

1923.

ASSAM SECRETARIAT.

APPOINTMENT AND POLITICAL DEPARTMENT.

Political Branch.

B, Progs. for September 1923, Nos. 186-201.

Pages 1-16.

Closure of the Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tracts.
(Maintenance of the Lohit Valley Road.)

Excluded Areas Records.

1352
1923

References to former cases.

Political, B, February 1923, Nos. 729-748. (Same subject.)
Ditto, August 1922, Nos. 237-276.
Ditto, January 1923, Nos. 547-555.
Ditto, October 1923, Nos. 225-237.
Ditto, August 1923, Nos. 216-218.
Ditto, July 1923, Nos. 135-138.
Ditto, December 1921, Nos. 405-418.
Ditto, July 1916, Nos. 72-94.
Ditto, April 1922, Nos. 74-83.

References to later cases.

Political B, March 1924, Nos. 1709-1748. } (Same subject.)
Ditto, September 1925, Nos. 180-185. }
Ditto, June 1926, Nos. 222-225.

6020: 8-10-22 = 1040-1042
— A, Dec/31 = 8-9
— B, Sep/32 = 598-29

NOTES.

POLITICAL—B, SEPTEMBER 1923.

Nos. 186-201.

Closure of the Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tracts. (Maintenance of the Lohit Valley Road.)

MEMORANDUM FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA IN THE FOREIGN AND POLITICAL DEPARTMENT,
No. 604—774-X., DATED THE 17TH MAY 1923.

One copy at once to Public Works Department for favour of report.

22nd May 1923.

A. W. BOTHAM.

Under-Secretary,

Draft for approval.

Nripendra—22nd May 1923.

22nd May 1923.

H. G. DENNEHY.

TO THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM IN THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, No. POL. 1184—2577A.P., DATED THE 22ND MAY 1923.

Extract from notes and orders on file No. Pol.-1184 of 1923 regarding 'the Administration Report of the Sadiya Frontier Tract for the year 1922-23.'

Mr. O'Callaghan's idea about the Lohit Valley Road is that it is unnecessary to maintain it on its present scale for local purposes, but that it should be kept up as a bridle track with foot bridges over the more difficult rivers. The Public Works Department have asked the Government of India what their intentions are in regard to the road, and we can only await their reply.

21st May 1923.

J. H. K[ERR].

Under-Secretary,

Kindly see the Public Works Department's note in that department file linked.* Our telegram† dated the 3rd February 1923 may, if desired, be shown to the Public Works Department unofficially.

* C 1R of 1923.

† Pol., B, Feb. 1923, Nos. 729-748.

2. As regards the Lohit Valley Road, it may be noted that the views of the Government of India regarding this road were expressed in item (6) of Sir A. Grants' demi-official No. 1329E.B.* dated the 19th September 1916. It appears that it was then intended to maintain permanently the existing Public Works Lohit Valley Road, up to Therouliang†. Since then there has been no change in the arrangements.

* Page 11 of notes in Confdl. Pol., A Dec. 1916, Nos. 1-24.

† Pol., A, Dec. 1916, Nos. 1-24.

In connection with the question of abolishing the Eastern Frontier Division, the Public Works Department proposed to declare the Political Officer, Sadiya, to be the Public Works disbursing officer for the maintenance of the Lohit Valley Road, but the Political Officer did not agree to the proposal.

3. From His Excellency's order above, it appears that the Public Works Department have made a reference to India regarding the road, but no mention is made of this point in the linked file.

Nripendra—26th May 1923.

Chief Secretary,

His Excellency's note above. Public Works Department in the linked file say they have no papers. Their attention may be drawn to His Excellency's note, and they may be asked to say what would be the saving involved in barely maintaining the road with foot bridges only over rivers which would not otherwise be crossed on foot. They might also note on the saving effected in the current budget by abandonment of any projected schemes for rest houses.

It is not clear what would happen to the rest houses. Presumably they must be kept up by Political Officer otherwise dismentlement would be necessary. Public Works Department might discuss this point.

26th May 1923.

H. G. DENNEHY.

His Excellency,

Perusal of the memorandum at paper under consideration. I intended the memorandum to be put up at once for submission to His Excellency.

2. The Public Works Department note on the linked file may be seen. I think the Public Works Department had better wire to the Executive Engineer for an estimate to be framed in consultation with the Political Officer, of the savings in case of complete abandonment of the Lohit Valley Road and in case of maintenance as a bridle path. From His Excellency's note it is clear that Mr. O'Callaghan contemplates the possibility of some cheaper form of maintenance than that at present in force.

3. I think we had better warn the Political Officer at once demi-officially of the recommendations which the Government of India are making.

26th May 1923.

A. W. BOTHAM.

As proposed. Also let Inspector General of Police know.

2. As to the Lohit Valley Road, surely it would not cost over a lakh annually to keep up 93 miles of bridle track for foot traffic, and probably there would be no valid objection to the Political Officer taking it over as Public Works Department disburser under these altered conditions. This point should be further examined. I think we had also better get from the Political Officer a note justifying the maintenance of the road as a bridle path, showing what sort of traffic it would serve and so on.

27th May 1923.

J. H. K[ERR].

Copy extracts from His Excellency's above orders on the Public Works Department file and return.

2. Issue the telegram below to Political Officer, Sadiya.

3. Send copy of our telegram* and of India's memorandum at paper under consideration to both Political Officer and Inspector General of Police demi-officially for present information.

* Pol., B, Feb. 1923, Nos. 729-748.

28th May 1923.

A. W. BOTHAM.

Under-Secretary,

Orders above. A draft demi-official put up.

Nalini—28th May 1923.

28th May 1923.

H. G. DENNEHY.

TELEGRAM TO THE POLITICAL OFFICER, SADIYA, No. 2593A.P., DATED THE 28TH MAY 1923.

TO THE POLITICAL OFFICER, SADIYA, THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE, ASSAM, AND THE POLITICAL OFFICER, BALIPARA, D. O. No. POL-1184-2606-8A.P., DATED THE 28TH MAY 1923.

FROM THE POLITICAL OFFICER, SADIYA, No. 183C.W.—2-R., DATED THE 31ST MAY 1923.

