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No. 24.

Duties of the Principal of the Presidency College, Calcutta..

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No. 1860T.—G., dated Darjeeling, the 17th September 1913.

From—W. S. MILNE, Esq., I.C.S., Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, Genl. Dept.,
To—The Director of Public Instruction, Bengal.

I AM directed to address you on the subject of the duties of the Principal of the Presidency College, Calcutta. In his report on the working of the college during the year 1910-11, Mr. James drew attention to the heavy burden thrown on the Principal by the new regulations of the University and by the expansion of the college. He pointed out that the new conceptions of the relations between the staff and the students and the increased responsibilities which these conceptions brought in their train impose too severe a strain on the Principal, who is at the same time responsible for the disciplinary control of the students and for the business management of the college affairs.

2. The Governor in Council has given careful consideration to these facts, and is of opinion that if Mr. James is to perform in the fullest measure the duties which properly belong to the head of an important and growing institution in connection with its organization, control and development, and at the same time to take his due share of lecture work as a senior member of a learned body of professors, he must, so far as possible, be relieved of the burden of routine business. To dissociate the Principal from actual teaching, on the other hand, would appear to be a retrograde step, and it is one which the Governor in Council is not inclined to favour, but there is every reason why the burden of his routine administrative duties should be lightened.

3. It has been suggested that alleviation might be given by the appointment of a member of the superior staff to undertake duties of a similar nature to those performed by Bursars in Oxford colleges. Such an officer would have full financial responsibility, subject only to the general control and supervision of the Principal. It would probably be necessary to give the selected officer a suitable local allowance. It has also been suggested that another senior member of the college staff might be appointed Dean or Proctor, to relieve the Principal of the duty of receiving the ordinary applications of students. This appointment would in a general way correspond to that of the Vice-Principal in certain colleges, and it is possible that in this case, too, an allowance would be necessary.

4. I am to request that you will be so good as to obtain and submit to Government the views of the governing body of the college with reference to the whole question of the relief to be afforded to the Principal, and to invite their attention at the same time to these suggestions for the creation of the appointments of a Bursar and of a Dean. Should you recommend the creation of these appointments, it will be necessary to state definitely what powers the Principal will delegate to these officers, and to what extent such delegation would lighten the burden of his routine duties. Incidentally it has been suggested that the Principal should have the services of a shorthand-writer.

5. In conclusion I am to request that the administration report of the Presidency College may in future be submitted to Government officially through the governing body of the college.

GENERAL DEPARTMENT.

EDUCATION.

[FILE 4-C 58.]

K.-W.—A PROCEEDINGS FOR NOVEMBER 1913, No. 24.

Duties of the Principal of the Presidency College, Calcutta.

[Extract from the Annual Report on the Presidency College (Calcutta) for 1910-11.]

12. Government also must recognize that a college as a moral institution is something utterly different from a bit of departmental machinery. Good business management in a college is the foundation of prosperity and a very important matter. But it belongs to mechanism ; it is not the soul of an institution for the education of character. It should not be, nor in any wise appear to be, the chief duty of the Principal of a college to be the competent head of a college office. The new regulations of the University, the frank adoption of the residential ideal with its apparatus of hostels and personal supervision, have introduced new conceptions of the relations between staff and students, and especially of the relation of the Principal to the college. The old conception and the new are incompatible ; and if it is really intended that the Principal shall be the personal head of a college, something less must be made of the importance of full financial responsibility as for a business concern. At the very least the financial rules must, without laxity, be such as are adaptable to college needs and work. This is not true of the financial rules under which Presidency College has at present to work, which are designed and fitted for the work of something quite different, namely, great departments of public administration. I pray that at least some attempt may be made to give the Principal of Presidency College relief in this matter. Happily the constitution conferred last year upon the governing body offers a way by which at all events some embarrassments may be removed. What is clear to me after three and a-half years' experience is that, if a college is to be organized and worked as a place for the education of character, a Principal cannot take upon him this new and supreme responsibility *in addition to* all that has been expected of routine duty under the system which has grown up since the Hindu College became the Presidency College in 1855 ; when, moreover, the college, already large, has increased its numbers by half as many again in the last two years, thus adding to the mere weight of routine business. The attempt to undertake all this is too great a strain. Something has to give way ; something must be let go ; for, to meet all the claims of such a position is a sheer impossibility.

