

[No. 14.]

*Extract from Fortnightly Report, dated 12 April, 1917, from Commissioner, Tirhut Division, to Chief Secretary to Government of Bihar and Orissa.*<sup>1</sup>

I have just had a letter from Mr. Gandhi,<sup>2</sup> presumably the one of South African fame, to ask for an interview, and will see him tomorrow. He wishes to ascertain for himself the true position regarding the condition of Indian working in connection with Indigo plantations, having heard a great deal about it, and would like to do his work with the cognizance and even co-operation of the local administration. He wishes to place the object of his enquiry before me, and learn whether he may receive any assistance from the local administration in furtherance of his work. Of course from our point of view the local administration has been concerned with the problem since early in the last century and the question is whether it can receive any assistance in furtherance of its work from Mr. Gandhi. I will see what he proposes to do.

[No. 15.]

*Note of an interview between M.K. Gandhi and L.F. Morshead, Commissioner, Tirhut Division, dated 13 April, 1917, recorded by Commissioner.*<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Gandhi said that he had had many communications asking him to enquire into conditions in the indigo plantations, and found that there was an insistent public demand that he should enquire. He had no desire to stir up trouble, but wished to see how matters stand, and whether there were any grievances that were not being brought to the notice of the authorities. It was pointed out to him that the *raiya*s were not backward in representing their grievances, and that our administrative resources in the shape of the courts, the Settlement officials, the Manager of the Bettiah Estate, the District Magistrate, Subdivisional Officer in their executive capacity were all being employed to ascertain and rectify the causes of complaint. We had to consider whether a stranger intervening in the midst of our operations would not embarrass them, and Mr. Gandhi was asked whether he could produce any credentials to show the insistent public demand of

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<sup>1</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>. Vide No. 13 ante.

<sup>3</sup>. Political (Special) Department, file No. 1571 of 1917.

which he spoke. He said that he would not produce private letters, but could furnish a representation from local people to show that his intervention was desired. He was informed that he might do this, although naturally a representation submitted to order would not carry the weight of requests previously received. In the interval the matter would be considered, but it might be necessary to take Government orders.

Mr. Weston,<sup>1</sup> who was present at the interview, questioned the advantage of Mr. Gandhi's intervention, whilst we were in the middle of the problem, and suggested that it would be more appropriate afterwards, when it could be seen if the action taken was adequate. Present intervention might cause regrettable friction between the planters, *raiyats* and officials.

Mr. Gandhi acknowledged that his intervention in other causes had not been unaccompanied by temporary disturbances. The kind of trouble with the potentiality of which we had to reckon in Champaran was indicated to him.

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[No. 16.]

*Letter, dated Muzaffarpur, 13 April, 1917, from M. K. Gandhi, to L. F. Morshead, Commissioner, Tirhut Division.*<sup>2</sup>

Dear Mr. Morshead,

In accordance with my promise made this morning<sup>3</sup> I send you a letter addressed to me by the inviting friends who are at present here.

I fear that I might have failed to convey to you the correct scope of my mission. I, therefore, restate it here. I am anxious to test the accuracy of the statements made to me by various friends regarding indigo matters and to find out for myself whether I can render useful assistance. My mission is that of making peace with honour.

I am,

Yours truly,

M. K. Gandhi.

I enclose too a note just given by Babu Arikshan Sinha.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Magistrate of Muzaffarpur.

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

3. Vide No. 15 ante.

4. A prominent lawyer and a political leader of Muzaffarpur.