Chief Secretary,

Political Officer's estimate of Rs. 577 per mile seems very high. The figure stated to India for saving if the whole road were abandoned was one lakh. It seems now clear that total abandonment would be advisable if there is no prospect of getting the Don and Delei bridges, as one lakh is a high figure to pay for mere prestige, since Political Officer says in other places that once the Don and Delei bridges go the road will only be used on the cold weather, at which time even now the Brahmaputra route is used in preference. The modification at his paragraph (b) is clearly very desirable, but if India insists a retrenchment the whole had better go—with the possibility of heavy expenditure in the future.

4th June 1923.

H. G. DENNEHY.

His Excellency,

Perusal of paper under consideration with reference to the order of 27th May 1923.

* Confdl. Pol., A, Dec. 1916, Nos. 1-24.

2. A map of the Lohit Valley Road will be found on the confidential collection. *

3. In his note of 16th January 1923* Mr. O'Callaghan contemplated the maintenance of the cart road to Sunpura and of the old fair weather pilgrim's road from Sunpura to Dening and Temei, and the abandonment of the whole of the Lohit Valley Road from Sunpura upwards. In his note† he had suggested consideration of scrapping the new road from Sunpura *via* Tayan to Tidding and the substitution for it of the old road *via* Temei. I fancy therefore that his idea referred to by His Excellency in his note of 21st May 1923 is to scrap the new road from Sunpura to Tidding, maintain the old road as a fair weather cart road to Temei and carry on a bridle path from there to Tidding and up the valley as at present. If this is correct, Mr. Furze's estimate for maintaining the whole of the new road as a bridle path is not what we want. The cart road to Temei is apparently at present maintained as a fair weather road; and the net saving effected by Mr. O'Callaghan's proposals (as I understand it) would be the cost of maintenance of the new road from Sunpura to Tidding *minus* the cost of maintenance of a bridle path from Temei to Tidding. The cost from Sadiya to Sunpura, and from Tidding upwards, will remain as at present. If His Excellency thinks this is the proposal contemplated by Mr. O'Callaghan I will ask Public Works Department to obtain the figures.

* Pol., B, Feb. 1923, Nos. 729-748.

† Pol., B, Jan. 1923, Nos. 547-555.

4. At the same time we had better make certain from Public Works Department whether the savings of one lakh reported as following on the complete abandonment of Lohit Valley Road allow for the maintenance of the road from Sadiya to Sunpura. This is necessary in any case as an ordinary district road.

4th June 1923.

A. W. BOTHAM.

I should be much obliged if Mr. Dundas would kindly advise on the case. Mr. O'Callaghan in his letter of the 16th January 1923 and also in discussion with unrecommended the abandonment of the Lohit Valley Road. His view was, I think, that if the Government of India adhered to their policy of refusing to carry the road beyond Therouliang, it was useless to maintain it up to Therouliang. He did not specifically mention the Sadiya-Sunpura length, but presumably he intended to maintain it as a cart road, since it would be useless to maintain the Dening-Temei road, as Mr. O'Callaghan proposed, without keeping the Sadiya-Sunpura length open. We may therefore, I think, assume that what Mr. O'Callaghan meant was the abandonment of the road between Sunpura and Therouliang. He said nothing about a connecting route between Temei and Tidding or Therouliang. The Government of India's memorandum is rather cryptic, but what they mean apparently is that while they have decided on the abandonment of the Lohit Valley Road on the present scale, they are willing to consider the question of maintaining it on a smaller scale as a bridle path. If I have understood Mr. O'Callaghan's proposals aright this is not exactly what he intended. Anyhow what we want to know now is whether, assuming the Government of India order the abandonment of the Lohit Valley Road on its present scale, we should press for its maintenance in any other form or for the maintenance of alternate routes to take its place for the purpose of local communications, and as we shall want the Government of India to find the money for this purpose, we shall have to give reasons in support of any proposals we make.

5th June 1923.

J. H. K[REB].

Mr. Dundas,

5th June 1923.

A. W. BOTHAM.

Chief Secretary,

I find myself in thorough agreement with the officiating Political Officer when he writes that the abandonment of the Lohit Valley Road would entail a blow to our prestige. Nowhere in the Sadiya Frontier Tract are we in happier relations, with our influence better consolidated, than among the Taroon and Mija of the Lohit, due, in my belief, to the making of this road and its subsequent maintenance during the last ten years. This fact alone is almost sufficient justification for its retention in some form. Another lies in its situation along the flank of the Bebejiya country, giving access from a convenient and always approachable centre, over the Painlou Pass, to the interior villages of that truculent area. There can be no doubt but that the existence of the road has contributed much to the good feeling now existing on the part of that tribe towards us, and the post at Denning has prevented their raiding of the Taroon and a general disturbance of the peace. The sense of security engendered by all that such a road implies in the mind of rude population whom it affects can best be appreciated by a recollection of the conditions of ignorance of our power and mistrust which existed and led to the very costly but infructuous Bebejiya-Mishmi Expedition of 1899-1900. The chief justification however for the road is its value in proclaiming our suzerainty over the Taroon and Miju tribes and using them as our intelligence against possible aggression through the easy route to Rima. With them as our friends such aggression would be difficult if not impossible owing to the extremely difficult nature of parts of the country. The reverse is not pleasant to contemplate. China in its present condition of provincial disintegration and strife and general political chaos is for the moment harmless. But it will be remembered that in the rains of 1911 troops sent by that aggressive Viceroy of Ssu-Chuan, Chao Eah Feng, came over the G'lei Dakhru pass at the head of the Delei river and penetrated down that valley as far as Chibaon which is only $2\frac{1}{2}$ marches from the plains of this province.

2. It is my considered opinion that the road is of vital importance to the maintenance of our influence, now established, with these important buffer tribes and through them with the population of South-Eastern Tibet, particularly the province or district of Zagul, which though of no particular political importance, yet lies in the track of possible aggression by the Chinese whom they have no reason to like, but fear greatly. Traders from Zagul and further districts in South-East Tibet began to visit Sadiya in my time. The reports of the Political Officer show they now come in increasing numbers.

3. The alternative track following the bank of the Lohit can only be an open season track which stops at Temei. It is convenient because it is shorter but Temei is the terminus and in that direction it leads nowhere. Any kind of a track in continuation to the Tidding Valley would judging by what I saw in 1911 be extremely costly. It would lie for a part of its way along the northern face of Ahrokha where the hill side is one huge slip and precipitous. Even at present all access to the Lohit Valley proper leaves the lower road at Denningam, at about mile 70 of the Lohit Valley Road and proceeds along this for the next 23 miles to Therouliang where the Pariling bridge over the Tidding river made by the Sappers and Miners in 1912-13 and maintained since by the Public Works Department is crossed.