NOTE.—It might have been added that in addition to the college the Principal stands in a close relation to two large attached secondary schools—the Hindu School and the Hare School—and that an appreciable amount of work and responsibility is involved in this relation.

I HAVE obtained copies of the last three administration reports of the Presidency College. Mr. James refers in his note to the report for 1910-11. The extracts he quotes will be found on pages 7-8 of the report for that year.

2. Mr. James's complaint is that the Principal's burdens are more than he can bear, and he calls particular attention to the strain of office work. Good business management, he says, belongs to "mechanism," and it should not be the chief duty of the Principal of a college to be the competent head of the college office. He adds that the financial rules under which the Presidency College works are not adaptable to college needs and work, but he thinks that the constitution conferred on the governing body offers a way to the removal of some at least of the embarrassments.

The foregoing is what Mr. James wrote in 1911. He reiterates the views then expressed. He divides his functions into two classes : (1) his functions as the medium of official correspondence and as the chief accountant and cashier of his office, and (2) his functions as a teacher and as the centre of college life in its educational and moral aspects. His burden is too heavy, and he suggests as measures of relief (a) freedom from business responsibility and (b) assistance in disciplinary control. He wants a steward or manager who shall have financial responsibility, and he wants some of his staff under the name of Dean, Proctor or the like to take over the ordinary applications of students, or, as a still better solution of the difficulty, he desires the appointment of two purely disciplinary officers.

3. With regard to the question of the performance of purely business matters and of financial responsibility, there is, one must admit, considerable force in Mr. James's contentions. The same difficulty has been felt in Madras. Secretary will remember the Government of that province has suggested the appointment of a *business* head of their college who will not be in any way responsible for teaching. This Government is inclined to the view that

the Principal of a large college should not be dissociated from teaching work, and the solution would be on the lines of granting relief in business matters. In this connection the report of the committee appointed in 1905 by the Senate to inspect Calcutta colleges may be read. Mr. James must have relief from routine financial duties, though of course he must ultimately be held responsible. It is clear that the Steward, who is, I think, a member of the Subordinate Educational Service on Rs. 200 per mensem, cannot be placed in a responsible position. It would seem essential that a businessman of approved capacity and honesty should be appointed to the post. The pay might be raised to Rs. 400-500, and for this sum a competent European might be secured. An alternative solution would be to appoint one of the professors, whose work is comparatively light, to the post of Bursar. He might be given an allowance for these additional duties.

4. On the disciplinary side of college life, relief might be afforded to Mr. James by the appointment of the professors in rotation as Deans, very much after the method in vogue in Oxford Colleges. These Deans could deal with petitions and applications of all kinds and could interview students and parents. Small allowances might be given for the extra work involved.

5. I feel, however, that it is very difficult to suggest any practical remedies, since we are not really aware of the actual amount of labour involved in all these subsidiary duties. The truth is, in all probability, that Mr. James' sense of conscientiousness leads him to occupy his time with petty details. That at any rate is the impression I have got from reading the papers. One also feels that Mr. James does not make adequate use of the governing body and of the advisory body of the Council. If the former body is properly worked, Mr. James should be relieved of a great deal of financial responsibility, and one surmises that the Advisory Council could do a great deal in the way of taking over responsibility for discipline and the like.

Without an examination of the possibilities of the more extended utilization of these bodies I feel handicapped in dealing with the case.

I do not think Government can take action on the materials now before it, and I would suggest that a small committee consisting of Mr. James, two other professors of the college, Mr. Chapman (who was head of the Commercial Institute), and Mr. Wordsworth, with, perhaps, Secretary, might consider the question in greater detail and formulate definite proposals.

W. S. MILNE—12-6-1913.

HON'BLE MEMBER—

Mr. James's proposals are:—

- (1) the appointment of a superior officer as Steward or Registrar, the present Steward not having sufficient status to take financial responsibility, and
- (2) the appointment of two purely disciplinary officers who would evidently be professors.

