

Mr. J. Hullah : That sum is largely made up by an item of Rs. 2,18,000 for the substitution of free labour for convict labour. It has been found that free labour is more efficient, and it is, moreover, very difficult to maintain discipline over the convicts when they are allowed to work in the forests. The policy of substituting free labour for convict labour has already been in force for a couple of years, and we hope that very soon, possibly next year, we shall be able to dispense with convict labour altogether. The rest of the sum is made up by Rs. 50,000 for the extension of the saw mill which we have in the Andamans and a sum of Rs. 8,000 is provided for the purchase of a steam-cutter.

The motion was, by leave of the Assembly, withdrawn.

EXTRA ASSISTANT CONSERVATORS.

Mr. B. Venkatapatiraju : Sir, I beg to move :

‘That provision of Rs. 1,57,940 for Extra Assistant Conservators and other superior officer (page 53) be reduced by one lakh.’

Perhaps, Sir, it is my duty to explain at some length why such amendments are moved. The Honourable Mr. Innes has told us ‘Why not leave the administrative business to executive officers?’ I respectfully ask the Government what portion of the responsibility is left to us. Are we not even to dictate the policy? Therefore, in order to economise the administration, we have to move amendment after amendment whether accepted by the Government or not. And the complaint was made by the Honourable Mr. Ginwalla that we are unable to sift the matter thoroughly. I am in as much difficulty as is Mr. Ginwalla himself in understanding it, because the same papers are placed in his hands as are placed in mine. All the same we have to take a broad view of the question to see whether we cannot suggest in the case of abnormal growth of expenditure any reduction in any particular figure. With reference to the salaries of these officers—I am only dealing with superior officers and am leaving out the subordinate establishment—at page 53 you find the whole was increased from Rs. 2,05,000 to Rs. 5,46,000, more than 106 per cent., and with reference to the particular item about which I move from Rs. 53,000 they want to increase it to Rs. 1,57,000, that is nearly treble. With reference to developmental functions, i.e., those which will produce any additional income, we should not grudge spending any amount. When I notice there are only 8 officers increased and yet we have an increase in expenditure of nearly 3 lakhs, from 2 lakhs to 5 lakhs, I ask, is it necessary that we should spend all this amount? I could very well understand if a larger number of people were employed in order to bring about this forest improvement and forest development in a large part of the country, but I find that with these 8 persons, they want to saddle the general tax-payer with an additional sum of 3 lakhs of rupees. In this matter we must either wholeheartedly criticise the Budget or leave it to the Executive to do whatever they please; there is no use of suggesting any amendment and not pressing for it. Therefore, Sir, I earnestly request that, unless you are satisfied with the explanation given by the Executive, you must reject this abnormal increase.

The Honourable the President : The question is :

‘That provision of Rs. 1,57,940 for Extra Assistant Conservators and other superior officers be reduced by one lakh.’

Dr. Nand Lal: Sir, I will invite the attention of this Honourable Assembly to this particular item, which does seem to me to be exorbitant. No reason has been assigned for the great difference. The Honourable the Mover has already pointed out the difference between the item which was demanded last year and the sum which is being demanded now. I can assist you by inviting your attention to the same question, so that you may be able to realise that this large demand is not called for at all. Under the heading 'Budget Estimate, 1920-21,' it is Rs. 53,220 and then under the head 'Revised Estimate, 1920-21' it is Rs. 51,780. What is demanded now is Rs. 1,57,940, a tremendous difference. And no explanation, no reason for this great difference has been given.

Therefore, I trust, this Honourable Assembly will accept the Resolution which has been moved.

Mr. J. Hullah: I admit, Sir, that I am not able to justify the full provision that has been made in the item under discussion. That, however, does not mean, as I shall show later, that I can accept the Resolution.