4. It is immaterial whether the Lohit Valley road is maintained as a cart road or bridle track. So long as the first 15 miles to Sunpura is kept on as a cart road. It is very important however, and, I think, vital to the full political value of the road that the suspension bridges at the Delei and Don rivers should be repaired and kept in good order.

11th June 1923.

W. C. M. DUNDAS.

(4)

TELEGRAM FROM SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, SIMLA,
No. 340G., DATED THE 6TH JUNE 1923.

Extract from notes and orders on Public Works Department file No. G. Estt. 2A-1 of 1922.

Secretary,

We do not fully understand the position. The letter from the Government of India to Political refers to a telegram which we have not got.

Executive Engineer has been asked to report savings if the road were kept up merely as a foot track by Political Officer.

Paper under consideration, it will be noticed, wants to transfer the maintenance to provincial revenues. I doubt if Finance Department will view this with much pleasure.

7th June 1923.

B. F. TAYLOR.

Political unofficially,

For favour of elucidating what the present position is. It is urgent that a final decision should if possible be arrived at as soon as possible.

8th June 1923.

O. H. DESENNE.

Public Works Department,

From the memorandum of which you have a copy it appears that the Government of India contemplate 'abandonment' of the Lohit Valley Road as at present maintained, but are still considering its maintenance as a bridle path. The suggestion that such maintenance as a bridle path should be from provincial revenues is new. I am afraid we have no further information at present.

9th June 1923.

A. W. BOTHAM.

Extract from a letter, dated the 9th June 1923, from Mr. H. C. Barnes, to His Excellency.

Under-Secretary,

Mr. Dundas' views prepage are with reference to His Excellency's orders of 5th June 1923.

2. Mr. Barnes' letter of 9th June 1923.—From India's memorandum dated the 17th May 1923 it will appear that the proposals regarding the Balipara and Sadiya Frontier Tracts are being referred to the Secretary of State.

* G.-Estt. (File No. 2A-1 of 1922).

3. The Public Works Department* file linked is for perusal.

Nripendra—12th June 1923.

Chief Secretary,

12th June 1923.

H. G. DENNEHY.

His Excellency,

Perusal of Mr. Dundas' note. We have not yet got the figures of probable savings from the Public Works Department.

12th June 1923.

A. W. BOTHAM.

The difficulty I feel about taking Mr. Dundas' view is that both Mr. O'Callaghan and Mr. Furze, hold definitely that the retention of the road (from Sunpura to Therouliang) in any form cannot be justified unless the bridges over the Delei and the Dore are kept in repair. The Government of India in their letter of the 4th October 1922, to the Secretary of State definitely declined to adopt this course in spite of a very strong hint from the Secretary of State that they were making a mistake, and on the 11th December they* declined to let us reappropriate Rs. 4,000 from savings for the repair of the bridges. I don't think there is any probability of our getting them to reconsider this matter now.

* Pol., B, Jan. 1923, Nos. 547-555.

2. However we must get the figures before we decide finally on the line of our reply. The road falls under three separate lengths and we should have figures for each length separately, if possible.

(1) There is the length from Sadiya to Sunpura which all are agreed should be maintained as a cart road. We want an estimate of the cost of this.

(2) There is the length from Sunpura to Paya now maintained as a cart road which all agree might be converted into bridle tracks or foot path, if it is maintained at all. We want to know what we should save by this conversion.

(3) There is the length from Paya to Therouliang with the Pariling bridge. It would be useful to know what this length costs.

Please ask Public Works Department to see what they can do in the way of obtaining these estimates.

3. I should like to know also whether the cost of maintaining the road from Sunpura to Temei is borne by Provincial or Central and what the cost is.

4. There are two Denings marked on the map one on the road between Sunpura and Temai and the other on the road between Paya and Therouliang. [At which of these places is the Assam Rifles outpost? Note that every one is agreed that this outpost must be maintained in any event.] Also the map shows a road or track between the two Denings. Is this maintained at present, and if so,

by whom?

13th June 1923.

J. H. K[ERR].

Copy of paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 to Public Works Department in continuation of our memorandum at page 2 for favour of report as early as possible.

2. Then find out from Inspector General of Police's office at which "Dening" the outpost is stationed. I imagine it is at the one on the lower road, and that the cross road to the upper road is maintained in order to preserve communication with it throughout the year. But verify this.

13th June 1923.

A. W. BOTHAM.

Under-Secretary,

Order above. A draft is put up for approval.

After issue, action will be taken on paragraph 2 of Chief Secretary's order.

The Public Works Department file linked may be returned now. The file may kindly be endorsed to that department.

Nripendra—13th June 1923.

13th June 1923.

H. G. DENNEHY.

Extract from orders on Public Works Department, file No. 2A—1 of 1922.

We had better hurry up our reply to the Government of India's memorandum of 17th May. We shall have to protest against this suggestion that we should pay for the maintenance of the bridge path which seems at variance with the Foreign Department's memorandum.

Let Chief Secretary see.

12th June 1923.

J. H. K[ERR].

TO THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, ASSAM, NO. POL. 1299-2648A.P., DATED THE 14TH JUNE 1923.

Under-Secretary,

Paragraph 2 of Chief Secretary's order dated the 13th June 1923. The Assam Rifles outpost is stationed at Dening* on the Lohit Valley Road as will appear from the map at page 24 of the collection noted in the margin. This "Dening" is on the north of 28° latitude. The cross road referred to is not a regular road; it is a Mishmi path followed by the Mishmi Work Party, when they were finally compelled to abandon their work and evacuate the country in 1913, vide paragraph 4 of Chief Engineer's report dated the 29th May 1916.

As verbally ordered, a map* on the same scale as the one in Confidential collection is put up for inspection. Assam Administration's letter No. 2015-16P.† dated 11th April 1916 to the Political Officer, Sadiya, and the Inspector General of Police, read with Colonel Herbert's note of 19th April 1916, seems to make it clear that the outpost is stationed at Dening (Deningam) on the road between Payan and Therouliang (Lohit Valley Road).

