etc. He mentioned that the public opinion in England was in favour of such a free grant to India and that since the British colonies and many foreign countries were contributing to the Indian Famine Relief Fund, the British parliament should not refuse a contribution proportionate to her wealth and her responsibility for the Indian people.¹ Sir Henry Fowler also spoke in support of the motion.

Sir M. Hicks Beach, Chancellor of the Exchequer, opposed the motion. He argued first, that the Imperial Exchequer was the Exchequer of the United Kingdom and not that of the British Empire at large, and, therefore it was not to vote a grant to any colony. Secondly, he declared that due to expenditure on wars in South Africa and China the budget of the United Kingdom for the financial year 1900-01 was running at a deficit of £36 million for which he was unable to borrow another amount of £5 million for India thereby

¹Ibid., cols. 1379-81.

putting more pressure on the British taxpayers. Thirdly, the Chancellor of the Exchequer mentioned that such a free grant was not officially wanted by the Government of India.¹ The motion was defeated by 112 against 65 votes.

This refusal of financial assistance to India was coldly received by all the newspapers in Britain. Hamilton's role and responsibility in this refusal were given secondary importance in the long editorial comments of The Times. The newspaper accepted the financial reasoning of Hamilton but observed that a liberal grant to India in her great distress would have been a mark of closer ties between the two countries. The newspaper further commented, "A generous gift cannot impair the validity of the severest code of financial orthodoxy".² The Manchester Guardian held this refusal as a sheer injustice to the broken Indian peasants on whom the British nation looked for sharing their own burden as well as that of the Imperial establishment.³ The Daily News held Hamilton responsible for the refusal of the Imperial grant.⁴

Curzon took a very severe objection to the manner in which the motion for a free grant was refused. He opposed the financial

¹Ibid., cols. 1369-70.

²The Times, 28 July 1900.

³The Manchester Guardian, 27 July 1900, quoted in India, 17 August 1900.

⁴The Daily News, 27 July 1900, quoted, ibid.

arguments of Hamilton and maintained that India for the most part was governed by "sentiment" not by strict financial principle. He found no value in the assurance of Hamilton and the British Exchequer that when India required financial assistance, she would obtain it and he alleged that the Imperial government had so far done little in redressing the distress of India. Curzon thought that the Imperial government should have given a free grant to India of at least £2m. Even £1m. would have been of immense help to the Government of India in giving free advances to the rayats of the British districts. Moreover Curzon very much resented the statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the House of Commons, in course of which he mentioned, as being one of the grounds for not giving a financial grant to India, that the Viceroy did not officially apply for such assistance. Curzon suspected that his private correspondence with Hamilton in this matter was distorted in the process of communications by the latter to the Treasury.¹ But Hamilton denied this and said that Curzon was at liberty to issue a press statement against the Chancellor of the Exchequer's parliamentary speech. Hamilton expressed his gratitude to Curzon as the latter did not do so. Hamilton now revealed the truth that since the British Exchequer was hard pressed

¹Curzon to Hamilton, 2 August 1900, C.P.

for money due to war he was unable to press the Chancellor of the Exchequer for a free grant to India.¹ But Hamilton concealed his views from Northcote to whom he presented this refusal as a product of his old idea. "I am old fashioned," he wrote to Northcote, "and I am averse to mixing up the finances of the two exchequers: the more they are intermingled, the worse it will be for the weaker treasury."² Hamilton insisted on the independence of the Indian finance in order to keep the Indian affairs immune from parliamentary control.

Ultimately the Government of India had to manage the famine expenditure unaided by the Imperial government. Of Rs. 130 lakhs estimated to be given to the rayats as loan and advances the Government of India was at last able to grant Rs. 122.88 lakhs to the rayats of the affected areas,³ within the British territory.

Table III

Advances to the rayats in 1900

Bombay Presidency	Rs. 62.56 lakhs
Punjab	Rs. 30.82 "
Central Provinces	Rs. 27.00 "
Ajmere	<u>Rs. 2.50 "</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>Rs.122.88 lakhs</u>

¹Hamilton to Curzon, 22 August 1900, H.P.

²Hamilton to Northcote, 27 July 1900, H.P.

³G.G. in C. to S. of S., 14 June (Rev. & Agri. No.31) 1900, Corres. No. 180, P.P.(H.C.) 1902, Vol. 70, pp. 495-6.

These advances were made repayable. But the Government of India instructed the governments of the affected provinces to grant those advances generally in accordance with the provisions of the Agriculturist Loan Act of 1883 save with the variations:

(a) that those advances should be made free of interest, (b) that the first instalment in repayment of the principal of the advance should be postponed for 12 months from the date of advance, (c) that the local governments should have the discretion to grant remission in respect of the principal of the advances according to the repaying capacity of the rayats, but on no account should such remission exceed one half of the aggregate sum advanced in that province.¹

The total amount was inadequate to the needs of the impoverished rayats who had to wait for another harvest, a period of at least five months. Though there was a provision for remission of up to 50 per cent of the total advance, still the remaining amount became a burden to the rayats. Besides the advances made by the government, the Indian Charitable Relief Fund Committee had distributed freely Rs. 81.80 lakhs to the rayats of the whole affected areas, of which Rs. 55.30 lakhs went to the British districts and Rs. 26.50 lakhs to the Native States.²

¹Govt. of India to Govt. of Bombay, Govt. of Punjab, Govt. of Central Provinces, and Ch. Comm., Ajmere Merwara, 21 May (Rev. & Agri. Nos. 1042-5 F) 1900, Enclo. I to Corres. No. 180, ibid., pp. 495-6.

²Enclos. I & II to Corres. No. 180, ibid., pp. 496-7.

During this famine the Bombay famine administration was marked by the lack of timely and adequate measures, mismanagement and consequently with heavy mortality. Far more significant is that the Bombay famine administration suffered a serious setback due to difference of opinion between the Bombay Government and the Government of India on the one hand and the Bombay Government and their local officers on the other. Ultimately the official differences turned into personal jealousies between Curzon and the Bombay officials viz., Northcote and his two councillors, Monteath and Nugent, and the Bombay officials and Mr. Lely, Commissioner of Gujrat, who was alleged to be personally connected with Curzon. The result was that the suffering people were treated as a pawn in a personal conflict between the Imperial bureaucrats in India.

As mentioned earlier, though the whole presidency was hit by the drought and crop failure it was in the Gujrat division where the condition was worst. In the affected districts of the Bombay Presidency the mortality figure during the month of April 1900 was 85,341 as against the normal of 32,165 which means an excess of 53,176.¹ The following table compares mortality in some districts of the presidency in October 1899 and April 1900.

¹Curzon to Hamilton, 20 June 1900, C.P.

Table IV

Mortality statistics in some Bombay Districts in October 1899
and April 1900

District	October 1899	April 1900
Ahmedabad	30 per mille	126 per mille
Broach	36 " "	133 " "
Kaira	34 " "	160 " "
Panch Mahal	19 " "	260 " "
Ahmednagar	38 " "	117 " "
Khandesh	29 " "	216 " "
Nasik	55 " "	119 " "

It should be mentioned that the terrible mortality in the affected areas of the Bombay Presidency especially in the districts of the Gujrat Division commenced long before cholera had broken out in the famine camps. There was no satisfactory explanation either from the sanitary commissioner or from the collectors for this very great increase.² This heavy mortality drew the attention of Hamilton and he feared that it would be criticised in parliament. He asked Northcote for his observation on it.³ It should be noted here that

¹ Hamilton to Northcote, 6 July 1900, H.P.

² Ibid.

³ Telegr. (Pvt.), Hamilton to Northcote, 7 July 1900, C.P.

Northcote did not pay a visit to Gujrat. But according to him the high death rate was caused by the fact that the constitutions of the people were exceptionally weak and quite unaccustomed to famine. The failure of crop and shortage of water supply compelled the people to eat bad food and drink impure water which produced stomach complaints and rendered people susceptible to diseases like cholera. Moreover the exceptional heat of the Indian summer caused high fever and consequently many famine deaths. Northcote observed that mortality was heavy among the immigrants from the native states adjacent to the Gujrat Division and also among the Bhils and Kolis, the aboriginal tribes of the Panch Mahal district. These aboriginal tribes were unaccustomed to the relief system and wandered about without going to the government poorhouse or relief work centre. As regards relief measures Northcote maintained that the average cost per head relieved in Gujrat was higher than for the rest of the Bombay Presidency, viz., one anna and eight pies and a quarter against one anna and six pies and a half elsewhere. Deduction for wilful short work had been only $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in March 1900 and $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in April 1900. There were on an average 84 work centres for 10,185 square miles in Gujrat as against 125 work centres for 34,239 square miles in the Bombay Deccan and Khandesh. In the Gujrat Division there was one work large or small on an average within $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles of every village. One poorhouse was opened in every

339 square miles in Gujrat, as against, 1389 square miles in the Bombay Deccan and Khandesh.¹

But The Times of India, Mr. Vaughan Nash and Dr. Klopsch, the three most authentic non-official sources of information of the famine in Bombay, were of the opinion that the arrangements were very insignificant and untimely and that there was no power of the local officer to relax the rigid code. All protested against the "unbearable" hard labour and the "cruel" scale of penal wages.² The Times of India further observed that there had been terrible mortality from direct starvation and indirectly through enfeeblement long before cholera broke out.³ This proved that there was an absence of relief work centres or poor houses in many affected areas.

Earlier Curzon complained to Hamilton that the Bombay Government could not grasp the magnitude of the problem.⁴ He toured in Gujrat and considered the statistical comparison of the measures

¹Telegr. Governor of Bombay to S. of S., 15 July 1900, C.P.

²The Times of India, 22 May 1900. Dr. Klopsch found that the pregnant women, nursing mothers and children were employed in hard work. He had seen women who had to travel over 1¹/₂ miles carrying a load of broken stones on their heads and depositing it at the heap. Since the employment of pregnant women, nursing mothers and children was contrary to the prescription of the Famine Code, Dr. Klopsch enquired of the relief officers why they were employed. But he obtained no satisfactory explanation. Dr. Klopsch then personally appealed to Northcote to relax the hard work and penal wages. Dr. Klopsch to Northcote, 30 May 1900, enclo. Northcote to Hamilton, 31 May 1900, H.P.

³The Times of India, 23 October 1900.

⁴Curzon to Hamilton, 11 July 1900, C.P.

undertaken in Gujrat with those in other parts of the Bombay Presidency as explained by Northcote "fallacious and beside the point". The point was not, said Curzon, whether the Gujrat statistics compared favourably with those of the Deccan and Khandesh, but whether they were adequate to the situation in Gujrat itself. According to Curzon the measures adopted in Gujrat were absolutely inadequate. He alleged that the early orders and resolutions of the Bombay government with regard to relief operation in the affected areas were very "harsh and injudicious". Besides Curzon observed that Mr. Lely, the Commissioner of the Gujrat Division who had spent the whole of his thirty-one years' service in Gujrat, knew the people and their problem well and accordingly put forward certain liberal suggestions with regard to relief operations in his area which were disregarded by the Bombay Government. Curzon believed that had some suggestions of Lely been accepted and given effect to, the tragedy in Gujrat could have been checked to a great extent. He fully agreed with the observations of the Times of India and Mr. Nash with regard to the famine in Bombay.¹

It was true that the Bombay government several times rejected many liberal proposals of Lely with regard to the relief operations in his division. Early in February 1900 the Government of Bombay

¹Curzon to Hamilton, 18 July 1900, C.P.

ordered a reduction of wages in the Broach district. On 24 February Lely sent to the Bombay government an urgent appeal to modify that order. But the Bombay government, in their resolution of 3 March, declined to do so. On 5 March Lely further sent an appeal noting that the order for reduction of wages could not be carried out. Again the Bombay government in another resolution of 15 March, refused to modify that order.¹ On 9 March the Government of Bombay issued a circular imposing fines for work short of the prescribed task.² Lely again wrote to the Bombay government that if the fines for short work were introduced, the result would be fatal and he suggested that a margin should be left.³ But the Bombay government urged that the full task should be strictly enforced and that no margin should be left.⁴ Again when large relief works were found to be difficult to supervise and centres of epidemic, Lely opened some small works in the districts of Ahmedabad and Kaira. But the Bombay government objected to it.⁵ The Government of Bombay completely neglected the aboriginal tribes like the Bhils and the Kolis of the Panch

¹Curzon to Hamilton, 25 July 1900, C.P.

²Bombay P.W.D. Circular Memo. 9 March (No. 58F) 1900, Corres. No. 53, Bombay Famine Papers, Famine & Relief Operations in India during 1899-1900, Vol. I, p.166, P.P.(H.C.) 1902, Vol. 70.

³Comm. of Gujrat to Govt. of Bombay, 26 March (No. 3327) 1900, enclo., Resol. Bombay Govt. 23 April (No. 2080) 1900, Corres. No. 54, Bombay Famine Papers, *ibid.*, pp. 166-68..

⁴Resol. Bombay Govt. 23 April (No. 2080) 1900, *ibid.*

⁵Curzon to Hamilton, 25 July 1900, C.P.

Mahal district. Contrary to the recommendation of the Famine Commission of 1898 the Government of Bombay prescribed for them a wage far below the minimum, based on the ground that as they were accustomed to collecting jungle fruits and mohua flowers and eating animal flesh, the wages on relief works would simply supplement their normal requirements. Besides, they were paid in cash instead of grain and it was very difficult for them to procure food grains from the distant market. They suffered terribly and the mortality among them was high. In May 1900 a full scale of wages as prescribed by the Code was introduced for them and small works like the clearance of jungle, tanks etc. were opened, when it was too late to arrest the progressive rate of mortality among them.¹

It seems to be certain that the negative approach by the Bombay government to Lely's liberal proposal was the product of the Bombay government's reaction to the Government of India's early instruction for stringent relief measures. The Government of Bombay protested against the circular of the Government of India but the latter did not pay any attention to it and, therefore, the relief operation in Bombay had to be restricted. At the early stage of the famine the Government of Bombay appealed to the supreme government to lend the services of some civil and

¹A note by J. Monteath, Secretary to the Govt. of Bombay, n.d., enclo. Northcote to Hamilton, 27 July 1900, H.P.

military personnel for famine duty. This appeal was refused by the latter.¹ Northcote complained to Hamilton, "... all I wish is, not to complain but in justice to my colleagues, to say that a stitch in time would have saved nine in our judgement only that we could not get the needles and threads when we wanted them."² The Bombay government constantly opposed Lely's suggestions, obviously because the latter, as they thought, was personally well connected with Curzon and when asked by the Government of India why Lely's proposals were rejected, the Government of Bombay explained that those liberal measures were contrary to the circular of the Government of India.³ There were ample proofs of the hostile feeling existed between Curzon and the Bombay officials especially Northcote, the Governor and his two veteran councillors, Monteath and Nugent. Curzon had opposed the appointment of Northcote as Governor of Bombay.⁴ Curzon considered Northcote, Monteath and Nugent antagonistic to the Government of India and unfit for their posts.⁵ Northcote, Monteath and Nugent

¹Northcote to Hamilton, 19 July 1900, H.P.

²Northcote to Hamilton, 19 July 1900, H.P.

³Govt. of Bombay to Govt. of India, 15 June (Rev. & Agri. No.2554) 1900, Corres. No. 56, Bombay Famine Papers, loc.cit., pp. 169-71.

⁴Telegr. (Pvt.), Curzon to Hamilton, 14 October 1899, C.P.

⁵Curzon to Hamilton, 2 August 1900, C.P.

earned the displeasure of Curzon as they did not desire Curzon's tour in Gujrat during the famine. Curzon particularly was displeased with Northcote as he did not pay any visit to the affected areas of Gujrat.¹ On the other hand, Northcote thought that Curzon did not like the statutory powers of the presidency governments to correspond directly with the home government and that he desired its abolition.²

In this controversy between the Government of India and the Bombay Government Hamilton tried to be impartial. He had the privilege of getting information from the two sides. Hamilton did not attach much importance to the difference of opinion between the Government of Bombay and the Commissioner of the Gujrat Division. He only lodged a general complaint against the Bombay government that from the very beginning they devoted more attention to the avoidance of wholesale demoralisation than to the performances of the obligation of keeping the people alive.³ To Northcote Hamilton said that Curzon did not write to him officially to restrict the powers of the Governors of the Presidencies of Bombay

¹ Ibid.

² Northcote to Hamilton, 7 September 1900, H.P.

³ Hamilton to Curzon, 13 August 1900, H.P.

and Madras to correspond directly with the Secretary of State.¹ As regards Lely's connection with Curzon Hamilton admitted that Curzon supported Lely². On the whole Hamilton tried to convince Northcote that Curzon had no desire to interfere with the Bombay government, but his attitude towards the Government of Bombay in connection with the famine was the product of a peculiar trait of his character which Hamilton fondly called "Curzonese".³ Hamilton wrote to Northcote: "I am personally very fond of Curzon. But I quite admit that there is something in his manner which at times is irritating. But I am quite sure that this something is not the result of any deliberate intention to annoy or to irritate or to tyrannise, but is the ingrained inherent manner of the man himself...."⁴ In the strained relations between Curzon and the Bombay officials Hamilton could not remain neutral. He made an attempt to appease both sides. But his support of Curzon made him indifferent to the stringency of the relief policy of the Government of India which was virtually the immediate cause of this conflict. Hamilton did not mention anything about it to Curzon as he earlier approved that policy.

¹Hamilton to Northcote, 27 September 1900, H.P.

²Ibid.

³Hamilton to Northcote, 22 August 1900, H.P.

⁴Hamilton to Northcote, 4 October 1900, H.P.

At the close of the famine an official commission was set up to enquire into the effects of the relief operations in the British districts, and the causes of the mortality, and to recommend some measures to prevent the recurrence of famine in future.¹ It was proposed at first by the Government of India that the proceedings of the Commission should be made semi-confidential and that only the reports should be published.² Hamilton objected to this on the ground that such practice would be subjected to public criticism.³ Hamilton and Curzon were agreed to set up a separate commission to enquire into the condition of the irrigational works related to the protection and prevention of famine.⁴ The commission was composed of four members, including Sir A.P. MacDonnell as its Chairman. With regard to the nomination of an Indian member, Hamilton differed with Curzon who wanted to nominate Ananda Charulu, a member of the Viceroy's Legislative Council.⁵ Hamilton opposed his nomination because of Charulu's association with ^{the} Indian National Congress.⁶ Ultimately

¹G.G. in C. to S. of S., 25 October (Rev. & Agri. No. 59) 1900, Paper Relating to Famine Commission of 1901, Corres. No. 1, P.P.(H.C.) 1902, Vol. 70, pp. 137-9.

²Telegr. (Pvt.), Curzon to Hamilton, 23 October 1900, C.P.

³Telegr. (Pvt.), Hamilton to Curzon, 26 October 1900, C.P.

⁴Ibid.; see also Telegr. (Pvt.), Curzon to Hamilton, 3 November 1900, C.P.

⁵Telegr. (Pvt.), Curzon to Hamilton, 23 November 1900, C.P.

⁶Telegr. (Pvt.), Hamilton to Curzon, 23 November 1900, C.P.

Mr. K.C. Mukherjee was appointed.¹ The Commission started its work in December 1900 and submitted its report on May 8, 1901.

The Commission recommended that the admission to the relief work should be more stringent.² It was observed by the Commission that the scale of wages recommended by the Famine Commission of 1898 was excessive. The Commission of 1901 accepted the classification of workers prescribed by the Commission of 1898 but recommended a reduced scale of wages.

¹Mr. Mukherjee was the Chief Member of the Council of Jaypur State. He died later on and was succeeded by Mr. Shyam Sundar Lal, Diwan of Kishengarh. The other two members of the Commission were Messrs. F. A. Nicholson, Member of the Board of Revenue, Madras and J.A. Boudhilon, Ch. Secy. to the Govt. of Bengal.

²R.F.C., 1901, para 44, P.P. (H.C.) 1902, Vol. 70.

Table V

Scale of wages recommended by the F.C. 1901¹

Class of Worker	Daily Wages in Chattāk	
	MALE	FEMALE
Special Class	ONE PICE MORE THAN CLASS I	
I Digger	18 Chh.	14 Chh.
II Carrier	14 "	13 "
III Working children under 14 above 10	10 "	10 "
IV Adult dependent and rest day	12 "	10 "
V Non-working children		
a) over 7 under 10	6 "	6 "
b) under 7 not in arms	4 "	4 "
c) children in arms	ONE PICE EXTRA TO MOTHER OR 3 Chh.	

The Commission maintained that the minimum wage had led to the wastage of money and demoralisation of the worker and recommended that it should be replaced by a system of pure payment by results supplemented by relief to dependents. The Commission was of the opinion that this system of payment by result would be successful provided the following conditions were observed: (a) that relief operations

¹Ibid., para 120.

should be started in time; (b) that weakly persons should be separated for whom a reduced fixed wage should be provided; (c) that a fixed wage should be given on the rest days and days when it was impossible to work.¹ It was also recommended that for the distribution of gratuitous relief a cash dole should be preferred to cooked food or grain dole.² For the Commission observed that the officers on relief operations experienced difficulties in managing state kitchens and procuring food grain for the famine stricken people. In several cases it was found that the private grain dealers who were authorised by the government to supply food grains among the famine stricken people left the famine camps for fear of epidemics.³

The Famine Commission of 1901 was very critical of the Bombay famine administration and observed that relief operations there had suffered a serious setback due to hesitation and misunderstanding of the officials.⁴ Unusual delay in extending the relief operations and in the opening of poorhouses was considered by the Commission to be the chief cause of the heavy mortality in the Bombay Presidency.⁵

¹Ibid., paras 76-80.

²Ibid., paras 137-142.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., para 32.

⁵Ibid., paras 47-49.

In Gujrat the Commission found that the provision of the famine code had not been implemented for many months and agreed with the Deputy Sanitary Commissioner of the Gujrat Division in attributing to this cause the heavy mortality.¹ The Commission was of the opinion that the wages in Gujrat were not excessive and that a higher rate of wage was needed there.² The Commission of 1901 found that the death rate in Gujrat was the highest ever recorded.

Table VI

Death rate per mille in the Gujrat Division
in 1900 in comparison with the Decennial average³

Districts	Decennial average	Death in 1900
Ahmedabad	35.69	173.30
Broach	39.56	161.96
Kaira	34.21	148.40
Panch Mahal	22.68	281.02
Surat	32.50	79.42

¹Ibid., para 135.

²Ibid., para 101.

³Ibid., para 191.

In view of the mismanagement of the famine administration in Bombay the Commission of 1901 observed that the position of the Chief Secretary, Mr. Monteath, who was regarded as Famine Secretary, was not well-defined. Had he been appointed a Famine Commissioner the misunderstanding and the failure of action would have been avoided. For, the position of a Famine Commissioner, who is a high executive officer empowered to exercise ad hoc the powers of the local government is quite different from that of a Secretary which is not an executive post. That is why the Commission of 1901 recommended that in every province administered by a Governor in Council a Famine Commissioner should be appointed in time of famine.¹

As regards mortality in the affected areas of the British territories the Commission of 1901 estimated that there was an excess of $1\frac{1}{4}$ million deaths over the normal figure in 1900.² Regarding the official declaration that the death rate in the British districts was increased by the immigrants from the adjoining native states, the Commission of 1901 was of the opinion that of 1,250,000, 250,000 might be from the immigrants though the Commission was not fully certain about it.³ It was also admitted by the Commission

¹Ibid., para 35.

²Ibid., para 203.

³Digby estimated that the total mortality in this famine was 3.25m. See the same author, Prosperous British India, p.130.

that during the famine year 1900 the immigration from the native states was not excessive.¹ The members of the Commission reserved their opinion as to the details of the relief operations in the native states as it was outside the scope of the enquiry; but they generally maintained that the Durbars of the native states in many cases were efficient in relief operations and adopted humane policies.²

The Commission also recommended the establishment of agricultural banks³ for supplying cheap credit to the rayats and the extension of protective irrigation works.⁴

The Commission's recommendations regarding (a) reduction of wage scale, (b) enforcement of stringent regulation on the admission of relief work centres and (c) preference of cash dole to food grain or cooked meals were highly objectionable. It has been explained above that the reduction of wages and stringent restriction on the entry of the relief works had caused tremendous hardship to the people and consequently heavy mortality. Besides, the results of the introduction of cash dole instead of grain dole or cooked meals to the recipients of gratuitous relief who were either very

¹Ibid., para 169.

²Ibid., para 164; see also The Times of India, 23 October 1900.

³Ibid., paras 288-309.

⁴Ibid., para 351.

sick or infirm and unable to work, would be dangerous. If it were very difficult for the government officers in charge of the relief operations to procure food grain, it would be far more difficult for the sick and infirm to do so. The Commission rightly observed the mismanagement of the famine administration in the Bombay Presidency and held Bombay Government responsible for heavy mortality there. From this point of view the Commission was impartial. But the Commission seems to have failed to be impartial in its observation on the relief policy of the Government of India which was denounced by the whole country. As the Commission was appointed by the supreme government it seems obvious that such a body could not help supporting the relief policy of that government.

The Government of India accepted the recommendations of the Famine Commission of 1901 and decided to incorporate them into the provincial famine code.¹ Hamilton approved the decision of the Government of India but could not agree with the Commission's recommendation on the reduction of wages. Now he observed that the Commission took seriously the heavy expenditure on famine and in order to restrict expenditure in future famine reduced the scale of wages. Hamilton believed that the expenditure on famine in

¹Proc. Govt. of India, 26 August (Rev. & Agri. Famine No. 12-43-30) 1901, Corres. No. 4, Papers Relating to Report of the Famine Commission 1901, P.P. (H.C.) 1902, Vol. 70, pp. 143-51.

1899-1900 was not excessive in proportion to the intensity of the famine.¹

The famine of 1899-1900 once again proved that there was a wide gap between the theory and the practice of the Famine Code. The task was gigantic no doubt but the measures undertaken were untimely and absolutely inadequate although the administrative machinery to tackle it had long been prepared. Curzon's famine policy was directed at economizing the expenditure on relief and deficient in humanitarian consideration. In many cases code instructions were neglected. The late declaration of famine, enforcement of strict regulation on relief operation at a time when there was a great need for liberality, his authoritarian indifference to the views of the Bombay government and the rejection of some recommendations of the Famine Commission of 1898 were the worst features that turned Curzon's relief policy into a failure. Curzon sincerely tried for an Imperial grant but he submitted to the pressure from the home government.

Hamilton's attitude towards this famine was most illiberal. The responsibility for the country lay on him and he had the powers and position equal to it. But he did not try to exert his power in the British Cabinet. Indian Famine was not referred to the Cabinet meetings.²

¹S. of S. to G.G. in C., 1 November (Rev. No. 163) 1901, Corres. No.5, ibid., pp. 152-4.

²See P.R.O. Cabinet Papers: Vol. 52 (Cab.37/52) 4 January to 16 May 1900,
Vol.53 (Cab. 37/53) 21 May to 13 December 1900.

What could he do sitting far away from the scene? He could provide the Viceroy with adequate finance in the form of private charity or an Imperial grant, taking all to be an evil necessity only to save the people. But Hamilton showed scant regard for the weight of his responsibility and the reality of the famine situation. Hamilton deliberately tried to check the flow of private charity in England, opposed the demand for a financial assistance from the Imperial Treasury and supported Curzon's stringent relief policy. In 1896-97 Hamilton persuaded Elgin to accept a famine grant from the Imperial government only because the latter was willing to give that in return for Indian revenue's contribution towards war in the North Western Frontier of India. However, in the famine of 1899-1900, Hamilton prevented Curzon from seeking a grant from the Imperial Exchequer only because he would be unable to press upon the Treasury which was hard pressed due to war. In this respect Hamilton had no definite stand of his own except that of his rigid allegiance to the policy of the Imperial Cabinet.

Chapter IIITHE FAMINE TAX ANDTHE FAMINE RELIEF AND INSURANCE FUND

The imposition of the Famine Tax in India in 1878 and the creation of the Famine Relief and Insurance Fund out of the proceeds of this tax are vital aspects of the famine policy of the Government of India. Whilst the Famine Code included the prescriptions for administrative preparation to deal with a famine situation, the Famine Relief and Insurance Fund represented the permanent financial provision to supplement the expenditure on famine relief in years of famine and, in the non-famine years, to construct such irrigation works and railways as constituted protective measures against future famines. Though much research has been done on the famine policy of British India no sufficient light has yet been thrown on the Famine Relief and Insurance Fund.¹ Here an attempt is made to discuss the nature and extent of the Famine

¹ A.F.Loveday, The History and Economics of Indian Famines, p.133; B.H.Bhatia, Famines in India, and B.Chandra, The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India, 1880-1905, p.516 did not deal with this topic beyond mentioning the name of the Fund. C.N.Vakil, Financial Development in Modern India 1860-1924, Bombay 1924, pp. 252-264 and H.S.Srivastava, The History of Indian Famines, 1858-1918, pp. 237, 369-76 made an inadequate and general discussion on this subject without revealing the underlying motive behind the imposition of the tax, the creation of the Fund and the extent of the misappropriation of the Fund.

Tax and the objectives and application of the Famine Relief and Insurance Fund.

The history of the Fund is closely associated with Hamilton's official career in the India Office. He was the official proposer of the tax and the creation of the Fund in the House of Commons when he was the Under Secretary of State for India. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century the objectives and the application of the Fund had been a bone of contention between the Indians and their allies and the government. After the famine of 1899-1900 the moral responsibility to re-organize the Fund in order to create a real fund for the prevention of famine fell on Hamilton and Curzon.

The Government of India spent an enormous amount of money on the famines of 1860-61, 1865-66, 1873-74 and 1876-77. In all these famines the government was ill-prepared to meet the heavy expenditure on relief. This had resulted in two things: first, hasty financial arrangements for expenditure on relief disturbed the regular programme of the budget; secondly, except in the Bengal famine of 1873-74, the relief measures were very inadequate and the government could not, in the least, fulfil its legitimate duty of relieving the distress of the people. Since the incidence of famine was found to be periodic, it became an urgent necessity to make a permanent financial provision not only to provide sufficient measure to save the lives of the people from the immediate danger but also to undertake preventive measures against future famines.

The idea of the creation of a Famine Insurance Fund first occurred to Lord Northbrook.¹ He advocated the creation of such a fund for the aforesaid purposes. The famine of 1876-7 caused the loss of over six million lives and the total expenditure incurred in that famine was £10m. This great shock prompted Lytton to implement the scheme of Northbrook.² Since the fund should be created by imposing special taxes on the people, the problem arose as to what type of tax should be imposed. There were three alternatives before the Government of India. First, to revive the income tax;³ secondly, to reimpose the licence tax,⁴ and thirdly, to equalise the salt tax, then levied at various rates, throughout the country.

The revival of the income tax was quite justifiable on the ground that the high salaried officials, both in Government and non-Government organisations, and the professional classes were enjoying the benefits of government without paying any contribution

¹ Cited in speech of Strachey at the L.C.I., 27 December 1877.

² Lytton to Salisbury, 28 October 1876, L.P.; see also Lytton to Temple, 28 October 1876, ibid.

³ The income tax was first imposed in 1860 and affected the rich, high salaried officials and professional men and was very unpopular. It was abolished in 1865, reimposed in 1869 but was again abolished in 1873 because of its unpopularity. For details see P.N. Banerjea, A History of Indian Taxation (London 1930), Chs. II and III.

⁴ The licence tax was levied in 1867 on small traders earning an annual income down to Rs. 100 but was repealed in 1868 due to public protest against it (ibid.); see also V.K.R.V. Rao, Taxation of Income in India (Calcutta 1931), Ch. I.

to the state. On the other hand, the extension of the licence tax and the increase of salt tax would affect the poor. But Lytton maintained that since the poorer class of the people was the victim of the famines and since the proposed Famine Relief and Insurance Fund was intended for expenditure on famine relief and taking effective measures against the recurrence of famine, the fund should be created out of the taxes realised from that section of the people.¹ He was against the revival of the income tax on the ground that it would affect the higher income groups, both European and Indian. Lytton first proposed the imposition of a land cess all over the country as a famine tax.²

Lytton's proposal was discussed in the India Office. The Council of India agreed with the proposed creation of a Famine Insurance Fund but opposed the imposition of a land cess. Salisbury himself was against the imposition of land cess on the ground, first, that it would be an act of interference in the land revenue settlement made by the department concerned and, secondly that it would be unjustly burdensome to the poor people. He agreed with Lytton in not favouring the revival of the income tax.³ Lytton then dropped

¹Lytton to Mallet, 12 December 1877, L.P.

²Lytton to Salisbury, 1 November 1877, L.P.

³Salisbury to Lytton, 29 November, 5 December and 19 December 1877, L.P.

the idea of imposing a land cess; but he assured Salisbury that he would consult with Strachey, the finance member, and devise a new tax different from the income tax and land cess.¹ The India Council then approved the proposal of creating the Fund.

The fresh taxation devised by Strachey and Lytton was none other than the old licence tax. In the financial estimate of 1877-8 Strachey declared that, as famine was not an exceptional calamity, provision must be made for prevention and relief out of ordinary revenue and not by borrowing. That, he explained, was why the government resorted to imposing the licence tax and to increasing the salt tax. On the basis of the total expenditure on all past famines Strachey calculated that the average annual amount to be provided for the proposed fund would be not less than Rs. 1¹/₂ crores (£1¹/₂m.). Apart from this there must be a margin for contingencies which was estimated at Rs. ¹/₂ crore (£500,000). Therefore, the total amount required was Rs. 2 crores (£2m.). The amount of Rs. 1¹/₂ crores for the proposed fund was to be collected through the licence tax in Bengal, Bombay, Madras, Punjab and the North Western Provinces, and through salt duties in Bombay and Madras. The licence tax was to be imposed on the annual income of any person dealing in any trade at the rate of 2 per cent per annum.² The maximum sum of the licence

¹Lytton to Salisbury, 28 December 1877, L.P.

²Proc. L.C.I., 27 December 1877. According to the existing rate of exchange £1 = Rs.10. Rs. 100,000 = Rs. 1 lakh, Rs. 10 lakh = Rs. 1 m., Rs. 10m. = Rs. 1 crore.

tax in Bengal was at first proposed as Rs. 200 and later it was raised to Rs. 500; the minimum of taxable income was fixed at Rs. 100 per annum.¹

The licence tax was imposed in the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras by acts of the respective governments with little variation. In the Bombay Presidency the taxable minimum was Rs. 100. The licensees were divided into fifteen classes. The maximum payable by a licensee was Rs. 200 and the minimum Rs. 2.² In Madras the tax was levied on all incomes above Rs. 200 per annum, the agricultural and professional incomes being exempt. The licensees were divided into twelve classes according to their income. The maximum sum payable by a licensee was Rs. 800 and the minimum Rs. 4.³ The licence tax was levied in the Punjab, North Western Provinces and Oudh by an Act of the Governor General in Council.⁴ In the Central Provinces, Assam and Burma the licence tax was not imposed. In the Central Provinces the old Pindhari tax was allowed to be continued as the equivalent of the licence tax. The minimum income for this tax was Rs. 150 per annum.⁵ The

¹Act I of 1878, The Bengal Licence Act, 1878.

²Act III of 1878, The Bombay Licence Act, 1878.

³Act III of 1878, The Madras Licence Act, 1878.

⁴Act II of 1878, The Northern India Licence Act, 1878.

⁵P.N. Banerjea, op.cit., p.68.

enhancement of salt duties in Bombay and Madras also formed a part of the famine tax and an act was passed to that effect.¹

The Famine Fund was to be a central fund but all these taxes would be imposed and collected provincially and distributed by the supreme government to the provinces affected by the famine. As to the objectives of the fund Strachey declared that the amount Rs. 1¹/₂ crores (£1¹/₂m.) would be applied to famine relief in the year of famine, and in non-famine years, partly to aiding the prosecution of protective railways and irrigation for the prevention of famine and partly to the reduction of debt., i.e. the part of the amount would be absorbed in the budget in order to help reduce the debt of the government. This was regarded as a famine reserve in view of the fact that in the year of famine the same amount of money used by the government to reduce the debt should be credited to the famine fund. Strachey further declared that the government would devote the money solely to the above purposes and apply no part of it to any other objects.² Similar pledges had already been taken by Lytton.³

¹Govt. of India Act XVIII of 1877, The Salt Tax Act, 1877.

²Proc. L.C.I., 27 December 1877, op.cit.

³Lytton to Mallet, 12 December 1877, Lytton to Queen, 21 March 1878, L.P.

The new taxation is contrary to normal canons of taxation. It was in violation of the principle of equity and social justice and, therefore, was very unpopular. People were at a loss to understand why the petty traders earning Rs. 8.8as per month were liable to be taxed whereas the doctor, lawyer, high salaried officials were exempted from paying any tax. The Indian newspapers protested against these taxes.¹ The Native Opinion observed that money for the famine fund should be provided by economizing on civil and military expenditure of the government and not by taxing the poor.² The Grambarta Prakashika supported the impost of this tax for the creation of the famine fund on condition that (a) the people must be furnished with current accounts of the fund; (b) the fund should be kept separate from the budget, and (c) this tax must not be a permanent burden on the people.³ In the viceroy's Legislative Council

¹ Sahachar (Calcutta), 24 December 1877 and 7 January 1878; Bharat Mihir, 3 and 31 January 1878; Amrita Bazar Patika, 3 and 10 January 1878; Dacca Prakash (Dacca), 6 January 1878; Hindu Hitaishini, 12 January 1878; Bharat Sanskarak, 14 January 1878 and Murshidabad Patrika, 1 February 1878, B.N.N.R., 1877 and 1878; see also Indu Prakash (Bombay), 31 December 1877 and 14 January 1878; Duyan Prakash (Poona), 31 December 1877 and 21 January 1878; Gujrat Mitra (Surat), 6 January 1878 and Rost Gaftar (Bombay), 27 January 1878, Bom.N.N.R., 1877 and 1878; see also The Madras Mail, 2 January 1878.

² The Native Opinion (Bombay), 30 December 1877, Bom.N.N.R., 1878.

³ The Grambarta Prakashika (Bengal), 9 February 1878, B.N.N.R., 1878.

Maharaja Jatindra Mohan Thakur moved an amendment to the effect that the imposition of this tax should be limited to a period of two or three years in the hope that greater economy in military expenditure would render the continuance of the tax unnecessary. The motion was defeated.¹

On 16 January 1878 Strachey further pledged:

"I feel confident that I shall be able to satisfy the Council and the public that the resolution which the government has proclaimed will be faithfully carried out, and the proceeds of these new taxes will be expended for the purpose of providing what I have called an insurance against famine and for no other purposes whatever."²

The constant public protest led to the repetition of the official pledge. On 9 February 1878 Strachey repeated his earlier promise.³ Lytton, too, recorded another pledge on 12 March:

"We have explained to the people of this country that additional revenue by the new taxes is required not for the luxuries, but the necessities of the State: not for the general purpose, but for the construction of a particular class of public works; and we have pledged ourselves not to spend one rupee of the special resources thus created upon works of a different character..."⁴

¹Cited in Banerjea, op.cit., p.62.

²Quoted in Memo., B.C.I.N.C. to H.C., 1 June 1894, op.cit.

³Cited in ibid.

⁴Quoted, ibid.

These pledges of the Government of India could not soothe the discontented public who then tried to attract the attention of the radical members of the House of Commons so that they could launch a movement inside parliament to abolish those taxes. At a meeting on 19 February 1878 the people of Bombay adopted resolutions protesting against the imposition of those taxes and demanding their abolition. They sent a memorial to the members of the House of Commons.¹ Similar meetings were also held in Calcutta² and Madras,³ following which public memorials were sent to the House of Commons. Later on the Bengal Chambers of Commerce sent a petition to the Secretary of State for India requesting the abolition of the new taxes.⁴ The memorials to the members of the House of Commons received an immediate response from the radical members of whom Professor Fawcett was the leading figure. He assured the memorialists that he would move an amendment motion in the House of Commons demanding the abolition of the taxes under question.⁵ Hamilton, then Under Secretary of State for India,

¹The Times of India, 20 February 1878.

²The Indian Mirror (Calcutta), 3 March 1878; see also The Hindu Patriot (Calcutta), 4 March 1878.

³The Madras Mail, 14 March 1878.

⁴The Hindu Patriot, 15 April 1878.

⁵Fawcett to the Citizens of Bombay, 22 March 1878, cited in The Madras Mail, 13 April 1878.

was the Commons spokesman of the India Office and had to defend the new fiscal measures of the Government of India in the House of Commons.

