

The taking of statements in Bettiah has been stopped as from yesterday. I am going to Motihari tomorrow to stop the taking of statements there.

I am,
Yours sincerely,
M. K. GANDHI.

[No. 126].

*Government Resolution No. 1890-C, dated Ranchi 10 June, 1917,—by
Chief Secretary to Government of Bihar and Orissa.*¹

On various occasions during the past fifty years the relations of landlords and tenants and the circumstances attending the growing of indigo in the Champaran district have been the cause of considerable anxiety. The conditions under which indigo was cultivated when the industry was flourishing required readjustment when it declined simultaneously with a general rise in the prices of foodgrains; and it was partly on this account and partly owing to other local causes that disturbances broke out in certain indigo concerns in 1908. Mr. Gourlay was deputed by the Government of Bengal to investigate the causes of the disturbances; and his report and recommendations were considered at a series of conferences presided over by Sir Edward Baker and attended by the local officers of Government and representatives of the Bihar Planters' Association. As the result of these discussions, revised conditions for the cultivation of indigo, calculated to remove the grievances of the *raiyats*, were accepted by the Bihar Planters' Association.

2. In 1912 fresh agitation arose, connected not so much with the conditions under which indigo was grown as with the action of certain factories which were reducing their indigo manufacture and taking agreements from their tenants for the payment, in lieu of indigo cultivation, of a lump sum in temporarily-leased villages or of an increase of rent in villages under permanent lease. Numerous petitions on this subject were presented from time to time to the local officers and to Government, and petitions were at the same time filed by *raiyats* of villages in the north of the Bettiah subdivision in which indigo had never been grown, complaining of the levy of *abwab* or illegal additions to rent by their lease-holder, both Indian and European. The issues raised by all these petitions related primarily to rent and tenancy conditions; and as the revision settlement of the district was about to be undertaken, in the course of which

1. Political (Special) Department file No. 1571 of 1917.

the relations existing between landlords and tenants would come under detailed examination, it was thought advisable to await the report of the Settlement Officers before passing final orders on the petitions. The revision settlement was started in the cold weather of 1913. On the 7th April 1915 a resolution was moved in the local Legislative Council asking for the appointment of a mixed committee of officials and non-officials to enquire into the complaints of the *raiyats* and to suggest remedies. It was negatived by a large majority, including 12 out of the 16 non-official members of Council present, on the ground that the appointment of such a committee at that stage was unnecessary, as the settlement officers were engaged in the collection of all the materials required for the decision of the questions at issue, and additional enquiry of the nature proposed would merely have the effect of further aggravating the relations of landlord and tenant, which were already feeling the strain of the settlement operations.

3. The settlement operations have now been completed in the northern portion of the district and are approaching completion in the remainder, and a mass of evidence regarding agricultural conditions and the relations between landlords and tenants has been collected. A preliminary report on the complaints of the tenants in the leased villages in the north of the Bettiah Sub-division in which no indigo is grown, has been received and action has already been taken to prohibit the levy of illegal cesses and, in the case of the Bettiah Raj, to review the terms of the leases on which the villages concerned are held. As regards the complaints of the *raiyats* in other parts of the district, the final report of the Settlement Officer has not yet been received, but recent events have again brought into prominence the whole question of the relations between landlords and tenants, and, in particular, the taking of agreements from the *raiyats* for compensation or for enhanced rent in return for the abandonment of indigo cultivation. In these circumstances, and in deference to representations which have been received from various quarters that the time has come when an enquiry by a joint body of officials and non-officials might materially assist the Local Government in coming to a decision on the problems which have arisen, the Lieutenant-Governor in Council has decided, without waiting for the final report of the settlement operations, to refer the questions at issue to a Committee of Enquiry, on which all interests concerned will be represented.

4. The following committee has accordingly been appointed with the approval of the Government of India:—

PRESIDENT.

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

MEMBERS.

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

The Hon'ble Raja Harihar Prashad Narayan Singh,¹ Member of the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council.

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

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

M.K.Gandhi, Esq.

SECRETARY.

E.L. Tanner, Esq., I.C.S., Settlement Officer, South Bihar.

5. The duty of the committee will be—

- (1) to enquire into the relations between landlord and tenant in the Champaran district, including all disputes arising out of the manufacture and cultivation of indigo;
- (2) to examine the evidence on these subjects already available, supplementing it by such further inquiry, local and otherwise, as they may consider desirable; and
- (3) to report their conclusions to Government, stating the measures they recommend in order to remove any abuses or grievances which they may find to exist.

The Lieutenant-Governor in Council desires to leave the Committee a free hand as to the procedure they will adopt in arriving at the facts.

6. The Committee will assemble about the 15th July and will, it is hoped, complete their labours within three months.

ORDER.—Ordered, that the Resolution be published in the *Bihar and Orissa Gazette*, that a copy of it be submitted to the Government of India in the Home Department, and that copies be also forwarded to the Commissioner of the Tirhut Division, the Secretary to the Board of Revenue and to the Secretary of the Committee.

¹. The Hon'ble Raja Harihar Prashad Narayan Singh resigned on account of ill-health before the Committee assembled, and the Local Government in Resolution No. 2399.C, dated the 9th July, 1917, appointed in his place Hon'ble the Raja Kirtyan and Singh of Banaili, Member of the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council.