* Between Payan and Therouliang.
A. R. B., June 1923, Nos. 196-205.
Confdl. Pol., A, Dec. 1916, Nos. 1-24, page 9.

* Mishmi Mission Survey 1911-12.

† Page 49 of Pol, B, July 1916, Nos. 72-94.

Nripendra—13th June 1923.

Chief Secretary,

It appears from the papers put up that there was an old stockade occupied in 1911-12 at Deningmukh, but in 1916 when the question of making a new outpost arose, it was placed on the Lohit Valley Road, Public Works Department, at Deningam.

18th June 1923.

H. G. DENNEHY.

Yes—the note and letters in Political, B, July 1916, Nos. 72-94 and also paragraph 10 of the report in confidential Political, A, December 1916, Nos. 1-24 are I think conclusive and the map in Assam Rifles, B, June 1923, Nos. 196-205, agrees.

18th June 1923.

A. W. BOTHAM.

FROM THE OFFICIATING POLITICAL OFFICER, SADIYA FRONTIER TRACT, D. O. No. 199C.W., DATED THE 22ND JUNE 1923.

Under-Secretary,

It appears from the Government of India's Memorandum, dated the 17th May 1923, that they have submitted to the Secretary of State their recommendations regarding Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tracts on the lines of our proposals contained in the telegram* dated the 3rd February 1923.

* Pol., B, Feb 1923, Nos. 729-748.

2. We have not yet received replies to our memoranda dated the 22nd May and 14th June 1923 from the Public Works Department, and cannot send our reply to paragraph 2 of India's memorandum dated the 17th May 1923, regarding the Lohit Valley Road.

Nripendra—25th June 1923.

Chief Secretary,

We may perhaps tell Political Officer to effect a reduction of Rs. 8,000 in his civil works estimates.

25th June 1923.

H. G. DENNLEHY.

His Excellency,

I agree. Mr. O'Callaghan's calculations at pages 31, 32 and 41 of the collection Political, B, February 1923, Nos. 729-748, are not too clear, but it appears from the statement that he proposed to reduce expenditure on civil works under his charge from Rs. 38,362 to Rs. 30,000.

26th June 1923.

A. W. BOTHAM.

26th June 1923.

J. H. K[ERR].

To Mr. T. E. FURZE, D. O. No. 2839A.P., DATED THE 26TH JUNE 1923.

His Excellency,

His Excellency's orders of 13th June 1923. The information required is given in the statement*
 * Printed as proceedings No. 200. furnished by Public Works Department. The details will be found
 † C. 1E-20 of 1923. in the Public Works Department file at the bottom, marked "Lohit Valley Road." The Assam Rifles outpost is at the Upper Dening, that on the road between Paya and Therouliang.

2. On the basis of the average expenditure for the last three years the Public Works Department report the savings resulting from the total abandonment of the Lohit Valley Road at Rs. 1,36,733 in addition to Rs. 30,000, the cost of the North-East Frontier Division. This however is considerably more than is provided in the Central Public Works Department budget (or than has been debited to Central funds during recent years) on account of the road. The explanation is that actual expenditure is only provided in the case of maintenance, and a percentage is in addition allowed for establishment and "tools and plant" which are paid for from the Provincial Budget. Expenditure on establishment and "tools and plant" considerably exceeds the percentage allowed, and the loss falls on provincial revenues. The provision in the Central Budget for 1923-24 is—

	Rs.
For maintenance	1,08,000
23 per cent. for establishment tools and plant	24,840
Total	<u>1,32,840</u>

or about Rs. 1,33,000.

We clearly cannot report that the probable saving will exceed this sum. We have also to allow for the upkeep of the portion of the road from Sadiya to Sunpura (Rs. 8,318) with proportionate percentage charges (Rs. 2,700). The net saving would thus be about Rs. 1,22,000 if the Lohit Valley road from Sunpura upwards were altogether abandoned.

3. If the road from Sunpura to Paya were converted into a bridle path, and the whole road otherwise maintained at the present standard the saving would be Rs. 15,500 + percentage charges Rs. 3,565, or approximately Rs. 19,000.

4. If converted into a bridle path however the road would be made over to the Political Officer for maintenance, and Mr. Furze's estimate, including establishment charges etc., is only Rs. 61,934 (including the cart road from Sadiya to Sunpura), giving a saving of about Rs. 71,000 as compared with the budget provision for 1923-24 (Rs. 1,33,000). Mr. Butler, the Executive Engineer, is extremely sceptical as to the Political Officer being able to manage on this sum, and Mr. Furze admittedly does not know the road. Still presumably there would be no attempt to keep up the same standard of maintenance, and an average of over Rs. 500 a mile in addition to establishment charges, etc., seems a fairly generous allowance. We might however allow a good margin and take Rs. 50,000 as the savings in case the road from Sunpura upwards were reduced to a bridle path on an inferior standard of maintenance.

28th June 1923.

A. W. BOTHAM.

Discussed with His Excellency.

29th June 1923.

A. W. BOTHAM.

Public Works Department,

Could you please let us have two or three copies of the map to send to the Government of India with our letter about the Lohit Valley Road ?

30th June 1923.

A. W. BOTHAM.

Chief Secretary,

Three copies are placed below.

2nd July 1923.

B. F. TAYLOR.

His Excellency,

A draft is submitted.

3rd July 1923.

A. W. BOTHAM.

Thanks. I have made a few modifications. If they are correct, draft may issue.

4th July 1923.

J. H. K[ERR].

TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA IN THE FOREIGN AND POLITICAL DEPARTMENT, No. POL-1379—
2935A.P., DATED THE 5TH JULY 1923.

Extracts from Diary No. J—504 of 1923.

Chief Secretary,

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If there is a spare copy of the Government of India Budget, he (Mr. Barnes) might have it, and office might prepare a note on the Emigration Budget for this (and last year) and also on the Frontier Tracts. It would be impossible to send these files out of office.

This had better wait until we have replied to India—A. W. B.

27th June 1923.

H. G. DENNEHY.

27th June 1923.

A. W. BOTHAM.

Under-Secretary,

Chief Secretary's marginal order above. Our letter has issued to India. If desired a copy of this letter together with a copy of our telegram, dated the 3rd February 1923 may be sent to Mr. Barnes. (The proposals dealing with the general question as regards Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tracts have already been submitted to the Secretary of State.)