In April 1878 Fawcett moved a motion in the House of Commons to the effect that the new tax should be abolished as it would unjustly affect the poorer section of the people. He observed that the licence tax was oppressively unjust since it was imposed on the people earning £10 per annum while the wealthy professionals and officials were completely exempted from any tax. Fawcett strongly attacked the Government of India for deciding the increase of salt duty. The cost of salt in Bombay in 1878 was 2 annas per maund without duty whereas by the Act of 1878 one maund of salt cost 40 annas with duty. He considered this new impost burdensome to the poor. Fawcett supported the creation of the Famine Insurance Fund but he strongly believed that the £2m. required for this purpose could be raised by reviving the income tax on the richer class of people and economizing on the civil and military expenditure. With regard to the application of the Famine Fund Fawcett suggested that it should be expended on famine relief only and that in the non-famine years the fund should be kept in a separate account duly invested. He was not in favour of spending any amount out of the fund on the public works, the return on which he believed to be

uncertain.¹ Sir George Campbell spoke for the motion, fully supporting Fawcett's views.²

In the debate Hamilton had a very small role to play. He opposed the motion, giving the same reason for taxing the poor for the creation of the Famine Fund as that put forward by Lytton. In theory, of course, Hamilton believed that the income tax should be revived; but he mentioned that its unpopularity among the official class was the main objection to it. With regard to salt tax Hamilton observed that the Government of India had taken the right course of action by fixing a uniform rate of 40 annas or Rs. 2.8as. a maund throughout the country. This uniform rate involved an increase of 11 annas per maund in Madras and Bombay, but resulted in a reduction of 12 annas in Bengal and 8 annas in the Punjab and the North Western Provinces.³

Fawcett had rightly objected to the imperial system of taxing the poor and exempting the rich. His suggestions to spend the famine fund only on famine relief and to keep it in a separate account to invest it in the non-famine years were socially justified, technically prudent and financially constructive. He might have

¹Hansard, 239, 2 April 1878, cols. 418-25; see also H. Fawcett, "The New Departure in Indian Finance", Nineteenth Century, October 1879, republished in ^{the} same author, Indian Finance, London 1880.

²Ibid., cols. 431-6.

³Ibid., cols. 459-69.

foreseen that as there was no statutory regulation as to the application of the fund, whatever its nomenclature might be, the fund would not be used in accordance with the declared objective. Hamilton's explanation in opposing the motion was deficient. He put too much emphasis on the salt tax, trying to show that, on the whole, the present act had reduced the duties. But it must be remembered that the **Salt Tax Act** of 1878 was but one of the package fiscal measures of the Government of India. The reduction in salt duties in Bengal, North Western Provinces and the Punjab was far outweighed by the imposition of the licence tax in the above-mentioned provinces and the Road and Public Works cess on land in Bengal in 1877. The worst feature of this fiscal measure was that the people of Bombay and Madras, who had suffered terribly in the famine of 1876-7, were burdened with the licence tax as well as the increased salt duties. Hamilton did not answer the point raised by Fawcett and Campbell in connection with the separateness of the fund from the budget. This is a substantial point in view of the fact that, if in the non-famine years part of the fund was not specifically shown as famine surplus, then it might be used according to the discretion of the government for purposes other than famine. Hamilton failed to refute the arguments of Fawcett and Campbell, but he carried a majority of the

House with him.¹

The collection of these new taxes started in the financial year 1877-'8. But people were doubtful as to the application of the Famine Fund. In March 1879 the leading people of Calcutta sent a deputation to the Viceroy expressing fear lest the proceeds of these taxes should not be properly utilized.² Lytton, giving a further definite pledge, rebuked the deputation:

"As the representative of the sovereign of India I regret that such language should have been held to me by you. The sole purpose of the additional taxation you complain of was the preservation of the lives of the people of India from the effect of the famine. Whatever may be the fault and shortcomings of the government, its action in the matter to which your address makes reference was dictated by the sincerest and most anxious desire to give to the people of India the greatest protection which could practically be provided for them against the calamities of future famine. To insinuate the contrary is to insinuate a calumny."³

A sad contrast to the repeated pledges of both Lytton and Strachey was found when the real motive behind the creation of the Famine Insurance Fund was revealed. Actually a major objective of the new taxation was to create a general fund for the redemption of the cotton duties, as well as to meet the famine expenditure.⁴

¹Voices: 159
Ayes: 96, ibid.

²Cited in Memo., B.C.I.N.C. to H.C., 1 June 1894, op.cit.

³Quoted in ibid.

⁴Lytton to Mallet, 12 December 1877, L.P.

But due to the famine condition in Bombay and Madras and due to the already imposed Road Public Works Cess on the land revenue in Bengal, there was no other alternative but for the Government of India to fall back upon a fresh tax in the name of a Famine Relief and Insurance Fund. Since the year 1876-7 was a famine year for Bombay and Madras, Lytton thought it an opportune moment to impose a fresh tax in that name. Before Strachey's financial statement in the Legislative Council he wrote to Mallet :

"Lord Salisbury thinks that we are trying, by our present measure to get more revenue than we absolutely need. And writing to you confidentially, I cannot deny that, in a certain sense and to a certain extent, this is quite true. But if we do not take advantage of the present situation (when the whole Indian public expects and has made up its mind to endure much heavier taxation than we propose to inflict on it) for screwing up the revenue, we shall never be able to reform our tariff which grievously needs reforms."¹

Similarly, Strachey, contrary to his public announcements as to objectives of the Fund, not only recorded that the new taxation was mainly intended to increase the general revenue of the Government of India in order to prepare for any emergent situation but he completely denied the existence of such fund. He observed:

"This policy of insurance against famine was simple in its nature, but it has been constantly misunderstood and persistently misrepresented. It has often been supposed that a separate fund was constituted into which certain revenues were to be paid, and which could

¹Ibid.

only be drawn upon for a specified purpose. No such unreasonable and impractical notion was ever entertained, and every idea of the kind was from the first repudiated by the Government and by myself, the author of the original scheme. The 'famine insurance fund', of which people have often talked, never existed."¹

Such being the underlying motive behind the creation of the Fund, one could guess how strictly the pledges of Lytton and Strachey would be honoured.

Immediately after the creation of the Fund Lytton's Government requested the sanction of the India Office to meet certain charges on some productive railways, i.e., railways not intended for protection against famine, out of the Fund. Lord Cranbrook, the then Secretary of State for India, refused to allow this on the ground that such a step would be contrary to the objective with which the Fund was constituted. The decision was supported by two successive parliamentary committees of 1879 and 1884.² In the financial year of 1879-80 the taxes were realised but the proceeds of Rs.1¹/₂ crores were not credited to the Fund. It was shown in the budget of the Government of India that the Fund in that year was suspended. This gave rise to the popular charge that the fund had been diverted to strategic and military uses especially in the Afghan war.³ In

¹J. Strachey, India its Administration and Progress, London 1911, p.257.

²Hansard, XLIX, 20 May 1897, col. 925.

³Memo., B.C.I.N.C. to H.C., 1 June 1894, op.cit.

1885 Mr. E.N.Baker, Financial Secretary to the Government of Bengal, observed: "The operation of the famine insurance surplus had not in reality been suspended at all. It had doubtless been obscured by the introduction of a deficit in the budget for the year..."¹ The Government of India replied to these popular charges in a circular letter of 16 January 1879; but Baker remarked that the circular had "entirely failed of effect in removing... the prevailing misconception"² regarding the application of the famine fund. The Bengalee alleged that the famine fund was spent in the Afghan War.³

In his Midlothian campaign in 1880 Gladstone attacking the Tory policy in India alleged that money earmarked for the Famine Insurance Fund was spent in ^{the} Afghan war. Referring to the pledge given by Lytton and Strachey with regard to the application of the Fund he told his audience: "Has that pledge been kept? The taxation was levied. The pledge was given. The pledge has utterly been broken. The money has been used. It is gone. It has been spent upon the ruinous, unjust, destructive war in Afghanistan."⁴

¹ E.N.Baker, History of the Famine Relief and Insurance Grant, Calcutta 1885, quoted in Minute of Curzon, 29 January 1901, enclo. G.G. in C. to S. of S., 11 July (Fin. & Acc. No. 232) 1901, Fin. Papers from India, Vol. 1248, 1901.

² Ibid.

³ The Bengalee (O.E.), 12 June 1880.

⁴ Quoted in The Madras Mail Weekly, 16 April 1890.

In 1881 a notable change took place with regard to the application of the Fund. It was decided that in non-famine years half of the Fund, i.e. Rs. 750,000 was to be spent on railway construction not necessarily intended for the prevention of famine. This decision was quite in violation of the objectives of the Fund which, as explained earlier, restricted expenditure on such irrigation works and railways as were considered to be measures for the protection of future famine. This question was discussed in the same year when Ripon was the viceroy. Strachey was then succeeded by Major Baring (later Lord Cromer), as Finance Minister. Baring noted with concern the improper use of the fund.¹ To avoid this Baring wanted to keep the fund separate from the budget. It was proposed by the Government of India in 1885 that the accounts of the fund should be periodically audited, but no action was taken.² In 1885 another change took place in connection with spending half of the fund in non-famine years on public works. During that year the Government of India undertook a large scheme of railway extension. Some railways originally designed as productive railways constructed by private companies were termed protective railways and the interest on them was charged against the Famine Fund. This was sanctioned by Lord Randolph

¹Quoted in ibid.

²R.F.C., 1898, para 536.

Churchill, the then Secretary of State for India, whereas a few years earlier such a process was disccountenanced by Lord Cranbrook. Churchill observed:

"Great objection has been taken both by former Secretaries of State and by the Select Committee of the House of Commons last year, to the proposal to appropriate as interest any portion of the Famine Insurance Grant, the declared object of which was to keep down debt. I recognise, however, that the circumstances of the present time are of a special character, and could not have been contemplated either by my predecessors or by the Parliamentary Committee. ... I therefore authorise you to charge against the Famine Insurance Grant the amount payable during the next five years, as interest on capital raised by companies for the purpose of constructing any of the lines which are mentioned by your government as being, in your opinion, needed for the protection of the country against famine, but which you are not at present able to construct through state agency."¹

The immediate result of the above sanction was that the interest upon the Indian Midland and Bengal-Nagpur Railways,, a productive railway formerly constructed by the private companies, began to be charged to the Famine Fund.²

In 1889 the application of the Famine Fund was vigorously debated in the House of Commons. The debate was initiated by Charles Bradlaugh and Campbell. Bradlaugh was then acting as the Parliamentary representative of the newly formed Indian Political Agency in London. According to the previous demand of Bradlaugh,

¹ Quoted in R.C. Dutt, Open Letters to Curzon on Famine and Land Assessment, in *India*, London 1900, p. 81.

² Hansard, XLIX, 20 May 1897, Col. 925; see also Hamilton to Curzon, 5 September 1900, H.P.

John Gorst, the Under Secretary of State for India, placed before the house for the first time the accounts of the Famine Fund:

Table I

Statement of accounts of the Famine Relief and Insurance Fund from 1879-80 to 1889-90.¹

Year	Famine Relief	Protective Railway Capital & Interest	Protective Irrigation	Reduction of debt	Total
	Rx	Rx	Rx	Rx	Rx
1879-80	104,059	-	-	-	104,059
1880-1	34,840	-	-	-	34,840
1881-2	34,834	682,403	135,449	715,151	1,567,886
1882-3	22,103	-133,129	263,443	1,343,555	1,459,972
1883-4	9,205	649,248	283,223	581,137	1,522,813
1884-5	7,350	946,457	253,046	341,504	1,548,357
1885-6	40,695	618,271	186,807	683,498	1,529,271
1886-7	1,041	351,812	107,979	-	460,832
1887-8	402	285,199	91,006	-	376,607
1888-9	10,200	485,500	72,700	-	568,400
1889-90	20,500	611,200	80,000	-	711,700

¹P.P.(H.C.) 1889, Vol. 58, p.600; Rx = tens of rupees.

The table shows that there is no account of the Fund for two years, 1877-8 and 1878-9. The accounts shown in 1879-80 and 1880-1 are only Rx 104,059 and Rx 34,840 respectively instead of Rx 1,500,000 each year. The full amount of Rx 1,500,000 was shown against the Fund during the five years 1881-2 to 1885-6. But during the four years from 1886-7 to 1889-90 the annual average amount shown against the Fund is less than Rx 500,000. For the thirteen years from 1877-8 to 1889-90 the total amount of the Fund should have been Rx 19,500,000, whereas the total in fact was only Rx 10,500,000. Of the Rx 10,500,000 over Rx 4,500,000 were spent as interest on protective railways during the period from 1881-2 to 1889-90, the results of which were of doubtful utility in view of the fact, as explained above, that many productive railways were termed as protective ones. Besides the accounts of the Famine Fund, the Financial Statement of the Government of India for the years 1888-9 shows that the net charges in Upper Burma both for the military expedition and the civil and military administration after the British occupation there for three years from 1886-7 to 1888-9 was £667,650.¹

In the debate on the financial estimate of the Government of India for 1889-90 in the House of Commons Charles Bradlaugh pointed out the short appropriation of the Famine Fund, and alleged

¹Hansard, 340, 27 August 1889, Cols. 610-22.

that the Fund was misappropriated for the Burma war. He recalled the solemn pledges of Lytton and Strachey and observed that except during the viceroyalty of Ripon the Famine Fund was not used to the appropriate purpose and that this misappropriation was a gross "breach of faith" on the part of the Government of India. He demanded the immediate revival of the Fund, the keeping of a separate account for it, and an enquiry into its accounts since its creation.¹ Campbell also denounced the government for using the fund for the construction of costly strategic lines.² There was no official reply to the charges brought by Bradlaugh and Campbell. Moreover Richard Temple, late Governor of Bombay, supported the diversion of the Famine Fund on the ground that there was no legal contract between the Government of India and the Indian people to the effect that the Fund should be exclusively devoted to famine purposes.³ This is absurd. There can be no question of a legal contract on such an issue between the people and the government in an autocratic state. The pledges of Lytton and Strachey had imposed moral and political

¹ Ibid., Cols. 622-38; Bradlaugh's speech was later published under the title: Indian Money Matters: The Story of the Famine Insurance Fund and what was done with it, Indian Political Agency, London 1889). Digby supplied all information about the Fund to Bradlaugh.

² Hansard, ibid., Cols. 644-51.

³ Ibid., Cols. 638-44.

obligation upon Britain. Bradlaugh and Campbell did not question the legality of the diversion of the Fund. They appealed, rightly, to justice and fairness.

In 1891 Digby also brought an allegation of the misappropriation of the Fund. He had been in Calcutta in Christmas week of 1877 and met Strachey and discussed with him the creation of the Fund. Digby was then a supporter of the special taxation for the creation of the Famine Fund. But now he calculated that out of the total amount Rs 22,500,000 raised from 1877-8 to 1891-2, only Rs 13,020,837 had been devoted to famine relief and famine preventive measures. The amount misappropriated according to the calculation of Digby, is Rs 9,479,163.¹ Digby released this statement in the Manchester Guardian in 1891 contrary to that of John T. Petrocokino, member of the London Committee of the Indian Social Matters, who wrote to the Under Secretary of State for India with regard to the "rumours" in connection with the Fund. He was informed by the India Office that the Fund was started from 1880-81 and he calculated the Fund on that basis.² But on seeing Digby's calculation of the Fund with effect from 1877-8 Petrocokino entered into correspondence with the India Office and discovered that there were many anomalies in the maintenance of the Fund. He did not find any accounts of the Fund

¹ The Manchester Guardian, 29 August 1891, reprinted in India, 23 October 1891. Rs = 10 rupees.

² J.T. Petrocokino's letter to The Manchester Guardian, 19 August 1891, reprinted in India, 23 October 1891.

for the years 1877-8 and 1878-9 in the reply from the India Office.

Petrocokino was then convinced that Digby was correct in his calculation and he wrote to the Manchester Guardian:

"I write this so that all those who have followed the little controversy last month between Mr. Digby and myself, will see that the government figures from which I quoted were not correct in that they did not account for everything. Mr. Digby was correct in his statement, and I thank him for having thus put materials into my hands which have enabled me at length to satisfy myself that the India Office has led me astray and that the responsible government of India have not dealt satisfactorily with the money which ought to have been applied to the Famine Insurance Fund."¹

In 1894 the issue of the Famine Fund was taken up by the British Committee of the Indian National Congress. In a memorandum to the House of Commons Wedderburn, on behalf of the Committee, alleged that the Fund was misappropriated and he demanded an enquiry into it. By this memorandum Wedderburn wanted to mobilize the opinion of the members of Parliament so that the issue could be raised in the debate on the financial statement of India for 1894. The accounts he enclosed with the memorandum were all furnished from the official sources which showed the same misappropriation as had Digby. Wedderburn calculated the accounts of the Fund from 1878-9 to 1894-5. During the sixteen years the total amount of the Fund should have been £24m. But according to his calculation the

¹The Manchester Guardian, 25 September 1891, reprinted in India, 23 October 1891.

government spent under the head of the Fund over £16m., the sum misappropriated being £8m. He agreed with Bradlaugh that except during Ripon's time the Fund was used for war expenses and for the payment of exchange compensation allowance to the European officials.¹ But in the debate on the financial estimate of the Government of India for 1894 Henry Fowler, the then Secretary of State for India, denied this charge. Fowler did not give any evidence to support his denial.²

During the viceroyalty of Elgin the finance of the Government of India was strained by wars on the North Western Frontier. Hence in the financial year 1895-6 James Westland, the Finance Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, reduced the contribution to the Fund from Rs. 1¹/₂ crores to Rs. 1 crore.³ Westland believed that much had been done to prevent famine and that there had been no serious famine during recent years. The most important point in Westland's speech is that he regarded the annual allocation of Rs. 1¹/₂ crores. for the Fund as "self-imposed obligation" on the part of the Government of India.⁴ Elgin maintained that the Fund was owned

¹ Memo. B.C.I.N.C. to H.C., 1 June 1894, *op.cit.* The title of the memorandum is "The Poor Man's Lamb: Famine Insurance for the Masses Versus Exchange Compensation for the Classes".

² Hansard, XXVII, 16 August 1894, Cols. 1285-8.

³ Telegr. G.G. in C. to S. of S., 18 March 1896, cited in India, April 1896.

⁴ India, May 1896.

by the people of India, but due to the exigencies of circumstances he approved Westland's scheme of reducing the contribution to the Fund.¹ Hamilton then agreed with Elgin but warned that the government should not go further in reducing the contribution to the Fund.² This reduction of the Fund intensified public protest against the government. In the Viceroy's Legislative Council Ananda Charulu objected to Westland's statement with regard to the application of the Fund and observed that the construction of the public works out of the Famine Fund was mostly dictated by strategic and commercial needs quite apart from any relation to famine.³ Much of Charulu's observation was proved correct by the famine of 1896-7, when it was revealed that little had been done during the past years for the actual prevention of famine. At the approach of this famine the Indian National Congress urged that the Famine Fund should be used for its intended purposes.⁴ In England the Socialist leader, Henry Hyndman, observed that, had the Fund been used for its specified purposes during past years, the famine of 1896-7 would not have been so acute.⁵

¹Elgin to Hamilton, 26 November 1895, E.P.

²Hamilton to Elgin, 20 December 1895, H.P.

³Cited in India, May 1896.

⁴Resol. No. XII of I.N.C. Session Calcutta, 1896, cited in India, February 1897.

⁵The Times, 18 January 1897.

After the famine of 1896-7, the Famine Commission of 1898 made a detailed review of the Fund. The Commission calculated the accounts of the Fund with effect from 1881-2. It was mentioned by the Commission that the fund was created with effect from 1877-8 but no question was raised by them as to the omission of the fund from the accounts for the years 1877-8 to 1880-1. The Famine Commission of 1898 showed the accounts of the Fund from 1881-2 to 1895-6.

Table II

Accounts of the Famine Relief and Insurance Fund
for 15 years from 1881-2 to 1895-6¹

	Rx*
Spent upon actual famine relief	320,664
Spent upon construction of protective Irrigation Works	1,813,841
Spent upon construction of Protective Railways	6,550,931
Spent in meeting interest upon the Indian Midland and Bengal Nagpur Railways	3,631,450
Charged in reduction and avoidance of debt (famine surplus)	5,327,299
Total	17,644,185

*Rx = tens of rupees

¹R.F.C., 1898, para 534.

During the 15 years the government should have spent Rs. 22¹/₂ crores but the table shows that the total amount spent is a little over Rs. 17¹/₂ crores. Moreover, out of Rs. 17¹/₂ crores over Rs. 10 crores were spent on protective railways. The Famine Commission of 1898 made no attempt to discover this short appropriation of the Fund and they attributed this short appropriation to financial exigencies.¹ The commission, therefore, recommended that every year in the budget the full amount of Rs. 1¹/₂ crores should be contributed to the Famine Fund. It was further recommended that if at any time, due to financial exigencies, the contributions to the fund were required to be reduced, the total amount of such reduction should be made good by an addition to the grant of the subsequent year; and the balance remaining after meeting the charges of the year for famine relief and protective public works should be distinctly shown in the accounts as famine surplus.² With regard to the protective public works the commission recommended that greater importance should be given to the construction of protective irrigational works and that the construction of such works should be expedited without any return being expected from them. The commission observed that the construction of most of

¹Ibid., para 535.

²Ibid., para 537. Rs. 10m. = 1 crore; Rs. 15m. = 1¹/₂ crores.

the protective railways was completed but recommended that the annual charges for interest upon the Indian Midland and Bengal-Nagpur Railways should continue to be regarded as fixed and annual charges against the Fund.¹

A comparative analysis of the comments and observations made by Campbell, Bradlaugh, Digby, Wedderburn and Charulu and the Famine Commission of 1898 on the application of the Fund shows that proof of misappropriation of the Fund, either directly or indirectly, is embodied in all. But the observations of the Famine Commission of 1898 differ from those of the others in that, first, the Famine Commission of 1898 altogether avoided mention of the accounts of the Fund from 1877-8 to 1880-1. This was apparently due to the fact that during that period the whole accumulated fund was used either to reduce cotton goods tariff or for ^{the} Afghan war, which was very difficult for an official commission to explain. The second difference was that Bradlaugh, Campbell (etc.) explained the shortfall in terms of misappropriation, while the Famine Commission did not.

R.C. Dutt was highly critical on the application of that part of the Fund in non-famine years which was earmarked for construction of protective public works as preventive measures against

¹Ibid., para 538.

future famine. He observed that the annual charges for interests upon the Indian Midland and Bengal-Nagpur Railways should not be borne by the Famine Fund. He opposed spending a farthing for railway construction out of the Fund. Dutt observed that though extensive construction of irrigational works was the only positive means to combat drought, it had been neglected in the interest of railway extension.

The total length of railways up to the end of 1898-9 was 26,059¹/₄ miles, of which 22,491 miles were open for traffic. The net loss to the Indian revenue, from these railways, after deducting all their earnings and income was Rx. 57,734,761 up to the end of 1898-9.¹ As for irrigation, such works in India were divided into three classes viz., (a) Productive, (b) Protective and (c) Minor. The productive irrigational works are those which are constructed with the hope of profit, while the protective works are undertaken not for profit but as preventive measures against drought. Storage tanks, wells and bundhs were deemed minor works. At the end of 1879-80, the capital outlay on productive irrigation works was Rx 20,298,000 and up to the end of 1896-7 it was Rx 31,252,948. But deducting from this a sum paid by the Government to the Madras Irrigation Company, the actual capital outlay during the 17 years

¹R.C.Dutt, op.cit., p.82.

had averaged only Rx 540,000 a year. The total area irrigated by the productive works at the end of 1896-7 was 9,448,692 acres with a net return of 6.35 per cent on the capital outlay. The capital outlay on protective irrigation works up to the end of 1896-7 was Rx 2,009,253 out of which Rx 1,698,424 were charged against the Famine Fund. The total area irrigated by such works in 1896-7 was 200,733 acres excluding 123,087 acres irrigated by the Swat River Canal. The cost of the construction of the protective irrigational works was met from the revenue of the Government of India and, therefore, no interest was charged against these works.¹ The minor irrigational works were of great importance. Some of these works were constructed by the Hindu and Muhammadan rulers, some by the District Boards or benevolent zamindars during the British period. The financial return on these works was very satisfactory. The British Government did not spend money on most of these works. The total expenditure incurred on these works during the seventeen years 1878-9 to 1896-7 was over Rs. 80m. and the revenue exceeded the expenditure by over Rs. 60m. In 1896-7 the minor irrigational works irrigated 7,442,990 acres.²

Dutt urged that minor irrigational works should be constructed. In the hilly regions like the Central Provinces, a canal system would

¹Ibid., pp. 82-4.

²Ibid.

not be suitable. He maintained that construction of high embankments or bundhs across the slopes of the mountains would turn large dry areas into vast lakes irrigating thousands of acres of land.¹ B.K. Bose, members of the Viceroy's Legislative Council, held the same view. He believed that drought in the Central Provinces could effectively be checked by the construction of minor irrigational works like storage tanks and lakes. He urged that instead of railways storage lakes should be constructed out of the Fund.²

Large irrigational works involved heavy expenditure; but minor works could be undertaken at a low cost. If minor works were undertaken out of the Fund as protective measures against famine then the purpose of the Famine Fund would have been fulfilled. During the period from 1877-8 to 1896-7 there is no evidence that such works were constructed out of that part of the Fund which was allocated for protective public works.

In 1899 the Government of India tried to reorganise the Famine Fund in accordance with the recommendation of the Famine Commission of 1898. The Government of India proposed that the full amount of Rs. 1¹/₂ crores or Rs. 15m. would be contributed annually to the Famine Fund and in the non-famine years the apportionment of the fund should be as under:

¹Ibid., p.86.

²Cited in ibid.

Table III

Proposed allotment of Famine Fund in non-famine years.¹

	Rx
a) Famine Relief	Nil
b) Protective Railways	Nil
c) Protective Irrigation	100,000
d) Charges on the Indian Midland & Bengal-Nagpur Railways	400,000
e) Reduction of debt (Famine Surplus)	1,000,000
<hr/>	
Total	Rx 1,500,000
<hr/>	

Hamilton agreed with the recommendation of the Famine Commission and approved the scheme of the Government with regard to the re-organisation of the Fund.² There is very little innovation in the above reorganisation of the Fund except that nothing was allotted for the so-called protective railways. But the allocation of Rx 400,000 for the loss of the Indian Midland and Bengal-Nagpur Railways is open to objection as shown above and the allotment of expenditure on protective irrigation is insignificant. The most serious point of objection is the allocation of Rs. 1/crore under the head

¹G.G. in C. to S. of S., 31 August (Finance & Accounts No. 309) 1899, enclo. S. of S. to G.G. in C., 14 December (Finance No. 242) 1899, Financial Letters to India, Vol. 790, 1899.

²S. of S. to G.G. in C., 14 December (Finance No. 242) 1899, ibid.

reduction of debt. It is the same process which had long been practised and under its name the money was used for purposes other than famine.

At the close of the famine of 1899-1900 Curzon, on his own initiative, wanted to make a vigorous move to constitute a bona fide Famine Insurance Fund.¹ Hamilton had by now become most dissatisfied with the application of the Fund during recent years. He objected to the system of making the interest payable on the Indian Midland and Bengal-Nagpur Railways a permanent charge upon the Fund and considered it a "mischievous" act of Randolph Churchill. He now realised that a good many protective works, annually constructed out of the Fund, were of doubtful utility.² Hamilton, therefore, approved Curzon's desire to reform the Fund.³

In January 1901 Curzon prepared a memorandum detailing the history of the Famine Fund since its creation. He observed that the "... Famine Grant, except in famine years, is for the most part no longer, except in name", and that "to constitute the raising of a large annual sum by taxation, which is ostensibly devoted to one

¹Curzon to Hamilton, 15 August 1900, C.P.

²Hamilton to Curzon, 5 September 1900, H.P.

³Hamilton to Curzon, 20 December 1900, H.P.

object, and is practically swallowed by another, is neither straightforward policy nor prudent finance."¹ He believed that much had been done in violation of the pledges taken by Lytton with regard to the Fund. He maintained that money allotted to the construction of protective public works out of the Fund had been spent for productive public works. He commented:

"During this period all sorts of railways were styled as protective, in order to squeeze them within the four corners of the Grant: and the anomalous and contradictory spectacle was often witnessed of a railway being both protective, for that portion of its costs which was charged to the famine Grant, and non-protective, for that portion which had to be raised by loan. In other words, the distinction between protective and non-protective public Works had become meaningless, and the famine Grant had developed into a sort of privy purse of the Public Works Department which was enabled by its means to construct railways that would otherwise have had to remain outside its programme."²

Hence Curzon was not in favour of the system of making the interest payable to the Indian Midland and the Bengal-Nagpur Railways a permanent charge upon the Famine Fund, though earlier he, in Council, had approved it. Curzon also thought that the process of showing the unexpended balance of the Fund in the non-famine years as "reduction of debt" was defective in view of the fact that it could allow that portion of the Fund to be used to reduce the debt of the government for purposes other than famine. Curzon considered

¹Minute of Curzon, 29 January 1901, op.cit.

²Ibid.

that a genuine Famine Insurance Fund should be constituted so that in the non-famine years half of the Fund might be spent on measures as real protection against famine and the remaining half be invested on business principle as Famine Insurance.¹

The substance of Curzon's minute was accepted by the Viceroy's Executive Council. A despatch was sent to the India Office proposing a bona fide Famine Relief and Insurance Fund. First, it was proposed that in the non-famine years half of the Fund, i.e. Rs 750,000, should be devoted to (a) construction of small irrigational works through local government; (b) constitution of a special famine branch in the Secretariat of the Government of India or any local government where it would be necessary and (c) measures designed to increase the food supply, to facilitate the food distribution and to improve the economic condition of the people.² Regarding the remaining half of the Fund the Government of India proposed that the amount should be shown under the head Famine Insurance instead of Reduction of Debt. It was mentioned that this process was advised by Sir James Westland in 1881 when he was the Comptroller General of India so that the unexpended balance should be used for famine purposes only. The next important proposal of the Government of India was that the amount credited to Famine

¹ Ibid.

² G.G. in C. to S. of S., 11 July (Financial & Accounts No. 232) 1901, op.cit.

Insurance should be invested in sterling securities. This investment should be discontinued when the total amount of the Fund would be £7m. to £10m.¹

This proposal of the Government of India contains two important points, one is that the Fund would be earmarked for famine only which would prevent the government from using it for purposes other than famine, and the other is the investment in sterling securities of the unexpended balance which would increase the cash balance of the Fund year by year. Hence the proposal, broadly speaking, is quite justified. But the proposal of spending half of the Fund in the non-famine years on measures like increase of food supply, to facilitate the food distribution and to improve the condition of the people, was indefinite and idealistic. It was unrealistic to undertake measures on the above aspects throughout the country with only Rs 750,000 a year. Had the whole amount been devoted to the small and minor irrigational works the result would have been very effective in preventing drought.

Hamilton promised to give his full support to this proposal in his Council. He wrote to Curzon: "I will gladly cooperate with you in trying to get the famine grant put on a sounder and more intelligible basis than it has hitherto occupied. The Fund unquestionably

¹Ibid.

has been tampered with and the Native Press, who are always complaining of misappropriation in connection with the fund, have a good deal of right on their side".¹ Curzon personally wrote to Hamilton that the reorganization of the Famine Fund on the lines proposed by the Government of India would satisfy the Indian public opinion. But he was very suspicious about the attitude of Westland, who was then a member of the Council in the India Office, towards this proposal. Hence Curzon specially wrote to Hamilton: "Please do not let Westland defeat our proposals. He was bad enough when he was out here. ... I never believed that he would be in favour of my main proposal, since his whole career here was spent in defending the existing misappropriation of the Fund."² Curzon's suspicion was justified in view of the fact that it was Westland who, during Elgin's time, had reduced the contribution to the Fund from Rs. 1¹/₂ crores to Rs. 1 crore.

Hamilton referred the proposal to his Finance Committee, where Westland strongly objected to the proposal. Westland maintained that the Fund had been designed to create a general surplus of revenue so that the Government of India could use it in the event of any emergent situation including famine. The Fund was intended to keep down borrowing. Since famine involved heavy expenditure

¹ Hamilton to Curzon, 1 August 1901, H.P.

² Curzon to Hamilton, 25 October 1901, C.P.

which could be undertaken only by borrowing, this fund was to help reduce the borrowing. He therefore did not find fault with showing the unexpended balance in the non-famine year against reduction of debt. Regarding his advice to the Government of India in 1881 in connection with the change in the system of keeping accounts of the Fund as referred to in the proposal of the Government of India, Westland observed that he had suggested that change only if a separate fund were formed. Since Westland was in favour of maintaining the status quo of the Fund, he was opposed to the proposal of investing the unexpended balance of the Fund in the non-famine years in sterling securities. He did not object to the constitution of a famine branch in the central or provincial secretariat out of the Fund.¹ He supported the view that Lytton and Strachey had thought of the creation of the Fund. His reformatory zeal in the early years of his official career, when he was under the influence of a liberal viceroy, had made him suggest the change in the accounts of the Fund, which if it had materialised would have prevented the Fund from being turned into a "government pool".² But at the end of his life, as a veteran financial expert he had changed his ideas and considered the Fund from the point of view of the imperial interests rather than those

¹Minute of Westland, 17 September 1901, enclo. S. of S. to G.G. in C., 10 January (Financial No. 4) 1902, Financial Letters to India, Vol. 793, 1902.

²The term was used by Curzon; see Curzon to Hamilton, 10 January 1901, C.P.

of the people for whom the Fund was actually created.

Holderness, another member of the Finance Committee, supported the major proposals of the Government of India except that with regard to spending money on measures to increase food supply and improve the economic condition of the people. He rightly held that these measures were too broad and outside the scope of the Famine Fund.¹ Sir Dennis Fitzpatrick observed that the existing system of keeping the unexpended balance of Rs 750,000 in the non-famine year under the head Reduction of Debt could not offer any guarantee that the sum was to be spent for the purposes for which it was intended. He supported all the proposals of the Government of India except that of investing the unexpended balance in sterling securities. Fitzpatrick did not give specific reasons for his objection to this proposal.²

Hamilton opposed Westland's interpretation of the theory behind the creation of the Fund and observed that what Strachey and Lytton had objected to was making a statutory regulation for the Fund. But the proposal of the Government of India was not directed to that end. The Government of India only wanted to show the unexpended balance of the Fund in the non-famine year as famine insurance instead of continuing to show it as expenditure on Reduction of Debt. Hamilton lent his full support to this part of

¹Minute of Holderness, 1 August 1901, encl. S. of S. to G.G. in C., 10 January (Financial No. 4) 1902, op.cit.

²Minute of Fitzpatrick n.d. encl. ibid.

the proposal. He also approved the scheme of the Government of India to spend half of the Fund in the non-famine years on protective measures against famine. However, he was not in favour of investing the unexpended balance of Rs 750,000 in sterling securities in England.¹ Its practical difficulty, as Hamilton believed, was that in order to transmit the proceeds of the Fund from India to England, the amount of cash at the disposal of the Government of India for public works would have to be reduced. This reduction of the cash balance of the government would necessitate the raising annually of larger sterling loans in England. Hamilton considered it a "bad finance" and, therefore, did not think it justified.² It has been explained earlier in this chapter that the unexpended balance of the Fund in the non-famine years was used by the government for general expenditure with the provision that the same amount of money was to be credited to the famine reserve in the year when there would be a famine. From this point of view Hamilton might have questioned whether the remittance of the unexpended balance of the Fund to England would affect the cash balance of the Government of India. But since the Government of India thought that they would be able to remit that amount to England and in order to replenish that amount they could raise loans in

¹Minute of Hamilton, 10 December 1901, enclo., ibid.

²Hamilton to Curzon, 12 December 1901, H.P.

India, Hamilton's objection is not justifiable.

After a good deal of deliberations the Council of India decided to reject the proposals of the Government of India. A despatch was sent to the Government of India containing the decision that (a) the Fund should be regarded as general surplus of the budget of the Government of India; (b) the unexpended balance of the Fund in the non-famine years should be shown as expenditure on Reduction of Debt and (c) nothing should be spent for minor irrigational works. The reason for objecting to the investment of the unexpended balance of the Fund in sterling securities as noted in the despatch was the same as put forward by Hamilton. In order to justify this decision of the India Office of not changing the existing position of the Fund Hamilton observed in the despatch: "Despite the various circumstances which have disturbed the finances, I consider that the original conception of the famine insurance surplus has been fully realised."¹ It was calculated in the despatch that the increase of revenue by the annual provision of a crore and a half rupees from 1878-9 to 1900-01 amounted to Rs. 34¹/₂ crores or according to the existing rate of exchange £23m. Of this amount there was an expenditure of £11³/₄ m. on famine relief and £9m. on the construction of protective

¹S. of S. to G.G. in C., 10 January (Financial No. 4) 1902, op.cit.

works; nearly £2¹/₂m. was applied to the construction of works which could not otherwise have been carried out without incurring a debt and £1¹/₂m. debt was discharged. It was concluded that since the Famine Fund during the period under review had reduced the debt of nearly £23m. the purpose of the Fund had been properly fulfilled.¹

The arguments contained in the despatch of the Secretary of State are unreasonable. An attempt was made to show that the Fund was merely created to reduce the general debt of the Government of India. The public debt of India involved debts due to various expenditure of the government and famine was but one expense. Now the simple question arises why the Fund was named Famine Relief and Insurance Fund. This question was deliberately avoided by most of the members of the India Council. On the other hand, the accounts of the Fund put forward in the despatch are very rough and vague. It did not enter into the details of the accounts. Moreover, since the term "protective works" is vague and anomalous as observed by Campbell, Charalu, Dutt, Curzon, and even by Hamilton himself, the amount of £9m. described as expenditure on protective works cannot be definitely said to have been actually spent on works as preventive measures against famine. Hence the

¹Ibid.

despatch of the India Office did not effectively refute arguments of the Government of India. It failed to explain Curzon's series of allegations.

Hamilton knew that the refusal of this proposal of the Government of India would shock Curzon, who was enthusiastic to reorganise the Fund. He assured Curzon that if there was any improvement in the monetary condition, then the Government of India could renew its proposal.¹ Hamilton intimated that then he might be willing to consider the proposal of the investment of the unexpended balance in sterling securities.

The Government of India was highly dissatisfied with the refusal of their proposal. Once again they put forward their proposal for reconsideration by the Secretary of State for India in Council. The Government of India objected to the basic principle of the Fund as enunciated by the Council of India. Contrary to the arguments put forward by the India Office against the scheme of the investment of the unexpended balance of the Fund in sterling securities, the Government of India pointed out first, that there would be no difficulty in raising an amount of Rs. 75 lakhs annually in the non-famine years. During the seven years from 1895-6 to 1901-2 the Government of India's rupee loan had been floated as under:

¹Hamilton to Curzon, 27 February 1902, H.P.

Table IV

Loan raised by the Government of India from
1895-6 to 1901-2.¹

	Rs.
1895-6	Nil
1896-7	400 lakhs
1897-8	300 "
1898-9	120 "
1899-1900	Nil
1900-01	300 "
1901-2	100 "

The Government of India wrote confidently: "It is our matured opinion that in such seasons the government demand does not exhaust the supply and that we could easily raise the extra 75 lakhs which would be required under our present proposal."² Secondly, the Government of India thought that it would be possible for them to remit Rs. 75 lakhs per annum in England. During the said seven years the annual average remittance to England for Home charges amounted to £16,803,900 and in addition to this the Government of India thought that it would be easy to remit Rs. 75 lakhs. It was observed that India's existing balance of trade was favourable and that the remittance of Rs. 75 lakhs would not disturb it. The

¹G.G. in C. to S. of S., 3 July (Fin. & Com. Dept. No. 185) 1902, Financial Papers, Vol. 1437, 1902.

²Ibid.

Government of India explained that in every year they would not remit the amount to England, but wait for a favourable opportunity for making remittances, holding the amount in the meantime as an addition to cash balances above what was required for ordinary purposes of the Government.¹ This time the Government of India attached no importance to the India Office's refusal of other minor proposals. They put the whole emphasis on the creation of a genuine Fund invested in sterling securities.

Hamilton could not fully agree with the arguments of the Government of India though he had sympathy with the proposal. Recalling the opinions of the past Finance Members of the Viceroy's Council Hamilton maintained that it was not possible to raise annually the loan of Rs. 75 lakhs. Nevertheless now he considered the proposal from the political point of view, especially as the creation of a real Famine Insurance Fund invested in sterling would soothe the public mind in India. So Hamilton agreed to make an experiment to implement the proposal.² Hamilton sent a memorandum to the Finance Committee supporting the proposal. Sir Arthur Godley, the Under Secretary of State for India, was to support Hamilton's suggestions. But as most of the members were on holiday he postponed the further consideration of the matter until all were present.