Mr. Milne proposes the appointment of a committee to consider the question in detail and to submit definite proposals. There is much to be said for this suggestion but I am doubtful whether the result would be commensurate with the labour involved. I am inclined to think that definite proposals should come from the Principal himself, who is in a good position to work up a scheme. If Hon'ble Member approves the proposals generally, we might ask the Principal to draw up a detailed scheme, mentioning the qualifications and pay of the officer who would take the present Steward's place, and his duties; and stating what functions should be assigned to the disciplinary officers, what extra allowances they would get and the term of their office, and what officers he would recommend for the appointment. Mr. Milne's suggestion to appoint professors in rotation might be mentioned to him for consideration.

When we get such a definite scheme it might perhaps be advisable to appoint a committee to examine and advise upon it. The points for discussion would then be more easily focussed than at present.

It is possible that the governing body or College Council would afford the Principal assistance in working out such a scheme, but perhaps the question of consulting them or not might be left to the discretion of the Principal.

Owing to what has recently happened I am afraid the present is not an ideal time for taking up the consideration of this question, but I do not think this is sufficient reason for postponing its consideration.

H. F. SAMMAN—13-6-1913.

Please obtain a copy of 'this year's administration report' from which Mr. James quotes his 12th paragraph, and make a new file on this subject, starting with that paragraph as its origin.

When the file has been prepared, send it over to Director of Public Instruction with reference to this paragraph and ask for the favour of his opinion as to the action to be taken. I am inclined to the view that we should invite the attention of the governing body to it, and ask them to frame a scheme which would afford to the Principal the relief desired, without

dissociating him entirely from the teaching work of the college. But I shall be glad to keep an open mind on the subject until I have heard the Hon'ble Mr. Hornell's views.

* * * * *

I should also be glad to know what was done with reference to the remarks included in the report for 1910-11, whether by the Director of Public Instruction or by Government. Surely such reports come to Government in some form? If not, what does Director of Public Instruction do with them? The Presidency College report will have to come to us in future, probably through the governing body.

P. C. LYON—13-6-1913.

SUBMITTED with reference to F of Hon'ble Member's order dated the 13th July 1913. This may now be sent to Director of Public Instruction.

S. K. B.—20-6-1913.

S. N. G.—20-6-1913.

W. S. MILNE—21-6-1913.

If I am at liberty to draw upon my own experience at the Presidency College I would suggest that the truth is partly revealed by Mr. Milne's observation at E on page 2 of these notes. The duties of the Principal of the college are very heavy, but Mr. James certainly does take a degree of satisfaction in doing with his own hand unimportant matters of which he might well be relieved. There is much routine work of which he could be easily relieved by the Steward who is a competent assistant, and there is much of which he might be relieved by the other professors if only he worked out a scheme. There is no reason why much of what is at present done by the Principal should not be done by other members of the staff. It would probably strengthen their influence, bring them into touch with students other than those of their classes, and would not in any way weaken the Principal's position.

I shrink from the suggestion made at B on page 1. I have seen some schools in England which employ disciplinary masters. Their position is unfortunate. They are out of touch with the general work of the school; they are regarded as spies; they only come in contact with the boys for unpleasant purposes, and generally they are a weakness rather than strength in the administration. I think that officers in educational institutions, whose duties are purely disciplinary, cannot in any way retain the respect of the students, particularly so in India, where the difficulties are apt to be complicated by differences of nationality. I consider this a most unfortunate suggestion.

At A on page 1 there is another suggestion which, however, Mr. James regards as the less preferable—to have some member of the staff with the title of Dean or Proctor who shall be responsible. This is feasible to some extent, but in my opinion only as a matter of delegation. The Principal must always retain supreme disciplinary authority and should invariably deal with the more difficult and delicate questions of discipline. I do not understand how it is possible to separate disciplinary conditions from the other conditions that make for a college's welfare. Mr. James has elsewhere pointed out that it is an important part of the Principal's duty to set a good tone to the college. The discipline is not a matter apart from good tone, it is an essential part, and the tone of a college depends in the greatest measure on discipline. I think the separation which Mr. James has endeavoured to make is unnatural and unmeaning.