Nripendra—6th July 1923.

Chief Secretary,

Perhaps these papers will not be of much use to Mr. Barnes unless he has a copy of Mr. O'Callaghan's letter and statements.

6th July 1923.

H. G. DENNEHY.

His Excellency,

Perhaps it would be as well to send Mr. Barnes copies of our correspondence with the Government of India about the Frontier Tracts in case the Government of India wish to discuss the question with him.

7th July 1923.

A. W. BOTHAM.

On the whole, I think we had better not. It would be difficult for Mr. Barnes to follow the case without seeing all the papers from 1916 onwards.

7th July 1923.

J. H. K[ERR].

(2)

ASSAM SECRETARIAT PROCEEDINGS.

APPOINTMENT AND POLITICAL DEPARTMENT.

POLITICAL—B.

SEPTEMBER 1923.

Closure of the Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tracts. (Maintenance of the Lohit Valley Road.)

No. 186.

No. 604—774-X., dated Simla, the 17th May 1923.

From—The Secretary to the Government of India in the foreign and Political Department,
To—The Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam.

THE SADIYA AND BALIPARA FRONTIER TRACTS.

Reference your telegram dated the 23rd February 1923.

Your proposals as regards the Balipara and Sadiya tracts are being recommended to the Secretary of State with a request for telegraphic approval.

By abandonment of the Lohit Valley road do you mean complete abandonment or the maintenance of the road as a bridle path. Please report the probable amount of savings in either case.

No. 187.

No. Pol.-1184—2577A.P., dated Shillong, the 22nd May 1923.

Memo. by—The Under-Secretary to the Government of Assam, Appointment and Political Department.

Copy of Memorandum No. 604-774X., dated the 17th May 1923, from the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department, is forwarded to the Secretary to Government in the Public Works Department for favour of an early report.

No. 188.

Telegram No. 2593A.P., dated Shillong, the 28th May 1923.

From—Chief Secretary to Government of Assam,
To—Political Officer, Sadiya Frontier Tract,

Abandonment of Lohit Valley Road as now maintained likely to be ordered. Please supply note justifying maintenance as bridle path showing what sort of traffic it would serve and so on. Also advise whether Political Officer could take over as Public Works Department disburser if maintained as bridle path.

No. 189.

D. O. No. Pol.-1184—2606-8A.P., dated Shillong, the 28th May 1923.

From—H. G. DENNEHY, Esq., I.C.S., Under-Secretary to the Government of Assam, Appointment and Political Department,

To—The Political Officer, Sadiya Frontier Tract, Sadiya, the Inspector General of police, Assam and the Political Officer, Balipara Frontier Tract.

I am disired to forwarded for present information copies of the correspondence noted below :—

- (1) Copy of a telegram dated the 3rd February 1923, from the Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam, to Foreign, Delhi.
- (2) Copy of Memorandum No. 604-774X., dated Simla, the 17th May 1923, from the Government of India, Foreign and Political Department, to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam.

No. 190.

No. 133C.W.—2R., dated Sadiya, the 31st May 1923.

From—T. E. FURZE, Esq., Offg. Political Officer, Sadiya Frontier Tract, Sadiya,

To—The Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam.

In reply to your telegram No. 2593A.P., concerning the abandonment of the Lohit Valley Road as now maintained, in which I am asked to justify its maintenance as a bridle path and to advise whether the Political Officer could take it over acting as Public Works Department disburser, I have the honour to attach hereto a note as ordered.

I must confess that owing to my lack of local knowledge—during my service in the Frontier Tract, I have unfortunately never had the opportunity of seeing the road—such views as I am inclined to hold are based purely on general grounds. I would therefore ask that full weight be given to the opinions of those officers who not only know the Terrain well, but have had, by long experience of this particular portion of the Frontier Tract, sufficient time to examine, and form a mature judgment on, what is admittedly an extremely difficult question.

As will be seen in the note appended hereto, I have stated that the Political Officer might take over the road as an *experimental* measure, should it be definitely decided to withdraw the Public Works Department establishment.

I lay stress on the word experiment, as I believe that Mr. O'Callaghan would not have been willing so to do and furthermore, past experience has shown that funds are never available for 'civil works' undertakings, however urgent the project for which the money is required nor are sufficient annual repair grants sanctioned for roads maintained by the Civil Works Department. As the up-keep of the Lohit Valley Road is admittely an extremely difficult task, owing to heavy rainfall, the friable nature of the strata over which it runs, and the impossibility of estimating the action of the various rivers which lie across its path, it would be obviously be most imprudent for the Political Officer to take over its up-keep, without duly weighing the *pros* and *cons*: Further I am of opinion that the arguments against his acting as Public Works Department disburser would be too strong to justify his acceptance of this additional responsibility, if Government are unwilling to grant him adequate financial support.

Provided Government are willing to afford this support, I feel that the experiment should be tried, for I consider that every effort, consistent with the financial position, should be made to prevent the large sums of money already spent becoming a total loss.

It will be observed that the retention of the road in any form cannot be justified, unless the vital bridges over the Delei and Dou rivers which are now under the Public Works Department are repaired; this being so, a reference to my predecessor's letters on this subject will add force to the proviso above. Every effort was made by him to secure the repair of these bridges without result and if Government cannot see their way to repair and maintain these two bridges (in addition to those now kept up by the Public Works Department along the Lohit Valley Road) it will undoubtedly be sounder to abandon the whole road and revert to the cold weather track following the line of the Lohit.

The latter scheme was put forward by Mr. O'Callaghan and there are many arguments in its favour, but if Government are prepared to keep up the hill road, this course is obviously from every point of view the most satisfactory.

No. 191.

Note on the future of the Lohit Valley Road.

The inception of the Lohit Valley Road was due to the then desirability of posting an Assistant Political Officer at Walong and the necessity of providing this officer and his force with a secure line of communications which would be open all the year round between Walong and Sadiya.