¹Ibid.

²Hamilton to Curzon, 24 July 1902, H.P.

He thought that he would get support for his view in a larger committee.¹ But Hamilton's hope of getting support was shattered. Law, a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council returning home on his retirement, told the members of the Finance Committee that the loan market in India was very limited. As a result all were hostile to the proposal. Their argument was that besides the impossibility of raising loans in India, the proposal involved borrowing at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in India in order to invest money at $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in England. Hamilton tried to persuade the Committee to accept the proposal on the ground that the political advantage which could be gained out of the creation and growth of a fund of this kind in England would more than counterbalance the slight monetary loss that would be involved in the operation of the scheme. But the committee remained unchanged in its views. Hamilton then referred the proposal to the Council of India in its entirety in order to have a majority in his favour.² Here he clashed with the members of the India Council. Two separate drafts were prepared on the proposal of the Government of India. One was made by those who were against the proposal and the other by Hamilton sanctioning the proposal on the condition, first, that the measures should not involve

¹Hamilton to Curzon, 27 August 1902, H.P.

²Hamilton to Curzon, 4 December 1902, H.P.

a curtailment of the annual public works programme; secondly, that the annual remittance from India should at least be sufficient to meet the net disbursements of the Home Treasury and, thirdly, that the measure should not involve an increase in the sterling borrowing by the railway companies. Hamilton specifically mentioned that if the above conditions were not realised the scheme would be discontinued.¹

In this contest Hamilton failed to get a majority. All members were against the proposal. Even Holderness who at first supported the proposal now went against it and when a division was taken Fitzpatrick was the lone supporter of Hamilton.² Hamilton tried to make a compromise with the group of members headed by Westland but without success. He exclaimed to Curzon: "It is the first time that I have been defeated in Council when I exercise my whole authority in the question under discussion."³ A despatch was sent to the Government of India rejecting the proposal for the second time.⁴ But Hamilton, either because of his defeat in the council or because he believed in Curzon's proposal, requested the latter to reopen the question.⁵

¹Draft despatch by Hamilton n.d. enclo. S. of S. to G.G. in C., 13 February (Financial No. 30) 1903, Financial Letters to India, Vol. 794, 1903.

²Hamilton to Curzon, 11 December 1902, H.P.

³Ibid.

⁴S. of S. to G.G. in C., 13 February (Financial No. 30) 1903, op.cit.

⁵Hamilton to Curzon, 7 May 1903, H.P.

The Government of India was so dissatisfied with the India Office's disposal of the Fund and so convinced of the substantial benefits that would come out of the creation of a bona fide Famine Relief and Insurance Fund, that after a couple of months they re-opened the issue. For the third time, the Government of India sent a despatch recording their strong conviction as to the possibility of raising a loan to the required amount and remitting it to England without difficulty.¹ Godley decided to keep the despatch hanging until the formation of a new cabinet which was due in October 1903,² to which Hamilton agreed.³ J.F. Finlay, a newly appointed member of the India Council, urged the Secretary of State to approve ^{of} the proposal.⁴ But in accordance with the wishes of Hamilton and Godley no discussion was made on it. In October 1903 Hamilton left the India Office to be succeeded by St. John Brodrick. In March 1904 the despatch of the Government of India was referred to the Finance Committee together with a note by Brodrick recommending the reconsideration of the proposal. Meanwhile Westland died. L. Abraham, a newly appointed member of the Finance Committee, in a long confidential note repeated the

¹G.G. in C. to S. of S., 28 May (Fin. & Com. Dept. No. 147) 1903, Fin. Papers India, Vol. 207, 1903.

²Arthur Godley to Hamilton, 7 August 1903, enclo. S. of S. to G.G. in C., 29 April (Financial No. 78) 1904, Financial Letters to India, Vol. 795, 1904.

³A note by Hamilton, 7 August 1903, enclo. ibid.

⁴A note by Finlay, n.d., enclo. ibid.

history of the misappropriation of the Fund and urged upon the committee to accept the proposal.¹ But the Finance Committee remained fixed to its previous decisions and the proposal was refused for the third time.² Curzon's determination to constitute a genuine Famine Insurance Fund was of no avail. Hamilton was relieved of the trouble of renewing a lost battle. The Famine Relief and Insurance Fund remained in its old position.

The history of the Famine Relief and Insurance Fund is really a history of a breach of faith. The evidence shows that the Fund had been misappropriated for military expeditions, exchange compensation allowance to the European Officers and for the extension of railways needed for strategic and commercial purposes. No official statement was issued refuting the series of allegations from various quarters. Only a retired Anglo-Indian official in an unstatistical and emotional reminiscence of his official life in India protested against the allegations.³ But the observation of that official about the Fund was merely the feeble swan-song of the idealism of Lytton and Strachey and the dirge of which was promptly sung by the Anglo-Indian daily, The Statesman. With reference to the accounts of the Fund up to the year 1903-4, the newspaper observed:

¹A note by Abraham, n.d. enclo., ibid.

²S. of S. to G.G. in C., 29 April (Financial No. 78) 1904, ibid.

³Charles A. Roe, "Indian Taxation", Asiatic Quarterly Review, April 1903, p.299.

"The long and short of the matter is that considerably more than three fourths of the Fund up to date, at the lowest estimate, has been applied to purposes which, however excellent in themselves, are not in any true sense preventive of famine, so that the description of the fund as a Famine Insurance Fund, is at any rate an egregious misnomer. If that were all, the cause for complaint might not, perhaps, be a very serious one. But it is obviously very far from all; for the facts raised the question whether the extremely small sum which the statement shows to have been devoted to what may properly be regarded as insurance against famine, i.e. to purposes which really tend to prevent or mitigate, famine, is all that could have been beneficially so spent, during the quarter of a century covered by the accounts."¹

None was more familiar with the Famine Fund in the India Office than Hamilton. During Elgin's time Hamilton showed no interest in the Fund. He approved Elgin's decision to reduce the contribution to the Fund though he was aware of the fact that such reduction was in violation of the original scheme of the Fund. Hamilton took no notice of the demand raised by the Indian National Congress and Hyndman for the proper use of the Fund. He became very critical on the application of the Fund when Curzon brought the allegation of its misappropriation. Curzon had the sincere desire to re-organise the Famine Fund with a view to making it useful for the

¹The Statesman, n.d., quoted in India, 3 July 1903. The budget statement of 1903-4 shows that out of a total sum of £26m. levied from the public £2,074,049 would remain unexpended at the close of the year 1903-4 and that, of the balance of £23,925,951, a sum of £12,623,319 had been expended on famine relief and £9,792,020 on protective works, while £1,510,612 had been applied to reduction of debt.

prevention of famine. Hamilton approved Curzon's scheme, the implementation of which would have prevented the Government from using the fund for purposes other than famine. But the majority of the members of the Council of India viewed the Fund from the point of view of the interests of the Government of India rather than those of the Indian peasants for whom the fund was created. Hence, despite Hamilton's support, the proposal of the Government of India was rejected. Westland's views on the Fund carried much weight in the refusal.

Chapter IV

THE INDIAN FAMINE UNION IN ENGLAND

1901 - 1903

In January 1891 William Digby wrote an open letter to the members of the House of Commons drawing their attention to the growing poverty of the Indian masses.¹ But it produced no effect. After the formation of the Parliamentary Committee of the British Committee of the Congress in 1893 Wedderburn several times moved motions in the House of Commons with a view to inducing the India Office to cause an enquiry into the economic condition of the peasant population of India.² Every time the motion was defeated. While speaking against such motions and placing the financial estimate of the Government of India in the Commons, Hamilton gave the impression that the Indian rayats were in a prosperous condition under British rule.³ After the famine of 1896-7 Hamilton declared in the House: "... during the twenty years that have elapsed since the last great famine [1876-1877] we have improved the material condition of the mass

¹ Digby to members of the House of Commons, 9 January 1891, India, 16 January 1891.

² Hansard, XLV, 26 January 1897, cols. 517-57; LII, 5 August 1897, cols. 464-6; LIII, 17 February 1898, col. 995; LXXVI, 8 August 1899, cols. 196-7.

³ Hansard, XLIV, 13 August 1896, col. 772.

of the people and their powers of offering resistance to exceptional distress."¹ Immediately after the famine of 1899-1900 Hamilton once again told the House; "... notwithstanding the great losses and depreciation of agriculture in the West, taking India as a whole, the vast community within its borders have progressed and prospered, and there has been a distinct economic advance."² The two Famine Commissions of 1898 and 1901 did not investigate the economic condition of the rayats which was beyond their scope of enquiry. But in their research works published between 1900 and 1902 Dutt, Naoroji and Digby showed with facts and figures the growing deterioration of the economic condition of the rayats under British rule. These publications might have aroused the interest of intellectuals on Indian affairs, but they failed to influence the Government of India in jettisoning their apathy towards the grave issues pointed out by the authors. Thus the whole affair seemed to be frustrating to a section of the retired Anglo-Indian officials and to philanthropic and liberal minded Englishmen who, during the last decade of the nineteenth century, having been discontented over the British policy in India, had been shuttling between the Liberal Party and the British Committee

¹Hansard, LXXVI, 8 August 1899, col. 178.

²Hansard, 99, 16 August 1901, col. 1201.

of the Congress with a view to pressing the Government of India for a remedy to the distress of the Indian rayats. At the dawn of the present century their discontent streamed into a further course of action in the formation of the Indian Famine Union in England.

The Indian Famine Union was a national non-political organisation in England having for its immediate objective the setting up of an independent enquiry commission to seek for the causes of the poverty of the Indian peasants and ultimately to explore the causes of famine and measures for its prevention. The life span of this Union was two years, but during this short period it was able to educate the British public on the economic crisis of the Indian people and mobilize their opinion in favour of undertaking measures to redress it. As no comprehensive analysis has been made so far of this particular aspect of the activities of the British public for the cause of the Indian rayats except the brief summary in journalistic style made by S. K. Ratcliffe,¹ this chapter deals with the origin and growth of the Indian Famine Union in England, its objectives and functions and the attitude of Hamilton and the Government of India towards it.

¹S.K.Ratcliffe, Sir William Wedderburn and the Indian Reform Movement, London 1923, pp. 110-9. Dr. Bhatia has made only brief reference to the formation of the Indian Famine Union in London without mentioning any date and the points of the main resolutions adopted in its Conference held on 15 April 1902, Bhatia, Famines in India, op.cit., p.272.

The idea of forming the Indian Famine Union originated with Wedderburn. In a letter to The Times he appealed to the British people in order to induce them to give a definite shape to their sympathy with the suffering people of India.¹ He suggested that a national Union should be formed, named the Indian Famine Union, on a purely economic basis with the specific object of investigating the causes of the Indian famines and to determine by scientific methods the way in which effective means of prevention might be sought. This suggestion did not include the question of relief operations in the years of famine as that was within the jurisdiction of the Government of India. Wedderburn maintained that in the matters of famine in India a responsibility also rested on the British people and he thought that it was their duty to ascertain by an enquiry, whether the periodic calamities might be not only mitigated, but altogether averted. He considered this problem one of Imperial importance as it affected the lives of millions of his "fellow citizens", and that it deserved the anxious attention of both the humanitarians and economists in England. He recalled from his own official experience in India that 40 years ago Indian peasants in general had three safeguards against famine, viz., (a) domestic hoards of grain, (b) family ornaments and (c) credit with the village moneylender, who was also the grain dealer.

¹The Times, 9 April 1901.

But towards the close of the nineteenth century all were lost by the peasants. He could not take much grain home to stock for bad years, the family ornaments had gone into the melting pot and his relations with the moneylenders turned bitter because of his heavy debt. As a result, in the year of crop failures, though the bazaar was full of grain the peasant could not purchase it for want of money and credit and then he and his family must be fed by charity or must die of hunger. Under such circumstances, Wedderburn thought that the British people were not justified in pronouncing Indian famine to be inevitable until all reasonable proposals for a remedy were carefully examined.¹

As to the character, composition and functions of the proposed enquiry, Wedderburn suggested that the Committee should be of a very modest and practical character, involving little expense and without disturbing the current administration. For this there was no necessity for an expensive Imperial commission or any large collection of facts and figures relating to the whole of India. It would be a detailed enquiry into the economic condition of a few selected villages to be conducted on the spot under the direction of the various local governments. The procedure as suggested by Wedderburn was that in each famine province the local administration

¹Ibid.

would select a few typical villages and appoint a representative committee of experienced men, official and non-official, European and Indian, to make a full diagnosis of their condition, ascertaining the exact financial position of each cultivator, with the history and causes of his indebtedness to the moneylenders, where such indebtedness existed. This enquiry should be on the lines of that conducted by the Deccan Riots Commission of 1875 . When the enquiry was complete, the selected villages should be entrusted to efficient administrators having discretion to treat each case on its merits, and extricate the cultivators from their financial difficulties. Since the rural village was the microcosm of all India, and if a practical means could be discovered to render these typical villages safe and prosperous, Wedderburn thought that a clue would have been obtained to make rural India safe and prosperous.¹

At first Wedderburn's proposal did not receive wide response from the British public. Only two radical newspapers of London came forward to declare the need for the formation of such a Union. The Morning Leader observed that the Famine Commission had failed to grapple with the problem of the prevention of famine and, therefore, the public at home, on whom the ultimate responsibility rested, should see that this duty was not neglected. The newspaper appealed to the British people irrespective of party affiliation, to unite

¹The Times, 16 April 1901.

under the banner of the proposed National Union in order to perform this urgent duty.¹ Welcoming the suggestion the Investors' Review commented: "The suggestion is a good one, and we should be glad to see it carried into execution, but fear the inveterate apathy of the British public must militate against its formation."²

Gradually the liberals, radicals and people interested in Indian affairs, as well as the retired civilians from the Indian administration, became eager to form a National Union. On the 7th June 1901, a conference was held at the Westminster Palace Hotel in London of the people having special experience of India, in order to begin the organisation of the Indian Famine Union. Mr. Leonard H. Courtney presided.³ Lord Ripon was also one of the main supporters of the formation of the Union. He could not attend the conference but he wrote to Wedderburn: "With the object of the meeting I heartily sympathise. No subject connected with India is of greater or more pressing importance than the prevention of the famine, and I am convinced that such an investigation as you propose cannot fail to produce valuable results and to help in the solution of the many difficulties by which the question of famine is beset."⁴

¹The Morning Leader, 10 April 1901, quoted in India, 12 April 1901.

²The Investors' Review, 13 April 1901, quoted in India, 19 April 1901.

³The Times, 8 June 1901; see also India, 14 June 1901.

⁴Ripon to Wedderburn, 28 May 1901, published in India, 14 June 1901.

This conference adopted four resolutions. First, that a national Union should be formed under the name of the Indian Famine Union on an economic and philanthropic basis with the specific object to investigate the causes of the famine and promote possible means of prevention. Secondly, a provisional committee of the Indian Famine Union was constituted with 17 persons¹ with powers to add to its number and to decide what step should be taken to operate the function on a broad practical basis. Thirdly, it was decided that the Union should cooperate with the Government of India in every respect with regard to the investigation of the economic condition of the rayats. Lastly, it was resolved that a memorial should be addressed to the Secretary of State for India requesting him to cause a detailed enquiry to be carried on in selected typical villages in each province affected by the famine with a view to ascertaining the actual condition of the cultivator and to suggest means by which he might be enabled better to withstand famine.²

The conference was given wide publicity all over England. Most of the British press supported the objectives of the Indian

¹The members of the Committee were: Mr. Leonard Courtney, Lord Hobhouse, (sometime Legal Member of the Viceroy's Council), Sir Raymond West (formerly Judge of the Bombay High Court), Sir George C.M. Birdwood, Sir John Jardine (formerly Judge of the Bombay High Court), Sir M.M. Bhowangree, M.P., Sir William Wedderburn, Mr. W.S. Caine, M.P., Mr. S.S. Thorburn (late Financial Commissioner of the Punjab), Mr. J.D. Rees, I.C.S. (retired), Mr. Horace Bell (formerly Offg. Director General of Railways of India), Messrs. William Digby, R.C. Dutt, D. Naoroji, T.A. Denny, Francis Lorrain Petre, I.C.S. (retired) and G.P. Pillai, Editor, The Madras Standard, India, 14 June, 1901.

²Ibid.

Famine Union.¹ But The Times published a brief report of the conference without making any comment on it.² The Review of the Week expressed an extremely reactionary feeling towards the Union. According to this newspaper, the proclaimed objectives of the Union had no real meaning as it came from the lips of people like Wedderburn, Caine and Naoroji who were regarded as "theorists and faddists". The newspaper concludes: "Having failed to hamper the Indian Government from within the parliament, an attempt is now to be made through the egregious Famine Union from outside. Nor is the attempt less insidious because it is concealed under a cloak of friendliness. The Indian Famine Union is a mischievous body, which may stir up much racial trouble in India and can do no possible good in the direction it proposes to move."³ Besides supporting the objectives of the Union some newspapers raised some points of clarification which are worth mentioning. The Outlook questioned, first, whether the enquiry wanted by the Union was intended to ignore the enquiries the Government of India had been periodically making through trained civilians; and secondly, whether the Union was willing to send out the retired civilians to India for the enquiry at their own expense.⁴ The first question

¹ Democracy, 15 June 1901, quoted in India, 5 July 1901. See also Pilot, 15 June 1901, ibid., Liverpool Daily Post, 18 June 1901, ibid., Sunday School Chronicle, 20 June 1901, ibid., Investors' Review, 22 June 1901, ibid., The Outlook, 22 June 1901, ibid., The Observer, 23 June 1901, ibid.

² The Times, 8 June 1901.

³ The Review of the Week, n.d. June 1901, quoted in India, 5 July 1901.

⁴ The Outlook, 22 June 1901, ibid.

is of serious importance. Actually it was not expressly stated in the resolution of the conference that the Union was ignoring all the enquiries of the Government of India with regard to the question under review. But the very demand for a special enquiry by the Union indirectly amounts to saying that all enquiries and reports so far made by the Government of India had failed to detect the actual economic condition of the rayats. With regard to the second question, Wedderburn did not enter into details as to the expenditure to be incurred in such an enquiry. But he mentioned that it would not be expensive as it was proposed to be carried out mainly by the officials of the local governments in collaboration with some representative non-official Indians and Europeans. The Observer suggested that the Chancellor of the Exchequer should be asked to grant some money for this purpose.¹

In July, Naoroji resigned from the membership of the Famine Union. He thought that his association with the Famine Union as misunderstood by some of the press might prejudice the activities of the Union. He wrote to Wedderburn: "I shall watch with deep interest its proceedings, and I wish it every success in finding out the whole truth, as others have found it before."²

A draft of the memorial to the Secretary of State for India was framed by Wedderburn and was finally approved by the

¹The Observer, 23 June 1901, ibid.

²Naoroji to Wedderburn, 6 July 1901, published in India, 12 July 1901.

Committee of the Famine Union in November 1901.¹ In this memorial full credit was given to the Government of India's efforts to mitigate the distress of the famine-stricken people through extensive relief operations and it was mentioned that the Famine Union was not concerned with the distribution of relief. The Famine Union expressed its grave concern on the question of the prevention of famine and offered its services at the disposal of the Government of India in devising means of prevention of famine. It was thought by the Famine Union that the various means suggested by the Government of India to improve the economic condition of the rayats deserved careful enquiry. They included more rapid extension of irrigation, agricultural banks, village and other industries, re-forestation, migration, grain storage, export duties on food grain, technical education, arbitration court, besides administrative reforms such as timely remission of land revenue during famine and limitation of land alienation. The Famine Union hoped that as each item came under investigation it should be duly informed as to what step was taken by the Government of India.²

The Famine Union considered that the problem of the prevention of famine in India could not be grasped without further

¹India, 8 November 1901.

²Draft of the memorial, published in India, 8 November 1901.

special knowledge of the different circumstances of its extended territories and their inhabitants. What is beneficial in one area may be useless and even mischievous elsewhere and, therefore, an exact diagnosis of the economic condition of the rayats should precede the application of the remedies. For this reason, in the memorial, the Secretary of State for India was requested to ask the Government of India to set up the proposed enquiry.¹

It was mentioned by the Famine Union that there were precedents (in which the Government of India had based remedial agrarian legislation upon the results of enquiry of the type proposed by the Union. For example the Deccan Ryots Relief Act of 1879 was the product of the recommendation of the Deccan Riots Commission of 1875,² and the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900 was based upon a village and holding by holding enquiry carried out in 1895-6 by Thorburn in typical tracts of the Western Punjab. This enquiry was both minute and comprehensive. It was extended to 742 villages and was completed within six months with an extra expense of £300 only.³ The Famine Union was aware of the fact that valuable information regarding the economic condition of the Indian peasants had been collected by the Government of India in 1887-8⁴ but it pointed out that although that enquiry was valuable for the purpose

¹Ibid.

²See for details R. Kumar, Western India in the Nineteenth Century, London 1968, Chs. V and Vi.

³Draft memorial, op.cit.

of comparison, it had no direct connection with the famine question. Moreover, that enquiry belonged to a period before the great famine of 1896-7 and 1899-1900 had seriously affected the condition of so large a portion of the rayats. In the memorial, therefore, it was pointed out that fresh enquiries of the type suggested were urgently necessary in order to determine the economic condition of the rayats with reference to their existing power of resisting the impact of famine. Lastly, the memorial mentioned that the concern of the Famine Union was for a scientific enquiry, unconnected with party politics, and, therefore, the Government of India should support its efforts to counter the danger of famine. The memorial thus fully explained the terms of reference of the proposed enquiry and cleared some points of confusion contained in Wedderburn's original proposal.¹

Before this memorial was submitted to Hamilton it was circulated to the newspapers throughout the United Kingdom, signed by Leonard Courtney as Chairman and Wedderburn, Thorburn and Bhowanagree as joint Secretaries of the Indian Famine Union. At the same time a campaign for signatures to the memorial was launched; at the initial stage it met with a tremendous success. The signatories to the memorial fully represented the elite of England,

¹Ibid.

ranging from M.P.s to the Archbishop of Canterbury, from the principals of the Colleges of Oxford and Cambridge to the Mayor and Provosts of the principal towns and cities of England, from the Chairmen of various Chambers of Commerce to litterateurs like George Bernard Shaw.¹

The memorial received universal support from the newspapers in Britain. The leading liberal newspaper, The Manchester Guardian, which was silent up to that time with regard to the objectives of the Indian Famine Union, now came forward with emphatic support for the cause. It described the prayer of the memorial "as a modest request which Lord George Hamilton should find it easy to grant", and considered the movement of the Famine Union "a sign of profound interest which Englishmen of all parties take in the well-being of our great dependency".² Another liberal newspaper, the Daily News, printed a well-informed article on the memorial and thought that the proposal was "entirely moderate and non-controversial".³ The Morning Leader, while supporting the contents of the memorial, set forth reasons why no plausible ground for refusing the prayer of the memorial could be discovered.⁴ The

¹For the first list of signatories see Appx. C(I).

²The Manchester Guardian, 2 November 1901, quoted in India, 8 November, 1901.

³The Daily News, 4 November 1901, ibid.

⁴The Morning Leader, 2 November 1901, ibid.

Echo observed that "there is abundant scope in all directions for searching enquiry".¹

The Tory newspapers also joined the supporting campaign. The Daily Graphic, a Unionist journal, spoke of the memorial as a "very temperate appeal" and believed that the enquiry "will help to show what measures of reforms are feasible".² The Globe recognised the "highly influential and representative character" of the signatories. The newspaper indirectly raised objection to the enquiry because of the cost it involved, but at the same time admitted that if the enquiry led to useful results the cost of it would be immaterial. Lastly, the newspaper could not conceal its fear that the outcome of this enquiry would be "conflicting counsels".³ The Daily Chronicle had nothing but praise for the Famine Union but observed that "the Indian Famine Union appears to be much the same body as the Indian National Congress reorganised on a more practical basis, and with a single definite object in view".⁴

The Daily Chronicle's characterisation of the Famine Union as the reorganised Indian National Congress is erroneous. It was specially mentioned in the memorial that the Famine Union was a philanthropic and non-political organisation, whereas the objective

¹The Echo, 1 November 1901, ibid.

²The Daily Graphic, 2 November 1901, ibid.

³The Globe, 31 October 1901, ibid.

⁴The Daily Chronicle, 30 October 1901, ibid.

of the Indian National Congress was both broad and purely political in character. Besides, one of the joint secretaries of the Famine Union, Sir M. M. Bhowanaggee, an Indian M.P., was a staunch anti-Congressite. More precisely, the diverse character of the signatories of the memorial conclusively proves that the Indian Famine Union represented the views of retired Anglo-Indian officials and liberal and religious minded people of England, who from sheer justice and humanity wanted both the Government of India and the Secretary of State for India to do something positive to save the destitute agricultural people of India from ruin. Of course it is true that the initiative of this movement was taken by Wedderburn, who happened to be an important leader of the British Committee of the Congress but it does not follow that the Famine Union was the Indian National Congress in disguise. The Indian leaders then residing in England, such as Pillai and Dutt, played an insignificant role in this particular movement.

On the 15th November 1901 a copy of the memorial together with the whole list of the signatures so far collected was forwarded to Hamilton with a request that he should receive a deputation from the Indian Famine Union to present it.¹ Hamilton agreed to do that and enquired whether the Famine Union would be willing to

¹India, 14 February 1902.

come jointly with the Blackburn Chamber of Commerce, which also desired to present a memorial to Hamilton on famine in India.¹ When the Famine Union agreed to this Hamilton informed them that he was unable at that moment to fix a date for the reception of that deputation, but it would probably be a day soon after the meeting of the parliament.² This decision of the India Office was circulated to the signatories of the memorial. Afterwards the promise of the India Office was repeated³ but despite reminders both by letter and personal application at the India Office no date was fixed.

The campaign of the Indian Famine Union was not confined to London. On the 15th November 1901 a meeting was held in Liverpool where it was resolved to form a Liverpool Branch of the Famine Union in order to propagate its objectives more vigorously.⁴ Membership of this branch was to be granted to those "friends of India" who sympathised with the object of the Union, on payment of a subscription of not less than one shilling a year to the branch fund. At the same meeting a committee of the office bearers of

¹Hamilton to I.F.U., undated, cited in India, 14 February 1902.

²Hamilton to I.F.U., 4 December 1901, ibid.

³India Office to I.F.U., 20 December 1901, cited ibid.

⁴India, 22 November 1901.

the new branch was selected. It consisted of a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and 18 committee members.¹ The new committee held another meeting on that day and adopted three resolutions. First, the main objectives of the Indian Famine Union as declared by the National executive in London were confirmed and it was decided to send a copy of the resolution to Hamilton and the local member of parliament. Secondly, a copy of the resolution of the branch was to be handed over to W.C. Bonnerjee, one of the delegates to the session of the Indian National Congress in India with a view to raising a discussion of the question in the session of the Congress and to getting suggestions for the Union's activities. Thirdly, the branch Secretary was empowered to ask the National Committee for speakers who would instruct the members of the branch on Indian affairs as well as address meetings in various parts of Liverpool.²

Pursuant to the resolution of the Liverpool Branch the activities of the Union in England were reported to the 17th session of the Indian National Congress held in Calcutta in December 1901

¹The members were: Sir Edward Russell (President), Dr. C.F. Aked (Vice-President), Mr. Sydney Style (Treasurer), Mrs. G. Blair (Secretary); Mesdames Browning, Stewart Brown, Snelt Brown, Mahood; Misses E. Robinson, Rathbone, Gosline; Drs. de Beaumont Klein, E. Levine; Revs. S.J. Jones, R. Armstrong, Hoare; Messrs. R. Robinson, B. Johnson, A. Wilson, J. Edwards, A. Ludlam and W. Callie, India, ibid.

²Ibid.

by Bonnerjee and a resolution was passed congratulating this movement.¹

In spite of the various attempts to extend the movement of the Union in various parts of England, its prospect gradually became very grim because of the stiff opposition from Hamilton. A debate on India was due to be held in the House of Commons on the 3rd February 1902 when W.S.Caine was scheduled to move an amendment to the report of the Famine Commission, 1901 calling the attention of the House to the fact that the economic condition of the Indian rayats was parlous and that no measure had been taken by the Government of India to improve it. Hamilton knew that Caine would raise a storm in the House. The notice of this motion upset him. He changed his mind with regard to his promise to the Famine Union to receive a deputation from them. He now wrote to the Famine Union: "I am very sorry for the disappointment which I am afraid my decision has caused to the members of the Indian Famine Union, but I am sure they will understand that in the circumstances it is necessary for me to reserve what I have to say on behalf of the Indian Government for the debate in the House of Commons".² Hamilton's letter was surprising to all. In its reply the Famine Union reiterated that since it was a non-political body

¹Resolution No. VIII, C, published in G.A.Natesan & Co. (ed.), The Indian National Congress (Madras n.d.), 3 Pts., Pt. III, p.119.

²Hamilton to I.F.U., 28 January 1902, quoted in India, 14 February 1902.

and as the main objective of the memorial was for an enquiry which would place the economic facts before the public in a convenient form, it should be kept altogether separate from parliamentary action on behalf of the Indian Government to meet an allegation in the House. For this reason the Famine Union was against the reception of the deputation depending on the course of a debate in Parliament. But at the same time the Famine Union informed Hamilton that it was ready to postpone the deputation until after the Indian debate that was due on the 3rd February 1902.¹

There was no direct link between the movement of the Indian Famine Union and the debate in the House of Commons. Caine moved the motion on behalf of the Indian Parliamentary Committee. Moreover, the object of the debate was different from the prayer of the memorial of the Famine Union. But on the whole the subject matter of the debate was closely related to the movement of the Famine Union and, therefore, the debate gave added strength to the movement.

The debate was virtually on the poverty of the peasants of India, which Caine had studied during four winters in India. He was hostile to the Famine Commission of 1901, whose recommendation did not go far enough to suggest effective and permanent measures

¹I.F.U. to Hamilton, 31 January 1902, quoted in ibid.

to remedy the chronic destitution of the Indian masses. The amendment he moved was a charge that the agricultural population of India had not materially benefited under the British administration; not only were they poor but their poverty was chronic and increasing. As a remedy Caine considered that the civil and military expenditure of the Government of India should be curtailed and that provision should be made for the extension of irrigation works, the establishment of agricultural banks and the reassessment of land revenue on the basis of the paying capacity of the rayats.¹

Caine observed that out of 230 million people of British India, 180 million were in abject poverty. In 1902 the average income per head per annum of the U.S.A., U.K. and her self-governing colonies, France, Germany, Holland and Belgium was £33 and of Russia, Italy and Spain £13. But for India, according to Curzon's estimate, it was £2 only. Caine maintained that even this estimate of Curzon's was optimistic. For according to Curzon the £2 was the average income of all the people of India from the rich Parsi merchant of Bombay and the zamindars of Bengal down to the poorest ill-paid agricultural labourers and day labourers of the famine affected tracts. Curzon particularly estimated that part of the national income which derived from agriculture and stated it

¹Hansard, 102, 3 February 1902, col. 267.

authoritatively at Rs. 20 or £1.6.8d. per head per annum. This means that 180 million people of India had to exist year after year on an average 320 pennies for 365 days. Since this average includes all the landowners, zamindars and wealthy tenant farmers, if 10 million of the richest people were separated from 180 million, it would leave 170 million people whose average income would not reach three farthings a day.¹

Caine then argued that this average income of £1.6.8d. is very insignificant in comparison with the estimated minimum expenditure of the family of a rayat on food and clothing only. He referred to an estimate of expenditure of an average small Indian farmer, prepared in 1888 in the province of Berar by Mr. Leslie S. Saunders, I.C.S. He took a family of three of the agricultural labouring class and estimated a year's expenditure as follows:

¹Ibid., cols. 267-9.

Table I¹

Annual Expenditure of an agricultural
family of 3 in 1888.

	£	s	d
1. Clothing	3	16	0
2. Cost of food grain (neither wheat nor rice but inferior cereals)	3	15	11
3. Condiments	15	1	
4. Salt	6	2	
5. Cooking oil	5	9	
6. Lamp oil	3	10	
7. Petty expenses	17	2	
TOTAL	£6	19	11

According to the estimate of Curzon the average income of all engaged in agriculture was £1.6.8d. but here is an agricultural labourer whose family of three requires, if sufficient food of the humblest sort is to be had, an income of £6.19.11d., towards which the average, including the income of the zamindar and big farmer of his village only produces £4.0.0. (£1.6.8d. x 3).²

If the Indian agricultural population was to have sufficient food of the humblest and coarsest quality, they would require,

¹Ibid., cols. 269-70.

²Ibid.

according to Mr. Saunders' estimate, £1.14.2²/3d. (total of items 2 to 5 divided by three) per head per annum, whereas according to Curzon's estimate the per capita income was £1.6.8d. which was not enough for food alone. Moreover, Caine maintained that Curzon's estimate of average income included the rent of the land for those who had to pay land revenue, which according to Curzon's estimate was £0.1.6d. per head per annum. Furthermore, the same estimated per capita income also covered the interest to be paid for the debt. The total amount of debt of the Indian peasants during that time was estimated at £320 m. This comes to £1.6.0d. per head per annum and the interest on this sum averaged at 12 per cent amounts to £0.3.3d. per head per annum. Now the net annual per capita income after deducting the land revenue and interest for the moneylender comes to £1.1.11d, i.e. £1.6.8d. - (£0.3.3d. + £0.1.6d.), which means 263 pence for 365 days.¹ This estimate almost tallies with that of Digby who calculated 274 pence for 365 days or three-fourths of a penny a day.²

Caine then said that the increase of the per capita income of the Indian people from Rs. 18 in 1882 during Lord Cromer's time to Rs. 20 in 1901, did not necessarily mean that the condition

¹Ibid.

²Cited in ibid.

of the Indian peasants was much improved in 1901. He referred to the Indian Statistical Abstract of 1901 wherein the variation in the average retail price of several food grains at selected centres from 1873 to 1901 was given:

Table II¹

Variation of prices of several food grains
base = 100

Grain	1881	1898	% increase
Rice	97	157	60
Wheat	101	145	44
Jawar	94	131	37
Bajra	98	130	32
Raji	99	174	75
Gram	106	135	42
Barley	97	111	21

Taking the average throughout, the prices of food grain, which absorbs 60 per cent of the peasants' expenditure, were just 45 per cent higher at the time of Lord Curzon's Rs. 20 than they were at the time of Lord Cromer's Rs. 18. This statement could

¹Indian Statistical Abstract, 1901, p.321, quoted in ibid, cols. 287-9.

be strengthened by making a comparative study of the prices of these food grains during the five years 1880-4, Cromer's period, and those for the year 1896-1900 as detailed below:

Table III¹

Variation of prices of food grain
base = 100

Grain	1880-4	1896-1900
Rice	132	170
Wheat	103	164
Jawar	97	160
Bajra	103	170
Raji	105	169
Gram	102	178
Barley	97	157

Again, taking the average throughout, the prices for the five years of Lord Cromer's time were 6 per cent higher than in 1873 and that of Curzon's period 67 per cent higher than that in 1873 and 61 per cent higher than that of Cromer's period.²

¹Quoted in ibid.

²Ibid., col. 288.

In connection with this rise in prices it may be asked how far the agricultural population of India benefited from it. Caine observed that most of the rayats did not get benefit from this rise in prices. As soon as the harvest was over the rayats deposited their grain with the moneylender or bania who, later on, fixed the prices of grain. So far as the landless agricultural labourers were concerned, they were entirely at the mercy of the bania. It was the bania who actually got the benefit of this rise in prices.

Caine's conclusion was that this increasing poverty of the Indian peasants under the British rule was due to three reasons: drought, 'drain' and debt. He thought that for its remedy no palliative measures like remission or suspension of land revenue and liberal relief would be effective. According to him the remedy lay on the Government of India's making drastic efforts for the construction of extensive protective irrigational work, the establishment of agricultural banks, reassessment of land revenue on the basis of the paying capacity of the rayats and curtailment of civil and military expenditure.¹

Hamilton's argument in reply was not based on statistics, but was full of contradiction and hypothesis. He admitted that

¹Ibid., cols. 289-90.

India was poor but at the same time he held that India was becoming prosperous. Hamilton compared the economic condition of the Indian people with that of the Londoners. For this he referred to an economic survey made by Sir Charles Booth who concluded that not less than 30 per cent of the people within the City of London were in abject poverty.¹ By drawing this analogy Hamilton tried to oppose the contention of Caine to the effect that not less than 80 per cent of the people of India was in destitute condition.

Hamilton believed that the land revenue assessment in India was very light. He did not find fault with the moneylenders as they were, according to him, "as essential to the agriculture as the spade or the plough". He held that as the land revenue was light the rayats became extravagant and, therefore, they fell easy prey to the moneylenders. Hamilton believed that the indebtedness of the rayats was mainly due to the fact that they spent much for their ceremonies like marriage and 'funeral feasts'. As regards the annual per capita income of the Indian people as explained by Caine on the basis of the estimate of Cromer and Curzon, Hamilton did not agree with this estimate which he regarded as hypothesis. He declined to produce documents concerning the enquiry into the economic condition of the people of India during

¹Ibid., cols. 297-8.

Dufferin's time only because it was, according to him, very old and the estimate recorded in that document was also hypothetical.

He observed:

"I do not attach myself very much importance to these hypothetical calculations of what is the average income of anybody in a great continent like India as they are largely based on supposition. I declined to produce certain documents because they are old history, and I doubt whether they would do much to elucidate some of the problems which the hon. gentleman raised, but figures do show very clearly that although the movement has been very slow, it has of recent years been upwards and on the whole, the average income of India has increased, but very slowly."¹

Although several speakers spoke in favour of Caine's motion it was defeated.

The defect of Hamilton's argument is that he could not defend himself with facts and figures. Caine presented his case strictly with reference to the official figures which were at the disposal of the Government of India and the India Office. Hamilton's comparison of the Indian condition with that of the Londoners is absurd. The gap between 30 per cent and 80 per cent is very wide. Moreover, the poor people of London at that time were much better off than their Indian counterparts. In England the Poor Law Board and the Charity Organisation Society provided permanent and regular security to the poor people, whereas in India only in the

¹Ibid., cols. 307-8.

the worst famine years was state relief granted to the victims out of a sense of evil necessity which was again inadequate to prevent deaths in millions. As regards the causes of the indebtedness of the rayats nothing can be more ironical than the observation of Hamilton. Domestic ceremony was a mockery to the poor peasants. Besides, marriage and 'funeral feasts' were not the regular events for which they had to live in debt throughout their whole life. The Deccan Riots Commission of 1875 exposed the poverty and indebtedness of the rayats and showed that the land tax was heavy in comparison with the paying capacity of the rayats and, therefore, after paying land revenue and interest to the moneylenders very little was left to them to live on, until the next harvest. Then as the only alternative they had to fall back upon the moneylender who charged excessively high rates of interest.

In 1887 the Government of India received news from various sources that the greater proportion of the population of India suffered from daily insufficiency of food, and in a confidential circular issued by them asked the local governments to enquire into the actual condition of the lower classes of the population, especially in agricultural tracts.¹ Accordingly enquiries were

¹ Confidential Circular of the Govt. of India to the Govts. of Madras, Bombay, Bengal, N.W.P. & O., the Punjab, C.P., Assam, Ajmere, Coorg and the Resident of Hyderabad, 17 August (Rev. & Agri. Dept. Cir., Famine No. 44F/8-1) 1887, Rev. & Agri. Proc. (Famine), Vol. 2981, 1887. This circular was issued in accordance with the resolution of the Government of India No. 6-340-50 G of 8 December 1881 which

made district by district. The majority of the reports of the enquiries made by the collectors or commissioners revealed the prevalence of universal poverty among the masses, especially the small peasants and agricultural labourers.¹ Reports from the Bombay districts show that not only the day labourers and agricultural labourers, but also the peasants suffered from insufficiency of food during the years of normal harvest. In the Bombay Deccan 33 per cent of the area with a population of 1,727,250 was chronically liable to famine. In the Karnatak, comprising the districts of Belgaum, Dharwar and Bijapur, 61 per cent of its area was liable to famine. In the Konkan it was reported that in most of the districts the cultivators did not get enough food to satisfy their hunger.²

The prevalence of universal poverty among the masses was also reported from the Madras districts. The collector of the district

formed the new Department of Agriculture attached to the Department of Revenue of the Govt. of India and local government. The department was entrusted with the duties of (a) agricultural enquiry, (b) agricultural improvement and (c) famine reliefs. Cited in Proc. of the Govt. of India, Rev. & Agri. Dept., 25 March (No. 345-55R) 1890, enclo. Appx. A, Proc. Agricultural Conference (Rev. & Agri. Dept.), Simla, 6 to 13 October 1890 (Simla 1890), I.O.R.No. 55 (2249) 1890.