I have elsewhere given my opinion with regard to the delegation of financial responsibility. As a general rule it would be desirable, but perhaps under the peculiar circumstances of this land, the delegation cannot be regarded as within the range of practical consideration. If any delegation were possible, I think it would be best to transfer the responsibility to some important member of the staff, whose duties are not so heavy. As a general consideration I would urge that these important matters should not be entrusted to any except officers who hold positions that command respect. I think that we should not endeavour to establish in our colleges any appointments which are not definitely connected with the working of the college as an educational institution, i.e., I would deprecate the appointment of any important officials who had no concern with, and no interest in, the purely educational work of the institution.

With regard to a suggestion made at C on page 2, I would hazard this suggestion, that the business conduct of an institution is intimately connected with its welfare and its reputation, and that perhaps nothing has a better educational influence than the knowledge that the business part of an institution is well run. Here again I think it undesirable to try and make any separation between the business aspect and the educational aspect of the work of a college. I would prefer to see the solution accepted, which is made at D on page 2. There is no reason why one of the professors should not be made a Bursar as is the custom in, for instance, the Oxford College. This would relieve the Principal to a considerable degree. The question of the degree of relief could be decided by the Principal himself. The Bursar so appointed might receive an allowance in addition to his pay. If it were possible to relieve the Principal of the purely routine work either in this way or by appointing the professors in rotation as Deans or by sharing the work amongst a certain number of professors, the Principal would have greater freedom for the more important duties which include teaching, finance, disciplinary control in a general sense, and general supervision.

Director of Public Instruction has already informed Government of his opinion regarding the proposal that a Principal should be relieved of the teaching duties, and the University has expressed itself very definitely on this point. The Principal is perhaps the last man who should be relieved of teaching duties. If he became an "dministrative officer his influence would be diminished. It is through his teaching that a man of high character and high ideals can exercise the widest influence.

The governing body might advise in such a matter and make suggestions as to the exact division of business matters between the Principal and any officer or officers appointed to assist him: or, perhaps, such a committee as that suggested in Mr. Milne's note on page 2 might be appointed. The Council can scarcely help in this matter. The Council is an

If the Accountant-General, Bengal, recognized more generously the financial administration of the governing body it would save much labour. In spite of the powers given to the governing body, he insists on special sanction of the Director of Public Instruction or Government for nearly every item the governing body passes.

W. C. WORDSWORTH.

unwieldy body with no definite powers, no rules of procedure, and little sense of business method. I acted as Secretary to the Council for four years and have little hesitation in saying that the Council adds considerably to the duties of the Principal, because it has no definite position and many of its members have little appreciation of proper procedure. It is to the governing body that we must look for any definite direction in the administration of the college.

With regard to the proposals for delegating superior powers, I would point out that there is no guarantee that any delegation would work successfully. The position of a disciplinary officer who is not the head of the institution is entirely dependent on the support given to him by the head of the institution, and it is by no means certain that any Dean or Proctor would invariably, in difficult matters, receive the support of his superior. This is a point of great importance.

All this means that in my opinion, heavy as the work of the Principal is, it might be considerably lessened by the Principal himself if he were to invite the co-operation of members of the staff. It has often been felt that their co-operation is not desired in any greater degree than that indicated by membership of the College Council. Many of the professors feel that they are lecturers and nothing more, and this feeling is strengthened by the circumstances of the institution. If these members of the staff were given a wider interest in the welfare of the institution and were given a definite share of the ordinary administrative duties, I think it would add to the efficiency of the college and to the harmony of the relations between the members of the staff themselves and between the staff and the students.

I should finally remark that much relief might be given to the Principal by the appointment of a capable shorthand-writer and typist, and that in the days to be, when the Principal has his quarters near the college, it will be possible to get much of the routine work done away from the college, i.e. without interruption, i.e., more speedily and efficiently. At the present moment the continued interruption of the Principal by students is one of the most serious drawbacks to the Principal's position. In this the Principal himself might perhaps contrive considerable relief, for instance, at the beginning of every session the Principal grants hundreds of interviews to rejected candidates for admission. This is an unnecessary act of good will and courtesy. For the majority of their purposes students might be referred to other members of the staff, and thus the Principal's time be economised. I should repeat once more that it is impossible for the Principal of a large college to know intimately or personally all the students of the college, and it is useless to try and know them except in the mass.