Fortunately or unfortunately, according to the point of view, the immediate urgency for this post and therefore for the completion of the road as originally planned, disappeared, while the road was still under construction. It was however completed in a modified form and now consists of a cart road from Sadiya to Paya *via* Sunpara and a bridle path from Payan to Theroliang, where it ends. Its maintenance in any form cannot be justified, unless the existing bridges over the Delei and Dao rivers are repaired and maintained, for its whole value lies in its providing access to and from Sadiya to the real Lohit Valley throughout the year. This value is diminished practically to vanishing point if the bridges over the two large rivers mentioned above are allowed to disappear. The subject of the abandonment of the road has arisen and there are three possible courses open which I will deal with below, but before touching on them I would mention that the term bridle path can be interpreted in various ways. It will be noticed that the present road is nothing but a bridle path from Payan to Theroliang and therefore its conversion throughout its length as a bridle path cannot effect any large savings; the cart road as far as Sunpara which carries heavy traffic must be kept up by some one. The change would therefore only affect the section from Sunpara to Payan.

I will now deal with the three possible courses which may be adopted—They are as follows :—

- (a) Total abandonment of the road.
- (b) Its up-keep by the Public Works Department as at present with modifications.
- (c) Its up-keep by the Civil Works Department under the Political Officer, Sadiya.

As regards (a)—This course would presumably mean the closing down of the Eastern Frontier Division of the Public Works Department and either (1) the charge of the Public Works Department buildings, etc., throughout the Frontier Tract devolving on the Political Officer and his Civil Works Branch or (2) the retention of the Public Works Department, Sadiya, becoming a subdivisional charge. It would save Government an annual commitment of roughly £ 6,000 which is the normal annual repair grant for the Lohit Valley Road and presumably also the divisional expenditure.

It is for Government to decide whether the benefits obtained by these economies outweigh the loss of prestige and mobility which the closing of the road would entail.

(b) Up-keep by the Public Works Department as at present but with modifications.

On the side of the retention of the Public Works Department and the maintenance of the road by them are ranged all the arguments produced below in favour of (c) with the additional one which is of importance, *viz.*, that the road will be maintained by a trained technical staff, who can devote their wholetime energies to the difficult problems which the up-keep of the road of this nature must perpetually present. Should its retention as a Public Works Department charge be decided on, I would suggest modifications such as the cutting down of the large expenditure at present entailed in the up-keep of the Sunpara-Payan section, and the transfer of the money so obtained to maintaining the Delei and Dao bridges and the keeping open of the track thereto from Theroliang. The latter work could easily be done by co-operation between the Public Works Department and the Political Officer.

(c) Its maintenance by the Civil Works Department under the Political Officer, Sadiya.

I adduce arguments under this head which are equally applicable to (b) as regards justification for maintaining the road.

I consider that the abandonment of road would be a great blow to our prestige in this corner of the Indian Frontier.

I am unfortunately scarcely qualified to marshal the many political and strategical considerations which arise, when a decision is being made totally to abandon a road which was originally intended to carry our influence right up the Lohit Valley, but such considerations must be taken into reckoning before adopting a course which may save £ 6,000 or more a year but which may, in years to come necessitate again a very heavy capital expenditure.

At the present time the road (with the Delei and Dao bridges in repair) enables the Political Officer to get right into the Lohit Valley proper at any time of the year.

If it is abandoned, the site of the present Denning post will have to be changed and probably withdrawn during the rains to Sunpara and Sadiya.

Since the opening of the road a small but growing number of Tibetan traders visit Sadiya, and its closing would possibly entail the cessation of these visits. Should they still continue to visit Sadiya after the abandonment of the road, their reports of our inability or unwillingness to maintain what we have begun, might cause grave misconceptions in South-East Tibet. The opening of the road and the maintenance of the Post at Denning has certainly kept the Mishmi clans in better order. Owing to the fact that most of the traffic which would nominally use the road, travel in the cold weather along the old plains road, which follows the course of the Brahmaputra, and is shorter and more direct, the traffic figures cannot be used in support of its maintenance.

As regards the proposal that the Political Officer should maintain the road as a bridle path, I have come to the conclusion that he could do so as an experimental measure.

I estimate that the maintenance costs would be reduced to Rs. 51,228 approximately or Rs. 557 a mile, and in addition to this annual repair grant I should require the following increase in my Civil Works Establishment—2 Sub-overseers, 1 passed Accounts clerk, one draughtsman and estimator. I should endeavour, in place of the permanent coolies now recruited for road work by the Public Works Department, to do the cold weather work by Naga contractors while during the rains, if other labour be not forthcoming, I should propose to employ the permanent cooly corps which must be retained at its full strength, debiting the cost to Road Account.

If the above proposal be considered worth entertaining I will come up early with my detailed estimates.

T. E. FURZE,

Offg. Political Officer, Sadiya Frontier Tract.

No. 192.

Telegram No. 340G., dated Simla, the 6th June 1923.

From—Secretary to Government of India, Public Works Department,

To—Secretary to Government of Assam, Public Works Department.

Your telegram No. 2743G., dated 9th May. Government of India have no objection to maintenance any of a bridle path from provincial revenues, *vide* correspondence resting with memorandum number 604, dated 17th May from Foreign to Assam.

No. 193.

Extract from a letter dated the 9th June 1923, from Mr. H. C. Barnes, to his Excellency.

* * * * *

Balipara Frontier Tract should not be abolished. But you might consider whether the Deputy Commissioner could not run it in addition to the district. I am sure he could. Obviously it is not a whole time job; and Darrang is a light district. The Commissioner could do some of the touring in the hills to the north of Tezpur, when the Deputy Commissioner could not manage it. Doubtless the police would object. But I do not see why the police should monopolize frontier work in the Assam Valley and the Indian Civil Service people be excluded. But the Balipara office should not be amalgamated with the Deputy Commissioner's office.

No. 194.

No. Pol.-1299—2648A.P., dated Shillong, the 14th June 1923.

Memo. by—The Under-Secretary to the Government of Assam, Appointment and Political Department.

Extracts (paragraphs 2, 3 and 4) from a note dated the 13th June 1923 by His Excellency the Governor of Assam, are forwarded to the Secretary to Government in the Public Works Department, in continuation of this department's Memorandum No. Pol.-1184-2577A.P., dated the 22nd May 1923, for favour of report as early as possible.

No. 195.

Extracts (paragraphs 2, 3 and 4) from a note dated the 13th June 1923 by His Excellency the Governor of Assam.

* * * * *

2. However we must get the figures before we decide finally on the line of our reply. The road falls under three separate lengths and we should have figures for each length separately if possible.