¹ Précis of the Reports received on the enquiry made into the condition of the lower classes of the population, Appx. A, G.G. in C. to S. of S., 30 October (Famine No. 3) 1888, enclo. Appx. II, Summary of the Principal Measures of the Viceroyalty of Lord Dufferin, Dept. of Rev. & Agri., Vol. II (Simla 1888), I.O.R. No. (19) 3021/2.

² Ibid.

of North Arcot reported that grinding poverty was widespread among the masses while the missionaries there commented that poor people went through life on insufficient food. In some districts the officials differed in their opinion as to the condition of the masses. The Civil Surgeon of Nellore alleged that the people suffered from insufficiency of food but the collector of that district did not accept it. In the Chingleput district the collector thought that the masses were miserably poor, which was not fully supported by the Government of Madras.¹

The reports from the districts of the Central Province show the existence of chronic distress and indebtedness among the small tenants and agricultural labourers. The collector of the district of Saugor reported that a great deal of poverty and indebtedness existed among the small tenants. The collector did not mention the exact annual income of a peasant family but observed that a family could "barely" subsist for a year with the smallest sum of Rs. 36 provided that the food for some months should be supplemented by wild fruits, berries and roots. But report from Wardha mentioned that the cost of food of poorest quality for an adult was Rs. 25 per annum.²

In Bengal, Assam, North Western Provinces and the Punjab the economic condition of the small tenants was reported to be

¹Ibid., pp. 144-7.

²Ibid., pp. 137-44.

better than that of their counterparts in the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras and the Central Provinces. But the agricultural labourers, day labourers and small artisans, except in the tea plantation areas of Assam, suffered chronic poverty. The weavers and potters of Dacca and Murshidabad districts of Bengal were reported to be in a bad condition. The day labourers of the district of Muzuffarpur, Saran, and parts of Dwarbhanga and Champaran were reported to be constantly suffering from insufficiency of food. It was reported that the day labourers of the Puri district hardly got more than one meal a day. The commissioner of the Gaya division observed that 40 per cent of the people of his division, mostly day labourers, were insufficiently fed.¹

Mr. Harrington, the commissioner of Fyzabad, North Western Provinces, maintained that the assertion of the Government of India that the greater proportion of the population of India suffered from a daily insufficiency of food was "perfectly true as regards a varying but always considerable proportion of the population, for a considerable part of the year in the greater part of India". Mr. Holderness, the collector of the Philibhit district of the same province, estimated that the united earnings of a labourer, his wife and two children, could not be put at more than

¹Ibid., pp. 118-26.

Rs. 3 per month, which means Rs. 36 per annum for a family of four. The said collector further estimated that when the prices of food grain were moderate, work regular and the health of the family good, then this income enabled the family to have one meal a day. He held that the small peasants were slightly better off. The Commissioner of Allahabad remarked that there was very little difference between the "poorer class of people and semi-starvation". Mr. Irwin, the Deputy Commissioner of Rae Bareilly, held that a considerable number of people suffered from hunger except just about harvest time.¹

In the Delhi division of the Punjab the standard of living of the day labourer and the agricultural labourers was "perilously low". Speaking about 33 villages in the Ferozpur district, the Extra Assistant Commissioner of the Jullundhar division observed that "many of the people lie down hungry in the evening and seldom get sufficient for both meals during the 24 hours". Mr. Ghulam Farid Khan, another Extra Assistant Commissioner, writing about the Shahpur district of the province, held that $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of the Hindus of the district lived at starvation point, and that 10 per cent had an insufficient quantity of food while 4 per cent of Muslims were at starvation point and 20 per cent did not get

¹Ibid., pp. 128-31.

sufficient food.¹ Such are some of the selections of reports of the confidential enquiry made during Dufferin's time as referred to by Hamilton. This report was kept in confidence.

In the debate of the House of Commons Hamilton fell into his own trap not only by declaring the official estimate of the per capita income hypothetical but also by declining to produce before the public the full report of the enquiry made in 1887. If the official estimates were hypothetical and the official enquiries old and unfit for publication, and especially as Hamilton had no concrete evidence in his hand to support his thesis that the Indian peasants had been prospering under the British rule, then where is the truth? Why should not an independent commission be set up to discover the true and up-to-date facts, as proposed by the Famine Union? Actually there is no connection between Hamilton's parliamentary statement and his own realisation about the economic condition of the Indian peasants. In January 1897, when Wedderburn moved a motion in the House of Commons for an enquiry into the economic condition of the rayats, Hamilton expressed the same opinion about them.² The motion was defeated, but immediately after it Hamilton expressed his doubt of the truth of his statement in parliament to Elgin: "... the spread and extent of the famine and

¹Ibid., pp. 131-3.

²Hansard, XLV, 26 January 1897, cols. 517-57.

the enquiry it has suggested make me doubtful if the agricultural classes in India have materially improved their position during the last 20 years".¹ The Famine Commission of 1898 did not enquire into the economic condition of the rayats and the agricultural labourers but it had left a very discouraging impression about the economic condition. Nowhere did the commission see that this section of the people had any command of resources or any increased power of resisting the famine. With regard to Madras and Bombay the said commission commented: "... the masses of the Madras and Deccan ryots are still very poor and without resources ... we have no doubt, and it probably would be unsafe to infer that their power of resistance to famine has increased during the last 20 years".²

On 4 February 1902, the day after the debate, Wedderburn wrote to Hamilton requesting him to fix a date for the deputation. Wedderburn specially pointed out that "this enquiry seems all the more necessary as the debate seemed to show that conclusion cannot safely be drawn from the estimates of the average income".³ In reply Hamilton wrote a very startling letter to Wedderburn. He finally refused to receive the deputation and he put forward the

¹Hamilton to Elgin, 26 February 1897, H.P.

²R.F.C., 1898, para 591.

³Wedderburn to Hamilton, 4 February 1902, cited in "Lord George Hamilton and The Famine Union", India, 14 February 1902.

reason:

"I have read the memorial of the Famine Union. There is nothing new in their proposal, which has on more than one occasion been condemned by the House of Commons, and distinguished as may be the names of many of the signatories to the memorial, they have with few exceptions neither personal nor official knowledge of the matter they refer to. There is therefore nothing fresh or new which your Union has to say, and under the circumstances I propose not to receive them unless they can suggest or construct something with which I am not familiar." ¹

Next day Wedderburn wrote to Hamilton that since all the signatories to the memorial had been informed by circular that the Secretary of State had decided to receive their deputation and a large number expressed their willingness to be present, it would be necessary to call together all the signatories and place the matter before them. Wedderburn informed Hamilton that there would be universal disappointment amongst the signatories to the memorial that their efforts to cooperate with the Government of India in dealing with the famine were not considered deserving of recognition.² But there was no reply from the India Office.

Hamilton's refusal of a deputation provoked a country-wide indignation. Almost all newspapers in Britain, irrespective of political ideology, condemned Hamilton for his breach of promise. The Morning Leader commented:

¹Hamilton to I.F.U., 4 February 1902, ibid.

²Wedderburn to Hamilton, n.d., cited in ibid.

"It would be hard to find a parallel to this disgraceful conduct, which we repeat unfits Lord George Hamilton for the office he holds ... why does Lord George Hamilton on second thoughts think it safer not to receive a public deputation upon the economic condition of famine? Why does he persistently shirk the question? What is it that he would rather leave unsaid? The questions are worth thinking over. The Indian Famine Union may perhaps help the public to an answer."¹

The Daily News considered this refusal a breach of faith but the newspaper observed: "This action is of course, characteristic of Lord George Hamilton. It is nonetheless more serious."² The Daily Chronicle commented that there were many persons among the signatories to the memorial who knew India better than Hamilton and, therefore, the India Office must pay heed to their views.³ The Manchester Guardian thought that it was not an impertinence for the non-official persons to ask for facts about the condition of the Indian peasants. The newspaper observed that Hamilton's contemptuous refusal of the deputation strengthened the doubts raised by his "complacent optimism".⁴

¹The Morning Leader, 8 February 1902, quoted India, 21 February 1902.

²The Daily News, 8 February 1902, ibid.

³The Daily Chronicle, 8 February 1902, ibid.

⁴The Manchester Guardian, 10 February 1902, ibid.; see also The Investors' Review, 15 February 1902, ibid.

This affair had its repercussion in India, where the newspapers sharply criticised Hamilton's action.¹

The Famine Union faced a new situation. It called upon the public to meet together and decide what future step should be taken.² A meeting was held on the 14th February 1902 at the Westminster Palace Hotel, London, where three resolutions were passed. The first one expressed grave surprise and disappointment at Hamilton's withdrawal of the promise to receive the deputation. Secondly, it was resolved that another memorial should be sent to Hamilton explaining the reasons for the necessity of such a deputation and enquiry; and, thirdly, a conference of the Indian Famine Union was to be held to discuss and explore the causes of famine and devise the means for its prevention, to be followed by a public meeting from which a petition should be sent to members of Parliament on this matter.³

In accordance with the second resolution another memorial was sent to Hamilton, signed by Wedderburn and Thorburn, together

¹Utkal Dipika, 15 February 1902, B.N.N.R., 1902; The Bengalee, 18 February 1902, ibid.; The Bihar Herald, 18 February 1902, ibid.; The Indian Empire, 18 February 1902, ibid.; The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 21 February 1902, ibid.; The Indian Mirror, 3 April 1902, ibid.

²I.F.U. Circular, 7 February 1902, published in India, 21 February 1902.

³India, 21 February 1902. The meeting was presided over by Mr. Leonard Courtney.

with a copy of the resolutions passed in that meeting.¹ This memorial put forward the observations of the Indian Famine Union with reference to each of the main three points for which Hamilton refused to receive the deputation. With regard to the first that the proposal contained in the previous memorial was not new, it was observed that if the request were not new and if the information asked for had been so far withheld, the necessity of the Famine Union's action was of urgent importance. Besides, the severe distress of the Indian agricultural population during the two great famines of 1896-7 and 1899-1900 added force to the case for an enquiry. Regarding the second, Hamilton's contention was admitted, that the proposed enquiry had on more than one occasion been condemned by the House of Commons; but now the Union maintained that that was done at the instance of the Government of India on grounds which were not applicable in that case. The Famine Union believed that the House of Commons would not be averse to the proposed enquiry if the "veto" of the Secretary of State for India were removed. The Union was reluctant to discuss at length the grounds upon which the proposal for such an enquiry was refused in Parliament. Since the Famine Union was a non-political organisation, it was reiterated that the proposal contained

¹I.F.U. memorial to S. of S., 25 February 1902, India, 14 March 1902.

in their memorial should be considered completely dissociated from parliamentary action on party lines. With regard to the third point, that with few exceptions the signatories had neither personal nor official knowledge of the matter they referred to, it was argued that in the memorial the signatories did not claim themselves to have special knowledge about India though a certain number of them had spent their whole service lives in India. These people came forward not as experts but as members of the British public "interested in the welfare of India and grieved on account of the suffering of the Indian people from recurring famines". Moreover, the memorial contained neither adverse criticism of the Government of India nor any proposal of reform for which a special knowledge might be demanded. Their sole prayer was for an enquiry into the economic condition of the peasants of India. It was also mentioned that if the knowledge of the memorialists regarding India was defective, it was an additional reason for supplying them with complete information.¹

Besides the above arguments the memorial referred to Hamilton's disagreement with the Cromer and Curzon estimates of the average per capita income of the Indian people and thought that the proposed village enquiry could discover that precise information. Finally, again the Famine Union offered their full

¹Ibid.

cooperation in any way the Government of India thought fit in such an enquiry, especially in view of the fact that the Famine Commission of 1901 had recognised the necessity of the use of unofficial agency in such an enquiry.¹

The above observations of the Famine Union seem quite reasonable. But in reply Hamilton informed them that he had an understanding that Caine had an authority to represent the views of the Famine Union in the debate of the House of Commons on the 3rd February. On that basis, Hamilton wrote, he had induced the First Lord of the Treasury to give an evening of the House of Commons to this discussion of the poverty of India and its various causes. Hamilton claimed that in reply to Caine's motion he spoke at great length with regard to the Government of India's observation on the poverty of the Indian rayats. He was ready to accept suggestions from the Famine Union regarding drought and attendant mischief which were either original in themselves or the development of past and successful experiments; but he was unable to undertake further discussion of the proposal of the Famine Union, which, according to him, were "neither new nor capable of beneficial application to the immediate evils".²

¹R.F.C., 1901, para 34.

²Hamilton to I.F.U., 5 March 1902, published in The Times, 11 March 1902, republished in India, 14 March 1902.

Caine was an important member of the Famine Union but he was not authorised to place its views before Parliament. A review of Caine's speech in the House of Commons would clearly reveal that he neither spoke on behalf of the Famine Union nor was he concerned with the setting up of an independent enquiry commission. Nevertheless, Wedderburn wrote to Caine enclosing a copy of the letter of Hamilton, requesting him to let him know whether there was any circumstance that could give colour to the belief that he spoke on behalf of the Union.¹ But Caine replied in the negative:

"I have had a good deal of conversation from time to time lately with Lord George Hamilton, and of course I may possibly have said something which he thinks justifies him in his supposition; but a careful perusal of my speech will show that I studiously excluded from it all reference to the Famine Union, or its expressed and formulated opinion. I did this of set purpose, knowing that you had asked for a deputation, and desiring that anything I said should not traverse what might be placed before the Secretary of State with full authority by such a deputation... I must again repeat that all through my speech I had no consciousness whatever of being in any sense a public representative of the Famine Union, which is a strictly impartial and non-political organisation."²

Wedderburn sent to Hamilton a copy of Caine's letter. But in reply Hamilton kept silent in this matter only raising objection to Wedderburn's disclosing his letter to Caine.³ Wedderburn

¹Wedderburn to Caine, 8 March 1902, published in India, 14 March 1902.

²Caine to Wedderburn, 10 March 1902, ibid.

³Hamilton to Wedderburn, 8 March 1902, ibid.

considered himself well justified as that letter referred to the personal action of Caine in the House of Commons and added that he had no intention to disclose publicly any correspondence with Hamilton without previous permission, but he thought that this correspondence should be published so that the whole case might fairly be placed before the public.¹ Hamilton now cooled down. He wrote that he had no objection to his letters being published but that he was deeply disturbed at the publication of his correspondence of 4th February, which made him the subject of severe press criticism.²

Hamilton gave no satisfactory reply to the Famine Union's memorial of 25th February, nor did he proceed further. He avoided the deputation by referring to Caine's motion in the House of Commons. He was fearful of the results of the proposed enquiry. Though he vociferously voiced in Parliament the theory of the prosperity of the Indian peasants, he knew that the result of an enquiry such as was proposed by the Famine Union would contradict it. Hamilton's fear was heightened by Curzon, who replied to his question about the results of such an enquiry: "If you can dispose of the absurd request of the Indian Famine Union, you will

¹Wedderburn to Hamilton, 11 March 1902, ibid.

²Hamilton to Wedderburn, 11 March 1902, ibid.

confer upon me a great benefit. Should you want to know what sort of effect will be produced by such an enquiry as is asked for, consult MacDonnell. He will tell you pretty straight...."¹ Curzon clearly believed that the result of such an enquiry would be dreadful. It is not known whether Hamilton ever consulted MacDonnell in this question. But a year later when MacDonnell was appointed Under Secretary of State for Ireland, he drew a very melancholy picture of the Indian rayats, at a public meeting in Dublin, the purport of which was exactly what Curzon had suggested.² In view of this situation it is quite obvious that Hamilton would at all cost try to avoid the appeal of the Famine Union.

Hamilton showed his lack of diplomatic skill by refusing to receive the deputation. Since the institution of such an enquiry was solely dependent on the discretion of the India Office and the Government of India the reception of the deputation by Hamilton and a talk with the leaders of the Famine Union would not affect that discretionary power. Moreover, it would at least pacify them for a temporary period and save Hamilton from the newspaper criticism.

Despite the aloof attitude of the India Office the campaign of the Famine Union continued with new vigour. According to the

¹Curzon to Hamilton, 16 December 1901, C.P.

²India, 20 February 1903.

resolution of the previous meeting, a conference was held in London on the 15th April 1902 and attended by a large number of distinguished persons.¹ At this conference five resolutions were adopted. First, the previous demand for an enquiry into the economic condition of the rayats was reiterated.² Secondly, the recommendation of the Famine Commission of 1901 with regard to the substitution of elasticity for rigidity in the collection of land revenue in time of famine was approved and it was urged that in the case of crop failure due to drought, the revenue paying rayats should be granted liberal remission and that necessary advances should be made to them at low rate of interest for the purchase of seeds, food grain and plough cattle. Thirdly, importance should be given to the establishment of agricultural banks throughout the country in order to provide timely and adequate finance to the rayats as well as to save them from the hands of greedy moneylenders. It was further resolved that schemes of the Government of India for the establishment of village banks and settlement of old debts of the rayats, advanced during the time of Ripon, should be given effect. Fourthly, it was demanded that the Government of India should encourage technical education in India so that the indigenous arts and industries might be developed. Fifthly, particular attention was

¹ India, 18 April 1902. The Conference was held at Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

² Ripon was present at the meeting and proposed the first resolution.

focussed on the Government of India's indifference to the construction of protective irrigational works and it was held that a wider policy should be adopted and a larger expenditure should be made for the construction of protective irrigation. In accordance with the recommendation of the Famine Commission of 1901 the amount hitherto devoted to protective railways should be spent for protective irrigation works with special reference to smaller works in the form of storage tank, reservoir and irrigational wells. Finally it was decided that a copy of these resolutions should be sent to Hamilton. All the resolutions were unanimously approved by the conference.¹

Nothing more need be said about the first, third and the fifth resolution. But the second and the fourth resolutions require some explanation in order to explore whether the Famine Union put forward any practical proposal to deal effectively with the problems concerned. The land revenue payable to the government out of the produce of the rayats' land is a vital aspect as the rate determines partly by their economic condition. Whether the assessment of land revenue made by the Government settlement was justified in terms of the paying capacity is a question of serious importance. In the second resolution this question was completely overlooked and only palliative measures like suspension

¹India, 18 April 1902.

and remission of land revenue in times of famine, which had already been recommended by the Famine Commission of 1901, were suggested. Since the Famine Union was concerned with the impoverishment of the peasants it should have insisted that the assessment be made strictly in conformity with the paying capacity of the peasants. With regard to the fourth resolution it should be mentioned that technical education alone is not enough for the growth of industry unless the technical skill is used through the establishment of industries by government. The establishment of heavy industries in India was quite unthinkable at that time as it would jeopardise the interests of the British industries. But there was enough scope for the indigenous small scale industries throughout the country which could have provided employment relieving the pressure on agriculture. But the resolution does not throw any light on this very important point. It was only Mr. Jardine who, while supporting the resolution, maintained that the government should encourage the establishment of industry.

This conference was followed by a public meeting on the same evening. Lord Kinnaird presided. Among the important speakers at that meeting were Mr. Maclean M.P. and Digby. This meeting approved the resolutions of the conference and resolved that a petition together with the copy of the resolutions of the conference should be sent to Members of Parliament reiterating the demands of

the Famine Union.¹ An important feature of this meeting is the speech of Mr. Waugh. While supporting the resolutions of the conference he pointed out the deficiency of the resolution on arts and industry. He also observed that technical education alone could not bring industrial development. For this, he believed, organisation and capital were necessary. He thought that the Government of India should step in and bring about an understanding between the capitalists of the west and the skill of the Indian people so that the growth of industry in India could be possible.² Waugh's proposal amounts to a call for industrialisation of India through government undertaking. This progressive suggestion may not have commended itself to many members of the Famine Union, as India was the market for British goods.

This conference was again hailed by the British newspapers, and many extended their support to the Union.

The resolutions of the conference were duly sent to the Secretary of State for India and a petition to the Members of Parliament. Hamilton replied that the resolutions would be brought to the notice of the Government of India. But he pointed out that no cause had been shown for instituting an enquiry of the scope

¹India, 18 April 1902.

²Ibid.

and character demanded by the Famine Union.¹ The resolutions of the Famine Union together with a copy of Hamilton's letter to the Union were sent to the Government of India.²

The Government of India observed that the subjects referred to in the resolution of the Famine Union had been receiving the special attention of the government, and in concurrence with Hamilton's reply they were also convinced that there was no cause for such an enquiry. On the contrary, the Government of India observed that such an enquiry "would not merely disappoint the expectation that might have been formed in advance, but would be misleading and even harmful".³ The reasons advanced by the Government of India were as follows: First, there was an elaborate system of keeping records and statistics in connection with agriculture and the rents and tenures of land. These were under the supervision of the Department of Land Records and Agriculture which were separately constituted in every province. The revenue officers were specially instructed to keep constant watch over any deterioration of the condition of the rayats and to adopt measures accordingly. Secondly, in the temporarily settled provinces arrangements were made for detailed enquiries at intervals varying from 15 to 30 years. These were conducted by specially selected officials and were based upon

¹India Office to I.F.U., 13 May (No. 1274) 1902, R. & S., Vol. 23, 1902.

²S. of S. to G.G. in C., 16 May (Revenue No. 9) 1902, R. & S., Vol. 23, 1902.

³G.G. in C. to S. of S., 24 July (Famine No. 45) 1902, Rev. Letters from India, Vol. 29, 1902.

minute inspection. The results of such enquiries were taken into account by the government in fixing the terms of the new settlements. Thirdly, the Government of India believed that the decennial reports on the moral and material progress of the country made by each province followed by the census operation could furnish "a far juster and more adequate representation of the condition of the people as a whole than could result from any detailed inquisition into the circumstances of a few individual households or villages".¹ Fourthly, the Government of India thought that to gather correct information from the people about their economic condition would be an impossible task. For the Government of India believed that such an enquiry, howsoever philanthropic it might be, would be received by the people as a sort of "persecution" as it would interfere with their domestic life and ultimately would be "highly unpopular". Lastly, even if the enquiries were successful, the Government of India thought that it would be unwise to disturb the backward and ignorant peasants by creating a hope in their minds which the government was absolutely unable to fulfil. The Government of India observed:

"With a community as backward and ignorant as the Indian peasants, ... we can imagine nothing more

¹Ibid., para 6.

unwise than the creation of hopes which it would be beyond our power, whatever the nature of enquiry, or the policy adopted as its sequel, to realise, and which would merely disturb, without benefiting, the agricultural population. Did the result of the investigation in the selected villages indicate a low level of material prosperity, it would be impossible to raise that level by any novel act of the government either in the so-called famine area or over the whole of India. If on the contrary, it exhibited a steady rise in the standard of domestic comforts and subsistence, we could neither feel certain that these symptoms were of general application, nor could we possibly undertake to make them so."¹

The suggested enquiry had caused a nervous dread in the mind of the Government of India which found expression in the despatch through incoherent reasoning. It is true there were arrangements with regard to the keeping of land records and agricultural statistics but they were defective. In the agricultural statistics there was a system of making a statement of the varieties of land tenure in India, but the Government of India considered it to be defective and decided to omit that statement because it was, according to the Government of India, "inaccurate and misleading".² The Secretary of State for India concurred in the opinion of the Government of India, approved their decision and observed:

"... examination of the figures in the return leads me to the conclusion that the information which they purport to give is at present incomplete and

¹Ibid., para 10.

²G.G. in C. to S. of S., 27 February (Rev. & Agri. No. 12) 1902, Rev. Letters from India, Vol. 29, 1902.

misleading, and I accept your opinion that the complex and diversified land tenures of India are not susceptible of a uniform classification, and that the average area of landed property of different classes which the form is intended to show cannot be accurately ascertained without special inquiry. As you see no way of surmounting these difficulties, I agree with you that the table had better be omitted from future issues of the volumes of the Agricultural Statistics."¹

The fourth argument of the Government of India is not only erroneous but also objectionable. The members of the Deccan Riots Commission did not face any difficulty in getting information from the illiterate people. Nowhere in the report of the enquiry made during Dufferin's time is it mentioned that the government officials faced difficulties in gathering information from the people. Thorburn's enquiry into the Punjab villages showed that the village folk of India were easily accessible. Actually, in those days when people were plagued by famine and pestilence on the one hand and the moneylenders and revenue collectors on the other, it was a great source of reassurance to the masses if the government officials would come to them and with full sympathy enquire into their living condition, their hardship and difficulties. Such action would have been highly popular. Lastly, the Government of India's prediction of the possibility of success of the proposed enquiry repudiates other

¹S. of S. to G.G. in C., 25 April (R. & S. No. 74) 1902, R. & S., Vol. 23, 1902.

arguments. The Government of India's confession of the inability to improve the lot of the people might perhaps be the only and true answer on their part to the question raised by the Famine Union.

The India Office forwarded the despatch of the Government of India to the Famine Union.¹ But the reply of the Famine Union was very mild. It was then still hoping that its prayer would be granted by the Government of India. Another memorandum was sent to Hamilton in which the Famine Union recorded their strong conviction that their original question, whether the agricultural population of India had been prospering or not, was a burning matter and that this should be investigated. Lastly, again an appeal was made to Hamilton to receive a deputation from the Famine Union.² But neither was the prayer for the institution of an enquiry commission granted nor the deputation from the Famine Union received. Hamilton regarded the arguments of the Government of India against the proposed enquiry as "indisputable",³ and he carried out his responsibility by simply passing the memorandum of the Famine Union on to the Government of India.

The popularity of the Famine Union continued to increase. Meetings were held in various places in England.⁴ Towards the

¹India Office to I.F.U., 28 August (R. & S. No. 2346) 1902, published in India, 5 September 1902.

²I.F.U. to India Office, 27 October 1902, published in India, 31 October 1902.

³Hamilton to Curzon, 20 August 1902, H.P.

⁴See Appx. C(II) for a list of meetings held in various places in England.

beginning of 1903 Sir Henry Cotton returned to England on his retirement from the Indian Civil Service and participated in the campaign of the Famine Union. Under his guidance the Liverpool Branch of the Famine Union became increasingly active.

The activities of the Famine Union were welcomed by the Indian National Congress. In its 18th session at Ahmedabad in December 1902 the Congress recorded its appreciation of the efforts of the Union and was of opinion that such an enquiry as prayed for by the Union would be of value for a proper understanding of the true condition of the Indian rayats. The Congress further thought that in view of the two successive famines of 1896-7 and 1899-1900 such an enquiry was highly expedient as it would furnish economic data of utility for purposes of comparison.¹

Besides the main proposal of an enquiry into the economic condition of the rayats, the Famine Union also proposed a scheme for the plantation of drought resisting fodder plants in the drought and usually dry areas of India, in order to provide fodder for the cattle whose mortality, too, in times of famine caused a serious setback to the rayats. The Famine Commission of 1901 was concerned with the prevention of fodder famine, stressed the need for the plantation of fodder crops.² and recommended that the whole question of fodder supply in its preventive aspect should be

¹Resolution No. IV, quoted in India, 6 February 1903.

²R.F.C., 1901, para 210.

thoroughly examined by the Agricultural Department of all local governments.¹ In view of this recommendation, in December 1901, Wedderburn published a Famine Union pamphlet on the drought resisting fodder plants.² In preparing this pamphlet Wedderburn was assisted by the Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, Surrey and Allan Octavian Hume. The pamphlet contained a list of the names and nature and quality of sheep and salt bushes grown abundantly in the tropical regions of Central and Western Australia and South Africa which provide nutritious fodder for cattle and sheep.³ The Famine Union maintains that the climatic condition and the soil composition of the South Western part of the North Western Province, Rajasthan, Central India and Sind are suitable for the plantation of those shrubs and plants. In the local dialect the dry, sandy and alkali lands of the above mentioned regions of India are called Usar, Reh or Kallar. The Famine Union urged that the Government of India should take steps to plant the Australian and Cape salt bushes in those areas of India as protective measures against fodder famine.⁴ The pamphlet

¹Ibid., para 219.

²I.F.U. Leaflet No. 5, 30 December 1901, published in India, 17 January 1902.

³The Kew Bulletin, July and August 1896, quoted in I.F.U. Leaflet No. 5, ibid.

⁴I.F.U. Leaflet No. 5, ibid.

was sent to Hamilton who later on forwarded it to the Government of India for their observation.¹

Without waiting for the reply of the Government of India the Famine Union made further efforts to learn of the latest scientific experiments in the United States of America. A copy of the Famine Union's pamphlet was sent to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, requesting material on research into drought resisting fodder plants.² The Department of Agriculture sent to the Famine Union all the literature on this subject and assured it of help in this matter.³ American experiments in the drought resisting fodder plants threw new light on the utility of some particular species of salt bushes. The latter not only supply abundant fodder but their continuous plantation in the soil strongly affected with alkali salts absorbs the excess salts and neutralises the soil for cultivation of grain and vegetables fit for human consumption.

Wedderburn prepared another leaflet containing a list of salt bushes based on American experiments.⁴ He observed that the efforts of the Government of India in planting the drought resisting

¹I.F.U. to India Office, 10 January 1902, cited in S. of S. to G.G. in C., 24 January (Revenue No. 18) 1902, R. & S., Vol. 23, 1902.

²I.F.U. to U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, 23 February 1902, India, 2 May 1902.

³U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, Washington, to Wedderburn, 20 March 1902, ibid.

⁴I.F.U. Leaflet No. 8, 1 January 1903, published in India, 30 January 1903.

fodder plants and in reclaiming the usar lands in India were very few and that they were a complete failure because of the absence of scientific investigation with regard to the soil analysis and the selection of locality for the cultivation of salt bushes. That is why Wedderburn suggested that the results of the American experiments should be fruitfully utilized by the Government of India so that the double objectives, i.e., reclamation of usar lands and the supply of fodder, could be attained. For this he proposed that an agricultural research institute and experimental station should be established in some part of India and a team of experts in the relevant field of study should be appointed for this kind of work. Wedderburn thought that young Indians who had acquired special knowledge in this branch could render valuable contributions in this work. It was specially proposed that the Government of India could use the knowledge and skill of Professor Jagadish Chandra Bose of the Presidency College, Calcutta, who had just demonstrated his outstanding work on botanical research in the Royal Society, by entrusting him with organising a team of experts and research workers at the proposed institute.¹ The second leaflet of the Famine Union was forwarded to Hamilton who promised to refer it to the

¹Ibid.

Government of India for its consideration.¹

The Famine Union's allegation that the Government of India had done little in planting drought resisting fodder plants and that whatever it had done in this respect was turned into failure, seems to be justified. In 1864 the Government of the North Western Provinces first thought of reclaiming 2m. acres of usar land within the province. But no action was taken in this matter until 1876 when schemes were formulated by that government to reclaim the usar land and cultivate plants including drought resisting fodder plants. Afterwards four Government experimental estates were set up; i.e. at Juhi and Amraman near Kanpur and at Guriskran and Cherat near Aligarh. The plantation of Australian salt bushes was experimented in those estates and proved a success. Similar experiments were made in the Government Botanical Gardens of Saharanpur, North Western Provinces, and were successful. But these experiments were not extended for productive purpose. By 1890 the Government estates had been sold to private farmers. No grounds were advanced for the closure of these farms.²

Apparently, the Government of India took a very indifferent attitude to the whole movement of the Famine Union in England. But by this movement the Government of India realised the fact that the

¹India Office to I.F.U., 28 January (R. & S. No. 107) 1903, published in India, 30 January 1903.

²W.H. Moreland, Director, Dept. of Land Records & Agriculture, N.W.P. & O., "An account of the attempts which have been made to utilize the upland barren lands (usar) of the N.W.P. & O. for profitable purposes", Agricultural Ledger, Vol. VII, No. 13, 1901, p.420. See also I.F.U. Leaflet No. 5, op.cit.

destitute condition of the Indian peasants and the Government of India's inability to improve their condition had been made known to the British public. In 1903 the Government of India resolved to establish a Central Agricultural Research Institute and an agricultural college for higher studies in India.¹ How far this action of the Government of India was attributable to the movement of the Famine Union is difficult to say. In the Agricultural Conference held in October 1890 the need for agricultural research was emphasised.² There were only four agricultural colleges throughout India, one at Poona in Bombay, at Saidapat in Madras, at Kanpur in the North Western Provinces and at Nagpur in the Central Provinces. These colleges were run either by the Departments of Agriculture or those of Education of the local governments. In Bengal there was no separate agricultural college; there was only a Department of Agriculture attached to the Bengal Engineering College, Sibpur. The course of study in those colleges varied from two years to three years and the curriculum was elementary in nature. Besides, the teaching staff and the laboratory equipment were not only inadequate but very poor in quality. The Agricultural Department of the Bengal Engineering College was almost defunct

¹Moral and Material Progress of India during the decade ending 1901-2, para 11, enclo. G.G. in C. to S. of S., 26 February (Gen. Dept. No 8) 1903, Revenue Letters from India, Vol. 30, 1903.

²See Proceedings of Agricultural Conference (Rev. & Agr. Dept) 6-13 October, 1890 (Simla 1890), I.O.R. No. 55(2249)1890.

in 1900 as it did not attract students. These colleges could not help the government in developing agricultural research work. The policy behind the establishment of these colleges in Bombay, Madras and the Central Provinces was to encourage the sons of the big landholders to take these courses, on completion of which they were to be offered subordinate officers' posts in the Department of Revenue and Agriculture of the respective local governments in the hope that they would be the best executors of the land revenue policy of the government. In the Nagpur Agricultural College vernacular languages were used as the medium of instruction for the children of the landholders who could not follow English.¹

The Central Agricultural Research Institute was at first proposed to be set up in Dehra Dun where there was a highly equipped laboratory attached to the Institute of Forest Research. But there was no vast agricultural field for an experimental station and there was a shortage of agricultural workers. Later on it was decided to establish the proposed institution at Pusa in the Dwarbhanga district of Bengal.² The whole scheme was intended to combine the two objectives of establishing a Central Research Station under the Inspector General of Agriculture and his scientific staff and an agricultural college together with

¹G.G. in C. to S. of S., 4 June (Rev. & Agr. No. 26) 1903, Revenue Letters from India, Vol. 30, 1903.

²Since the devastating Bihar earthquake of 1934 the Institute was removed to New Delhi.

an experimental farm for the province of Bengal and the advanced students from other provinces. The implementation of this scheme was helped by a generous donation of Rs. 3 lakhs (£20,000) by Mr. Henry Phipps, ^{an} American philanthropist, towards the cost of buildings and laboratory equipment. The maximum annual expenditure on salaries, and farm and other charges was estimated at Rs. 1.27 lakhs. It was decided that the Government of Bengal would contribute Rs. 50,000 a year and that the Agricultural Department of the Bengal Engineering College should be abolished.¹

The proposed agricultural college was intended to furnish a complete course of agricultural instructions from elementary level to the advanced level extending over a period of five years. The first three years of the course were to meet the requirements of students from Bengal; and for the remaining period of the course, successful students from the provincial agricultural colleges would be invited, while the concluding year of the course would be kept for training teachers and specialists. The staff of the institute was to consist of a Director of the Institute and a Principal of the College, who was to give practical instruction in field work and farm management and supervise the students generally. In matters connected with scientific research and teaching the Principal was

¹Ibid.

to be assisted by the staff of experts attached to the Department of Agriculture, Government of India. At that time the staff of the Department consisted of an Agricultural Chemist, a Cryptogamic Botanist and an Entomologist. It was decided that this staff was to be strengthened by a second Agricultural Chemist with a knowledge of Bacteriology, a Biological Botanist and an Agri-Horticulturist.¹

The scheme of the Government of India received the sanction of the India Office. Hamilton suggested that arrangements should be made to train as many students as possible from the Institute so that experts might not be sent from England.²

The Central Agricultural Research Institute could not serve the purpose of the cultivation of drought resisting fodder plants, nor could it help in reclaiming the usar land in any other way. The list of the research papers published by the Institute from 1904 to 1921 shows that there no systematic experiment on the lines suggested by the Famine Union was carried out by the Institute. Nominally the research work of the Institute covered the various branches of Indian agriculture but its major attention was devoted to the indigo plantation,³ which was at that time one of the main trades of the European community in India.

¹Ibid.

²S. of S. to G.G. in C., 14 August (Revenue No. 122) 1903, R. & S., Vol. 24, 1903.

³See Appx. C(III) for a list of classified bulletins published by the Institute at Pusa from 1904 to 1921 on the basis of the various research works carried out by it.

The Indian Famine Union is a profound expression of a matured understanding of a section of the British public interested in the welfare of India on the effects of the British administration in India. The whole movement is a sincere piece of philanthropic romanticism, full of appeals and prayers to an obdurate imperial authority to get some concession for the agricultural masses of India. The movement is non-political but it may also be said to be the last attempt of the frustrated British Committee of the Congress to bring about a change in the imperial policies in India and precisely to set forth a reformatory path between the nineteenth century imperial absolutism and the gradual process towards the liquidation of the empire. The Indian Famine Union may also be characterised as a product of Liberal reaction to the Tory misrule in India.

The Famine Union's main prayer for the institution of an independent commission to enquire into the actual economic condition of the rayats was absolutely justified because the Secretary of State for India himself expressed his doubt of the official estimate of the per capita income of the people of India. Other proposals of the Famine Union except the scheme of the drought resisting fodder plants were not new. But these required to be emphasised through this movement because the Government of India had not so far taken any effective measure on them. The leaders

of the Famine Union were unanimous in their opinion on the aims and objectives of the Union but they differed slightly among themselves with regard to the question of emphasis on the main causes of and remedy for the distress of the Indian rayats. According to Wedderburn the main cause was overassessment,¹ to Caine it was "drain", drought and debt² and to Thorburn it was the sheer absence of liberal and humane administration.³ As to remedy, the suggestion of Sir Henry Cotton of the rapid industrialisation of India,⁴ was highly objectionable to Thorburn's view⁵ and detestable to the Manchester Guardian,⁶ because such a process would jeopardise the interests of British industries. On the whole, what everybody wanted was a liberal administration in India with an effective policy to improve the economic condition of the rayats within the imperial framework, an idea which seems to be utopian. Perhaps because of this reason the radical socialist

¹Hansard, LII, 5 August 1897, cols. 464-5.

²See Caine's speech above, p. 233.

³Thorburn's speech at the Fabian Society, Clifford Inn, London, 10 January 1902, published in India, 17 January 1902.

⁴Speech of Sir Henry Cotton at the Picton Hall, Liverpool, 31 October 1902. This meeting was organised by the Liverpool Branch of the Indian Famine Union. For full text of this speech see India, 7 November 1902.

⁵Speech on 10 January 1902, op.cit.

⁶The Manchester Guardian, 1 November 1902, quoted in India, 7 November 1902.

leader, Henry Hyndman, who during that time was one of the great champions for the cause of India, remained absolutely unconcerned with the activities of the Famine Union.

Hamilton's dealing with the Famine Union was most impolitic. He gave very little importance to the question raised by the Union. At the inception of the campaign of the Famine Union Hamilton thought that the Union in course of time would break down by inner conflict between Wedderburn and Thorburn as the latter did not believe that the assessment was high.¹ But Wedderburn was tactful in excluding the assessment question from the resolution of the Famine Union. The Union thus remained united and its campaign helped in discrediting Hamilton's public life.

Curzon could realise the gravity of the problems raised by the Union while Hamilton could not. That is why at the first news of the formation of the Famine Union Curzon privately expressed his concern to Hamilton over the results of the proposed enquiry. But the reasons he put forward in his despatch rejecting the demands of the Famine Union are unconvincing and misleading. How far the activity of the Famine Union stirred Curzon to any action is very difficult to judge but it does seem likely that the decision of the Government of India for the establishment of a Central Agricultural Research Institute was expedited by the movement of the

¹Hamilton to Curzon, 6 March 1902, H.P.

Famine Union, especially its proposal for the foundation of such institutes all over India.

The Famine Union ultimately failed to attain its objectives. But it had performed one significant task. Through its extensive campaign both in press and platform the Famine Union was successful in keeping the British public informed of the destitute condition of the agricultural population in India created during the long years of the British administration.

