

CHAPTER XII

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

DISTRICT BOARD

OUTSIDE the municipalities of Bankura, Bishnupur and Sonamukhi, the administration of local affairs, such as the maintenance of roads, bridges, ferries and pounds, the control of village sanitation and water-supply, the provision of medical relief, etc., rests with the District Board, assisted by the Local Boards of Bankura and Bishnupur and a Union Committee at Kotulpur. The District Board consists of 15 members, of whom seven are elected, four are nominated, and four are ex-officio members. According to the returns for 1906-07, pleaders and mukhtars predominate, representing 40 per cent of the members, while Government servants and the land-holding classes each represent 26.6 per cent.

INCOME

The average annual income of the District Board during the 10 years ending in 1901-02 was Rs. 1,10,000, of which Rs.42,000 were derived from the road cess. During the quinquennium ending in 1905-06 it amounted, on the average, to Rs. 1,24,000 per annum, of which Rs. 48,000 were obtained from the road cess, Rs. 33,000 from Government contributions, Rs. 2,000 from pounds, Rs. 1,500 from ferries, and Rs. 39,500 from other sources. In 1906-07 the opening balance was Rs. 49,000, and the receipts of the year aggregated Rs. 1,15,000, including Rs.49,000 realized from the road cess, Rs. 30,000 contributed from Provincial revenues, Rs. 1,500 obtained from tolls on ferries, and Rs. 2,000 from pounds. Here, as elsewhere, the road cess is the principal source of income, but the incidence of taxation is light, being only 9 pies per head of the population— a proportion lower than in any other district in the Burdwan Division.

EXPENDITURE

The average annual expenditure during the decade ending in 1901-02 was Rs. 1,09,000, of which Rs. 57,000 were spent on civil works, Rs. 32,000 on education, and Rs. 2,000 on medical relief. During the 5 years ending in 1905-06 the disbursements amounted to Rs. 1,30,000, the chief items being Rs. 47,000 spent on communications, Rs. 37,000 on education, and Rs. 4,000 on medical relief. In 1906-07 the expenditure was Rs. 1,28,000, of which more than half (Rs. 79,000) was allocated to civil works, while education accounted for Rs. 36,000. The heaviest charge on the income of the District Board is the maintenance of communications. It now maintains 61 miles of metalled roads and 541 miles of unmetalled roads, besides a large number of village tracks with a total length of 105 miles; the cost of maintaining these roads in 1906-07 was Rs. 54, Rs. 42 and Rs. 28 per mile respectively. The Board maintains 7 Middle schools and aids 2 High schools, 33 Middle schools, 169 Upper Primary schools and 868 Lower Primary schools. For the purpose of supervision, it entertains 11 Inspecting Pandits. Altogether 5 per cent of the ordinary income of the Board was expended in the same year on medical relief and sanitation— a proportion higher than in any other district in the Division except Burdwan and Birbhum. Three dispensaries are entirely maintained by it, six dispensaries receive grants-in-aid, and special measures are taken on the outbreak of epidemic diseases.

LOCAL BOARDS

In subordination to the District Board are the Bankura and Bishnupur Local Boards, the jurisdiction of each corresponding to the subdivisional charge of the same name. The Bankura Local Board is composed of 12 members, of whom six are nominated and six are elected; while the Bishnupur Local Board is composed of 12 members, all nominated by Government as the system of election has not been introduced. The Local Boards receive allotments from the funds of the District Board, and are entrusted with the maintenance of village roads, pounds and ferries, and some other small functions.

UNION COMMITTEES

There is only one Union Committee in the district, viz., that of Kotulpur, which was established in 1904-05. It has an area of 2 square miles, and a population of 6,083 persons. The Committee is

administered by a Board of 7 members, and is reported to display little activity; for in 1905-06 the Committee held no meetings and spent nothing, while in 1906-07 it held only two meetings and merely spent the balance of the previous year (Rs. 350).

