

[No. 119.]

Letter No. 1817, dated 8 June, 1917, from H. McPherson, Chief Secretary to Government of Bihar and Orissa, to L.F. Morshead, Commissioner, Tirhut Division.¹

MY DEAR MORSHEAD,

I am desired to inform you that the Lieutenant-Governor in Council has decided to appoint a Committee of Enquiry, which will examine and report on the whole question of agrarian conditions in Champaran. The constitution of the Committee will be communicated to you as soon as it is finally settled. As at present proposed it will consist of the following:—

PRESIDENT.

F. G. Sly, Esq., C.S.I., Commissioner, Central Provinces.

MEMBERS.

The Hon'ble Mr. L.C. Adami, I.C.S., Legal Remembrancer, Bihar and Orissa.

G. Rainy, Esq., I.C.S., Deputy Secretary to the Government of India, Finance Department.

The Hon'ble Raja Harihar Prashad Narayan Singh, Member of the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council.

The Hon'ble Mr. D.J. Reid, Member of the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council.

M.K. Gandhi, Esq.

6. Brijkishore Sahai, Vakil of Darbhanga.
7. Sambhusaran Varma, Vakil.
8. Rajendra Prasad, Vakil of Bankipur.
9. Anugrah Narain Singh, Vakil of Bankipur.
10. Brahmachari Arbhusan, Vagabond of Gopalganj, Saran.
11. Parasnath Tripathi, outsider from Sahabad District.
12. Bindyabasini Prasad Varma, Pleader of Gorakhpur.
13. Chandradeep Narain, Pleader of Chapra.
14. Mr. Kirpalani, M.A. Late Professor of B.B. College, Muzaffarpur.
15. Raghunandan Prasad, outsider.
16. Parmeshwar Lal, Bar-at-law of Bankipur.
17. Gorakh Prasad, Pleader of Motihari.
18. Ganesh Datt Singh, Vakil of Bankipur.

Number 6, 9, 11, 12, 13 and 15 are reported to be helping in recording statement of witnesses. No. 14 is said to draft confidential reports and correct statements. Nos. 1 to 9 (inclusive) were present in the meeting of Babu Gorakh Prasad, Pleader of Motihari on 18th April, 1917, when the relations between planters and *raiyats* were discussed.

¹. Political (Special) Department file No. 1571 of 1917. Original in Tirhut Commissioner's file No. 115 (Mr. Gandhi's Enquiry II).

SECRETARY.

E. L. Tanner, Esq., I.C.S.

2. Mr. Gandhi who has agreed to serve on the Committee on his part undertakes at once to put a stop to his enquiry and to abstain henceforth from taking a single statement and also from visiting any *dehat* or allowing any of his assistants to do so. Mr. Gandhi does not want the *raiyats* to feel that he has deserted them and is unwilling on that account to leave the district altogether pending the assembly of the Committee. But he undertakes not to go beyond Bettiah and Motihari; after short visits to these places he will go on a visit to his home in Ahmedabad.

3. His honour in Council has directed that pending the assembly of the Committee and the conclusion of its labours vigorous action should be taken to prevent all abuses that may come to light or be brought to notice. For instance the taking of *abwabs* must as far as possible be finally stopped use being made where necessary of the power of refusing to renew leases. Similarly effective measures should be taken to prevent the illegal impressment of labour carts and ploughs.

4. An advance copy of his letter is being sent to Messrs. Heycock, Whitty and Lewis for information¹ so that they may understand the situation as explained in paragraph 2 and do their utmost to carry out the instructions contained in paragraph 3.

Yours sincerely,
H. McPHERSON.

1. Copies of this letter were sent to Heycock, Whitty and Lewis on the same day. Although still confidential, the Associated Press of India picked up this news, some how or other, and the *English man* of Calcutta published in its issue of 8 June, 1917 as quoted below:—

(Associated Press of India)

Bankipore, June 7.

The Local Government has decided to appoint a small committee of enquiry to investigate the relations between the landlords and tenants in this province. . . . It is not certain whether the inquiry will be public. The planters demand an open inquiry, while Mr. Gandhi is reported to have advised Government not to have a public inquiry. Disinterested opinion, however, is inclined to view that power should be given to the Chairman of the Committee to decide which portion of the inquiry should be in camera or which portion of the evidence recorded should be omitted.

It is expected that Government will issue a *communiqué* on the subject very shortly, formulating definite issues for an enquiry. It is not yet certain whether Mr. Gandhi's demand for a time-limit for the committee's report will be complied with.

Mr. Gandhi arrived here this morning from Ranchi. Interviewed, he declined to make a statement, but said that he expected Government to take some action which will be satisfactory to all concerned. This evening he is holding an informal conference with the local leaders and Pandit Malaviya, who has been sent for. He proceeds to Bettiah tomorrow morning with Mrs. Gandhi, who joined him at Ranchi.'