Chapter V

PROBLEMS OF LAND POLICY:

ASSESSMENT, LEGISLATION AND FINANCE

Questions of land revenue assessment were omitted from the deliberations of the Indian Famine Union, although the reassessment of land revenue in the Central Provinces, Madras and the Bombay Presidencies during the last decade of the nineteenth century was widely criticised. Since land is the only source of income of the rayat, the rate at which he is to pay a part of the produce of his land to the state as revenue is a factor which vitally determines his economic condition. During the last decade of the nineteenth century the land revenue demand in the Central Provinces and in the Presidencies of Madras and Bombay was increased beyond the paying capacity of the rayat. During this period two great famines took place in those areas.

In 1893 Mr. Alexander Rogers, a retired Bombay civilian, protested against the raising of land revenue in the Madras Presidency. Rogers entered into correspondence about the matter with Hamilton when the latter became the Secretary of State, and his views were referred to the Government of Madras for their observation. During his five year stay in England, from 1896 to 1901, R. C. Dutt, the highest authority of his time on the agrarian

problems of India, pointed out in the press and in public speeches that the rayats of the Central Provinces and the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras were highly taxed, and that they were unable to save anything for bad years. He urged that the government should curtail the revenue demand for the material benefit of the rayats.¹ During the famine of 1899-1900 Dutt wrote five open letters to Curzon bringing the above mentioned allegation, and he suggested some concrete reforms.² Dutt also openly challenged the statement of Hamilton, who in reply to a question in the House of Commons observed that Dutt's allegation was based on his ignorance of the facts.

Dutt's open letter to Curzon and the statement of Hamilton incited the discontent of Rogers and some other retired civilians in England, and towards the end of 1900 they, together with Dutt, sent a memorial to Hamilton suggesting reform in land revenue assessment on the lines proposed by Dutt.³ As these events happened

¹R.P.Mitra (ed.), Open Letters to Curzon and Speeches and Papers, Pt II, Speeches and Papers from 1897-1900, and Pt III, Speeches and Papers from 1901-2.

²Dutt to Curzon, 12 February 1900 (on the Central Provinces), 20 February 1900 (on the Madras Presidency), 6 April 1900 (on the Bombay Presidency), 25 April 1900 (on Bengal), and 12 May 1900 (on the N.W.P. & Oudh and Punjab), R.C.Dutt, Open Letters to Curzon on Famines and Land Assessment in India, London 1900.

³See below p. 299.

immediately before the establishment of the Indian Famine Union, it seems certain that the leaders of the Famine Union did not consider it necessary to include the land revenue question in their deliberations.

Two broad systems of land revenue settlement - the permanent and the periodic - were introduced in various parts of British India with variations in some places in conformity with the local traditions. Under the permanent settlement, introduced in Bengal by Cornwallis in 1793, the revenue to be paid to the government by the zamindars was fixed for ever. However the rent to be paid to the zamindars by the tenants was to be fixed by agreement between them.¹ This agreement was regulated by the Bengal Tenancy Acts of 1859 and 1885.² A permanent zamindari settlement was also introduced in the coastal regions of the north and south west of the Madras Presidency.

In the North Western Province, Oudh, Punjab and some parts of the Central Provinces the government made settlements with the village heads, Zamindars, Talukdars, Sirdars and Malguzars respectively. But the revenue to be paid to the government by these

¹Regulation XIX of 1793, for detail see B.H.Baden Powell, A Manual of the Land Revenue Systems and Land Tenures in India, Calcutta 1882, pp. 161-216.

²Dutt to Curzon, 25 April 1900, op.cit.

local chiefs was not made permanent. The revenue was subject to revision after 30 years. In the early period the revenue was fixed at two-thirds of the zamindars' rents from the tenants. Afterwards, in accordance with the Saharanpur Rules of 1855, government's share was fixed at not more than 50 per cent of the zamindars' rent collected from the tenants. With regard to the rent payable by the rayats to the landlords, all except the Malguzars of the Central Provinces were free to deal with the rayats, subject of course to the regulations laid down by the tenancy laws.¹ The rent payable by the rayats to the Malguzars was to be fixed by the revenue authority at a level no higher than one half of the net produce of the land.²

In the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras and in the greater part of the Central Provinces, government came to a settlement directly with the individual rayats for the payment of land revenue. This system is, therefore, popularly known as the rayatwari settlement. Under the system land is assessed field by field as each rayat holds it. After an accurate measurement of the field,

¹ Dutt to Curzon, 12 February 1900, and see also 12 May 1900, op.cit.; Bengal Act X of 1859, Bengal Tenancy Act VIII, of 1885; Madras Rent Recovery Act VIII of 1865; North Western Provinces Act XII of 1881; Oudh Special Act XXVI of 1866; Oudh Rent Act XXII of 1886; Punjab Act XVI of 1887.

² Dutt to Curzon, 12 February 1900, 12 May 1900, op.cit.

the quality of the soil is classified and a money assessment, to be paid to the state, is imposed on it. Every rayat is given patta or deed, showing the revenue assessment of the field, right to possess, sell, inherit or mortgage his field so long as he will pay the assessed revenue to the government. Besides, there is an annual jamabandi (settling with each cultivator), taking account of any change in each holding as shown in the patta and noting deductions, if any, from the total revenue of each holding.¹

Under the rayatwari settlement assessment of land revenue is subject to revision after 30 years. Usually one half of the net produce of a holding was regarded as revenue to be paid to the government, the net produce being determined by the gross produce minus the cost of cultivation. Under the rayatwari system the rayats had no right to appeal to law courts questioning the validity of the revenue assessment made by the settlement officers.

I Assessment

At this time, the problem of land revenue assessment mainly concerned the Central Provinces and the Presidencies of Madras and

¹B.H. Baden Powell, Land System of British India, 3 vols., Oxford 1892, Vol. III, pp. 32-3; see also N. Mukherjee, The Ryotwari System in Madras,^{1792, 1827,} Calcutta 1962, Ch. VII.

Bombay. Rogers, the first person to give prominence to the problem in this period, dealt only with the Madras Presidency. Dutt, on the other hand, discussed the land revenue problems of the Central Provinces, Madras and the Bombay Presidencies in the context of the land revenue affairs of the rest of British India. Of his five open letters to Curzon the first three deal with the Central Provinces, Madras and Bombay and the remaining two cover the revenue history of North Western Provinces and Oudh, and the Punjab and Bengal.

With regard to the Central Provinces Dutt mentioned that the early land revenue policy of the Government of India was in favour of "light assessment and long leases".¹ The first settlement in the Central Provinces was effected after 1860. The settlement code of the Central Provinces envisaged that the government demand on the Malguzars should be limited to 50 per cent of the tenants' rent.² Dutt alleged that this principle was not carried into practice by the settlement officers. He observed that two grave mistakes were committed by the revenue officers.

¹Govt. of India to S. of S., 28 June (No. 2279) 1860, quoted in Dutt to Curzon, 12 February, 1900, op.cit.

²C.P.Settlement Code, para 24, cited in Dutt to Curzon, 12 February 1900, op.cit.

First, the rent payable by the rayats to the Malguzar was fixed too high. Dutt maintained that nearly one half of the total produce of land had been fixed as the Malguzars' share. He observed that this caused tremendous hardship to the rayats which was increased after 1890 when the second settlement was effected. During the old Hindu rule one sixth of the gross produce of the land was regarded as the state's share and the principle ^{of one third of the gross produce} was generally followed during the Muslim rule in India. In Bengal under Cornwallis's permanent settlement one sixth of the gross produce was fixed as the zamindar's share and in the North Western Provinces and Oudh it was one fifth.¹ Dutt urged that in the Central Provinces rent payable by the rayats to the Malguzar should be fixed not more than one fifth of the gross produce of the land.²

The second mistake alleged by Dutt was that the government demand on the Malguzar's assets was also fixed unduly high. Although the Saharanpur Rules of 1855 prescribed the limitation of the government demand on the landlord's rental as 50 per cent, in the North Western Provinces usually the government demand was

¹A.P.MacDonnell's evidence before the Currency Commission, answers from 5737 to 5740, cited in ibid.

²Ibid.

limited to 40 per cent.¹ Dutt alleged that in the Central Provinces the government demand on the Malguzar's rental was between 60 and 65 per cent. Over and above this the government used to demand $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on account of local cesses and, therefore, the total government demand on the Malguzar's rental amounted to between $72\frac{1}{2}$ and $77\frac{1}{2}$ per cent or even 80 per cent. It is observed that, because of this high revenue demand, both on the Malguzars and the rayats, vast areas of land had to be surrendered to the government and remained uncultivated. Dutt appealed to Curzon that the government demand on the Malguzars should be limited to 50 per cent, in addition to which the demand for local cesses should be fixed at not more than $6\frac{1}{4}$ per cent.²

Dutt also objected to the reduction of the period of settlement in the Central Provinces from 30 years to 20 years.³

Dutt's second letter to Curzon was concerned with Madras.⁴ He dealt with the problems of Madras under three points. First, he attacked the virtual confiscation of the Madras rayats' right "to retain his land perpetually without any increase of assessment

¹A.P.MacDonnell's evidence before the Currency Commission, op.cit.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Dutt to Curzon, 20 February 1900, op.cit.

as long as he continues to fulfil his engagements".¹ Such was the right established by Sir Thomas Munro. During the eighteenth-fifties this principle was accepted by the Madras Government² supported by the Madras Board of Revenue in 1856,³ and again recommended by the Madras Government in 1862.⁴ But this principle was never applied in practice. In Ripon's time a compromise was made. The Government of India retained the right of the government to enhance the assessment in the revision of settlement but on a very limited scale. Ripon's government proposed that once a field is assessed and surveyed, there should be no further revision except on the sole ground of rise in prices.⁵ This principle was accepted by the Madras Government in 1883⁶ but vetoed by the Secretary of State for India in 1885.⁷

¹Munro's evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons, 15 April 1813, quoted in ibid.

²Madras Administration Report, 1855-6, cited in ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Govt. of Madras to Govt. of India, 8 February (No. 241) 1862, cited in ibid.

⁵G.G. in C. to S. of S., 17 October 1882, cited in ibid.

⁶Cited in ibid.

⁷S. of S. to G.G. in C., 8 January 1885, cited in ibid.

In 1895 the Madras Board of Revenue put an end to all confusion as to government's right to enhance the revenue on various grounds other than the rise in prices. It was declared by the Board:

"At each settlement or resettlement of a district, government will fix at its discretion the period for which such settlement or resettlement shall be in force. The collector shall then notify the period in the District Gazette and explain to the ryot that the new rates will not be liable to alteration during the currency of the settlement period, government reserves to itself the right to revise the assessment in such manner as may then seem just and proper either with reference solely to a rise or fall in prices, or with reference also to other considerations such as would require a reclassification of soils or a recalculation of the grain outturn."¹

Dutt observed that the enhancement of revenue by reclassification of soils and recalculation of the grain output was a root cause of overassessment in the Madras Presidency. He invited Curzon to introduce the principle proposed by the Government of India under Ripon.

Dutt's second point was that the existing principle of taking one half of the net produce of the land as land revenue payable by the rayats to the government was fraught with injustice, and that it was liable to error. For in determining the net produce of the field the cost of cultivation used to be underestimated.

¹Standing Order I of the Madras Board of Revenue as amended on 1 July 1895, quoted in ibid.

He mentioned that the cost of cultivation of an acre of good land in the district of Tanjore was estimated by the settlement officer at Rs 14 only while it was Rs 6 for an acre of poor land. According to Dutt this calculation was incorrect. Rs 14 is a very insufficient amount for cultivating an acre of good land and Rs 6 is absolutely inadequate for an acre of poor land. Dutt maintained that the cost of cultivation of an acre of poor land was equal to or higher than that of the good land. He believed that this wrong calculation of the cost of cultivation led to high assessment of revenue beyond the paying capacity of the rayats and ultimately they had to abandon the field. Dutt suggested that the principle of the one half of the net produce should be replaced by that of one fifth of the gross produce of the land as maximum revenue payable by the rayats to the government.¹

The third point mentioned by Dutt is with regard to the Madras Government's proposals to impose a compulsory water rate within the area irrigated by the government's irrigation system. A Bill to that effect was pending in the Madras Legislative Council. The Bill stated that "where a field is in the midst of wet cultivation, any attempt to exclude the water is frustrated

¹Ibid.

by percolation",¹ and so every occupier of land, whether he gets water from the canal or not, should be compulsorily taxed. Dutt commented that a compulsory water rate of this type was unprecedented in India. Actually it was repeatedly condemned by the former Secretary of State for India.² The Bill was also intended to bar the jurisdiction of the High Court and other civil courts on cases relating to assessment of water rate on land revenue made by the collector. This provision of the bill was in reference to a judgment of the Madras High Court to the effect that under existing law a water rate could not be imposed on the rayat unless he applied for water.³

Dutt urged that a water rate should not be made compulsory and that the rayat should have right to appeal to a law court concerning grievances over the water rate or ^{the} land revenue fixed by the settlement officer.⁴

The third letter of Dutt to Curzon concerns the problem of the Bombay land revenue system.⁵ The Presidency came under British rule in 1817 at the fall of the Maratha Peshwas. During

¹Ibid., para 10.

²Ibid., para 11.

³Ibid., para 12.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Dutt to Curzon, 6 April 1900, op.cit.

the last years of the Peshwa rule the state demand on land was very high. Since the early years of the Company's rule the land revenue demand was increased to a far greater extent, as shown below:

Table I

Revenue demand in Bombay Presidency
from 1817-18 to 1820-21¹

1817-18	£368,047	
1818-19	£1,143,041	
1819-20	£1,078,164	
1820-21	£1,818,314	Rs 10 = £1.0.0.

The table shows that after four years of the Company's rule the land revenue was increased by over 100 per cent. From 1825 settlement operations were conducted on the rayatwari principle. But the revenue was enhanced exorbitantly, which caused such hardship that the official report of 1872 could not fail to record that "Every effort was made - lawful or unlawful - to get the utmost out of the wretched peasantry, who were subjected to torture - in some instances cruel and revolting beyond descriptions - if they could not or would not yield what was demanded. Numbers

¹R.C.Dutt, Economic History of India, 2 vols., London 1904, Vol. I, p.65.

abandoned their homes and fled into neighbouring Native States; large tracts of land were thrown out of cultivation, and in some districts no more than a third of the cultured area remained in occupation."¹ This distress of the people attracted the attention of the government. The settlement operation was postponed and a commission was set up to investigate the revenue affairs of Bombay. From 1836 a fresh settlement, still on the rayatwari principle, was begun under which the revenue demand was reduced to Rs 15,330,000. The settlement was completed in 1872 when the demand rose to Rs 20,310,000 or an increase of 32 per cent exclusive of Poona district.² The period of the first settlement began to expire from 1866, when the second settlement was begun. In 1896 the land revenue demand rose to Rs 30,472,134,³ an increase of over 50 per cent from the settlement of 1872. In the third settlement, effected from 1896, the land revenue of the Poona district was increased by 30 per cent, from Rs 103,530 to Rs 133,590.⁴

¹ Bombay Administration Report, 1872-3, p.76, quoted in Dutt to Curzon, 6 April 1900, op.cit.

² Bombay Administration Report, 1872-3, p.49, cited in Dutt to Curzon, 6 April 1900, op.cit.

³ Bombay Administration Report (Revenue), 1896-7 to 1902-3, Vol. L5(1) iii(1).

⁴ Dutt to Curzon, 6 April 1900, op.cit.

In his letter to Curzon Dutt alleged that the continuous enhancement of revenue had impoverished the cultivators. He observed that all fertile lands were covered by the first settlement, that lands settled with afterwards were less fertile and less productive, and that the enhancement of revenue on such land was disproportionate. Dutt further alleged that the method of enhancement of revenue in Bombay was most unscientific. Assessment was made not on the estimated produce of the field but on the intrinsic value of the land and an examination of the fiscal history of the land. Besides, rise in price, extension of cultivation, improvement in the means of communication effected by the construction of new roads or railroads near the field and the general advancement of the country were other grounds for enhancing the revenue. Dutt commented that except for the rise in prices all other grounds were "vague and indefinite".¹

Lastly, Dutt invited the attention of Curzon to the absence of any check on the powers of the revenue authorities to assess the land revenue. He thought that the Bombay rayats should have the right to appeal to the judicial authority to redress any grievance concerning the revenue assessment made by the revenue officers. In 1873 an assessment suit was filed in the Bombay High Court, which gave a verdict in favour of the rayats

¹Ibid.

and against the settlement officer. This incident was immediately followed by the introduction of a bill in the Bombay Legislative Council in order to bar the jurisdiction of the High Court and all civil courts in cases regarding assessment of land revenue, the object of the bill having been explained that "It was not expedient that the general policy of the government in relation to land revenue should be questioned, or that the details of revenue assessments should be questioned by the civil courts."¹ Accordingly the Bombay Revenue Jurisdiction Act was passed in 1873. Dutt considered it a gross injustice done to the rayats.

Dutt's suggested reform of land revenue assessment in the Central Provinces, Bombay and Madras may be summarised as under:

- a) that the principle of one-fifth of the gross average produce of the field should be introduced in the Central Provinces and in the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras where the rent payable by the rayats was fixed by the settlement officer;
- b) that state demand on the landlord's assets should not exceed 50 per cent of the rents paid by the rayats to

¹Quoted in ibid.

the landlord;

- c) that the period of settlement must not be less than 30 years;
- d) that the water rate should not be made compulsory;
- e) that both in matter of the water rate and the assessment of land revenue the rayats should be allowed to appeal to judicial authority against the decision of the revenue officers.¹

Dutt's allegation of overassessment represents the views prevalent among Indian national leaders during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. As a remedy, leading Indians and the Indian National Congress suggested the fixity of assessment in the rayatwari areas. Dutt made a departure from the proposal made by the Indian National Congress and suggested measures which could be fitted into the existing land tenure arrangements.

Dutt's allegations were widely circulated in England. Hamilton was aware of this as Dutt expounded the thesis through his presidential speech before the Congress session at Lucknow held in December 1899.² Hamilton was the first person to respond publicly, though he had neither adequate knowledge nor the inclination

¹ Ibid.

² G.A. Natesan & Co. (ed.), The Indian National Congress (Madras n.d.), 3 Pts, Congress Presidential Address (R.C.Dutt), Pt I, pp. 461-503, esp. 480-490.

to grasp the details of Indian revenue problems. Hamilton disappointed Havelock, the Governor of Madras, when the latter asked for his opinion on settlement questions and wrote: "I am sorry that I am completely ignorant upon settlement questions..."¹ Further, Hamilton wrote to Havelock: "My opinion on such a matter is worth little. Land revenue questions in India are so complicated and form such a special study in themselves that I have not time ... to sufficiently master them beyond knowing the mere rudiments and general principles of the different systems in force..."² Revenue problems were a dreaded subject to Hamilton, as he wrote to Curzon on one occasion: "I am always afraid of these revenue questions, as I admit I do not understand them..."³ On revenue questions Hamilton had to depend entirely on the "opinions and decisions" of the Revenue Committee of the Council of India.⁴ It is an irony that the responsibility of facing Duttian controversy lay with him.

In his speech before the House of Commons in April 1900 Hamilton first held Dutt a champion of the permanent settlement

¹Hamilton to Havelock, 27 July 1899, H.P.

²Hamilton to Havelock, 6 September 1899; see also Hamilton to Elgin, 21 May 1897, H.P.

³Hamilton to Curzon, 12 September 1900, H.P.

⁴Hamilton to Elgin, 25 November 1898, H.P.

and then observed that Bengal was not free from severe famine in the nineteenth century. He said, "In my own recollection there have been two most serious famines in Bengal, and in both cases the condition of those who were under the permanent settlement was in no degree better than that of those who were in neighbouring and adjoining districts which were only temporarily settled."¹ With regard to the rate of rent payable by the Bengal rayats to the zamindars Hamilton thought that Dutt's figure of one-sixth of the gross produce was entirely "erroneous".² On the contrary, Hamilton said that "rents in Bengal in most cases were over 51 per cent, and even went up to 61 per cent of the gross produce".³ Regarding the assessment in the new settlement in the Central Provinces Hamilton observed that he was "reluctant to dogmatise as to what is or is not a reasonable land revenue.... what occurred in the Central Provinces was not that the assessment was put too high, but that it was put up rather too suddenly.... A very considerable increase was made upon the previous assessment..... I do not think it is too high, but I do think its introduction should be gradual."⁴ The reason for

¹Hansard, 81, 3 April 1900, Cols.1122-3.

²Ibid., Col. 1122.

³Ibid., Col. 1123

⁴Ibid.

such a sudden increase of revenue in the Central Provinces was assigned by Hamilton to: (a) the construction of railroads throughout the province, which was said to have brought "immense prosperity" to the country; (b) an increase in cultivation, and (c) a rise in prices by almost 100 per cent.¹ Hamilton did not deal with the revenue affairs of the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras, but on the whole he thought that land revenue in the Native States was much higher than in the British districts.

Hamilton's observation on the impact of famines in Bengal is a gross distortion of the truth. Famines were far less severe in Bengal than in other parts of British India during the nineteenth century.² Hamilton's statement with regard to assessments in the Central Provinces is a virtual acceptance of Dutt's allegation of overassessment there. His comment on the comparison of the rate of land revenue between the Native States and the British territory is not correct/^{as it is not substantiated by ... data.} Regarding Hamilton's statement on the rate of revenue in Bengal it was Dutt himself who made a counter statement in the press. In a letter to the

¹ Ibid.

Manchester Guardian Dutt strongly criticised the alleged informants of Hamilton regarding his statement on Bengal rent.

He wrote;

"I do not know if Lord George Hamilton has been correctly reported, if he actually made this statement, I regret it. There is not a schoolboy in India who will not smile, there is not a young English administrator of two years experience in India who will not blush at the ignorance of the Indian facts shown by this statement, made by a Secretary of State for India in the House of Commons I am absolutely correct, and well within the mark in the statement which I have made and which I still maintain."¹

Dutt mentioned that there were some rare tracts in Bengal which were called Nij-jote land where the rate of rent could be compared with those mentioned by Hamilton. But in general, he observed, Hamilton's figure was not only "inaccurate but also astounding". to all who knew the revenue system of Bengal.²

As a further proof of the accuracy of Dutt's statement Hunter's estimate of the average gross produce and the average rent per acre for some districts of Bengal taken at random may be quoted as under:

¹The Manchester Guardian, 9 April 1900.

²Ibid.

Table II¹

Average rent per acre for some districts of Bengal.

District	Value of produce per acre in rice and winter crops	Average rent per acre	Proportion of rent to produce
	£ s d	£ s d	
24 Parganas	4 7 0	13 6	Less than $\frac{1}{6}$ th
Midnapore	3 15 0	9 0	Less than $\frac{1}{6}$ th
Jessore	3 5 0	9 0	Less than $\frac{1}{6}$ th
Gaya	3 12 0	9 0	$\frac{1}{8}$ th
Noakhali	3 10 0	9 0	Less than $\frac{1}{7}$ th

In a further statement issued in The Times Dutt demanded that an enquiry into the incidence of land revenue in Bengal and Madras should be made in order to verify his statement. He thought that such an enquiry could be completed within one week's time if the collectors of the district were asked to do so by the respective local governments.² Dutt's demand was not complied with but, a year later, asked by the Government of India for its views on Duttian controversy, the Government of Bengal wrote to the

¹W.W.Hunter, Statistical Annals of Bengal, quoted in ibid.

²The Times, 18 April 1900.

former that the percentage of rent to gross produce in Bengal was on the average eleven per cent,¹ which is less than Dutt's gross estimate of sixteen per cent or one-sixth of the gross produce. Besides, the findings of a contributor to the Times of India show that the incidence of land tax in Bengal is the lightest in India; it is highest in Bombay and next highest in Madras.

Table III²

Incidence of Land Revenue per 100 people

<u>Province</u>	
Bengal	Rs 54-0-0p
Bombay	Rs 199-4-0p
Punjab	Rs 114-0-0p
Madras	Rs 132-0-0p
Central Province	Rs 90-0-0p

The incidence of land revenue per acre of fully assessed area was also highest in Bombay and next highest in Madras. It was very light in Oudh and the Punjab.

¹Govt. of Bengal to Govt. of India, 24 June (No. 838T.-R) 1901, para 6, Land Revenue Policy of the Government of India, Calcutta 1902, p.70.

²J., "Bombay Land Revenue", The Times of India (O.E.), 13 April 1901.

Table IV¹Incidence of Land Revenue per acreProvince

N.W.P.	(a) Rs 2- 0- 8p.
	(b) Rs 1-12- 4p.
Oudh	(a) Rs 1-15- 7p.
	(b) Rs 1- 1- 9p.
Punjab	Rs 1- 2- 0p.
Bombay	Rs 3-15- 5p.
Madras	Rs 2- 4-10p.

In Table III the figure for Madras does not show the correct incidence of land revenue in the rayatwari areas as the estimate was made on the basis of whole area of the presidency which included both permanent and temporary rayatwari settled areas. As the incidence of land tax per head in the rayatwari area is higher than that in the permanently settled area, the incidence of land tax on the people in the rayatwari areas of the Madras Presidency must be higher than Rs 132 per 100 people as shown in Table III. Similarly the figure for the Central Provinces does

¹Table compiled from: N.W.P. & O. Administration Report, 1897-8, Appx. pp. 18-21, quoted in R.C.Dutt, Open Letters to Curzon on Famines and Land Assessments in India, op.cit., Appx. B, pp. 113-4; see also Punjab Administration Report, 1898-9, Bombay Administration Report, 1898-9 and Statistical Return, p.75, quoted in ibid., and Madras Administration Report 1898-9, statistical return, p.xxiv, ibid.

not seem to be correct. The calculation was made on the basis of the entire population of the Central Province which comprised both agricultural people and non-agricultural tribes whose number was significant. Had the estimate been made on the basis of the agricultural population only, the incidence of land revenue per 100 people would have been higher than Rs. 90 as shown in Table III.

Hamilton was very much perturbed at Dutt's statement in the press about him and his views. His high estimation of Dutt's services to the government, which he had expressed in the House of Commons, was soured and he characterised Dutt as a "shifty and unreliable fellow".¹ Nevertheless Hamilton could not help feeling an "internal hankering" after the Duttian view and he requested Curzon to give him a clear statement on the whole controversy.²

Curzon also had gone through Dutt's 1899 Congress speech relating to overassessment. But he considered himself an outsider and too much an amateur to handle the revenue questions. Curzon had the impression that the assessments in "some places" might be high, but he believed that low assessments did not ensure

¹Hamilton to Curzon, 27 April 1900, H.P.

²Hamilton to Curzon, 30 May 1900, H.P.

relief from famine.¹ He assured Hamilton that he would deal with the Duttian controversy as soon as the famine was over.²

In India only one Indian civilian contradicted Dutt's view, in a series of letter to the Englishman, Calcutta.³

Dutt, then engaged in his private research in the India Office, sharply refuted his argument with freshly collected statistics.⁴

Dutt did not receive any acknowledgement of his letters to Curzon. Since coming to England in 1896 he had been also engaged in delivering lectures on Indian economic conditions in various parts of England. Towards the end of 1900 he was able to rally behind him the support of some retired civilians. In December they sent a memorial to Hamilton, suggesting the reforms proposed by Dutt in his letters to Curzon.⁵ The memorialists did not mention

¹Curzon to Hamilton, 25 January 1900, C.P.

²Curzon to Hamilton, 20 June 1900, C.P.

³The correspondence was published in the form of a pamphlet. An Indian Civilian, Mr. Dutt and Land Assessments, Calcutta 1900.

⁴Dutt's letter to the Englishman, published in ibid.

⁵Memorial to the S. of S., 20 December 1900, enclo. S. of S. to G.G. in C., 25 January (No. 12 Revenue) 1901, R. & S., Vol. 22, 1901; reprinted in CorresNo. 12, P.P. (H.C.), Vol. 71, 1902. The signatories to the memorial were: Messrs. R.K.Puckle, Late Director of Revenue Settlement and Member of the Board of Revenue, Madras; J.H.Garstin, Late member of the Council, Madras; J.B.Pennington, Late Collector of Tanjore, Madras; H.J.Reynolds, Late Revenue Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal and late member of the Legislative Council of India; Richard Garth, Late Chief Justice of Bengal; R.C.Dutt, Late Offg. Commissioner of Orissa Division and member of the Bengal Legislative Council; C.J.O'Donnell, Late Commissioner of Bhagalpur and Rajsahi Division, Bengal; A. Rogers, Late Settlement

that overasssssment was the cause of the famines or that famines in Bombay, Madras and in the Central Provinces could be avoided by introducing permanent settlements. Rather they considered it essential that the share of the produce of the soil taken as the government demand should be strictly limited in every province and that the land revenue administration should be placed "on such a sound and equitable basis as to secure to the cultivators of the soil a sufficient margin of profit to enable them better to withstand the pressure of future famine".¹ Hamilton forwarded the memorial to the Government of India for their comments and observations. It was most difficult for the Government of India to face the allegation of overassessment and far more difficult to introduce the principles of reform suggested, which involved the curtailment of the increasing revenue demand. It was a question of grave importance whether to any extent the imperial interest was to be subordinated to that of the Indian rayats.

Curzon sent Dutt's letters and the memorial of the retired civilians to the local governments and instructed them to submit

Officer and member of the Council in Bombay; W. Wedderburn, Late Acting Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Bombay; John Jardine, Late Judge of the High Court of Bombay, and J.P. Goodridge, Offg. Settlement Commissioner, Central Provinces.

¹Ibid.

their observations on Dutt's views. In their replies the Governments of the Central Provinces and the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras denied the allegation of overassessment. They argued that the proportion of the rent to gross produce in those provinces was less than claimed by Dutt.¹ Never in their reports did those local governments mention how far the rayats could afford to pay that land revenue. On the basis of the replies of the local governments the Government of India passed a resolution on January 16, 1902 vindicating its land revenue policy.² In the resolution it was observed that the impact of the famines of 1873-4, 1876-7, 1896-7 and 1899-1900 in Bengal was no less significant than in other parts of India affected by those famines. The Government of India remained completely silent about the controversy on the proportion of rent to produce in Bengal as it was embarrassed by the Government of Bengal's declaration of an 11 per cent average. As regards the land tax in other parts of British India, the resolution maintained that the government took a smaller portion of the gross produce

¹Resol., Board of Revenue, Madras, 6 December (No. 542) 1900, enclo. Resol. of the Govt. of India, 16 January (Dept. of Rev. & Agri. No. 1-50-2) 1902, P.P. (H.C.) Vol. 71, 1902; Govt. of Bombay to Govt. of India, 30 March (No. 2181) 1901, enclo., ibid.; Govt. of C.P. to Govt. of India, 11 April (No. 1862) 1901, enclo., ibid.

²Resol. of the Govt. of India, 16 January 1902, ibid.

than was alleged and that it was being progressively lightened to meet the increasing needs of the people. The resolution refuted the allegation that the poverty of the rayats was connected with the overassessment and emphatically asserted that the intention of the government was to deal fairly and leniently with the agricultural classes and that the local governments were instructed to adopt liberal policies in the collection of revenue in bad years. The resolution further declared significantly:

"The Government of India could not desire to claim for the land revenue system of British India an exactitude or freedom from blemish to which it cannot pretend. Historically it owed its immediate origin to practices inherited from the most decadent period of native rule."¹ The resolution then claimed to have established the following propositions;

- a) that permanent settlement was not a protection against the incidence and consequence of famine;
- b) that in areas where the government received land revenue from the landlords government followed the principle of progressive moderation, and that the standard of 50 per cent of the rental of the landlord was one which was almost uniformly observed in practice and more often departed

¹Ibid.

- from on the side of deficiency than excess;
- c) that in the same areas government was willing to protect the interest of the tenants from oppression by the zamindars;
 - d) that in areas where the revenue was paid directly by the cultivator to the government the introduction of the proposed principle of $\frac{1}{5}$ of the gross produce would increase the existing burden;
 - e) that long term settlements were being gradually extended and that the shorter term was to be justified by the conditions created by the local developments;
 - f) that the future policy of the government would be to avoid any harassment of the cultivator by the new settlement operation;
 - g) that prospective assets should not be assessed;
 - h) that local taxes and rates were neither immoderate nor burdensome;
 - i) that overassessment was not the source of the poverty of the rayats nor a cause of famine.¹

Recent writers on Indian history who have touched this question have cast doubt on the contention of the Government of India.² In

¹Ibid.

²R.J.Moore, Sir Charles Wood's Indian Policy, Manchester 1966, p. 203. See also B. Chandra, The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India, New Delhi 1966, pp.414-20; see also H.S.Srivastava, The History of Indian Famines (Agra 1968), pp. 351-6.

this resolution the Government of India, first put undue and erroneous emphasis on the impact of the famines in Bengal. Secondly, the resolution wholly misinterpreted the basic demands of Dutt and other memorialists. It is quite clear from the letters of Dutt and the memorial that they had not advocated the introduction of the Bengal type zamindari settlement. They accepted the system in vogue but requested limiting the demand on land in the periodic settlement so that the rayats could save a margin of profit. Thirdly, the statement by the Government of India that they had uniformly maintained the 50 per cent of the landlord's rental as government demand is unsubstantiated by any statistical data and as such is not a convincing denial of Dutt's allegation. Fourthly, the proposition of the Government of India that the introduction of the proposed principle of one-fifth of the gross produce as land revenue payable by the rayats to the government would increase the existing burden of revenue is also a mere assertion. By this proposition the Government of India implied that the rate of revenue payable by the rayats to the government in the Central Provinces, Bombay and Madras was less than one-fifth of the gross produce. In view of the evidence of Tables III and IV above it could be said that the Government of India was grossly in error here. Fifthly, the assertion of the Government of India that land tax in India

was being progressively lightened seems to be the reverse of the truth. A detailed analysis of the increase of revenue demand in the Central Provinces, Bombay and Madras, as shown below, disproves the assertion of the Government of India. Sixthly, with regard to the period of settlement, the Government of India reserved its discretion to reduce the period from 30 years as demanded by the memorialists to 20 years where and when such reduction was deemed necessary. Seventhly, the resolution kept silent as to the judicial protection of the rayats' interests with regard to assessment of land revenue in the rayatwari areas of Bombay, Central Provinces and Madras as also to the imposition of a compulsory water tax on the Madras rayats. The Government of India did so only because it could not jeopardise its own prestige and British economic interests by letting the rayats go to the law courts and file assessment suits to which the government would be a party. The rayats of Bengal under zamindari settlement were allowed to do that only because in their assessment suits their contestants were mainly the zamindars and, therefore, the government's interests remained absolutely unaffected. Moreover, by enacting the Bengal Tenancy Acts the government, without sacrificing anything, championed the cause of the agrarian classes and won the hearts of the progressive elite. Lastly, without a detailed enquiry into the economic condition of the

rayats it was wrong on the part of the Government of India to assume that there was no connection between the poverty of the people and the government assessment. Rather it could be easily assumed that there is a connection, for the only income the rayats had was derived from his land. Besides, while it is true that overassessment is not the cause of the famine, but it is also true that had the government demand on land been reduced from 33 or 40 per cent to 16 per cent, the rayats could have saved, and mortality due to starvation in time of famine could have been much reduced. As has been explained above the gap between the beginning of virtual starvation of the people and the official declaration of famine and opening of relief operations had always been from two to three months.¹ Savings could have been used to provide food during such interim periods. Hence it could be said, contrary to the contention of the Government of India, that there was a connection between the government demand on land and the rayats' power to resist famine.

The resolution of the Government of India was hailed by the Anglo-Indian press,² but some were, of course, very critical despite their support. The Times of India supported the resolution

¹See for details Chapters I and II.

²The Madras Times, 21 January 1902; The Englishman, 23 January 1902; The Indian Spectator, 26 January 1902; The Pioneer Mail, 7 February 1902.

except for the last proposition. The newspaper contended that without a detailed enquiry into the economic condition of the rayats it was not safe to conclude that the overassessment had no connection with the poverty of the rayats.¹ The Madras Mail Weekly recorded its approval of the resolution but suggested that an enquiry should be made into the paying capacity of the rayats with special reference to the question why coercion in the collection of revenue was so often required.² India wholly disagreed with the contention of the Government of India. The newspaper thought that the reform proposals of the memorialists were very moderate and that these were denied only because India was governed by aliens.³

Back in India in January 1902, Dutt declared in a series of letters to the Pioneer that the contention of the Government of India as recorded in the resolution was nothing but a fallacy and he reiterated his views expressed in his letters to Curzon.⁴ Dutt took strong objection to the allegation made in the resolution

¹The Times of India (O.E.), 25 January 1902.

²The Madras Mail Weekly, 30 January 1902.

³India, 22 August 1902.

⁴The Pioneer, 12 March, 28 March and 7 April 1902; see also The Hindu, 29 March 1902, reprinted in R.P.Mitra (ed.), Open Letters to Curzon, Speeches and Papers, Calcutta 1904, pp. 111.

that native rule was responsible for overassessment. He observed that the decaying periods of the Indian rule had produced many vices but that in the matter of revenue assessment the East India Company was the "greater sinner".¹ Dutt further held that driven by the idea of increasing profit the East India Company raised the revenue to a level unprecedented in the history of India.² This view is supported by Dr. Stokes' considered policy terms of the economic doctrine of the Utilitarians in England.³ Official records showed that the revenue of the area under Indian rule was raised enormously as soon as it was occupied by the East India Company. In 1764 the total revenue collection in Bengal was £8m. and within 30 years it was raised to £27m., a rise of nearly 240 per cent. In the ceded districts of Oudh the last Nawab's revenue demand was Rs. 13¹/₂m.; within three years of Company's rule it rose to Rs. 17m.⁴ As mentioned earlier, in the Bombay Deccan the revenue demand was increased by 100 per cent within four years of Company's rule.⁵

¹Dutt's letter to The Pioneer Mail, 11 April 1902.

²Ibid.

³E. Stokes, The English Utilitarians and India, Oxford 1959, p.138.

⁴Dutt's letter to The Pioneer Mail, 11 April 1902.

⁵See above p. 286.

The figures of revenue demand during the last years of the Indian rule in Madras are not available, but the evidence shows that demand on the rayats' land was oppressively high when the Presidency came under the Company's rule. The Anglo-Indians of the early years of Company's administration condemned the oppressive revenue demand made by the East India Company. In 1808 Mr. Colebrooke protested against "grasping at the highest revenue and wringing from peasants the utmost rent".¹ In 1818 the Madras Board of Revenue rose against "binding the rayats by force to the plough, compelling him to till lands acknowledged to be overassessed, dragging him back to it if he absconded, ... taking from him all that could be obtained".² In 1830 Lieutenant-Colonel Briggs considered that the rate of revenue demanded by the East India Company was the highest and "was never known under any government in Europe and Asia".³ Mr. Shore, another Englishman, writing in 1837 said that "...every successive province, as it has fallen into our possession, has been made a field for higher exaction, and it has always been our boast how greatly we have raised our revenue above that which

¹Quoted in Dutt's letter to the Pioneer Mail, 11 April 1902.

²Quoted in ibid.

³Quoted in ibid.

the native rulers were able to extort."¹ Besides, official reports revealed that torture was resorted to on the rayats through the Indian subordinate staff as one means among others of obtaining revenue.²

Leading Indians from Bombay, Madras and the Central Provinces well acquainted with the revenue problems of their respective areas issued statements against the arguments of the resolution of the Government of India.³

The contention of the Government of India that the rayats were lightly taxed could be refuted and Dutt's claim of over-assessment and the consequent hardship of the rayats could be confirmed, by an examination of the rise in revenue demand, the rise or fall in cultivation, the extent of rayats' land sold and left uncultivated and the coercive measures adopted for the collection of revenue during the last decade of the nineteenth century and also the public reaction of the whole situation.

First, with regard to the Central Provinces, the following two tables show the progressive rate of land revenue demand from 1885-6 to

¹Quoted in ibid.

²See for details P.P. (H.C.), 1857, Vol. XXIX, East India (Torture).

³R.R.Rao, late Deputy Collector, Madras, "The Madras Land Revenue System since 1885", Land Problems in India, Madras 1903, pp. 80-98; G.Venkataratnam, member Madras Legislative Council, "The Madras Land Revenue System", ibid., pp. 99-116; G.Parekh, member Bombay Legislative Council, "The Bombay Land Revenue System", ibid., pp. 117-149; B.K.Bose, member Legislative Council of India, "The Central Provinces and Land Revenue System", ibid., pp. 150-175.

1892-3 and from 1897 to 1899 in the Province as a whole.