- (1) There is the length from Sadiya to Sunpura which all are agreed should be maintained as a cart road. We want an estimate of the cost of this.
- (2) There is the length from Sanpura to Paya now maintained as a cart road which all agree might be converted into bridle track or foot-path, if it is maintained at all. We want to know what we should save by this conversion.
- (3) There is the length from Paya to Therouliang with the Pariliang bridge. It would be useful to know what this length costs.

Please ask the Public Works Department to see what they can do in the way of obtaining these estimates.

3. I should like to know also whether the cost of maintaining the road from Sanpura to Temei is borne by Provincial or Central and what the cost is.

4. There are two Denings marked on the map one on the road between Sanpura and Temei and the other on the road between Paya and Therouliang. Also the map shows a road or track between the two Denings. Is this maintained at present and if so, by whom?

No. 196.

D. O. No. 199C.W., dated Sadiya, the 22nd June 1923.

From—T. E. FURZE, Esq., Officiating Political Officer, Sadiya,

To—The Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam.

I write demi-officially to enquire what steps Government wish me to take regarding my Civil Works budget this year (1923-24) which has just been received sanctioned in full. As you are aware the proper course for me to follow would be at once to submit my estimates for the various roads, etc., which would be sanctioned by the Chief Engineer. I should then be enabled to carry out necessary work on the various roads included in the budget.

Under present circumstances, however, I am placed in rather an awkward position. O'Callaghan in an office note stated that he would effect savings of Rs. 8,000 on the budget, but it is not clear how he proposed to effect these savings and no one here can enlighten me.

From Dennehy's demi-official No. Pol.-1184—2606-08A.P., dated 28th May and its enclosures, I see that the Government of Assam proposed a savings of Rs. 25,000 under Civil Works for Sadiya and Balipara.

If the necessity of effecting savings this year up to the amount estimated by O'Callaghan be absolute, I shall have to prepare fresh estimates as best I may, showing these reductions.

I need hardly say here that in my opinion, communications in the Frontier Tract being as they are, it would be a matter of serious regret to have to cut down so largely, but if the question has been decided it is not, of course, my intention to do otherwise than effect the necessary cuts to the best of my ability. Meantime my estimates should be in by July first, as, without these being sanctioned, I can carry out no work whatever.

In the above circumstances, would you very kindly advise me as to the course I should follow in preparing the estimates.

No. 197.

D. O. No. 2839A.P., dated Shillong, the 26th June 1923.

From—A. W. BOTHAM, Esq., I.C.S., Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam,

To—The Offg. Political Officer, Sadiya.

Will you please refer to your demi-official letter No. 199-C.W., dated the 22nd June 1923? It is not clear from O'Callaghan's note of the 16th January 1923, forwarded with his letter No. 1489G.—XXXIII-5 of the same date, precisely where he proposed to effect the saving of Rs. 8,000. What he said was "The Civil Works expenditure on roads is intimately connected with the maintenance of the frontier line, and I cannot therefore make a more definite case for saving beyond the Rs. 8,000 shown in the statement attached." I forward a copy of the statement in case O'Callaghan did not leave one in his office. It is impossible to give you final orders until we hear definitely the decision of the Government of India and the Secretary of State, but His Excellency thinks that it would be well for you to act on the assumption that it will be necessary to effect a reduction of Rs. 8,000 in your Civil Works estimates.

No. 198.

No. Pol.-1379—2935A.P., dated Shillong, the 5th July 1923.

From—A. W. BOTHAM, Esq., I.C.S., Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam,

To—The Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign and Political Department.

SUBJECT:—LOHIT VALLEY ROAD.

I am directed to refer to your Memorandum No. 604—774X., dated the 17th May 1923, in which you enquire whether by abandonment of the Lohit Valley Road in their telegram dated the 23rd February 1923 the Government of Assam meant complete abandonment or the maintenance of the road as a bridle path, and ask for a report as to the probable amount of savings in either case.

2. In the telegram referred to the Government of Assam contemplated the abandonment of the whole road with the exception of the portion, fifteen miles in length, from Sadiya to Sunpura, which is required as a cart road for ordinary purposes of local communication.

3. His Excellency the Governor in Council has since gone into the question in greater detail in consultation with the present and former Political Officers of this tract. The arguments against the abandonment of the road were stated as follows in paragraph 9 of my letter No. Pol.-1360—3620A.P., dated the 19th July 1922:—

"Proposals for the construction of a road in the Lohit Valley as far as Walong 42 miles from Rima, primarily as a defensive measure against Chinese aggression, were submitted in paragraph 7 of the Assam Administration's letter No. 69P.T., dated the 7th July 1912, and sanction to them was communicated in the Foreign Department's letter No. 2247E.B., dated the 16th October 1912. Work was undertaken on the road as far as the Tidding river by the Public Works Department, and beyond that by the Mishmi Work Party consisting of Sappers and Miners and Pioneers, during 1912-13, but in 1913 circumstances on the China frontier had changed and it was decided for the present to complete the road only as far as the Tidding river at a total cost of 21½ lakhs. The position was discussed at Simla in 1916 and it was decided by the Government of India that, although it was obviously desirable to maintain the existing road up to the Tidding river, on which so much had already been spent and which was serving useful commercial and political purposes, it was undesirable at present to incur any further expenditure on its extension. The reasons which induced the Government of India to decide on the maintenance of the road as far as the Tidding river in spite of the financial difficulties of the war still exist. They are briefly—

- (a) that a sum of over 23 lakhs has been spent on the construction of the road and that its abandonment now would entail the waste of this expenditure, with the possibility of having to repeat it should operations on this frontier again become necessary;
- (b) that the road has proved of great value both as a trade route and as a civilising agent and means of political control in the savage country through which it passes,

(14)

"There is further the argument that the abandonment of the road would inevitably be looked on as a retreat and regarded as evidence of weakness. It is certain that it would greatly impair the authority of the Political Officer in the area through which the road runs. His Excellency the Governor is therefore strongly of the opinion that the road must be maintained. It is estimated that the normal cost of maintenance at present rates will be about Rs. 1,08,000 a year."