The provision for Extra Assistant Conservators and other special officers is meant to provide not only for the existing staff of these officers in the Andamans, Baluchistan, Ajmere and Coorg, but also for an expansion of staff at the Dehra Dun Research Institute. We have in the forests of India an enormous industrial and commercial asset and we have now a scheme,—in fact it has already been introduced,—for developing our Research Institute at Dehra Dun so as to make it a first class research and experimental station. Apart from scientific officers who will deal more especially with pure forestry, such as officers in sylviculture and botany, we have also employed, or propose to employ, experts in forest chemistry, tanning materials, minor forest produce, paper pulp and cellulose, wood seasoning and wood technology. These officers, most of whom were provided for in last year's Budget and are also provided for in this year's Budget, will be assisted by officers of the provincial and subordinate services, and the provision for such assistants is comprised in the figure now under discussion and includes the pay of two assistant botanists, one assistant sylviculturist and two assistant chemists. They, in all, will cost Rs. 36,000, the existing staff in the Andamans will cost Rs. 26,000, in Baluchistan 4,400, in Ajmere Rs. 5,300 and in Coorg Rs. 13,420. Now, the total of this comes to only Rs. 85,000 and the figure put down in the Budget is Rs. 1,57,000. There is, therefore, room, it would seem, for a reduction of Rs. 72,000. But, now, I have to draw attention to the very large provision made for probable savings on the whole of the establishments Budget. At the time when the Budget was framed, we were not in a position to know exactly what staff would be required at Dehra Dun and to inform the Finance Department, and they, therefore, while making full provision for officers of the classes now under discussion made an enormous allowance for probable savings on the whole Budget. We are helpless in this matter. I understand that the Accountant General, on his previous experience and his future anticipations, cuts out a lump figure. You will see that in last year's Budget only Rs. 90,000 was deducted on that account, while this year the deduction is Rs. 2,84,000; and although I am not able to give the House details of the savings which the Accountant General anticipates, I am confident that a very considerable amount of these has been estimated for under the provision that we have made

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for the establishment at Dehra Dun. I, therefore, although I am not able to justify this figure as it stands, am unable to accept the proposal brought forward.

Mr. R. A. Spence : Sir, I too should like to oppose this Resolution for cutting down the sum of money provided for these extra assistant conservators. It is very often stated that Departments of Government are not run on businesslike lines or for the benefit of India from a commercial point of view. From what I know of the Forests of India and the work they are doing, I can say that this work specially is going to be of very great value to India from the commercial and business point of view. And just as the Forests are waking up and are going to be of such great use and benefit to the country, I think it would be very bad policy indeed to reduce the money that is being spent on the Forests.

Rao Bahadur T. Rangachariar : I should have understood the position better if the Honourable Member in charge, or the Honourable Mr. Spence, had thrown some light upon the productive nature of the expenditure which is going to be incurred. As it is, the particular item under consideration relates to particular officers, the provision for whom has been raised from Rs. 51,000 to Rs. 1,57,000. The Honourable Member who spoke for the Government spoke wide of the mark altogether. He went on justifying the expenditure at Dehra Dun and various other places. We have nothing to do with Dehra Dun in connection with this motion. This relates to a particular item, and why there should be this sudden increase from Rs. 51,000 to Rs. 1,57,000 is a matter which cannot be allowed to remain unchallenged. The Government have not justified it, and the Honourable Member admitted he was not able to justify it. Unless they are able to justify it, we should not allow it to stand.

The Honourable Mr. B. N. Sarma : Sir, we approached the Finance Department with a much larger figure under the head of Forests, because we hoped to be able to improve the Forest Research Institute at Dehra Dun considerably, so as to enable us to impart the highest education possible in Forestry in India, and as a preliminary thereto and to promote research, also improve the Research Institute and various other departments of activity which are auxiliary to the main purposes. But the Finance Member ruthlessly cut down that expenditure and has made a provision only for 25 lakhs and odd.

The Honourable Member asked as to whether we have not been providing too much under the head of salaries when we ask for a provision of Rs. 5,46,000. In making provision for salaries, etc., for the Department as a whole, it is impossible for us to say exactly how much of it will be spent, because we do not know how many officers, we expect to recruit, will be recruited, either in England or here. That is one of the difficulties under which we are labouring. We hope to increase our establishment. There are a good many vacancies in the Forest Department, speaking generally, and both the Secretary of State and the Government of India are trying to recruit as many officers as possible owing to the shortage in personnel in every department. But we have to make provision in the meantime, and we have accordingly provided Rs. 1,57,400, with a deduction provided elsewhere. If these appointments can be made either by the Secretary of State or by the Government of India,

then the greater part of the amount really provided will possibly be spent. At the same time, as I have said, under the whole head the amount has been cut down, because if our experience of last year is repeated this year we may not be able to recruit as many officers, build as many buildings and secure as much apparatus as may be necessary to start the Institute in full working order. I hope, therefore, the Council will be satisfied that under Forests, which requires considerable development, there should not be any undue economy and that every pie that can be spared should be provided for and spent. As far as the increases in the salaries of Imperial officers are concerned, that is a non-voteable subject. I do not think any economy which can be effected in this respect in the other services and branches will go far to meet the wishes of those Honourable Members who think the present salaries are already too large. There have been complaints from the officers concerned that the Secretary of State has not gone sufficiently far in that direction. But that is a side-issue. I hope this explanation will show that we have not asked for one pie too much, and that the grant will be sanctioned.

Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer : Sir, there is one point upon which I should like to have some further explanation from the Honourable the Revenue Minister. He has told us that when his Department put forward demands for money, he opened his mouth very wide. I am quite prepared to believe it, but what I do not understand, is this. There are at present 10 extra assistant conservators on the establishment during the current year 1920-21. It is proposed to increase the number to 15 in the next year. Therefore the addition of five extra assistant conservators in the next year has to be made. The salaries are said to range from Rs. 200 to Rs. 1,000. Generally, when you add more officers to an existing cadre, you start those officers at the lowest rung of the ladder and not at the topmost rung. Now, supposing you start these five extra assistant conservators at the lowest rung of Rs. 200 per mensem, it would come to Rs. 24,000 per annum extra, whereas we find that the Honourable Member has succeeded in getting a Budget provision of Rs. 1,06,000 more, which does not seem to be adequately justified by the explanation he has given. Let us suppose, on the other hand, that these five extra assistant conservators are to be started at the topmost grade of Rs. 1,000 a month. That would come to Rs. 12,000 a year for each man, and for five men Rs. 60,000. Even then the proposed addition of Rs. 36,000 has not been properly explained. I submit, that the proper way of making additions to your cadre is by beginning at the lower end and not the higher. Otherwise after a few years the men will complain that they have not had any increment for a long time.

I should like to have a word of explanation on this matter from the Honourable the Revenue Member.

Mr. B. Venkatapatiraju : Sir, we may be sympathetic towards the explanation given by the Honourable Member for Revenue and Agriculture, but I do not think we can forego our claim to decrease this amount. We are of course anxious that we should have our staff in tip-top condition; we do not complain of that, and there is provision for so many professors in the college and for experts, botanists, etc., costing Rs. 82,580. We are not at all for deducting that amount in any way; but in a case where, as the Revenue Secretary himself admits, it is not a justifiable figure, we are helping the department if we cut down this figure; because if they find it absolutely necessary they would prepare their budget correctly, so that they will be in a position to justify their demand before they ask for our vote.

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In this case they themselves provided for a probable saving of Rs. 2,84,000; probably it may be saved or it may not be saved; if any additional amount is wanted, perhaps they may not be able to save it at all. Even if the explanation of the Honourable Member that we must all encourage additional expenditure on forests be accepted, I do not know whether that has anything to do with the proper preparation of the Budget with reference to the demands. Therefore, on principle alone, we must all unanimously try our best to reduce this amount, so that we might have a better Budget next time.

Mr. J. Hullah: Sir, I only wish to repeat that we cannot consent to reduce this provision unless the provision for probable savings is also reduced by a corresponding amount. Therefore, I am unable to accept the Resolution.

The Honourable the President: The question is that the motion* for reduction be accepted.

The motion was adopted.

REDUCTION BY 3 LAKHS IN FORESTS.

Rao Bahadur T. Rangachariar: Sir, in moving

‘That the Demand under head Forests (No. 8) be reduced by 3 lakhs,’ my object is to draw attention to the fact that the Budget estimate does not indicate that any really important step is going to be taken to make these Forests a productive concern. I notice a large increase made in this department for revision of the pay of the officers; and a lump provision has been made for superior officers on page 53; at the bottom of the same page, there is again a lump provision for revision of establishment in Port Blair; and on page 54 lump provisions have been made for the re-organisation of the establishment of the Forest College, for the establishment of the Tanning Expert and for revision in Coorg; there are other items like ‘Sundries’ etc. These are the items which go to make up the increased cost. It will be noticed on page 52, that the total expenditure in 1919-20 was Rs. 14½ lakhs, and it is now proposed to increase it to 20 lakhs. I may say at once that I should not grudge this, and I should be the foremost in approving of expenditure on forests, because it is one of the items which we have to develop, and perhaps develop at a very fast rate. so that the forest industries and the by-products from forest industries may be rapidly developed. But unfortunately I find no provision made for any machinery being brought down, nor for any experts who will develop the particular processes by which forest products may be utilised for industrial purposes; I do not find any trace of that; the whole increase is due to establishment and establishment alone, and I should like the Honourable Member for Agriculture to explain this, as this is my doubt on this point. If he can assure me that he is going to develop the forests so as to make them productive, so as to make the department instructive, so as to make Indians take a larger share in learning these forest industries, I shall not press my motion.

Dr. Nand Lal: Mr. President and Members of this Honourable Assembly, if you will kindly take the trouble of comparing these figures which are given at page 51, I think you will have to admit that the motion which is before this Honourable Assembly is sure to meet success. You will kindly see that the total expenditure is given as Rs. 29,62,000—both voted and non-voted—and the voted amount, for which this Demand is made is Rs. 25,70,000. When we go into all these details relating to all these expenses we do not find any

* Vide page 860 of these Debates.