Table V

Land revenue demand in C.P.
from 1885-6 to 1892-3¹

Year	Total demand		
	Rs.	As.	Ps.
1885-6	6,173,521	9	8
1886-7	6,207,881	4	1
1887-8	6,281,421	7	2
1888-9	6,362,164	13	0
1889-90	6,559,075	11	11
1890-1	6,719,593	15	7
1891-2	6,730,850	4	2
1892-3	6,734,090	8	7

¹Compiled from: Proc. of the Ch.Com., C.P., Dept. of Rev., 9 March (No. 242-S) 1888; 26 March (No. 424-S) 1889; 19 April (No. 607-S) 1890; 26 March (No. 1403-S-3) 1891; 10 May (No. 1525) 1892; 15 April (No. 1829) 1893, Resol. on the Revenue Administration, Central Provinces 1886-7 to 1891-3, Vol. L5, IX⁽¹⁾.

Table VILand revenue demand in C.P. from 1897 to 1899¹

Year	Total demand		
	Rs.	As.	Ps.
1897	8,356,475	0	0
1898	8,409,815	0	0
1899	9,188,918	0	0

The second reassessment of land revenue in the Central Provinces was effected from 1890. In 1888-89, when the first settlement expired, the revenue demand was Rs. 6,362,164; after ten years, in 1899, the demand rose to Rs. 9,188,918, a rise of nearly 50 per cent over the previous settlement.

In the Central Provinces there was a separate head of land revenue which was called "Land Revenue not on Rolls or Fluctuating Land Revenue". It is not explained in the official records what sort of land the revenue under that head was demanded upon. It is presumed that these lands were not under regular cultivation or occupation. In 1895-6, the year just before the famine of 1896-7, which was not a year of good harvest, the revenue demand under the above mentioned head was Rs. 248,474 and the collection was 67 per cent. In 1897-8, the year immediately

¹Compiled from: Proc. of the Offg. Ch.Com., C.P., Dept. of Rev., 23 August (No. 3434) 1900, para 25-26, Resol. on the Revenue Administration, Central Provinces, 1898-9 - 1903-4, Vol. L5.

after the famine, the demand rose to Rs. 263,727 and the collection was 71 per cent.¹

Besides the rise of revenue demand in the Central Provinces as a whole the following table shows the percentage^{of}/enhancement of revenue demand effected after 1890 district by district.

Table VII

Percentage of enhancement effected after 1890 over the previous settlement in various groups of land.²

District	Enhancements	District	Enhancements
Saugor	68, 42, 48	Chhindwara	45, 55, 47, 25
Damoh	55, 73	Wardha	26, 28
Jubbulpur	50, 44, 62, 86, 64, 77	Nagpur	20, 21, 28, 24
Mandla	61, 66	Bhandara	40, 38, 30, 52
Senoi	95, 97, 55, 92, 50	Balaghat	48
Narsingpur	57, 46	Raipur	82, 98
Hoshangabad	69, 87, 96	Bilaspur	102, 105
Nimar	58, 56	Sambalpur	34
Betul	55, 63.8, 57, 37		

Further, the high assessment was certainly not due to any corresponding extension of cultivation. Rather, during the last

¹Ibid., para : 27.

²Speech of B.K.Bose, Proc. L.C.I., 28 March 1900, quoted in R.C.Dutt, Open Letters etc., op.cit., Appx. C.

decade of the nineteenth century the Central Provinces had been suffering from the agricultural depression. The following table shows the decrease in cultivation.

Table VIII

Decrease in the area of cultivation in
the C.P. during 1893-1900¹

District	% of Decrease	District	% of Decrease
Saugor	32	Hoshangabad	22
Damoh	25	Betul	30
Jubbálpur	21	Wardha	15
Mandala	10	Bhandara	26
Senoi	23	Balaghat	41
Narsingpur	13	Bilaspur	13

The total loss of cultivation during the above mentioned period was 2m. acres in the whole Central Provinces, which was 12 per cent of the total cultivable area. The progressive rate of land revenue demand in spite of agricultural depression was burdensome to the rayats who could only pay the revenue with hardship and difficulty. Various coercive measures had to be employed with those who could

¹B.K.Bose's letter to the Times of India (O.E.), 6 April 1901.

not afford to pay government demand.

Table IX

Coercive measures undertaken in revenue collection
in C.P. from 1885-6 to 1891-2 and from 1897-8 to 1898-9.¹

Processes	Year	Year
	1885-6 to 1891-2	1897-8 to 1898-9
Notices of demand	9229	1832
No. of defaulters brought to Dist. or Tashil H.Q.	1702	1916
No. of defaulters jailed in Civil Court	11	20
No. of attachment of moveable property ordered	16,559	16,298
No. of attachment of moveable property effected	1114	4535
Sale of moveable property	44 (incomplete)	400
Attachment or direct management of <u>Mahal</u>	Not given	272

The table shows that the coercive measures undertaken by the government were much more severe in two years, 1897-8 to 1898-9, between the two great famines, than those undertaken in seven

¹Compiled from: Resolutions on Revenue Administration in the Central Provinces 1886-7 to 1891-3, op.cit., and Proc. of the Offg. Ch. Com., C.P., Dept. of Rev., 23 August (No. 3434) 1900, op.cit.

years from 1885-6 to 1891-2.

Immediately after the operation of the resettlement in the Central Provinces public reaction ran high against the new settlement. In 1891 when the new Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces visited Bilaspur 15,000 people from the district staged a demonstration at the Bilaspur railway station. Their cry was, "bandobast se mar gaya" (the settlement has killed us).¹ It can be seen from Table VII that in the Bilaspur district revenue demand was increased by 102 to 105 per cent over the previous settlement. The Anglo-Indian newspapers were emphatic in their views on the overassessment in the Central Provinces. The Pioneer observed that the land in the Central Provinces was highly assessed.² Before the resolution on the land revenue policy of the Government of India was passed the Times of India alleged that in the new settlement of land revenue the Central Provinces did not receive a "fair trial". The newspaper urged the need to rectify the defects of the new assessment.³ India observed that had there been an independent enquiry into the

¹Dutt's letter to the Manchester Guardian, n.d. reprinted in India, 2 March 1900.

²The Pioneer, n.d., cited in India, 29 June 1900; see also the Indian Agriculturist, 2 July 1900.

³The Times of India (O.E.), 11 May 1901.

results of the recent settlement operation in the Central Provinces people would have known more clearly the causes of the famine than they were likely to know from an examination of relief operation by an official famine commission.¹ Overassessment in the Central Provinces was complained of in the Viceroy's Legislative Council. Mr. Chetnavis, a member, held that high assessment of land revenue was one of the main causes of the poverty of the people of the Central Provinces.²

Secondly, with regard to the Madras Presidency the official records show a progressive rise in revenue demand, a slight increase in the area of cultivation, large sale of defaulters' land, and a vast area of land that remained uncultivated. In 1880-1 the total revenue demand in the rayatwari areas of the Madras Presidency was Rs. 34,886,890;³ in 1890-1 it was Rs. 38,156,778⁴ and in 1900-1 it rose to Rs. 44,807,999.⁵ The increase of demand during the twenty years is nearly 29 per cent. But during the

¹India, 13 January 1899.

²Proc. L.C.I., n.d., cited in India, 14 March and 13 May 1898.

³Proc. Board of Revenue, Madras, 5 June (No. 1454) 1882, enclo. Proc. of the Madras Govt., 15 September (Rev. No. 985) 1882, Madras Land Revenue Reports for Fasli 1290 or 1880-81, Vol. L5-II, 1880-81.

⁴Proc. of the Madras Govt., 20 October (Rev. No. 1075) 1892, Madras Land Revenue Proceedings for Fasli 1300 or 1890-1, Vol. L5.II, 1890-1.

⁵Proc. Board of Revenue, Madras (Revenue Settlement, Land Records & Agriculture), 28 February (No. 30) 1902, para. 14, Madras Land Revenue Reports for Fasli 1310, 1900-01, Vol. L5.II(1), 1900-02.

last quarter of the nineteenth century the cultivation in the rayatwari areas was increased by 1.016m. acres. In 1874-5, the year before the great Madras Famine of 1876-7, the total cultivated area was 17.604m. acres, in 1890-1 it rose to 17.822m. and in 1900-1 it was 18.620m. acres.¹ But this increase of 1.016m. acres under actual cultivation is not proportionate to the growth of population in Madras. For during the period from 1880-1 to 1900-1 the population of the Madras Presidency rose from 31,220,973 to 38,199,162,² an increase of 6,998,189 or nearly 7 million. Hence the increase in area under cultivation does not seem to have brought about any benefit to the peasants. Government revenue demand was burdensome to them and many were forced to pay government revenue under severe coercion,³ lands and personal property of those who had failed to pay were sold:

¹Ibid.

²Census of India (Madras), 1901, Vol. XV-A, Pt. II, Table II, p.4.

³See for detail "Statement showing the number of Processes issued against Land Revenue defaulters in the year 1901-02", East India (Land Revenue), P.P. (H.C.), 1904, Vol. 63.

Table X

Sale of land and personal property of defaulters
in the rayatwari areas from 1887-8 to 1890-1 and
1891-2 to 1895-6.¹

	1887-8 to 1890-1	1891-2 to 1895-6
No. of defaulters	64,415	58,838
Acres sold	87,144	160,950
Acres bought in	39,849	71,534
Value of personal property sold	Rs.276,611	Rs.271,929

From January 1893 Alexander Rogers was constantly trying to draw the attention of the Secretary of State for India to this state of affairs.² He specially pointed out that nearly 60 per cent of the defaulters' lands were bought in by the government for want of bidders and that throughout the whole rayatwari area nearly 6m. acres of cultivable land under government possession was lying waste. This was mainly because of the fact that the government demand on those lands was so high that the cultivators were utterly discouraged from taking up those lands. Rogers then suggested that government demand on those lands should be reduced from 50 per cent to 30 per cent of the gross produce of the field so that the people

¹A. Rogers, "Government Evictions in Madras", India, 4 February 1898. The table was compiled from the Madras Revenue Administration Reports from 1887 to 1896.

²Rogers to S. of S., 12 January, 3 February and 29 March, 1893, cited in ibid.

were induced to take up the land for cultivation.¹ Rogers' views and suggestions were forwarded to the Madras Government but remained unanswered for over three years despite/^{his}repeated reminders. In 1896 the Madras Board of Revenue passed a resolution on this matter. The Board admitted the sale of land referred to by Rogers as well as the existence of an unoccupied area of 6m. acres. The Board then observed that the whole affair was under their consideration. With regard to land lying uncultivated the Board held the collectors concerned responsible for not distributing it to the rayats. The Board objected to Rogers' suggestion of reducing the revenue of those lands. It argued that such a precedent would encourage the occupiers of land to become defaulters with a view to getting a reduction of revenue.² The Madras Mail Weekly supported Rogers' allegations.³ Actually the resolution of the Board of Revenue was a virtual concession of Rogers' argument. But the Board's reason for rejecting Rogers' remedy is not only unconvincing but misleading. A rayat's plot of land is the very breath of his life, as it is the only source of income of his whole family and he tries to hold his ancestral land at all cost. It is absolutely incredible that the rayats

¹ Ibid.

² Cited in ibid.; see also summary of the resolution in The Madras Mail Weekly, 30 April 1896.

³ The Madras Mail Weekly, 30 April 1896.

would gamble with their plot of land en masse having been intentionally defaulters with the hope of getting some reduction in revenue.

In 1857 John Stuart Mill prepared a memorandum on the land tenures of India in which he made mention of the high assessment in the Madras Presidency. He observed: "Unfortunately the share of government was generally fixed too high and the result of this overassessment, increased as its pressure has been by the fall in the value of produce since the settlement was made, has never allowed the system a fair trial."¹ In 1894 the collector of the Coimbatore district spoke of the hardship of the rayats in paying government revenue. Referring to the Udamalpet taluk of his district the collector wrote to the higher authority: "Out of a demand of Rs. 61,318 for January, the Tashildar was unable to collect more than Rs. 22,410. The ryots are said to have no money in hand, and the moneylenders to have raised their rates of interest, and ... I see no reason to doubt that both these statements are true...."² It is a very rare report written by a collector without at first resorting to routine coercive measures.

¹A return written by J.S.Mill, June 1857 (n.d.), East India (Tenure of Land), P.P. (H.C.) 1857, Vol. XXIX.

²Collector of Coimbatore to Comm. of Rev. Settlement and Director of the Dept. of Land Records & Agri., 15 February (No. Bd.2562) 1893, enclo., Resol. 21 February (No.73) 1893, Rev. Proc. Madras, Dept. of Rev., 4 March (No. Rev. 208) 1893, Madras Revenue Proc., Vol. 4425, 1893.

Under the operation of the third settlement, effected after 1890, people all over the province were sullen with discontent. Reports from the vernacular newspapers show a grim picture of suffering of the rayats to pay the kist of the sarkar under the new assessment. In March 1891 the rayats of Tanjore held a meeting and sent a memorial to the collector protesting against the enhancement of land tax in the new settlement.¹ The Janamitran of Tanjore accused the settlement officers for their unmindfulness of the distress of the peasants and their self-aggrandisement at all costs.² The rayats were said to have been forced to pay the kist with "tears in their eyes".³ The Wyanaad Planters Association and the Wyanaad Mahajan Sabha raised their voices against the overassessment.⁴ The effect of the resettlement was intolerable to the Madras Mail Weekly. The newspaper sharply commented:

"It is not, however, right for the government to take advantages of its position as a monopolist to levy a uniform rate which is far in excess of

¹Janamitran, 28 March 1891, M.N.N.R., 1891.

²Ibid., 30 May 1891 and 26 September 1891; see also Andhra Prakasika, 2 May 1891; Vrittanta Chintamani, 6 May and 15 July 1891; Swadeshmitran, 30 June and 4 August 1891; Hindujana Samaskarini, October 1891, M.N.N.R., 1891.

³Nilalochani, 23 February 1891, ibid.

⁴The Madras Mail Weekly, 18 January and 19 April 1894.

the value of the benefits that it gives in return in a number of cases. It may again be urged that in a large number of cases the injustice goes further, for the general tax payer has a right to ask that this valuable asset should not in any case be given for less than it is worth. But it is precisely this which is and has for many years been going on in the Godavery and Kistna deltas. ... It is to this circumstance¹ that we allude when we say that the present system is fraught with injustice. To the removal of this injustice, the efforts of the government should be devoted without delay and without ceasing. The opportunity has lain in the hands of Sir Arthur Havelock for some time past, but as time passes nothing seems to be done. Possibly when a decision is arrived at, we shall see a repetition of the unseemly and unbecoming haste which was displayed when the revised assessments were introduced a few years ago in Trichinopoly district...¹

Conferences were held in various districts protesting against the method of assessment. On 21 February 1901 the rayats of the Chingleput district sent a deputation to Lord Ampthill and complained that the rayats had to pay the kist on the whole of a survey plot number although only a portion of the plot had been cultivated. The Madras Mail Weekly commented that this was "the kind of grievance that a local government should never permit".² The conference of the Godavari district held on 27 May, 1901 resolved that: (a) the increase in assessment in no case should exceed 15 per cent; (b) the period of settlement should be made thirty years; (c) an appeal from the decision of the revenue officer

¹The Madras Mail Weekly, 19 January 1899.

²Ibid., 28 February 1901.

should be to an independent tribunal.¹ The Madras Provincial Conference held at Madurai also adopted similar resolutions² and the Krishna District Conference followed suit.³

The overassessment was caused mainly during the process of reclassification of land in the revision of the settlement. The rate of revenue for panja (dry) land was Rs. 1-1-10p. per acre and for nanja (wet) land it was Rs. 5-0-1p. per acre.⁴ Land with a very low supply of water from the government canals was usually considered nanja land and was assessed according to nanja rate. The Madras Mail Weekly contended that the state should not exact the assessment unless the water necessary for cultivation were supplied. The newspaper thought that a system of remission on wet land was not only a "matter of common justice but also one of sound policy".⁵ The settlement officers used to pitch their camps at a remote corner of a village and reassess land on the basis of the past records without at that time examining the plot. The rayats were officially entitled to place their grievances with regard to new assessment before the settlement officer. But only

¹Ibid., 6 June 1901.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 13 June 1901.

⁴Quoted in Resol. of the Madras Board of Revenue, n.d., 1896, summarised in the Madras Mail Weekly, 30 April 1896.

⁵The Madras Mail Weekly, 30 May 1901.

a few rich and influential rayats of the village could get their grievances redressed through appeal to the settlement officer,¹ while the small poor peasants had very little access to the settlement camps.²

Thirdly, with regard to the Bombay Presidency, the total revenue including sale proceeds of waste land and other miscellaneous items rose from Rs. 248.9 lakhs in 1871-2-3 to Rs. 305 lakhs in 1898-9-1900, the increase being the 56.9 lakhs during the period or about 23 per cent. Of the total increase of 56.9 lakhs, Rs. 42.7 lakhs were due to revision of settlement and Rs. 14.2 lakhs to extension of cultivation.³ The extent of enhancement of land revenue after the revision of settlement may be gauged more clearly by an analysis of reassessment of revenue in some taluks taken at random. At the revision of settlement in the Panvel taluk of the Colaba district there was an increase of 36.6 per cent in rice land and 145 per cent in rabi land. The average increase was 44.8 per cent. over the preceding settlement.⁴ In Pen taluk of the same district the

¹Vettikkodiyon, 10 April 1891, M.N.N.R., 1891.

²Swadeshmitran, 1 May 1891, ibid.

³J, "Bombay Land Revenue", The Times of India (O.E.), 13 April 1901.

⁴Resol. Bombay, 8 September (Rev. No.7166) 1892, Bombay Revenue Proceedings, Vol. 4261, 1892, pp. 792-9.

increase was 20.7, 18.7, 41.2 and 34.4 per cent in grades 1, 2, 3 and 4 rice land respectively and 149.7 per cent in rabi land.¹ In the Kalyan taluk of the Thana district there was an increase of 44.8 per cent over the previous settlement. The estimate of the price index in this taluk, which is very important in revising the revenue, was reported to be defective and it was observed by the government that the general statistics of the taluk were "unfortunately not complete and that the record of prices of the staple food is itself defective".² There are of course some rare instances where the Revenue Department of the Bombay Government refused to sanction the rate of enhancement of revenue recommended by the settlement officer. In the Murbad taluk of the Thana district the settlement officer recommended an enhancement of 47.1 per cent over the previous assessment; but this was not sanctioned by the Bombay Government, which afterwards approved only 35.2 per cent.³

This rise in revenue demand was not backed by the extension of cultivation. Rather, during the last decade of the nineteenth century Bombay Presidency suffered from the agricultural depression.

¹Resol. Bombay, 19 March (Rev. No. 2064) 1894, paras 9-10, Bombay Revenue Proceedings, Vol. 4662, 1894, pp. 211-2.

²Resol. Bombay, 10 April (Rev. No. 2826) 1895, Bombay Revenue Proceedings, Vol. 4866, 1895, pp. 314-7.

³Resol. Bombay, 10 April (Rev. No. 2827) 1895, ibid., pp. 318-21.

In 1889-90 the total net cropped area in the Presidency was 25.133 m. acres and in 1899-1900 it fell to 22.059m. acres, a decrease of 3.074m. acres.¹ Besides, during the same period there was a tremendous loss of cattle in Bombay. The number of cattle was 8.685m. in 1893-4 and only 5.863m. in 1899-1900, a loss of 2.832m. or 33 per cent.²

High revenue assessment and depressing agriculture caused hardship on the people in paying the government revenue and the government had to undertake stringent coercive measures against defaulters which led to the sale and forfeiture of land and other private property.

¹J, "Bombay Land Revenue", The Times of India (O.E.), 13 April 1901.

²Ibid.

Table XI

Coercive measures undertaken against the defaulters
during the last decade of the 19th century.¹

	Average of 5 yrs ending 1895-6	1896-7 to 1899-1900
No. of notices served	69,160	916,156
Acres of land sold	3,617	63,316
Cases of distraint and sale of moveable property	384	6,891
Cases of sale of immovable property	7	41
No. of cases of forfeiture and sale of property	447	6,324
Cases of penalty	2,101	9,857

The above table shows that during the four years from 1896-7 to 1899-1900, covered by the two great famines, 63,316 acres of defaulters'

¹Compiled from:

- (i) Resol. Bombay, 13 October (Rev. No. 7303) 1899, para 8, on the Report of the Revenue Settlement of the Northern, Central and Southern Division and of the Dept. of Land Record and Agriculture for the year 1897-8, Jamabandi Report of the Northern, Central and Southern Divisions and Annual Report of the Dept. of Land Records and Agriculture, 1896-7 to 1901-1902, Vol. L5.III⁽¹⁾;
- (ii) Resol. Bombay, 25 October (Rev. No. 6680) 1900, para 9, on the Report of the Revenue Settlement of the Northern, Central and Southern Divisions and of the Dept. of Land Records and Agriculture for the year 1898-9, ibid.;
- (iii) Resol. Bombay, 5 November (Rev. No. 7774) 1901, para 8, on the Report of the Revenue Settlement of the Northern, Central and Southern Division and of the Dept. of Land Records and Agriculture for the year 1899-1900, ibid.

land were sold. This figure seems to be incomplete in view of the fact that according to Gokuldas Parekh, a member of the Bombay Legislative Council who made a personal investigation into the revenue affairs of Gujrat, it was in the three districts of Gujrat, i.e., Ahmedabad, Kaira and Broach, that 63,601 acres of defaulters' land were sold at auction during the three years from 1896-7 to 1898-9.¹

As far back as 1874 Northbrook observed that the assessment of land revenue in the Bombay Presidency was pushed too hard and that the government had neglected to carry out any policy of moderation.² In 1879 Justice G. Ranade complained of the high revenue assessment in the Presidency, especially in the Deccan.³ In the same year W.W.Hunter exposed the main causes of the poverty of the rayats of the Deccan before the Viceroy's Legislative Council. He said, "... the fundamental difficulty of bringing relief to the Deccan peasantry... is that the government does not leave enough food to the cultivator to support himself and his family throughout the year".⁴ Parekh's enquiry revealed that

¹Speech before the Bombay Provincial Conference held at Satara, May (n.d.) 1900, quoted in India, 22 June 1900.

²Northbrook to Salisbury, 12 November 1874 and 8 April 1875, N.P.

³Journal of the Poona Sarbhajanik Sabha, July 1879, Vol. II, No. 1, p.19, cited in B. Chandra, op.cit., p.405.

⁴Proc. L.C.I., n.d. 1879 quoted in Dutt to Curzon, 6 April 1900, op.cit.

revenue assessment was highest in the Gujrat division. The incidence of land tax per acre in the rayatwari areas of Ahmedabad, Kaira and Broach was Rs. 2-11-1p., Rs.5-0-7p. and Rs. 5-1-6p. respectively. The incidence of taxation per head of population was Rs. 2-7-8p., Rs. 3-12-6p. and Rs. 8-1-2p. respectively. Parekh also maintained that the incidence of assessment on the gross value of the produce was equally heavy.¹

The newspapers of Bombay, always vigorous in their expression, kept themselves engaged in recording their protests against the high revenue assessment and consequent distress of the people. The causes of the high assessment were attributed by the newspapers to: (a) wrong methods of reclassification of the soil and a recalculation of the price index; (b) arbitrary decisions of the settlement officers; (c) scant regard to the views of the rayats; and (d) the illiberal revenue policy of the government.²

The whole analysis of the effects of the settlement operations in the Central Provinces and the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras provides ample evidence that lands in those regions were highly assessed and that the high land tax put a severe strain on the economic condition of the peasants. The poverty of the

¹Speech before the Bombay Provincial Conference held at Sarara, May 1900, op.cit.

²Sudhakar, 27 January and 7 April 1894, Bom.N.N.R., 1894; see also: The Native Opinion, 4 February and 8 April 1894; Pratod, 5 February 1894; Subha Suchak, 9 February 1894; Indu Prakas, 19 February 1894; Poona Vaibhav, 25 February 1894; Bom.N.N.R., 1894. See also Maratha, 19 July 1896, Gujrat Mitra, 9 August and 30 August 1896, Bom.N.N.R., 1896.

Indian peasants could be removed, first, by directly increasing the productivity of land through the application of improved techniques of cultivation, better seeds, fertilizers, extensive irrigation and providing the peasants with timely, adequate and cheap credit. The second and indirect way of improving their condition is the growth of industries which would relieve the pressure of population on land. The first course of action involved heavy expenditure, for which direct state help and cooperation were necessary, while the second measure was detrimental to the interests of the British industries in the Indian market. Hence it is impossible on the part of the Government of India to undertake the above measures to improve the condition of the people. Under this circumstance the introduction of the principles of reform suggested by Dutt and other memorialists were the only remedies that could offer some benefits to the rayats.

The Government of India was absolutely adamant in its refusal to forego the unearned increment of the land. During the eighteen-sixties and seventies both the home government and the Government of India had contemplated the extension of the permanent assessment throughout India.¹ The impact of the mutiny had induced

¹ Colonel Baird Smith first advocated extension of permanent settlement. See for details, Further Report on Famine of 1860-1 in the N.W.P., 14 August 1861, P.P.(H.C.) 1862, Vol. XL, pp. 376-86. For further documents on permanent settlement see R.C.Dutt, Open Letter to Curzon on Famines and Land Assessments in India, op.cit., Appx. K to O.

official circles to think of conciliating the nobility and the peasants of India by reducing the land tax.¹ But in the eighties, when the fear of the mutiny was over and the government was faced with financial problems, the proposal was dropped for ever.²

During the nineties the Indian National Congress complained of the overassessment in the rayatwari areas and advocated the permanent fixation of the land tax.³ The famine of 1896-7 made the government conscious of the agrarian problems of India. In April 1897 The Times raised the demand for the permanent settlement as a remedy to the distress of the peasants.⁴ Elgin was strongly against the permanent settlement. Contradicting the view of The Times Elgin alleged that the demand for the permanent settlement was raised mainly by the educated and wealthy Bengalees and their allies in England. He was strongly in favour of temporary settlement, as by this system the government could retain a substantial

¹T.R.Metcalf, "The Influence of Mutiny of 1857 on Land Policy in India", Historical Journal, IV, 2, 1961, pp. 152-63; "The Struggle Over Land Tenures in India, 1860-8", Journal of Asian Studies, XXI, May 1962, pp. 295-307; see also R.J.Moore, op.cit., p.178.

²S. of S. to G.G. in C., 8 January 1885, cited in R.C.Dutt, Open Letters to Curzon etc., op.cit., p.157.

³See Appx. D for a list of Congress resolutions on agro-economic reforms.

⁴The Times, 27 April 1897. The newspaper observed "Among the conditions which make for the permanent prosperity of agricultural races, fixity of tenure holds a foremost place".

share of the unearned increment of land.¹ Hamilton shared Elgin's views. He observed that had there been no railway programme undertaken by the government, the question of permanent settlement would have been considered. Continuous development of railroads by the government and a permanent settlement of land revenue were, according to Hamilton, quite incompatible.² Hamilton seems to have confused the nature of permanent settlement desired by the Indian nationalists which, as mentioned earlier, was the fixity of revenue assessment made between the Government and the rayats. What Hamilton had in his mind was the Bengal type permanent settlement and, therefore, he thought that the introduction of the permanent settlement would not benefit either the government or the rayats, as the whole benefit would be enjoyed by the middlemen.³

II Legislation

Elgin's government completely sidestepped the problem of assessment. Elgin thought that the poverty and indebtedness of the rayats were unconnected with the government assessments.⁴

¹Elgin to Hamilton, 1 June 1897, E.P.

²Hamilton to Elgin, 25 June 1897, H.P.

³Hamilton to Elgin, 9 July 1897, H.P.

⁴Elgin to Hamilton, 28 April 1897, E.P.

It was the traditional belief of the major section of the English officials that the rayats were habitually extravagant in their expenditure for marriage and funeral feasts. Since the rayats had the right to possess, sell, inherit or mortgage their land, they could borrow money from the moneylenders and when they failed to repay the loan then land was transferred to the moneylenders. This process led to poverty, indebtedness and the transfer of land from the cultivating class to non-cultivating moneylenders, and the Government of India under Elgin was determined to legislate in order to relieve the peasants from indebtedness. Three reform measures were considered: (a) improvement of the Court of Wards, (b) measures for protecting debtors as an extension of the Deccan Rayats Relief Act; and (c) measures for restricting the right of land transfer. Of these three the last was considered extremely important.¹ After the famine of 1896-7 was over Ibbeston was entrusted with the task of devising legislation on the restriction of the right to transfer land. Elgin wrote to Hamilton that the Government of India would lay down the principle of such legislation and let each provincial government amend its laws to suit its own condition.²

¹Ibid.

²Elgin to Hamilton, 12 May 1898, E.P.

In November 1898 the Government of India sent a despatch to London detailing the programme for legislation to restrict the right of transfer of land in order to prevent the land passing from the cultivators to the non-cultivating moneylender.¹ Earlier, in October 1895, the Government of India had sent a circular to all local governments asking them to report on the subject. From the replies of the local governments it was considered that agricultural indebtedness and land transfer were acute in the Punjab. Hence the Government of India decided to embark on such legislation first in the Punjab. The proposed legislation was intended to prohibit any transfer of land from the agriculturists to the non-agricultural community.² The social object of the proposed legislation was to save the Punjab peasants from the clutches of the moneylenders, while the political object was to win the heart of a fighting race.

The principle of the proposed legislation amounted to an interference with the right of private property. Sir Dennis Fitzpatrick, the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, was strongly opposed to the proposed restriction as he thought that such a measure would incite political unrest. Fitzpatrick suggested that restriction should be applied only in some selected areas on an experimental

¹G.G. in C. to S. of S., 3 November (C. Land Rev. No. 59) 1898, Rev. Letters from India, Vol. 2739, 1898.

²Ibid.

basis. Fitzpatrick's successor, Mackworth Young, also held the same view but he referred the matter to a committee of Punjab revenue officials. The committee supported the general restriction of alienation as proposed by the Government of India.¹ All the papers were sent to the India Office for inspection and observation.

Elgin could not initiate the bill during his term of office. He left India in December 1898 and the legislation fell to Curzon, who succeeded him. The Council of India recognized the social and political objectives of the proposed legislation but disagreed on the scope of restrictions. Fitzpatrick, then a member of the India Council, violently opposed the general restriction as he had a year earlier as Lieutenant Governor of Punjab. Three other members of the Council agreed with him. They all supported restrictions in selected areas on an experimental basis.² Hamilton was much afraid of the effects of the proposed legislation. He wrote to Curzon, "I am always nervous about agrarian agitation, for I have passed so much of my political life in watching and combating its effects in Ireland...."³ After a good deal of deliberation the India Council was able to pass a despatch, which

¹Ibid.

²Hamilton to Curzon, 28 March 1899, H.P.

³Ibid.

did not offer any alternative proposal but simply considered the pros and cons of the two conflicting views. The Viceroy was given the option to choose the course of action.¹ Hamilton personally advised Curzon to accommodate Mackworth Young's views and assured him that whatever course of action he would take, he would have the approval of the India Council.²

Curzon was delighted at the decision of the India Office. He consulted with Rivaz and Ibbeston in Simla and preferred the principle of general restriction throughout the province.³ A despatch was sent to London together with a copy of the draft bill.⁴ On September 27, 1899 the bill for Alienation of Land in Punjab was introduced in the Viceroy's Legislative Council. It was severely opposed by Sir Harnam Singh, but ultimately passed into an act.⁵

The principle of the land legislation in the Punjab involved the infringement of the right of ownership of the property. The purpose behind such legislation seems to be more political than economic. Thorburn's investigation in the Punjab villages revealing that the Muslim peasants were oppressed by the Hindu dominated

¹S. of S. to G.G. in C., 27 April (Rev. No. 83) 1899, R. & S., Vol. 20, 1899.

²Hamilton to Curzon, 21 April 1899, H.P.

³Curzon to Hamilton, 10 May 1899, C.P.

⁴G.G. in C. to S. of S., 27 July (Rev. No. 50) 1899, cited in N.G.Barrier, The Punjab Alienation of Land Bill, 1900, Duke University 1966, pp. 56-57.

⁵For details see N.G.Barrier, ibid., Chs. II and III.

moneylenders was the main cause that led to official fear of the agrarian unrest amongst the people which supplied the "flower of the native army". The Punjab act was designed to protect them. It was not questioned what was the real cause of the indebtedness nor was it investigated to what extent land was transferred from the peasants to the moneylenders. This question was raised by Fitzpatrick but was rejected by the Government of India. Hamilton at first could not lend his support to the Punjab bill as he was afraid of the possible unrest from a fighting race whose affection, Hamilton strongly maintained, the government should nurse.¹ Moreover, Hamilton considered Thorburn's estimate of indebtedness and land transfer in the Punjab exaggerated.² But he failed to carry out his own views and submitted to Curzon's wishes. Curzon, on the other hand, being an amateur in revenue questions, gave no economic explanation for his support to the Punjab bill. Since the proposal of the bill was originated in the Government of India and was objected to by two Lieutenant Governors, and since the Government of India in such cases was constitutionally empowered to override the opinion of the Lieutenant Governors, Curzon did not give up the opportunity of exercising his influence over this affair.

¹Hamilton to Elgin,, 16 September 1897, H.P.

²Hamilton to Curzon, 6 March 1902, H.P.

Contrary to the intention of Elgin he got the bill introduced in the supreme legislature lest the Punjab officials should influence it if it were introduced in the Punjab Legislative Council. Mackworth Young was present at Simla while the draft of the bill was prepared there by Rivaz and Ibbeston, but he was not consulted.

The Punjab Land Alienation Act was very unpopular all over India. The Indian National Congress was at first opposed to the proposed restriction but later on withdrew its opposition in order to maintain its secular policy. For the majority of the peasants were Muslims, while most of the moneylenders were Hindus.¹ The Indian newspapers opposed the Act and all were of the opinion that the root causes of the poverty and indebtedness of the rayats were that government revenue was high and that the rayats had to borrow from the moneylenders mainly to pay the government revenue, as well as to feed his family.² The Indian Spectator observed that it was not the Shaukars, who were the cause of the indebtedness, but rather the government revenue system.³ The Civil and Military Gazette, the leading Anglo-Indian daily of Lahore, objected to the act on the ground that it would not uproot the causes of the poverty

¹N.G.Barrier, op.cit., pp. 67-8.

²The Hindu Patriot, 30 September 1899; Maratha, 9 October 1899.

³The Indian Spectator, 1 October 1899.

of the peasants. The newspaper suggested that to remove the poverty of the people the government should induce the peasants to increase production by providing irrigational and regular credit facilities, by reducing the cost of litigation, distributing the waste land and by the growth of industries inviting capital from Indian and English capitalists. In an accusing tone the newspaper sharply commented that the government had done little in this direction except "vague aspirations and approbations".¹

A year after the enactment of the Punjab Land Alienation Bill the Bombay Government sought to remedy the indebtedness of the Bombay rayats by introducing a bill on similar principles. The Bombay Land Revenue Code Act of 1879 allowed the rayats to possess their land with full right to inherit, sell or mortgage so long as they paid the government revenue.² It was the belief of the Bombay Government that because of the existence of the above mentioned rights vast areas of land in Bombay were being transferred from the agricultural classes to the non-agricultural Shaukars in the process of credit transactions between them. In order to check the alleged transfer of land the Government of Bombay proposed to introduce a bill amending the Bombay Land Revenue Code Act of 1879 with special reference to section 68 of the Act.

¹The Civil and Military Gazette, 3 February 1900.

²Sec. 68, the Bombay Land Revenue Code Act of 1879.

The effects would be that no sale or mortgage of land under survey and settlement could be transacted without the permission of the revenue officer, and that the collector would be empowered to take up land on short leases or on special terms, whether by private contract or by attachment and sale, under orders of the civil courts.¹

On 30 May, 1901 the bill was introduced in the Bombay Legislative Council.² In support of the main purpose of the bill Monteath, the Chief Secretary to the Bombay Government, declared that the grant of unrestricted right to property in land subject to the payment of government revenue had been the main cause of the agricultural indebtedness and the transfer of vast agricultural land from the agricultural community to the non-agricultural shaukar; and that it was the duty of the government to save the rayats from the shaukars by effecting restrictions on the right of alienation of land, without affecting the legitimate right of inheritance. Monteath held that the state demand on land had nothing to do with the indebtedness of the rayats. He explained that the main cause of the indebtedness was the "lavishness" of the rayats in their expenditure on "social ceremony", under the pressure of which they borrowed from the shaukar by mortgaging

¹Statement of Objects and Reasons of the Bill No. IV of 1901 to amend the Bombay Land Revenue Code Act of 1879, para 3, published in The Times of India (O.E.), 25 May 1901.

²Bill IV of 1901.

their land, and that the whole process culminated in sale of land.¹ Lely, Commissioner of the Northern Division, held that the enactment of such a bill was necessary in view of the example set up in the Punjab.²

Gokhale vehemently objected to the Bill on the grounds, first, that the very principle of the bill was unconstitutional as it violated the right of private property and allowed the revenue authority to exercise unrestricted power with regard to tenure of land free from judicial control; secondly, that it was not investigated as to what extent land was transferred from the rayats to the shaukars, which rendered necessary such legislation; thirdly, that it was not ascertained whether government demand on land had any connection with indebtedness of the rayats. He urged that the bill should be deferred until a careful and comprehensive enquiry was made into the pressure of assessment, the extent of agricultural indebtedness and land transfer, causes of the relinquishment and forfeiture, the effect of the rigidity of the revenue collection and the general economic condition of the peasants.³

¹Proc. Bombay Legislative Council, 30 May 1901.

²Ibid.

³Ibid. Other Indian members who spoke against the Bill were: Meherban Narayan Govind, Gokuldas Parekh and S.A.Chhatre.

After the first reading was over the bill was referred to a select committee consisting of six members, including Gokhale and Chhatre.¹ The Committee was divided in its opinion. The majority report, signed by four members, fully supported the bill,² while the minority report by Gokhale and Chhatre objected to it. Gokhale and Chhatre stated that the bill had caused a confusion in the minds of the rayats and the shaukars both, the former being under the impression that their proprietary rights over their holdings would be abolished, and the latter that the enactment of the bill would lead to the practical confiscation of their property. It was alleged that the government had not properly assessed the agrarian problems of the Presidency and that without solving the problem the proposed measure would aggravate it. The report said that the distress of the rayats could be remedied by the promotion of industry, the establishment of agricultural banks and reducing the state demand on land where it was excessive. The report recorded its strong objection to the bill on the lines Gokhale sketched in his first reading speech. It concluded by urging that the bill be delayed for one year for further consideration.³

¹The other members were: J. Monteath, J.W.P.Muir-Mackenzie, A. Cumine and V. Chunilal.

²Report of the Select Committee of the Bombay Land Revenue Code Amendment Bill of 1901 (majority report), published in The Times of India (O.E.), 13 July 1901.

³Report of the Select Committee (minority), published in ibid.

The bill met with public protest throughout the Presidency. The Bombay Presidency Association and the Deccan Sabha sent memorials to the Bombay Government observing that the bill was very hasty and urged that it should be deferred until the report of the Famine Commission of 1901 was published. Both the memorials demanded investigation into the indebtedness of the rayats and the pressure of revenue assessment.¹ The Gujrat Sabha of Ahmedabad also sent a similar memorial to the government.² But all requests were turned down by the Bombay Government.³ Before the second reading of the bill Pherozshah Mehta moved a motion to the effect that the bill should be referred to all district judges, collectors, deputy collectors, chief justice and other judges of the Bombay High Court, leading Indian public bodies and the individuals inviting their opinion on the bill within six months. But the motion was defeated,⁴ and when the second reading of the bill began Mehta, Parekh, Gokhale, Khare and Bhalkrishna Krishna walked out of the Council Chamber. The second reading was accomplished with minor amendments and the bill passed into an act upon the third reading.⁵

¹The Times of India (O.E.), 6 July 1901. About 630 petitions in vernacular were sent to the Government of Bombay protesting against the bill. For details see Proc. Bombay Legislative Council, 1901, pp. 213-6.

²The Times of India (O.E.), 13 July 1901.

³Ibid., 20 July 1901.

⁴Proc. Bombay Legislative Council, 23 August 1901; Ayes - 9, Noes - 14.

⁵Ibid., 24 August 1901.