MUNICIPALITIES

There are 3 municipalities in the district, viz., Bankura, Bishnupur and Sonamukhi. The number of rate-payers in 1906-07 was 6,954, representing 13.07 per cent of the population (53,204) residing in municipal limits, as compared with the average of 16.15 per cent for the whole Division. The average incidence of taxation in that year was only annas 7-5 per head of the population, as against the Divisional average of Re. 1-13-3, and varied from annas 10-1 in Bankura to annas 5-9 in Bishnupur and Sonamukhi.

BANKURA

The municipality of Bankura, which was established in 1869, is administered by a Municipal Board composed of 12 Commissioners, of whom eight are elected, one is nominated by Government, and three are ex-officio members. The area within municipal limits in 1906 was 4.96 square miles, the number of rate-payers being 2,482 or 12 per cent of the population; but in 1907 the area was extended to 5.96 square miles by the inclusion within municipal limits of mauzas Kethardanga, Demurari Gopinathpur, Murra and Ladiha.

The average annual income of the municipality during the decade ending in 1901-02 was Rs. 13,000, and the expenditure was Rs. 12,000; and during the 5 years ending in 1905-06 they were Rs. 17,500 and Rs. 15,000 respectively. In 1906-07 the income aggregated Rs. 19,000, besides an opening balance of Rs. 3,000. The chief source of income is a tax on persons, according to their circumstances and property, assessed at the rate of 1.125 per cent on the income of the assesseees. This tax brought in Rs. 7,000 ; and next in importance are a tax on animals and vehicles, which brought in Rs. 3,000, and a conservancy rate, which brought in Rs. 2,400, while fees from markets realized Rs. 1,200. The total incidence of taxation was annas 10-1 per head of the population. The expenditure in the same year was Rs. 20,500, excluding Rs. 4,000 expended on the repayment of loans, advances and deposits. The principal items of expenditure were medical relief, conservancy, drainage and public works, which accounted for 26.01, 24.1, 15.3 and 13.5 per cent respectively of the total expenditure.

It is reported that, at the present rate of taxation, the municipality cannot undertake new projects or carry out substantial reforms for want of funds. The supply of drinking water is said to be defective, the town being mainly dependent, on the two rivers on the north and south, which run nearly dry in the hot weather, and there is also a need of good tanks containing sufficient water for bathing and culinary purposes. The drainage system and lighting system are also said to require improvement. On the other hand, the drainage is believed to be better than in most of the towns in Bengal, and, on the whole, the sanitary condition of the town is good and the roads are well kept up.

BISHNUPUR

Bishnupur was constituted a municipality in 1873, and has a Municipal Board consisting of 12 Commissioners, of whom eight are elected and four are nominated by Government. The area within municipal limits is 8 square miles, and the number of rate-payers is 2,804, representing 14.6 percent of the population residing within municipal limits. The average annual income of the municipality during the 5 years ending in 1905-06 was Rs. 10,000, and the expenditure was Rs. 9,000. In 1906-07 the income of the municipality was Rs. 10,000, of which Rs. 5,500 were obtained from a tax on persons according to their circumstances and property, levied at 1.125 percent on income of the assesseees, while a tax on animals and vehicles brought in Rs. 1,200. The incidence of taxation was annas 5-9 per head of the population. The expenditure in the same year was Rs. 8,000, the principal items being conservancy, medical relief, public works and education, which accounted for 21.9, 15.2, 15.5 and 10.5 per cent respectively of the total expenditure.

SONAMUKHI

The municipality of Sonamukhi was established in 1886, and is administered by a Municipal Board, consisting of 9 Commissioners, all of whom are nominated by Government, the elective system not being in force. The area within municipal limits is 4 square miles, and the number of rate-payers is 1,668, representing 12.4 per cent of the population. The average annual income of the municipality during the 5 years ending in 1905-06 was Rs. 5,840, and the expenditure was Rs. 5,820. In 1906-07 its income was Rs. 5,000, besides an opening balance of Rs. 1,200. The chief source of income is a tax on persons, according to their circumstances and property, levied at 2 per cent on the income of the rate-payers, which brought in Rs.4,000; the total incidence of taxation was annas 5-9 per head of the population. The expenditure in the same year was Rs. 6,000, the principal items of expenditure being conservancy (23.5 per cent) medical relief (13.8 per cent), and education (12.2 per cent).