The view there expressed of the value of the road as a trade route and a means of political control and of the unfortunate effect which its abandonment is likely to have in impairing the authority of the Political Officer in the Lohit Valley and its neighbourhood has again been strongly urged upon the Local Government but the situation has been materially affected by the final refusal of the Government of India to maintain the threatened bridges over the Don and Delei rivers, about 30 miles beyond the portion of the road which is now maintained. It is generally agreed that on the collapse of these bridges the value of the existing road will be greatly diminished. The Government of India in their letter No. 1041—465 Ext., dated the 4th October 1922, to the Secretary of State definitely declined to undertake expenditure to save these bridges, and again in their Memorandum No. 1273—465 Ext., dated the 11th December 1922, to this Government they declined to permit the reappropriation of savings for the same object. This question has doubtless been fully considered by the Government of India in all its aspects, strategical and political, and the Governor in Council feels that it would be useless in present circumstances to seek to open it. He must therefore face the fact that the road if maintained will shortly cease to provide continuous communication at all seasons of the year with the important buffer tribes between Assam and China, and through them with South-Eastern Tibet.

4. In estimating the probable savings which would be effected by abandoning the road or by converting it into a bridle path, three sections of the road have to be considered. For convenience of reference three copies of a map which was submitted to the Government of India in 1916 are attached to this letter. The first section is the section, fifteen miles long, from Sadiya to Sunpura which is maintained as a cart road, and which must in any case be maintained as such for the purposes of local communications. The second, twenty-one miles long, is that from Sunpura to Payan, which also is at present maintained as a cart road, but which all agree could without serious inconvenience be reduced to a bridle path. The third is the section, 56 miles in length, from Payan to Therouliang, which has never been anything but a bridle path.

5. The "complete abandonment" of the road would involve the abandonment of the second and third sections, the first section being retained as a local road. The saving thereby effected would be roughly a lakh of rupees together with the corresponding percentage charges for establishment and tools and plant, or in all about Rs. 1,23,000.

6. An outpost of Assam Rifles is at present maintained at Dening on the Lohit Valley Road, and His Excellency the Governor in Council accepts the view of the Political Officer that the maintenance of this outpost is indispensable in order to control the powerful and turbulent clans of Mishmis which it flanks. As will be seen from the attached map an alternative route to this post is provided *via* the old pilgrims' road from Sunpura to Parasuram Kund. As this latter road follows the course of the Lohit river and crosses its tributaries near their mouths where bridging is not practicable, the outpost if the Lohit Valley Road were abandoned, could only be garri-oned during the dry months. This however would probably be sufficient for practical purposes, though of course not as effective as continuous occupation.

7. The other alternative suggested is the maintenance of the road as a bridle path. The conversion of the section from Sunpura to Payan, from a cart road to a bridle path would effect a saving of Rs. 15,000 *plus* percentage charges, or about Rs. 19,00 in all, a year. When however the value of the road as a means of through communication with the Upper Lohit Valley is reduced on the collapse of the bridges over the Don and the Delei, it would be unnecessary to maintain the road on the same standard as is in force at present on the Payan-Therouliang section. By abolishing the special North-East Frontier Division under the Public Works Department and handing the road over to the Political Officer for up-keep between Sunpura and Therouliang as a bridle path on a lower standard of maintenance, a total saving of about Rs. 50,000 could be effected as compared with the existing cost of maintenance and percentage charges. A road of this character would enable touch to be maintained with the country up to the Tidding river and this should suffice so long as compara-

tive tranquillity prevails in the Mishmi country. It is impossible however to overlook the fact that experienced officers regard our imminent loss of contact with the buffer tribes in the Upper Valley which will ensue on the collapse of the Don and Delei bridges, as a grave matter, which will lead to a serious loss of prestige, if nothing worse.

8. His Excellency the Governor in Council leaves it to the Government of India to decide whether the contingency of future complications on the frontier of China is sufficiently probable to make it worth while attempting in present financial circumstances to maintain the road as a part of the through line of communication on which so much money has been spent in the past. If it is decided that retrenchment must be effected in spite of the risks and objections involved. His Excellency in Council considers that the up-keep of the road from Sunpura to Therouliang by the Political Officer on a reduced standard of maintenance is on the whole the most advisable course; and this course would have the additional advantage that if in the future the Government of India again found it necessary to provide through communication with the neighbourhood of the Chinese frontier, they would not have to start again absolutely *ab initio*.

No. 200.

LOHIT VALLEY ROAD.

Item No.	Particulars.	Amount.	Remarks.
1	2	3	4
	<i>Information required by Political Department, vide His Excellency's orders dated the 27th May 1923.</i>	Rs.	
1	Savings if Lohit Valley Road completely abandoned.	1,36,735 + 30,000(a)	Based on the average maintenance charges for the path 3 years, viz., Rs. 1,05,118.
		97,398	
2	Savings if maintained entirely as bridle path.	75,000	Based in the standard maintenance estimate, viz., Rs. 65,781.
		35,464	
	<i>Information required by Political Department, vide His Excellency's orders dated the 13th June 1923.</i>		
3	Average cost of maintenance as cart road of section Sadiya to Sunpura.	8,318	Based on the average cost from the past 3 years.
4	Savings if section Sunpura to Paya is maintained as bridle path.	15,503 (Approximate.)	Ditto.
5	Average cost of maintenance of section Paya to Therouliang including Paraliang bridge.	69,325 (Approximate.)	Ditto.
6	Cost of maintenance, road Sunpura to Temei.	12,000	Both maintained from Central Revenues by Political Officer.
7	Cost of maintenance, road Denning to Tiju Mukh (near lower Dening).	4,400	Ditto.

(a) *Vide* details attached below.

(16)

No. 201.

DIVISIONAL OFFICE AT SADIYA.

					Rs.
1 Accountant	...	...	...	...	200
1 Head Clerk	...	...	...	...	120
1 Clerk	...	...	...	...	55
1 Clerk	...	...	...	...	45
1 Accounts Clerk	...	...	...	...	100
1 Ditto	...	...	...	...	75
1 Clerk	...	...	...	...	55
1 Computer	...	...	...	...	120
1 Telephone Clerk	...	...	...	...	52
1 Daftri	...	...	...	...	23
1 Orderly for Executive Engineer	...	...	...	...	14
1 Ditto ditto	...	...	...	...	13
Two Divisional peons at Rs. 12 each	...	...	...	...	24
One Divisional office chowkidar	...	...	...	...	12
					<hr/>
					$908 \times 12 = 10,896$
Pay of an Executive Engineer	...	...	...	...	$1,275 \times 12 = 15,300$
Travelling Allowance and Contingencies	...	...	...	...	3,804
					<hr/>
					30,000