In a long editorial The Times of India characterised Gokhale and his colleagues who walked out of the council as "champions" of the shaukar, and considered the act as a piece of legislation to protect the rayats from the moneylenders.¹ But all the vernacular newspapers recorded their protest against the proposed act.² Petitions from various parts of Bombay were sent to the Viceroy urging his intervention in this act of the provincial Government.³ A protest meeting was held in London by the Indian residents. At the meeting Dutt, Naoroji and Digby spoke against the new act. A memorial was sent to Hamilton requesting him to repeal it.⁴

The principle of the Bombay legislation amounted to the infringement of the right of ownership of land, which was a fatal blow to the morale of the rayats. It seems likely that the main reason for the legislation to prevent the transfer of land from

¹The Times of India (O.E.), 31 August 1901.

²Bombay Samachar, 21 May 1901; Akhbar-e-Soudagar, 22 May 1901; Jam-e-Jamshed, 24 May 1901; Maratha, 26 May and 9 June 1901; Gujrati, 26 May 1901; Kaiser-e-Hind, 26 May and 2 June 1901; The Ahmedabad Times, 26 May 1901; Kesari, 28 May 1901; The Poona Observer, 1 June 1901; Rast Goftar, 2 June 1901, Bom.N.N.R., 1901.

³The Times of India (O.E.), 28 September 1901.

⁴India, 29 November 1901.

agricultural classes to non-agricultural communities, as put forward by the government, is more apparent than real. A survey on four districts of the Deccan, i.e. Poona, Satara, Sholapur and Nagar, taking a period of nine years from 1883 to 1891, shows that the aggregate annual transfer of land by the agriculturists by sale and mortgage averaged not more than 2.7 per cent of the total occupied area. Of this only a little over 1.4 per cent was transferred to the non-agricultural classes, and 1.3 per cent to agricultural classes.¹ It is quite evident that the average annual transfer of 1.4 per cent of the total occupied area is not a factor that demands such legislation.

Curzon did not consider the act important although he was in agreement with its principle. His main argument against the act was that its application would affect more than 20 per cent of the total cultivated area of the Presidency and that it would cost Rs. 75 lakhs a year.² Curzon's opposition to the legislation was heightened when people all over the Presidency agitated against it. He accused the Bombay Government of misleading him about the consequences of the act.³ Curzon maintained that the agitation was popular and widespread and not entirely organised by the money-lending class as Northcote believed. He was so concerned about

¹ Report of the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act Commission, 1891-2, pp. 8-21, quoted in The Times of India (O.E.), 6 July 1901.

² Curzon to Hamilton, 3 July 1901, C.P.

³ Curzon to Hamilton, 31 July 1901, C.P.

the public agitation that he remarked that he would think twice before introducing any such legislation in Bombay.¹ But Curzon was powerless over this bill. According to statutory regulation the Presidency Governments were fully empowered to introduce and enact a bill of this type, and as the bill contained no penal clause no previous reference or formal approval from the Government of India was required. Curzon had to assent the bill with reluctance. He wrote to Hamilton, "... as long as the rules remain as they are, and as long as these powers are enjoyed by the two Presidency governments, I am absolutely powerless in this matter. I have now to sit still and to see myself roundly denounced by the whole Native Press in India (not that that matters much) for a course of policy and of legislation with which I have scarcely more to say than the fly that is crawling over the counterpane above my feet..."² Curzon's attitude towards the legislation in Bombay is strongly influenced by his general attitude towards the Bombay Government. He thought that the Bombay revenue administration was the worst in India and that it required a "root and branch reform".³ The main cause of Curzon's opposition to this piece of

¹Curzon to Hamilton, 11 September 1901, C.P.

²Curzon to Hamilton, 25 September 1901, C.P.

³Curzon to Hamilton, 31 July 1901, C.P.

legislation was not that it was denounced by the Indian press, not that the application of the act involved expense, but that he had no scope for influencing a bill over which the Bombay Government was constitutionally supreme. Curzon characterised this autonomy of the Presidency Governments as "perilous license" which he thought (out) to be curtailed.¹

Hamilton's attitude towards the Bombay Legislation was closely connected with his attitude towards the Maratha people. He had a temperamental dislike of these people, especially its Brahmin community who, according to him, were at the bottom of all sorts of anti-government agitation.² Hamilton thought that the application of this act would affect mainly the interests of the moneylenders and he supported the act.³ In the case of the Punjab bill Hamilton was afraid of the agrarian unrest, but with regard to the Bombay legislation Hamilton seems to be unconcerned about the political discontent likely to follow the act, possibly in view of his belief that the government might "ignore the dislike and disaffection" of intellectual and non-fighting classes.⁴ He

¹Curzon to Hamilton, 18 September 1901, C.P.

²Hamilton to Elgin, 23 July 1897; see also Hamilton to Curzon, 3 August 1900, H.P.

³Hamilton to Curzon, 2 October 1901, H.P.

⁴Hamilton to Elgin, 16 September 1897, H.P.

of course disliked the handling of the act and for this he held Monteath responsible.¹

III Finance

The above land legislation in the Punjab and Bombay was but the negative approach to the solution of the agricultural distress in India. During the period under review the government also thought of undertaking positive measures to relieve the distress of the rayats by arranging agricultural finance through the establishment of agricultural banks. Agricultural finance in India was chiefly provided by the private moneylenders, who were called Shaukars, Mahajans or Nidhis. During the last decade of the nineteenth century nearly half a million people dealt in moneylending and nearly half of them had made it their sole occupation. In 1888 the total capital invested in this business throughout the country was Rs. 200-300 crores, bearing an interest paid annually of between Rs. 40 and 60 crores.² Fifty per cent of the Indian peasants lived on the aid of the moneylenders with whom they had a running partnership. The Shaukar used to provide capital for seed, cattle, subsistence, sarkar's revenue and extraordinary expenditure while the rayats provided land, labour and organisation.

¹Hamilton to Curzon, 8 October 1901, H.P.

²The Madras Mail Weekly, 23 October 1890.

But after the harvest was over the rayats had to repay the whole debt.¹

Before Ripon's time there was no effective policy of the Government of India to provide credit facilities to the rayats in general. During Mayo's time Land Improvement Loans Act (Act XXVI of 1871) was passed under the provision of which the zamindars could get loans from the government for construction of wells, tanks, embankments etc. The act was amended in 1876 (Act XXI of 1876) which envisaged that tenants, with their landlord's sanction, were entitled to apply for loans to the government for the above mentioned purposes. But actually the peasants were not benefited by this scheme. The Famine Commission of 1880 observed that the provisions of those acts had "failed to realize the intention of promoting improvements".² The Government of India under Ripon undertook a positive step in the matter which was directed to the provision of credit facilities to all rayats by two means: (a) directly by the government, (b) through agricultural banks organised by the people themselves under government assistance and supervision.

Under the first head two acts were passed in 1883 and 1884, i.e., the Land Improvement Act of 1883 and the Agriculturist Loans

¹Ibid.

²R.F.C., 1880, loc.cit, Pt. II, pp. 143-4.

Act of 1884. Under the Act of 1883 provisions were made for granting loans to the rayat for the improvement of his land in case of any distress directly due to calamity in agriculture and for purposes connected with agriculture.¹ Under the Act of 1884 loans were to be made for the relief of distress, purchase of seeds, cattle or for any other purpose not specified in the Act of 1883.²

By these measures the government could not cope with the enormous demand for agricultural credit as the fund provided was very inadequate. Besides, under those acts the government could not advance money to the rayats to enable him to pay government dues or to feed himself and his family. The Madras Mail Weekly considers this scheme a hopeless failure. In the Madras Presidency the rayats used to draw annually from the shaukar Rs. 2000-3000 lakhs, whereas in 1888 the rayats of Madras received Rs. 3 lakhs only from the sarkar under the provision of those two acts.³ In the North Western Provinces Legislative Council Mr. Hazi Mohammad Ismail Khan alleged that the purpose of these two acts was not fulfilled. During the three years from 1890-1 to 1892-3 a

¹Act XIX of 1883, Land Improvement Act.

²Act XII of 1884, Agriculturist Loans Act.

³The Madras Mail Weekly, 23 October 1890.

total amount of Rs. 324,246 was granted under the Land Improvement Act, which means a little over Rs.1.08 lakhs a year for the whole province.¹ A.P.MacDonnell observed that in the Central Provinces there was scope for improving the atricultural lands but that the loans and advances for that purpose were very inadequate. In 1890 the loans and advances amounted to Rs. 107,459 but in 1891 they were reduced to Rs. 89,830.² Immediately before the famine of 1896-7 the government of the Central Provinces had failed to get sufficient funds from the supreme government and, therefore, the cultivators could not start fresh cultivation for want of funds.³

Bombay received comparatively fair treatment. During the six years from 1895-6 to 1900-01 loans and advances granted to the rayats of the whole province amounted to Rs. 191.27 lakhs.

¹Proc. N.W.P. & O. Legislative Council, n.d., quoted in The Pioneer, 4 August 1894.

²The Madras Mail Weekly, 15 October 1891.

³See Chapter I.

Table XIIILoans and advances granted from 1895-6 to
1900-01 to Bombay rayats¹

1895-6	Rs.	9.86 lakhs
1896-7	Rs.	36.62 "
1897-8	Rs.	23.11 "
1898-9	Rs.	8.31 "
1899-1900	Rs.	40.87 "
1900-01	Rs.	72.50 "
<hr/>		
Total	Rs.	191.27 "

Of the six years four, i.e. 1896-7, 1897-8, 1899-1900 and 1900-01, were of exceptional circumstances due to famines and, therefore, the figures noted against those years should not be taken as amounts granted in normal years. Only the amount of Rs. 9.86 lakhs and Rs. 8.31 lakhs noted against the years 1895-6 and 1898-9 respectively should be regarded as amounts granted in normal years. These figures, though higher than in Madras and North Western Provinces, are very meagre. The main cause of the failure of the scheme was lack of finance. The Indian Agriculturist observed: "... the Agriculturist Loan Acts are little better than a mockery of the necessities of the agricultural community, so grudging, so inadequate, so difficult of access is the assistance they hold out."²

The Government of India were aware of the inability to provide sufficient funds to the agriculturists and felt the necessity of organising agricultural banks throughout India so that the rayats could get regular and adequate credit facilities without falling back upon the moneylenders.³ In 1879 Justice Ranade thought of

¹The Times of India (O.E.), 24 August 1901.

²The Indian Agriculturist, 1 August 1902.

³Govt. of India to Govt. of Bombay, 5 December (No. 658.R.), Rev. & Agri., enclo. G.G. in C. to S. of S., 31 May (Rev. & Agri. No. 7), 1884, Rev. Letters from India, Vol. 5, 1884.

organizing agricultural banks.¹ In 1882 William Wedderburn, then district judge of Poona, prepared a memorandum on the organization of agricultural banks in India on the European model, which inspired some leading people of Poona and they formulated a scheme for such banks. The principles of the proposed bank as sketched out by Wedderburn were: (a) to provide funds for the settlement of old debts; (b) to restore friendly relations between the rayats and the village shaukars; (c) to secure the cooperation of both classes; (d) to induce the local capitalists to offer their financial support; (e) to claim from government concessions with regard to finance, stamp duty and audit.² The rayats of the Poona district agreed to these principles and in a meeting they adopted a resolution forming a committee for setting up an experimental bank in the Purandhar taluk of the Poona district. A deputation of the Committee waited upon the Governor of Bombay, who promised to give his government's support to their proposal. The Government of Bombay then forwarded the scheme to the Government of India, which also accepted the proposal subject to certain minor conditions. The Government of India agreed to: (a) appoint

¹Cited in B. Chandra, op.cit., p.486.

²W. Wedderburn, "History of a Crime", India, February 1897.

a commission for the liquidation of rayats' debts within a limited and experimental area; (b) advance, in the first instance, a sum of Rs. 6¹/₂ lakhs necessary for the composition of these debts; (c) remit as regards banks, a part of the stamp duty on documents, and the court fees in suit, to concede to the bank the privilege of recovering its advances through the revenue officers.¹ The Government of India requested the Bombay Government to give such banks a trial, to which the latter agreed.²

Meanwhile Wedderburn came to England on leave and tried to popularise the scheme there with the help of John Bright and James Caird. On 5 July 1883 Wedderburn read a paper on the "Poona Rayats' Bank" before the East India Association in London. Next day the leading dailies supported the scheme. Wedderburn then read another paper on "Government Concessions to Agricultural Banks in India" before the Manchester Chamber of Commerce. A committee was formed, including the chairman and the deputy chairman of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, in order to give continuing support to the scheme. This committee sent a memorial to the Secretary of State for India drawing his immediate attention to the scheme.

¹Govt. of India to Govt. of Bombay, 5 December (No. 658 R.) 1882, Rev. & Agri., op.cit.

²Govt. of Bombay to Govt. of India, 3 April (Rev. No. 2687) 1883, enclo., G.G. in C. to S. of S., 31 May (Rev. No. 3, Jour. No. 7), 1884, op.cit.

Wedderburn also approached Messrs. Rothschild, one of the leading financial magnates in the London moneymarket, and was promised by them the financial help for the establishment of such banks in India.¹

In 1884 Ripon's government had sent a despatch to the India Office asking for the sanction of the proposed experimental scheme.² But the proposal was rejected by the India Office on the ground first, that funds were not available to settle the old debt, and, secondly, it would be unwise on the part of the government to undertake additional responsibility of collecting the dues of such banks from the cultivators.³

In 1892 the Madras Government became interested in organizing such banks in the Presidency and deputed one officer, Mr. F. Nicholson, to Europe in order to investigate the working of the agricultural banks there. Nicholson submitted a voluminous report in 1895. He recommended the organisation of the rural bank on the Italian Raiffeissen system, i.e., based on self-help and co-operation amongst the rural population and the moneylenders. But, in order to suit the situation to India, he advocated that state help and

¹W. Wedderburn, "History of a Crime", op.cit.

²G.G. in C. to S. of S., 31 May (Rev. & Agri. No. 7) 1884, op.cit.

³S. of S. to G.G. in C., 23 October (Rev. No. 95) 1884, Rev. & S. Vol. 5, 1884.

cooperation for the growth and establishment of such banks were necessary and that these banks should run partly on commercial principles under the guidance of the existing Indian Companies Act, under the provision of which debts could be recovered through law courts.¹ Another officer of the North Western Provinces Government, Mr. Dupernex, had also formulated a scheme for "People's Bank" on the lines of Nicholson.² But Nicholson's proposal was rejected by the Madras Board of Revenue³ as well as the Madras Government.⁴ The reason for rejection was that Nicholson's advocacy of state help and cooperation in the establishment of such banks was, according to them, contrary to the basis of cooperation.

The organisation of rural banks on laissez-faire principle was impossible for the Indian peasants of that time. In Italy and Germany village banks were not entirely organised by the peasants themselves, but rather by the enthusiastic efforts of philanthropic individuals, and in course of time the scattered and isolated rural banks developed into an organic whole throughout the country. But for the establishment of such banks in a vast country like India, the Government must come forward with full financial support and

¹ F.A. Nicholson, Report Regarding the Possibility of Introducing Land and Agricultural Banks into the Madras Presidency, 2 vols., Madras 1895, Vol. I, pp. 370-80.

² H. Dupernex, People's Banks for Northern India, n.d., cited in R.Kumar, Western India in the Nineteenth Century, London, 1968, pp.241-3.

³ Resol. Madras Board of Revenue, 6 November 1896, Dept. of Rev. & Agri., (Rev. Branch), A. Proc. No. 7/10, November 1900, cited in ibid., p.243.

⁴ Order in Council, Govt. of Madras, 13 October 1899, Dept. of Rev. & Agri. (Rev. Branch), cited in ibid., p.244.

supervision, and had it done so it could have restored confidence both amongst the peasants and the village moneylenders, and both could have been drawn together on a common platform, serving the interests of both on the basis of mutual trust and cooperation. Nicholson's scheme was the only reasonable means of solution to the problem of rural credit in India. But the reason for this rejection of the scheme by the Madras Board of Revenue and Government was the same as that put forward by the Secretary of State for India in 1884.

Elgin personally did not approve of Nicholson's scheme. He thought that the establishment of a rural bank on Nicholson's principle would oust the village moneylenders and he feared the political danger of making the government the sole creditor of the rayats. Elgin, of course, believed that the organisation of rural banks by the rayats themselves was impossible. He suggested two alternatives: (a) to control and regulate by legislation moneylenders' transactions with the rayats; (b) to extend the loans and advances made by the government. With regard to the second alternative Elgin received news from the local governments that the loans and advances granted by the governments were properly utilized by the peasants and that the repayment was punctual.¹

¹Elgin to Hamilton, 28 April 1897, E.P.

But Hamilton was very doubtful whether merely the extension of loans and advances would serve the purpose of the agricultural banks.¹ He felt the necessity of such banks and valued the scheme of Nicholson,² but he saw difficulty in its practical application.³ Up to 1899 the Government of India was reticent about the scheme of Nicholson. Early in May 1899 Curzon assured Hamilton that he would express his opinion at a later time.⁴ Meanwhile, Nicholson's report became known in England to those interested in cooperative societies. Mr. Henry W. Wolff, chairman of the London based International Cooperative Alliance, in a letter to Hamilton, offered his services and guidance for the establishment of cooperative credit societies in India.⁵ Wolff objected to the fundamental principle of Nicholson's scheme. Dominated by the idea of laissez faire, Wolff believed, first, that for the success of such credit societies state interference should be the absolute minimum; secondly, the societies should run not on commercial principles

¹Hamilton to Elgin, 21 May 1897, H.P.

²Hamilton to Elgin, 30 June 1898, H.P.

³Hamilton to Elgin, 30 August 1898, H.P.

⁴Telegr. Viceroy to S. of S., 9 May and 7 June 1899, C.P.

⁵Henry W. Wolff to Hamilton, 26 June 1900, enclo. S. of S. to G.G. in C., 8 February (Rev. No. 19) 1901, Rev. & St., Vol. 22, 1901.

but on the principle of mutual service and cooperation; and thirdly, the societies should be regulated by a special act on the lines of the English Friendly Societies Act or Industrial Provident Societies Act so that the recovery of debt could be undertaken by the society itself.¹ Hamilton forwarded the memorandum of Wolff to the Government of India.²

In 1901 the Government of India contemplated giving a definite shape to the scheme for agricultural banks. Holderness, Secretary to the Department of Revenue and Agriculture, Government of India, strongly resented the Madras Government's rejection of Nicholson's proposal. He thought that it was possible for the state to assist with finance in organising rural credit societies. Holderness also considered Dupernex's scheme for organising rural and urban credit societies very useful, for the urban societies would be able to supply credit to their rural counterparts.³ Sir Edward Law, then Finance Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, believed that cooperative societies on the Raiffeissen principle could be made possible in Indian villages.⁴ The Famine Commission

¹A memorandum by Wolff, enclo. Wolff to Hamilton, 26 June 1900, ibid.

²S. of S. to G.G. in C., 8 February (Rev. No. 19) 1901, ibid.

³Note by T.W.Holderness, 28 August 1900, Dept. of Rev. & Agri. (Rev. Branch), cited in R. Kumar, op.cit., pp. 244-5.

⁴Note by E.F.G.Law, 26 September 1900, ibid.

of 1901 also urged the need for the agricultural banks.¹ In June 1901 a committee was set up under the chairmanship of Edward Law, including Holderness, Nicholson and Dupernex, to formulate a final scheme for agricultural banks, after examining the various proposals, and to prepare a draft bill for legislation in this matter. In November 1901 the committee submitted its report. It recommended that:

- (a) the term "cooperative credit society" should be used instead of "agricultural bank";
- (b) the society should be both rural and urban and the form of the society should be two-fold: (i) urban society on a share basis with limited liability; and (ii) rural society with unlimited liability and without shares;
- (c) the working capital of the society should be obtained from subscriptions for shares, deposits from the members of the society, deposits from outsiders or loans from outsiders given on the security of the joint credit of members of the associations;
- (d) the society must have a reserve fund, and 25 per cent of the net profits of the society should be carried to the reserve fund;

¹R.F.C., 1901, op.cit., paras 288-309.

- (e) the society should have the power to recover debts;
- (f) in the case of a society on a share basis with limited liability no restriction should be demanded for giving any loan, but in the case of a society without share capital, loans and advances should be restricted to:
 - (i) productive purposes, (ii) liquidation of debt, (iii) payment of government demand, (iv) marriage ceremony expenses provided the borrower had had a deposit account with the society for the past three years and the amount so lent did not exceed 50 per cent of the average annual deposits during that three years;
- (g) there should be no compound interest on loans and advances; the interest should be simple, being $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on loans and advances and $6\frac{1}{4}$ per cent on deposits;
- (h) all societies should be registered with a government official, called Registrar, who should be either a Deputy Commissioner, Collector or Judge of a district, and should there be an extensive development of the cooperative societies, a special officer in charge of these affairs might be appointed; the general working of the cooperative credit societies in every province should be placed under either the Director of Land Records and Agriculture or the Inspector General of Registration;

- (i) the registrar should have the power to control, inspect and audit the accounts of every society and the discretion to cancel registration of any society as and when necessary;
- (j) the government grant to the registered societies should be limited to Rs. 2000; the society should be exempted from paying stamp duty, registration fees and the income tax where the net annual income would be less than Rs. 500;
- (k) the management of the society should be in the hands of a committee of three members elected by the members of the society.

Besides the above recommendation the committee recognised the importance of the role of the credit societies already existing in various parts of India i.e., Madras Loan Fund, Madras Nidhis, etc., as well as the private moneylenders, and recommended that all should be fully utilized in the promotion of the cooperative societies all over the country. A draft bill was prepared strictly on the lines of the above recommendation, in the form of a special act of a permissive character on the general lines of the English Friendly Societies Act.¹

The recommendations of the Law Committee were an integration of the ideas of Wedderburn, Nicholson, Dupernex and Wolff, in which

¹Report of the Law Committee, published in the Times of India (O.E.), 30 November 1901.

both the principles of laissez faire and of the commercial banking were given importance. Two most vital principles enunciated by Wedderburn and Nicholson i.e., settlement of old debt and the state guarantee of the capital of the proposed society, were not accepted. The incorporation of these two principles would have rendered the government directly responsible for the liabilities of the society, but it would have helped the growth of such societies all over the country to the best advantages of the rayats. The provision for state control and supervision as embodied in the recommendation was quite reasonable but the provision for the financial assistance from the state was insignificant. Besides, no provision was made for educating the rural population on the idea of cooperation, which could have been done by the government through the Tashil headquarters.

Curzon considered the recommendation of the committee revolutionary although he was determined to make an experiment with such societies.¹ The draft bill was sent to the India Office² and long held up there. Nothing was done with regard to this bill during Hamilton's tenure of office. The bill was sanctioned by the India Office³ when St. John Brodrick succeeded Hamilton, and in 1904 the Cooperative Credit Societies Bill was introduced in

¹Curzon to Hamilton, 23 October 1901, C.P.

²G.G. in C. to S. of S., 3 September (Land Rev. No. 44) 1903, Rev. Letters from India, Vol. 30, 1903.

³S. of S. to G.G. in C., 20 November (Rev. No. 170) 1903, Rev. & St., Vol. 24, 1903.

the Viceroy's Legislative Council and was passed into an act.¹

The Cooperative Credit Societies Act was the landmark in the history of the cooperative movement in India. But the societies could not serve the purpose of the poor peasants for whose benefit the act was passed. Since rural credit societies were of unlimited liability and without share capital they could not attract the people who could invest capital and, therefore, such societies could not flourish. Moreover, the poor peasants were so very frustrated and demoralised by abject poverty that it was impossible for them to organise societies on their own initiative. So from this point of view the Cooperative Credit Society had failed to achieve its objective to improve the condition of the poor peasants. Nevertheless the credit societies helped the richer peasants to be grouped in the societies and to invest their capital resources to their advantage.²

¹Act X of 1904.

²E.M.Hough, The Cooperative Movement in India, London 1932, pp. 256-63; see also R. Kumar, op.cit., pp. 262-3.

CONCLUSION

Seldom had a Secretary of State for India been so unfavourably assessed for his policies as Hamilton. As his appointment was detested by the British radical press so was his resignation welcomed by the Indian press with relief. Commenting on the possibility of St. John Brodrick's appointment at the India Office, The Statesman of Calcutta remarked: "Lord George Hamilton's departure from the Ministry will be regretted by nobody. He never had the interests of India at heart, and anybody would be better than he."¹ The Maratha of Poona observed: "The resignation of Lord George Hamilton must come upon India as an extremely agreeable surprise.... And we confess we had completely despaired of getting rid of this mill-stone of a Secretary of State round our neck."² The Hindu of Madras wrote: "With his resignation, however, we are gratified. We have not had a worse Secretary of State for India for a very long time. Without conspicuous abilities, without much political foresight or prudent statesmanship, with little sympathy with the feelings, the hopes and aspirations of the people of India, Lord George has appeared to us as a veritable

¹24 September 1903, quoted in India, 23 October 1903.

²n.d., quoted in ibid.

incubus checking the flow of liberal opinions and sentiments from the seat of authority and power, exaggerating his own performances... India is bound to feel a welcome relief when this oppressive deadweight is removed from her.... but no man can be worse than Lord George Hamilton as Secretary of State for India and many are likely to prove infinitely better."¹ The above observations of the Indian newspapers were made on the whole policy of Hamilton. Although the present study is limited in its scope, it provides convincing testimony in support of such views.

Hamilton was a staunch Tory of the Victorian era. His political imagination was limited by his attachment to the Imperial status quo. He was a statesman holding the reins of a great dependency without having the statesmanlike qualities necessary to steer it in a constructive direction. His intellectual mediocrity, unimaginativeness, administrative inefficiency and his lamentable lack of knowledge of Indian problems kept him aloof from the harsh realities of Indian conditions. He was prepared to be guided by considerations of political expediency in England and by the pressure of the Government of India. In Hamilton's time the members of the Council of India were not men of eminence,² but so far as

¹ n.d., quoted in India, 23 October 1903.

² S.N.Singh, The Secretary of State for India and his Council, etc., p.149.

the present study is concerned, in most cases Hamilton was found to be obedient to their views.

Hamilton's policy differed as between the two famines with which he was confronted. During the famine of 1896-7 Hamilton showed his administrative promptitude by proposing some liberal measures to Elgin. This attitude was the product partly of his experience of famine during his Under Secretaryship and partly of the liberal measures backed by the members of his Council. In 1899-1900 Hamilton's famine policy underwent a distinct change. The wars in China and South Africa made him more conscious of the Indian obligation with regard to the Imperial wars than of his responsibility to relieve the distress of the famine stricken people. His suggestion to Curzon for launching an official campaign for a war fund in India, his reluctance to make an appeal for charity in England for Indian famine relief, his support of the stringent relief measures of the Government of India, and lastly his opposition to Curzon's earnest demand for an Imperial grant were the worst features of the famine policy of the Secretary of State. In 1896-7 the home government had been willing to pay some money to the Government of India because of the war in the North Western frontier and Hamilton persuaded Elgin to accept a free Imperial grant. In 1899-1900, however, the Imperial government had no intention to offer a free grant to the Government of India in connection

with famine. Hamilton not only did not approach the Treasury for such a grant but also prevented Curzon from seeking it.

In relation to the question of famine prevention, Hamilton's policy was quite inadequate. He was indeed impressed by Curzon's observations on the misappropriation of the Famine Insurance Fund and he did support Curzon's scheme to reorganise the fund for its proper purpose. This, however, was the sole occasion when Hamilton became critical of the Imperial policy in India and it was for this forlorn issue that he fought with the Council, a majority of which was opposed to the scheme of the Government of India, and he suffered defeat. In dealing with the Indian Famine Union Hamilton showed his want of political acumen and limited vision. He committed a tactical blunder by declaring the official estimate of the per capita income in India wrong, as well as by refusing the deputation of the Indian Famine Union. While Curzon was afraid of the results of the village enquiry suggested by the Famine Union, Hamilton remained indifferent to it.

With regard to land revenue questions in India Hamilton was conscious of his ignorance and he depended on the views of the revenue committee of his Council. His statement in the House of Commons counter-attacking Dutt's observation on the incidence of land revenue in Bengal ludicrously exposed his ignorance of Indian revenue affairs. Hamilton admitted in the House of Commons that

revenue assessments were somewhat excessive in the Central Provinces. He did so perhaps because of the fact that the famines of 1896-97 and 1899-1900 clearly revealed that the rayats were resourceless in normal years and that they had no power to resist famine. Hamilton understood that the rayats would have been benefited had they been allowed to appropriate the unearned increments of land. But he maintained that the government should not forego this. He argued that if the government did so the people of India would be deprived of railway extensions, which though they claimed heavy expenditure from the Indian revenues, had brought immense prosperity to the country. In fact the railway extension facilitated the investment of British capital in India, provided improved means of communication and served the strategic and administrative needs of the government, increased the volume of trade and commerce and caused the rise in prices of commodities of all descriptions. But if the railway extension is regarded as a main reason for the enhancement of land revenue in order to improve the condition of the poor peasants, then it is a question of serious consideration to what extent the poor rayats, victims of the famine, were benefited by the railway extension. Actually benefit of the railway extension did not reach to the poor peasants and agricultural labourers. First, railway extension helped the export of food grain causing local scarcity. Secondly, railway communication in remote parts of the country did

cause the rise in prices of agricultural commodities; but as the moneylenders held the controlling position between the production and distribution of the agricultural commodities, they and the merchants took the benefit of the rise in prices - not the poor peasants. Thirdly, despite the existence of the facilities of railway communications in an area affected by the famine, transportation of food grain there could not be undertaken by the private traders. For there is no incentive to the private trader to carry food grain to an area where the purchasing power of the people is small. Transportation of food grain in those areas could only be possible if the government undertook it. Since in times of famine government interference in the food grain trade was totally absent, existence of the facilities of railway communication in the areas affected by famine and scarcity could hardly come to the benefit of the poor rayats. Hence, the grounds advanced by Hamilton in justifying the appropriation of the unearned increments of land by the government is not tenable so far as the interests of the poor rayats are concerned. Had Hamilton ascribed the reason for revenue enhancement to irrigation, then it could be justifiable in the sense that irrigation would enable the rayats to increase the productivity of land and consequently prevent drought and famine.

Hamilton attached little importance to the rising educated class in India as a source of constructive criticism of the Imperial

system. He believed that the stability of the British Empire in India could be secured if the agricultural population were kept in contentment. But he was confused as to the right way for their contentment to be accomplished under an Imperial umbrella. As explained above, the curtailment of the increasing revenue demand was out of the question and irrigation was subordinated to railway extension. Hamilton felt the need of relieving the rayats from the clutches of the moneylenders. But he did not agree with Nicholson's scheme of agricultural banks. For in giving effect to that scheme he thought, first, the government would have to incur heavy expenditure and, secondly, the process of realisation of debt from the rayats besides the collection of land revenue, ultimately would create a source of conflict between the rayats and the government. Ultimately Hamilton did not find any means to make the rayats contented. The successive famines and the distress of the people made him self-critical of his own oft-proclaimed contention that the Indian rayats had attained prosperity under British rule, which he used to argue in reply to the proposition of Naoroji, Dutt and Digby. But fact saps the foundation of myth, evidence destroys the hollow edifice of assumption. Hamilton at last discovered that the laissez faire principles to which he subscribed had failed to improve Indian agriculture and the condition of the rayats. In the end he realised that state help and cooperation

in the field of agriculture were absolutely necessary to relieve the Indian rayats from the stupor of backwardness, indebtedness and poverty and he maintained that the British government in India had failed to extend that assistance to the Indian agriculture. After the famine of 1899-1900 he wrote to Curzon:

"Speaking of the poor agriculturist and projects which would benefit him, are we paternal enough in the encouragement and instruction which we give English agriculturists? ... and it is there where, I think, we have to some extent failed in India."¹

In 1880 the Englishman of Calcutta was conscious of what Hamilton realised in 1900 about Indian agriculture. In view of the famine of 1876-7 the newspaper wrote: "The late Madras famine has raised the question as to what the Government has done to protect the agriculture of Southern India, in return for the revenue raised from it.... There are not wanting those who affirm that this increased taxation had much to do with the late calamity. The husbandmen were less able, according to this view, to bear the strain of bad seasons, in consequence of the enormous increase in the revenue taken from them."²

Ripon's government was judicious enough to realize the true agricultural Indian/situation. His government made some sincere efforts to

¹Hamilton to Curzon, 24 October 1900, H.P.

²17 February 1880, quoted in "Twenty Eight Years in India", (pseudonym) The Failure of Lord Curzon, An Open Letter to the Earl of Rosebery, London 1903, pp. 27-28.

extend state help and cooperation towards rejuvenation of Indian agriculture. The curtailment of undue revenue demands in the rayatwari areas was contemplated, the organisation of rural banks financed and supervised by the government was proposed, acts containing provision for granting loans and advances to the rayats were passed and periodical village enquiries were suggested to examine the effectiveness of the revenue and agricultural policy of the government. The first two proposals were rejected by the home government. Two acts concerning loans and advances to the rayats were given effect to but in later years their scope was not enlarged according to the requirements of the rayats. In Dufferin's time a village enquiry was conducted all over the British territory, but its reports were kept in confidence for a long time. In Lansdowne's time an agricultural conference was held in Simla in 1890, when an agricultural expert was invited from England.¹ The conference devised various schemes for the improvement of agriculture. But neither the Government of India nor the local governments took any action to execute the schemes of improvement.

During the viceroyalty of Elgin the revenue and agricultural policy of the Government of India remained stagnant. No attempt

¹Dr. J. A. Voeleker. His report was later on published, Report on the Improvement on Indian Agriculture, London 1893.

was made by his government to renew the proposal for the establishment of agricultural banks, to reduce excessive revenue enhancements in the rayatwari areas or to enlarge the scope for granting loans and advances to the rayats. In his time Nicholson's scheme of agricultural banks was published, but his government took no notice of it. Elgin personally opposed Nicholson's scheme on both political and financial grounds such as those that were advanced later by Hamilton. Elgin was reluctant to forego the unearned increments of land in favour of the rayats and he did not think that poverty and indebtedness of the rayats had any connection with the government revenue demand. His government believed that the poverty and indebtedness of the Indian rayats were due to their extravagant social habits, driven by which they borrowed from the moneylender even by mortgaging their plots of land, which ultimately led to the transfer of land from the peasant class to the moneylending community. So his government sought its remedy by restricting the right to transfer land by sale or mortgage and arrangements were made for legislation in that direction in the Punjab.

Elgin had no constructive approach to famine policy. The devastating famine of 1896-7 was not taken up by his government seriously. His famine policy was dominated by the principle of economy in relief expenditure. In dealing with this famine Elgin

had committed unexcusable blunders which cost 4.5m. lives. Even after the famine was over, if he had sacrificed his false pride at the altar of the home government and accepted the offer of a free Imperial grant, he could have given some relief to the exhausted people. Elgin simply followed the famine policy of Lytton, which was a total failure. He showed scant regard to the purpose of the Famine Relief and Insurance Fund. As his coffers were drained by war on the North Western Frontier his government, swayed by the views of Westland, reduced the contribution to the Fund from Rs. 1¹/₂ crores to Rs. 1 crore, quite in violation of the original scheme.

The famine policy of the Government of India under Curzon did not undergo any substantial change but in his agricultural policy Curzon was more constructive than Elgin. Save two sincere attempts with regard to making an appeal to private charity in England and seeking an Imperial grant, Curzon's famine policy in no way differs from Elgin's. His stringency in relief operations and his difference of opinion with the Bombay Government contributed much to the heavy mortality in Gujrat, for which, of course, the Government of Bombay were equally responsible. Curzon had revealed the misappropriation of the Famine Relief and Insurance Fund and his efforts to reorganize it and form a genuine fund for proper application were both vigorous and sincere. But as this was objected to by the majority of the

members of the Council of India, who viewed the fund from the point of view of Imperial interest, Curzon was unsuccessful. In the field of providing agricultural finance to the rayats and imparting agricultural training and instruction Curzon's government took some positive steps which his predecessors had failed to do. The Cooperative Credit Societies Act of 1904 was the beginning of the cooperative movement in India, and the establishment of the Central Agricultural Research Institute at Pusa opened possibilities of agricultural research and training. During Curzon's time, too, a commission was set up to explore the possibilities of irrigational works in India. The commission recommended the further extension of state irrigation all over India.¹ Accordingly the Government of India formulated schemes of irrigation with an estimated expenditure of £30m., the completion of which would take twenty years.² But these measures could not improve the condition of the rayats in the short term. The extension of irrigation was very slow. During the ten years from 1904 to 1913-14 the total irrigated area all over India was increased from 44m. acres to 46.8m. acres. In 1918-21 only 11 per cent of the total cropped area of India was under irrigation, of which 5 per cent was from the state irrigation and 6 per cent from private works.³

¹Report of Indian Irrigation Commission, 1901-1902, 3 Pts., P.P.(H.C.) 1904, Vol. 66, Pt. I, paras 92-143.

²D.N. Dilks, Curzon in India, London 1969, p.235.

³H.S. Srivastava, The History of Indian famines, p.365.

The land legislation in Punjab and Bombay during Curzon's time did not contain any provision that could help improve agriculture or the condition of the rayats. The very basis of such legislation is questionable for the causes of the indebtedness of the rayats all over the provinces concerned were not investigated nor the extent of land transferred from the cultivating class to the non-cultivating moneylenders in the provinces concerned discovered. Curzon was enthusiastic over the Punjab Act. But his zeal subsided in the case of the Bombay Act. Perhaps he was doubtful of the utility of such legislation for improving the condition of the rayats. The land assessment resolution of the Government of India in reply to Dutt's open letter to Curzon and the memorial of Dutt and the retired Anglo-Indian civilians was not a self-critical examination of the revenue policies of the government but a re-iteration of the traditional revenue policy, which never allowed the rayats of the areas under review to retain a portion of the unearned increments of the land. The crux of the contention of Dutt and other memorialists is that the principle of revenue assessment should be guided not only by the needs of the state, but also by the paying capacity of the rayats. The resolution of the government did not consider whether after paying government revenue, whatever its percentage might be, the rayat could meet the minimum requirements of himself and his family. It is a question of serious

consideration but it was left outside the scope of the resolution. Curzon had a paternalistic feeling for the welfare of the "Indian poor, the Indian peasants, the patient, humble, silent millions, the 80 per cent who subsist by agriculture, who know very little of policies".¹ But to him the needs and obligation of the Indian Empire seemed so heavy that he could not see how the revenues could accommodate substantial relief to these people. His long despatch in reply to the memorial of the Indian Famine Union contains the significant proclamation that the Government of India were unable to satisfy the hopes of relief that the suggested village enquiry would encourage among the poor masses.

Since India's economy could not be converted from agriculture to industry, mainly because of her dependency upon a rising industrial nation, the only way to prevent famine and improve the condition of the rayats was to improve her agriculture. During the period under review the Indian National Congress had been constantly demanding that the government improve agriculture as well as the economic condition of the agricultural population. But the Congress in its resolutions put more emphasis on the principle of distribution of agricultural produce between the rayats and the government than on the methods of increasing production. This was partly due to the fact that the whole attention of the Congress

¹Speech of Curzon 16 November 1905, quoted in C.H. Philips (ed.), The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858-1947: Select Documents, London 1962, pp. 659-60.

was devoted to broad political and constitutional issues. This deficiency in the attention that the Congress gave to agriculture was met by the movements in England led by Wedderburn and the retired civilians. The memorial of the retired civilians in connection with land revenue suggested a fair distribution of the produce of the land between the rayats and the government, while the Indian Famine Union proposed various measures for increasing the productivity of land. But the results of these movements proved futile. In a letter to the Pioneer Dutt exclaimed: "My voice is weak against the voice of the Viceroy in India, supported by the Local Governments, and by an influential British press in England and in India."¹ Dutt conveyed the same feeling to Hamilton: "My endeavours, humble as they are, are known in India, and are almost universally believed to lead to nothing."² These feelings are the perfect representation of the results of the movements in England. The liberal pressure in England for Indian agrarian reform was too weak to command an effective influence upon the policies of the Government of India. The Imperial rulers were not "bold"³ enough even to

¹7 April 1902, reprinted in R.P.Mittra (ed.), Open Letters to Curzon, speeches and papers, op.cit., pt. III, pp. 201-3.

²Dutt to Hamilton, 3 August 1903, ibid., pt. I, pp. 138-43.

³R. J. Moore, Liberalism in Indian Politics 1872-1922, London 1966, p.72.

concede the moderate and minimal demands raised by their liberal backbenchers.