With regard to the previous reports, they have been submitted to Director of Public Instruction, and action has been taken on them so far as is necessary in this office. No action was taken on the points raised by Mr. James in his report in 1910 so far as it relates to the matters here under discussion.

I have omitted to refer to the question of accommodation. The science professors have each his own private room, where he can work at leisure and interview students. No Arts professor has a private room, and until recently there was one small common room for all the Arts professors and lecturers. Matters are a little better now, but not much. I believe they have a common room and a tiffin room—the latter unfurnished. There is nowhere where a student may interview and consult any of these professors except in the verandah or in the compound, and delegation of disciplinary or other authority is impossible under present circumstances.

W. C. WORDSWORTH—3-7-1913.

I AM sorry that the file has been so long delayed, more specially as there is very little that I wish to add. I know nothing of the working of the college since I was on its staff ten years ago. Mr. Wordsworth on the other hand knows the college intimately.

2. I think that the experiment of appointing one of the members of the higher staff to act as Bursar might well be tried. This ought to enable the Principal so to organize the clerical and financial work of the college that considerable relief to him might be derived from such an appointment. I think that the Principal might be asked whether he would regard such an appointment as affording him substantial relief, and if so, what duties he would propose to assign to the Bursar. It will be necessary to have details, for the case of an allowance will have to go to the Secretary of State, and it is not likely to be sanctioned unless full information is forthcoming.

3. Some further relief to the Principal might be afforded by an arrangement by which a professor might be appointed to act as Dean. How far any real relief would be afforded in this way would seem to depend largely on the number and nature of the duties which the Principal would be willing to delegate.

4. Mr Wordsworth points out that the final disciplinary control must obviously be in the hands of the Principal. In this country no one ever takes "no" for an answer so long as there is possible higher authority to whom an appeal can be lodged. Unless the Principal is therefore prepared to say that, with reference to certain specified matters, the decision of the Dean shall be final, I doubt whether such an appointment will really do much to lighten his burden.

5. In my letter No. 608 T., dated the 20th June 1913, I have expressed my views with reference to the proposal that the Principal of a Government college should be relieved of all teaching work.

W. W. HORNELL—8-8-1913.

We may now take steps to ascertain the views of the governing body of the college with reference to the appointment of a Bursar and a Dean as proposed in the notes. We should know what powers, etc., the Principal would wish to delegate to them.

2. We might address the Director of Public Instruction officially on the subject. It will be noticed (part marked H) that Mr. Wordsworth thinks there is some want of harmony and co-operation between the Principal and the other members of the staff. This in itself is bound to increase the Principal's work. It should not be so. There are several other points to be noticed:—

1. The necessity of providing private rooms for the professors, or at any rate, a decent common room, with, say, a small room attached for interviews with students.
2. The appointment of a shorthand-typist for the Principal.

These two questions will no doubt be brought up in answer to our reference.

3. Hon'ble Member's note dated the 13th June 1913 (part marked G). Please see Mr. Wordsworth's note (part marked I) on this point. The college report might be sent to Government officially in future.

W. S. MILNE—18-8-1913.

I AGREE. Please take action accordingly.

H. F. SAMMAN—20-8-1913.

A DRAFT IS PUT UP.

P. N. C.—30-8-1913.

S. N. G.—3-9-1913.

R. N. REID—11-9-1913.

HON'BLE MEMBER's orders dated the 13th June 1913 will recall this case. The views of Mr. Wordsworth and Mr. Hornell have since been obtained, and the draft, which is for approval, embodies, I think, the salient points.

W. S. MILNE—11-9-1913.

I HAVE made some modifications in the draft. Please issue early, if you have no further remarks to offer.

P. C. LYON—15-9-1913.

ISSUE.

W. S. MILNE—16-9-1913.

[No. 24.] O. I. No. 1860 T.—G., dated the 17th September 1913.

NEED we remind Director of Public Instruction for a reply to our letter No. 1860 T.—G., dated the 17th September 1913? We may wait till the middle of January.

S. K. B.—11-11-1913.

S. N. G.—11-11-1913.

YES.

R. N. REID—11-11-1913.