The famine policy of the Government of India during the period of the present study failed to grapple successfully with the situation. After 1883 the famine codes were formed for every province - a brilliant contribution of British civilians towards the administration of future famines. But despite the revision of the codes in successive years during the period of the famines under review, the code instructions remained inoperative long after the famine had actually started. For the famine policy of the Government of India lacked that promptness in action, liberality towards relief expenditure and sympathetic feeling for the suffering multitudes which crowned with success the administration of the Bengal famine of 1873-4. Neither could the revenue and agricultural policies of the Government of India during the period of the present study offer any effective answer to the economic malady of the masses. In a letter to Hamilton Dutt wrote with a note of warning: "A sullen despair and discontent prevail among the agricultural classes, which deepens with their indebtedness, and which contains germs of political danger in future."¹ This prediction of Dutt's was proved correct in later years. The increasing distress of the people, their disillusionment and frustration, helped to swell the ranks of the discontented Indian masses who trod the agonising path from raj to swaraj.

¹Dutt to Hamilton, 3 August 1903, op.cit.

BIBLIOGRAPHYA. PRIVATE PAPERS1. Hamilton Papers, India Office Library:

(a) MSS.EUR.C.

The private papers of Lord George Hamilton were presented to the India Office Library by Ronald Hamilton in September 1951. The collection comprises the correspondence of Hamilton as Secretary of State for India (1895-1903). This correspondence consists of one printed volume and thirty-four volumes containing printed typescript and manuscript material.

Letters to Elgin, 1895-98, C.125, 3 Vols.

Letters to Curzon, 1899-1903, C.126, 5 Vols.

Private Telegrams
to and from Elgin
and Curzon, 1895-99, D.508, 1 Vol.

Letters from Elgin, 1895-98, D.509, 12 Vols.

Letters from Curzon, 1899-1903, D.510, 14 Vols.

(b) India Office Library: MSS.EUR.F.123.

In 1964 there was a further addition to Hamilton's private papers which comprise forty bundles, both typescript and manuscript. These are mainly letters exchanged between Hamilton and Lord Sandhurst, Governor of Bombay (1895-9), Sir Arthur Elibank Havelock, Governor of Madras (1895-1900) and Sir Henry Stafford Northcote, Governor of Bombay (1899-1903). These papers have not previously been used. Although these are described in the India Office Library Catalogue as of minor importance some reflect the strained relations between the presidency governments and the Government of India that existed during Curzon's time.

2. Other Private Papers.(i) (a) Salisbury Papers, IOL Microfilm.

Hamilton to Salisbury, 1868-1878, Reel No. 819.

(b) Salisbury Papers,
Christ Church Library, Oxford:

Salisbury to Hamilton, 1872-1892, D/27, 1 Vol.

Hamilton to Salisbury, 1871-1892, Hamilton, Box No. I.

Hamilton to Salisbury, 1895-1902, Hamilton, Box No. II.

(ii) Northbrook Papers, IOL, MSS.EUR.C.144, Vols. 9-12.(iii) Lytton Papers, IOL, MSS.EUR.E.218.

Letters from Salisbury, 1876-1880, 516/Vols.1-5.

Letters to Salisbury, 1876-1880, 518/Vols.1-6.

(iv) Elsin Papers, IOL, MSS.EUR.F84.

Letters from and to Hamilton, 1894-1898, Vols.12-16.

Telegrams from and to
Secretary of State, 1894-1898, Vols.17-21.

(v) Curzon Papers, IOL, MSS.EUR.F.111.

Letters to and from
Secretary of State etc., 1899-1903, Vols.142-162.

Telegrams to and from
Secretary of State etc., 1899-1903, Vols.169-173.

Correspondence with
persons in India, abroad, 1899-1900, Vols.178-182.

B. BRITISH CABINET PAPERS: PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE (P.R.O.)

Vol. 52 (Cab.37/52) 4 January to 16 May 1900.

Vol. 53 (Cab.37/53) 21 May to 13 December 1900.

Vol. 54 (Cab.37/54) Telegrams 16 February to 26 June 1900.

Vol. 55 (Cab.37/55) Telegrams 3 July to 27 December 1900.

C. INDIA OFFICE RECORDS:

Administration Report
(Madras Land Revenue) L5II⁽¹⁾, 1880-1903

Administration Report
(Bombay Land Revenue -
Jamabundi) L5II⁽¹⁾, 1880-1903

Administration Report
(Central Provinces
Land Revenue) L5IX, 1880-1903

Famine Proceedings (India):

1895 Vol. 4766 1898 Vols.5438-5441 1900 Vols.5896-5898

1896 Vol. 4982 1899 Vol. 5665 1901 Vols.6133-6134

1897 Vols.5203-5209 1902 Vol. 6363

Financial Letters from India, 1895-1904, Vols.380-407.

Financial Letters to India, 1895-1904, Vols.786-795.

Minutes of the Council of India, 1895-1904, Vols. 74-93.

Dissent by members of the Council, Vols. 2-3.

Native Newspaper Reports:

Bengal (B.N.N.R.): 1877-78, 1896-97 and 1899-1900.

Bombay (Bom.N.N.R.): 1877-78, 1896-97 and 1899-1901.

Native Newspaper Reports (cont.):

Madras (M.N.N.R.): 1877-78, 1894-1901.

North Western
Provinces & Oudh
(N.W.P. & O.N.N.R.) 1896-97, 1899-1900.

Punjab (P.N.N.R.): 1899-1900.

Revenue Letters from India, 1880-1904, Vols.1-31.

Revenue Letters from Bombay, 1890-1904, Vols.12-26.

Revenue Letters from Madras, 1890-1904, Vols.11-25.

Revenue Despatches to India, Bombay & Madras, 1880-1895, Vols.1-16.

Revenue & Statistical Despatches to India etc., 1896-1904, Vols.17-25.

Revenue and Settlement Proceedings (India-Land):

1895 Vols. 4760-4762

1896 Vols. 4974-4976

1897 Vols. 5197-5199

1898 Vols. 5432-5434

Revenue and Agricultural Proceedings (India General):

1899 Vol. 5662

1900 Vol. 5893

1901 Vol. 6130

1902 Vol. 6360

Revenue Proceedings (Bombay):

1892 Vol. 4261

1895 Vols. 4866, 4867

1894 Vol. 4662

1896 Vol. 5087

Revenue Proceedings (Bombay)(Cont.):

1897 Vol. 5325

1899 Vol. 5738

1898 Vol. 5545

1900 Vol. 5968

Revenue Proceedings (Madras):

1890-1902

D. OFFICIAL PRINTED SOURCES

(i) Acts of Parliament

21 & 22 Vic., C.106 (Government of India 1858)

(ii) Government of India Acts

(iii) Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India,

1877-78 and 1895-1904.

(iv) Proceedings of the Legislative Council, Bombay, 1901.(v) Proceedings of the Governor General in Council, 1895-1904.(vi) Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 1874-1904.(vii) Parliamentary Papers (House of Commons).

<u>Year</u>	<u>Vol.</u>	<u>Subject</u>
1857	XXIX	Return showing Tenures of Land and Land tax in several presidencies in India.
"	"	Correspondence on alleged case of Tortures in India, since 12 September 1855.

(vii) Parliamentary Papers (House of Commons) (cont.)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Vol.</u>	<u>Subject</u>
1867	L	Correspondence between ^{the} India Office and the Govt. of India on Permanent Settlement, 1865-67.
"	LI	Papers, Correspondence and Reports on the Bengal and Orissa famines 1866.
"	LII	Papers on Madras famine (1865-66); additional papers on Orissa famine and subsequent to report.
1874	VIII	Report of the Committee on East India Finance.
"	L	Correspondence between the India Office and Govt. of India on Bengal famine.
1878	XII	Report of the Committee on East India Public Works.
"	"	Papers as to past famines in India.
1878	LVII	Report on debate in the Legislative Council of India, 27 December 1877, 16 January and 9 February 1878.
1880	LII	Report of the Indian Famine Commission 1880.
1881	LXXI	Further report on famine, with Proceedings, Evidence and Appendices.
1889	LVIII	Return of purposes to which provision for famine insurance has been applied in each year since its introduction.
1892	"	Comres. as to relief of agricultural distress in the Deccan, 1891-92.
1896	LXI	Return for 1883-84 to 1893-94, showing acreage cultivated and waste, notices of demand and of sale, defaulters whose property was sold, estimated value, amount realised, and acreage sold to Government and to others.

(vii) Parliamentary Papers (House of Commons) (cont.):

<u>Year</u>	<u>Vol.</u>	<u>Subject</u>
1897	LXIV	Papers on the famines of 1896, 1897, with Famine Code for North Western Provinces & Oudh.
"	LXV	Statement of Moral and Material Progress in India 1895-96.
1898	LXII	Papers on Famines of 1896-97.
1899	XXXI	Report of the Famine Commission of 1898.
"	XXXII	Evidences and appendices to the Report of the Famine Commission 1898.
"	LVI	Statement of Moral and Material Progress in India 1897-98.
1900	XXVII	Papers regarding Famine and Relief operation in India during 1899-1900.
1902	LXX	Report of the Famine Commission 1901.
"	LXXI	Papers regarding Land Revenue System of British India.
1903	XLVI	Report of the Committee on the establishment of Cooperative Societies in India.
1904	LXIII	Statement showing number ^{of} processes issued against land revenue defaulters during 1901-1902.
"	LXVI	Report of the Indian Irrigation Commission 1901-1903.
1907	LVIII	Return showing the progress of the Cooperative Societies in India.

(viii) Government Publications

Directive for Settlement Officer, North Western Provinces, Agra 1844.

(viii) Government Publications (cont.)

Land Tax of India, according to Mahomedan Law,
London 1853. Translated by W.B.E. Baillie,

Report and Proceedings consequent on the Tinnevelly Riots,
Madras 1859.

Correspondence on Koplak Outrages in Malabar, 1849-53,
2 Vols., Madras 1863.

Standing Order of the Madras Board of Revenue, 1820-70,
Madras, n.d.

Report on Deccan Riots Commission, 1875, 1875.

Annual Report (1878-9) of Cwampore Government Experimental
Farm, n.d.

J.F. Duthie, Fodder Grass of Northern India, 2 Vols.,
place not mentioned, 1880.

Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act XVII of 1879, 1882.

Survey and Settlement Manual for the Bombay Presidency,
Bombay 1882.

Report of the Agricultural Committee, Madras, 1888.

Summary of the Principal Measures of the Viceroyalty of
Lord Dufferin, Department of Revenue
and Agriculture, 2 Vols., Simla 1888.

Proceedings of the Agricultural Conference, 1890,
Simla 1890.

F.A. Nicholson, Report Regarding the Possibility of
Introducing Land and Agricultural
Banks into the Madras Presidency,
2 Vols., Madras 1895.

-- Summary of the Viceroyalty of Lord Elgin
Department of Revenue and Agriculture
Land Revenue Policy of the Government
of India, Calcutta 1902.

Summary of the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon
Department of Revenue and Agriculture

E. NEWSPAPERS AND JOURNALS.

(W) Weekly
(M) Monthly
(Q) Quarterly

(Indian)

The Agricultural Ledger, (Q) 1896 & 1901.

The Bengalee (Calcutta), 1896 & 1900 and January 1902.

The Civil and Military Gazette (Lahore), January 1900 & 1902.

The Englishman (Calcutta), December 1877 & January to March 1878.

The Hindu Patriot (Calcutta), December 1877 to April 1878.

The Indian Agriculturist (Calcutta), (M) 1900 & 1902.

The Indian Mirror (Calcutta), January to April 1878.

The Madras Mail (Madras), January to April 1878.

The Madras Mail Weekly (Madras), (W) 1890-1903.

The Madras Times (Madras), January to April 1878.

The Pioneer (Lucknow), May 1896 to June 1897.

The Pioneer Mail (Lucknow), (W) 1900 to 1902.

The Times of India (Bombay), December 1877 to April 1878.

The Times of India (Overland Edition), (W) 1890 to 1903.

(British)

The Daily Chronicle, November to December 1896, January to March 1897.

The Daily Graphic, December 1896 to June 1897.

The Daily News, December 1896 to July 1897.

India ((M) ¹⁸⁹⁰ to 1897, hereafter (W)), 1899-1904.

The Investors' Review, (W) October 1896 to July 1897,
October 1899 to July 1900.

The Manchester Guardian, October 1899 to June 1900.

The Times, December 1896 to July 1897, December 1899 to July 1900,
June 1901 to July 1902.

E. PRINTED BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

Anstey, V., The Economic Development of India, London 1936.

Baden-Powell, B.H., Land Revenue System and Land Tenures of British India, Calcutta 1882.

-- Land Systems of British India, 3 Vols., Oxford 1892.

Banerjea, P.M., History of Indian Taxation, London 1930.

Barrier, H.G., The Punjab Alienation of Land Bill, Duke University 1966.

Bhatia, B.M., Famines in India, 1830-1943: A study in some aspects of the Economic History of India, New York 1963.

Bradlaugh, C., The Indian Money Matter: The Story of the Famine Relief and Insurance Fund etc., London 1889.

Blyn, G., Agricultural Trends in India, 1891-1947: Output, Availability and Productivity, London 1966.

Chandra, B., The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India. Economic Policies of Indian National Leadership, 1880-1905, New Delhi 1966.

Curzon, G.H., Speeches, Vol. 4, Calcutta 1904.

Darling, H.L., Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt, London 1925.

Davies, C.C., The Problem of the North West Frontier, 1890-1908, Cambridge 1932.

Digby, W., Famine Campaign in Southern India, 2 Vols., London 1878.

-- Prosperous British India, London 1901.

Dilks, D.N., Curzon in India, Vol. 1, London 1969.

- Dutt, R.C., The Peasantry of Bengal, being a view of their condition under the Hindu, Mohamedan and English rule etc., Calcutta 1874.
- England and India: a record of progress during a hundred years 1785-1885, London 1897.
- Open Letter to Lord Curzon on Famines and Land Assessments in India, London 1900.
- Indian Famines, their causes and prevention, London 1901.
- Open Letters to Lord Curzon: speeches and papers, (ed.) R.P.Mitra, Calcutta 1904.
- The Economic History of India under Early British rule, Vol. 1, 2nd ed., London 1904.
- The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age, Vol. II, London 1904.
- Edwardes, M., High Noon of Empire: India under Curzon, London 1965.
- Fawcett, H., Indian Finance, London 1880.
- Forrest, G.W., The Famines in India, London 1897.
- Ghosh, P.C., The Development of the Indian National Congress 1892-1909, Calcutta 1960.
- Gopal, S., The Permanent Settlement in Bengal and its Results, London 1949.
- The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon 1880-1884, London 1953.
- British Policy in India, 1858-1905, Cambridge 1965.
- Gokhale, G.K., Speeches, 2nd Ed., Madras 1916.
- Griffiths, P., British Impact on India, London 1952.

- Gupta, J.N., Life and Works of Romesh Chandra Dutt, London 1911.
- Hamilton, Lord G.F., Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections, 1868-1885, London 1917.
- Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections 1886-1906, London 1922.
- Present Position of the Conservative Party a Speech and an address, London 1880.
- Holderness, T.W., People and Problems of India, London 1911.
- Hough, E.M., The Cooperative Movement in India, London 1932.
- Hunter, W.W., Annals of Rural Bengal, London 1868.
- Jack, J.C., The Economic Life of a Bengal District. A Study, Oxford 1916.
- Joshi, G.V., Writings and Speeches, Poona 1912.
- Karve, D.G., Poverty and Population of India, London 1936.
- Kumar, D., Land and Caste in South India, Cambridge 1965.
- Kumar, R., Western India in the nineteenth century, London 1968.
- Loveday, A., The History and Economics of Famines in India, London 1914.
- Malabari, B.N., The Indian Problems, Bombay 1894.
- Masani, R.P., Dadabhai Naoroji: the Grand Old Man of India, London 1939.
- McMinn, C.W., Famine Truths, half Truth, London 1902.
- Merewether, F.H.S., Tour Through the Famine District of India, London 1897.
- Metcalf, T.R., The Aftermath of Revolt. India 1857, Princeton, New Jersey, 1965.
- Mill, J.S., Principles of Political Economy, 7th ed., 2 Vols., London 1871.

- Misra, B.B., The Indian Middle Classes. Their growth in modern times, London 1961.
- Misra, B.R., Land Revenue Policy in the United Provinces..., Benares 1942.
- Mody, H.P., Sir Pherozeshah Mehta: A Political Biography, 2 Vols., Bombay 1921.
- Hookerjee, R.K., Land Problems of India, London 1933.
- Economic Problems of Modern India, London 1939.
- Moore, R.J., Sir Charles Wood's Indian Policy, 1853-66, Manchester 1966.
- Liberalism and Indian Politics 1872-1922, London 1966.
- Moreland, W.H., Agrarian Systems of Moslem India, Cambridge 1929.
- Moulton, E.C., Lord Northbrook's Indian Administration, 1872-76, London 1968.
- Mukherjee, N., The Ryotwari System in Madras, 1792-1827, Calcutta 1962.
- Murdoch, J., Memorandum on Some Questions of Indian Affairs to Lord Curzon, Madras 1900.
- Naoroji, D., Poverty and Un-British Rule in India, London 1901.
- Speeches and Writings, Madras 1910.
- Nash, V., The Great Famine, London 1900.
- Natesan, G.A., (ed.) Indian Politics, Madras 1898.
- The Indian National Congress, 3 Pts., Madras n.d.
- O'Donnell, C.J., The Failure of Lord Curzon: A Study in Imperialism. An Open Letter to the Earl of Rosebery, London 1903. (Published under pseudonym of "Twenty Eight Years in India".)

- Philips, C.H., (ed.), The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858-1947. Select Documents, London 1962.
- Phillips, A., Land Tenures of Lower Bengal, Calcutta 1874.
- Phipson, C.B., India's Difficulties: Some ways out of them: Indian Poverty and Indian Famines, London 1903.
- Rao, V.K.R.V., Taxation of Income in India, Calcutta 1931.
- Ratcliffe, S.K., Sir William Wedderburn and the Indian Reform Movement, London 1923.
- Rogers, A., The Land-Revenue System of Bombay, 2 Vols., London 1892.
- Ronaldshay, Earl of, The Life of Lord Curzon, 3 Vols., London 1928.
- Ray, S.C., Papers dealing with Indebtedness in India (Collection of Extracts from the Blue Books), Calcutta 1915.
- Economic Causes of Indian Famines, Calcutta 1902.
- Land Revenue Administration in India, 1915.
- Rudra, A.B., The Viceroy and Governor General of India, London 1940.
- Sanyal, N., The Development of Indian Railways, Calcutta 1930.
- Singh, H.L., Problems and Policies of the British in India, London 1963.
- Singh, S.H., The Secretary of State for India and His Council, 1858-1919, Delhi 1962.
- Sinha, H.K., The Economic History of Bengal; from Plassey to the Permanent Settlement, 2 Vols., Calcutta 1956 and 1962.
- Sitaramayya, B.P., The History of the Indian National Congress, 1885-1935, Bombay 1935.

- Srivastava, H.S., The History of the Indian Famines, 1858-1918, Agra 1968.
- Stokes, E., The Utilitarians and India, Oxford 1959.
- Strachey, J., India. Its Administration and Progress London 1911.
- Temple, R., India in 1880, 3rd ed., London 1881.
- Thorburn, S.S., Musalman and Moneylenders in the Punjab, London 1886.
- Vakil, C.N., Financial Development in Modern India, 1860-1924, Bombay 1924.
- Voelekar, J.S., Report on Improvement of Indian Agriculture, London 1893.
- Wedderburn, W., Allan Octavian Hume, London 1913.
- Wolff, H.W., Cooperation in India, London 1925.
- Woodruff, P., The Men Who Ruled India, 2 Vols., London 1953-4.

G. ARTICLES

- Atkinson, F.J., "Average Income of India 1875-1895", Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, June 1902.
- Baden-Powell, B.H., "Permanent Settlement of Bengal", English Historical Review (hereafter E.H.R.), X, 1895, 276-92.

- Bell, Horace, "Railways and Famines", Journal of the Society of Arts (hereafter J.S.A.), XLI, 1901.
- Chesney, George, "Indian Famine", Nineteenth Century, 1877, II, 603-21.
- Cumpston, M., "Some early Indian Nationalists and their allies in the British Parliament, 1851-1906", E.H.R., LXXVI, 1961, 279-97.
- Elliot, C.A., "On Measures Taken by the Government for the Prevention of Famine", J.S.A., 45, 1897.
- "Recent Famines in India and Reports of the Second Famine Commission", Asiatic Quarterly Review (hereafter A.Q.R.), 8, 1899.
- Fawcett, H., "The Financial Condition of India", N.C., 1879, V, 193-218.
- Gallagher, J. and Robinson, R., "The Imperialism and Free Trade", Economic History Review, 1953, VI.
- Harnetty, P., "The Indian Cotton Duties Controversy, 1894-1896", E.H.R., LXXVII, 1962, 684-702.
- Holderness, T.W., "Indian Famine of 1899", J.S.A., 50, 1902.
- Hyndman, H., "The Bankruptcy of India", N.C., IV, 1878, 585-608 and V, 1879, 443-61.
- Lely, F.S.P., "Political side of Famines in India", J.S.A., 55, 1907.

- Metcalf, T.R., "The Influence of the Mutiny of 1857 on Land Policy in India", Historical Journal, IV, 1961, 151-63.
- "The Struggle over Land Tenure in India", 1860-1868", Journal of Asian Studies, XXI, 1962, 295-307.
- Moore, R.J., "Imperialism and Free 'Trade Policy' in India, 1853-54", Econ.Hist.Rev., XVII, 1964, 135-45.
- Nightingale, F., "The People of India", N.C., IV, 1878, 193-221.
- Raj, J., "Changing Patterns in the Oudh Land Policy 1856-1868", Bengal Past and Present, LXXVIII, 1959, 87-91.
- Roe, C.A., "Indian Taxation". A.Q.R., April 1903.
- Rogers, A., "Government Evictions in Madras", India, 4 February 1898.
- Srivastava, H.S., "The Indian Famines of 1876-79", Journal of Indian History, XLIV, December 1956, 853-86.
- Wedderburn, W., "Agricultural Banks for India", Asiatic Review, 1898.
- "History of a Crime", India, February 1897.
- Wright, H.R.C., "Some Aspects of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal", Econ. Hist. Rev., VII, 1954-5, 204-15.

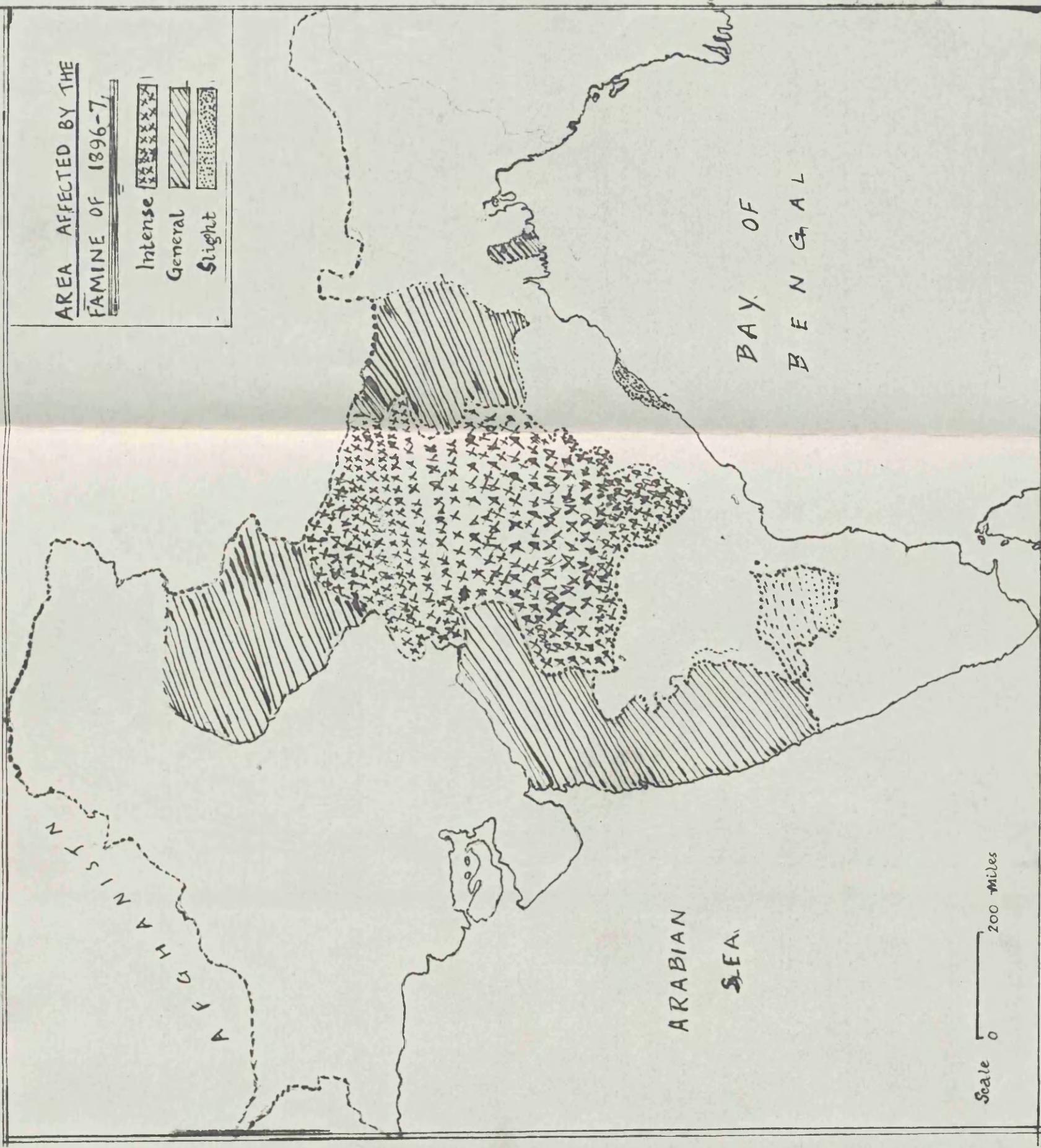
H. TRESES

- Gujral, L.M., "Internal Administration of Lord Lytton, with special reference to Social and Economic Policy, 1876-1880", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1958.
- Nalhotra, P.L., "The Internal Administration of Lord Elgin in India, 1894-1898", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London 1966.

APPENDIX A.
MAP OF INDIA I.

AREA AFFECTED BY THE
FAMINE OF 1896-7,

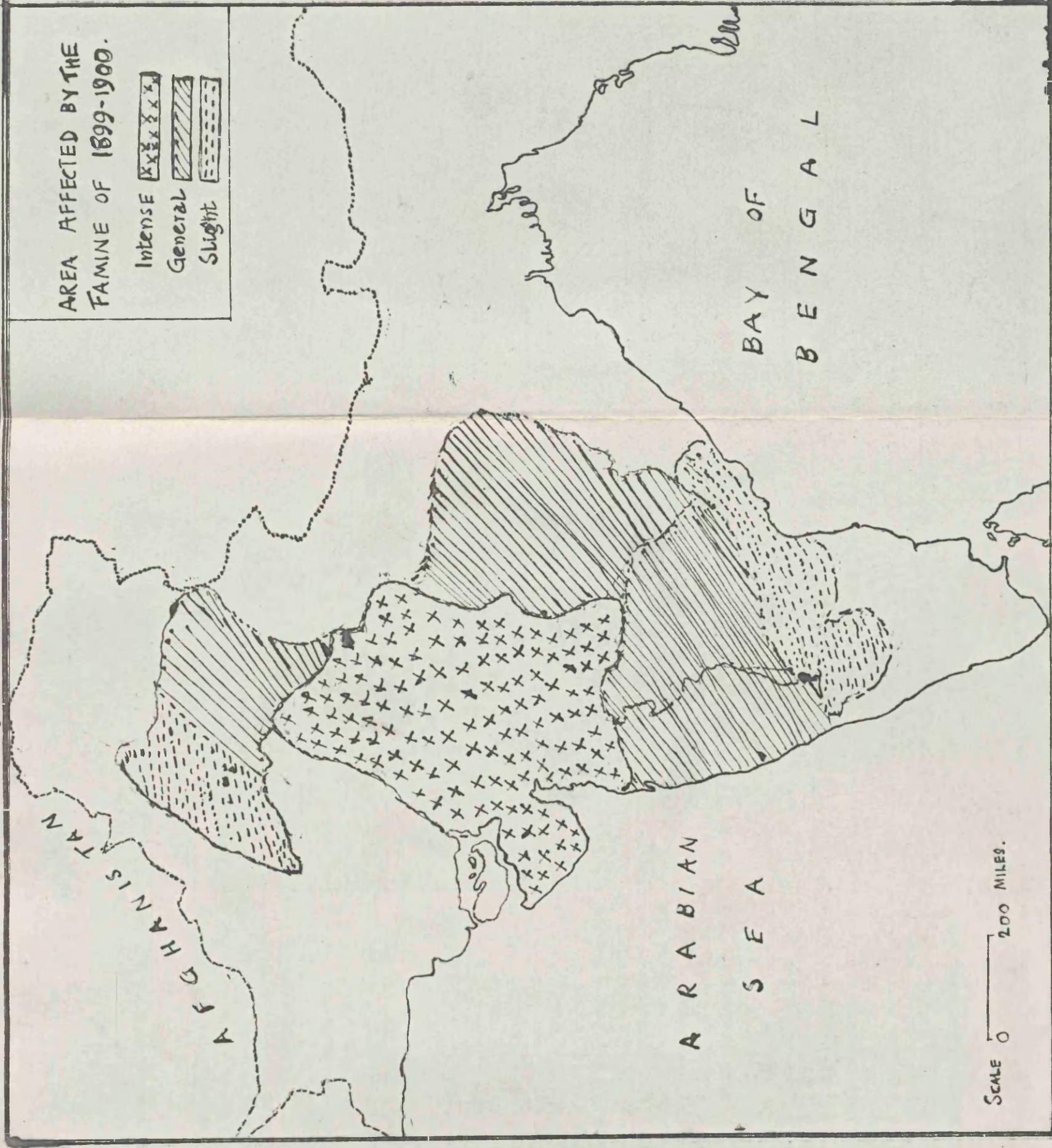
Intense
General
Slight



Scale 0 200 Miles

AREA AFFECTED BY THE
FAMINE OF 1899-1900.

Intense 
General 
Slight 



SCALE 0 200 MILES.

Appendix C (I)

The following is the first list of the signatories to the Memorial of the Indian Famine Union to the Secretary of State for India dated 1 November, 1901, *Soura: India, 8 November 1901.*

Archbishop of Canterbury	Mr J Herbert Lewis, M P
Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster	Sir John Leng, M P
Archbishop of Armagh	Mr J Herbert Roberts, M P
Bishop of Carlisle	" Thomas Shaw, M P
Bishop of Liverpool	" H J Wilson, M P
Lord Ripon	" J H Yoxall, M P
Earl of Aberdeen	" Edward Bond, M P
Earl of Dunmore	" R Cameron, M P
Lord Hobhouse	" Alfred Emmott, M P
Lord Kinnaird	" Samuel Evans, M P
Lord Leigh	Sir Michael Foster, M P
Lord Radstock	" Walter Foster, M P
Lord Stanley of Alderly	Mr J P Farrell, M P
Sir Auckland Colvin	" M J Flavin, M P
Sir Richard Garth	Sir W Brampton Gurdon, M P
Sir Lepel Griffin	Mr J Keir Hardie, M P
Sir John Jardine	" A H Heath, M P
Sir William Markby	" J D Hope, M P
Sir William Muir	" P J Kennedy, M P
General Sir Henry Norman	Sir James Kitson, M P
Sir W Comer Petheran	Col. Heneage Legge, M P
Sir John Budd Phear	Mr Maurice Levy, M P
General Sir J W Schneider	" Chas. MacArthur, M P
Sir Raymond West	Gen. Sir William Butler
Mr G B Chapman	Mr W P Byles
" T Hart Davies	" Jas. Carter
" T A Denny	Dr T J Macnamara, M P
" E C Ozanne	Mr J Lloyd Morgan, M P
Dr A D Pollen	" Chas. Morley, M P
Mr J R Reid	" T W Nussey, M P
" H J Reynolds	" J J O'Shee, M P
" Alex. Rogers	" A C Humphreys Owen, M P
" G W Vidal	" D V Pirie, M P
" C W Whish	" H J Rickett, M P
" T Gair Ashton, M P	" S Forde Ridley, M P
" W S Caine, M P	" Edmund Robertson, M P
" D Brynmor Jones, M P	" C P Scott, M P

Mr Charles E Shaw, M P	Rev. T Spurgeon
" J W Spear, M P	" Dr Taylor
" T Courtenay Warner, M P	" H A Thomas
" J K Wingfield Digby M P	" S Vincent
" Samuel Young, M P	" H Russell Wakefield
Dean of Durham	" Principal Whitehouse
" " Lincoln	Ven. Archdeacon Wilson
" " Landaff	Sir Arthur Arnold
" " Manchester	" Thomas Marlow, M D
Principal of Jesus College, Oxford	Dr Karl Blind
Warden of Keble College, "	Mr P W Bunting
Principal of Manchester College, Oxford	" Wilfrid Scawen Blunt
" " Mansfield College, "	" Donald Crawford
Master of Pembroke College, "	" William Digby
Principle of Somerville College, "	" J P Edwards
Master of Catherine College, Cambridge	" A E Fletcher
" " Clare College, "	Sir Douglas Fox
President of Queen's College, "	" Edward Fry
" " Queen's College, Belfast	" Theodore Fry
Principal of Aberdeen University	Prof. William Graham
Rev. Canon Ainger	Mr Frederic Harrison
" R A Armstrong	" T E Higham
" W T A Barber	" C H Hopwood
" Canon Barnett	" J Seymour Keay
Mr Branwell Booth	" Bertram Keightley
Rev. Dr John Clifford	" C H Loch
" E D Cornish	Sir Massey Lopes
" J Estlin Carpenter	Mr Fred. Maddison
" Dr Glasse	Prof. Alfred Marshall
" Canon Gore	Mr George Meredith
" Canon Hicks	" H S Murray
" J Page Hopps	Prof. S J Owen
" A O M Jay	Mr H D Pearsall
" Canon Knox-Little	Sir H Gilzean-Reid
" J T McGaw	Mr George Bernard Shaw
Dr Mair (Rev.)	" J Bamford Slack
Rev. Dr Marshall	" Robinson Souttar
" F B Meyer	" Herbert Spencer
" J H Moulton	Sir W P Treloar
" Dr Paterson	" E H Verney
" J E Radcliffe	Mr Alfred Wallace
" Dr Rigg	Prof. John Wastlake
" T G Selby	" A J Wilson
Archdeacon Sinclair	Mrs G S Barnett

Appx C (I) Cont

Miss E A Byles (Edna Lyall)	Provost of Paisley
Mrs Bramwell Booth	Chairman Blackburn Chamber of Commerce
" W P Byles	" Cardiff " " "
Countess of Carlisle	" Bradford " " "
Miss Alison Garland	" Cambridgeshire County Council
Madam Sarah Grand	" Merionethshire " "
Mrs Eva M'Laren	Lord Aberdare
" Chas. Mallet	" Keane
" F Max Muller	Marquis of Winchester
" Russell Rea	Lord Wrottesley
" Flora Annie Steel	Sir George Birdwood
Countess of Warwick	Gen. Sir Andrew Clarke
Lord Mayor of Bristol	Mr Romesh C Dutt
Lord Mayor of York	" Robert H Elliot
Mayor of Barnsley	Col. H B Hanna
Mayor of Barrow-in-Furness	Sir Robert G Head
Mayor of Birkenhead	Mr J Knox Wright
Mayor of Blackburn	Dean of Gloucester
Mayor of Bootle	Rev. Dr G S Barrett
Mayor of Bradford	Rev. Canon McColl
Mayor of Cheltenham	Rev. Wm Dale
Mayor of Coventry	Rev. Hugh Price Hughes
Mayor of Gateshead	Rev. Vernon Staley
Mayor of Grimsby	Rev. Chas. Voysey
Mayor of Huddersfield	Comptoir National d'Escompte
Mayor of Ipswich	(Mr E Lazarus, Manager)
Mayor of Maidstone	Councillor Fielding Johnson
Mayor of Newport (Mon.)	Sir William Bruce
Mayor of Nottingham	" Alfred Newton
Mayor of Shoreditch	Mr A G Symonds
Mayor of Stepney	" Edgar Speyer
Mayor of Sunderland	Dr R Spence Watson
Mayor of Warrington	Mr Alexander Wedderburn
Mayor of Wigan	" Spencer Wilkinson
Provost of Ayr	" W Martin Wood
Provost of Melrose	Mrs H Bradlaugh Bonner

Appendix C (II)

The following is the list of dates and places of public meetings on Indian matters held in various places in England during the period November, 1901, to December, 1903, which greatly helped the campaign of the Indian Famine Union. The Famine Union had no official connection with the British Committee of the Congress, but in its campaign the Union used the propaganda machinery of the Congress. These meetings were organised by the Liberal Association, Fabian Society, Free Church Association, British Committee of the Indian National Congress and the Liverpool Branch of the Indian Famine Union. (Compiled from INDIA, November 1901 to December 1903.)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Speakers</u>	<u>Organisers</u>
12 Nov.1901	Edinburgh	D Naoroji	Young Scotts Society
18 Nov.1901	Richmond	R C Dutt	Atheneum Club
10 Jan.1902	Clifford Inn, London	S S Thorburn	Fabian Society
27 Apr.1902	Chepstow Hall, London	D Naoroji	Pekham Ethical Fellowship
9 Jul.1902	Lambs Conduit St., London	Henry Cotton	Church of Humanity
10 Sep.1902	Dousland Grange	W Wedderburn	Liverpool Branch, I F U
15 Oct.1902	Edinburgh	J Jardine	Young Scotts Society
31 Oct.1902	Liverpool	Henry Cotton	Liverpool Branch, I F U
2 Mar.1903	Ipswich	W Wedderburn	Ipswich Reform Club
4 Mar.1903	Thrapston (Northampton)	Dr Aubrey	British Committee, I N C
5 Mar.1903	Northampton	Dr Aubrey & J C Mukherji	British Committee, I N C
6 Mar.1903	Welling- borough	Dr Aubrey & J C Mukherji	British Committee, I N C
9 Mar.1903	Kettering	Dr Aubrey & W C Bonnerji	Liberal Association, Free Church Council & Cooperative Society
17 Mar.1903	Wolverhampton	Dr Aubrey	Liberal Association
16 Dec.1903	Liverpool	W Wedderburn	Liverpool Branch, I F U

Appendix C (III)

List of Bulletins published by the Institute of Agricultural Research, Pusa, on the research works carried out by it during the period 1904 to 1921. (Compiled and classified from the catalogue of the India Office Library.)

<u>Topic of research</u>	<u>Bulletin No.</u>
Bee-Keeping	46
Cotton	1 and 26
Coconut Palm	9
Eucalyptus	21
Fibre Plant	15
Fodder Plant	41
Fruit	16 and 4
Flies	7
Gram Plant	45
Indigo*	3-12, 51 and 54; Indigo Publication Nos. 1-12
Insecticides	19 and 23
Jute	3
Lac cultivation	28
Locust	5
Manuring	40
Pest	10
Rice	34 and 38
Soil	52 and 53
Silk*	29, 39, 44 and 48
Saltpetre	24
Sugar cane *	13, 27, 37, 42, 47 and 49
Tea	18
Tobacco	50

Appx C (II) (cont.)

<u>Topic of research</u>	<u>Bulletin No.</u>
Veterinary	32
Wheat*	14, 17, 20, 22 and 31, 19
General development of agriculture in Bihar	33
Method of Chemical Laboratory	8

* Total numbers of research papers on Indigo, Silk Sugar cane and Wheat are 24, 4, 6 and 6 respectively.

Appendix DResolutions of the Indian National Congress
on land revenue, agriculture and economic reforms
1888-1903

<u>Year</u>	<u>Place of Session</u>	<u>Resol. No.</u>
1888	Allahabad	14
1889	Poona	7
1890	Calcutta	6
1891	Nagpur	3
1892	Allahabad	9
1893	Lahore	8, 10-11
1894	Madras	2-3
1895	Poona	10, 14
1896	Calcutta	12-13
1897	Anraoti	7
1898	Madras	6
1899	Lucknow	2
1900	Lahore	2, 23
1901	Calcutta	3, 15-16
1902	Ahmedabad	3-4
1903	Madras	3, 12

Source: G.A.Natesan & Co. (ed.), The Indian National Congress,
3 Pts, Madras (n.d.), Congress Resolutions, Pt. III, pp,
1-143.