

CHAPTER XV.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

DISTRICT BOARD. Tax riparian strip on the west bank of the Hooghly from Tribeni to the Belly Khal is an urban tract containing no less than seven municipalities (exclusive of French Chandernagore), and there is also a municipality at Arambagh. The rest of the district is rural in character, and the administration of its local affairs is controlled by the District Board. This Board has 27 members, of whom eleven are nominated, ten are elected, and six are *ex-officio* members, including the District Magistrate, who is its Chairman. According to the returns for 1907-08, the land-holding classes predominate among the members, representing 37 per cent. of the total number, while pleaders account for 23.6 per cent.

Income. The income of the District Board fluctuates considerably from year to year; but the average of the ten years from 1892-93 to 1901-02 was Rs. 1,80,944, and the average of the five years from 1904-05 to 1908-09 was Rs. 2,93,231. In 1907-08, exclusive of the opening balance (Rs. 97,872), the receipts aggregated Rs. 2,10,510, of which Rs. 97,012 were realized from road cess, the total incidence of taxation per head of the population averaging Rs. 1-8. Among other items in the receipts were Rs. 7,271 from pounds, Rs. 22,814 from miscellaneous sources, Rs. 5,918 from ferries, and Rs. 28,107 contributed by Government. The receipts from road cess, which form the principal source of income, averaged Rs. 82,015 during the ten years ending in 1901-02. A revision of the assessment was completed in 1906-07, and the receipts consequently rose to Rs. 97,012 in 1907-08 and to Rs. 1,05,720 in 1908-09. Receipts from the leases of pounds are, on the whole, declining, falling from Rs. 8,724 in 1892-93 to Rs. 7,271 in 1907-08. The amount obtained from ferries and tolls fluctuates, being, for example, Rs. 4,449 in 1902-03 and Rs. 6,461 in 1905-06. Part of the miscellaneous receipts is derived from recoveries on account of the cost of collecting arrears cesses, and part from the share of the profits paid to the District Board by the Howrah-Shiakhala Light Railway. The Government contributions also vary considerably from year to year.

The income from that source consists of (1) the amount assigned to establish an equilibrium between the income and the expenditure transferred to the Board from the Provincial accounts, and (2) sums allotted for improvement of roads in Government estates.

During the decade ending in 1901-02, the average annual expenditure of the District Board was Rs. 1,79,165, and during the quinquennium ending in 1908-09 it was Rs. 1,97,320. The chief items of expenditure are establishment, education, medical and civil works, the amounts spent in 1907-08 being Rs. 9,015 Rs. 37,853, Rs. 9,463, and Rs. 1,18,630, respectively. Civil works account for the largest disbursements, including as they do expenditure on new buildings and repairs of old buildings, the construction of new roads and the maintenance of old ones, the excavation and repair of tanks and wells, arboriculture, establishment, tools and plant, etc. In the quinquennium ending in 1907-08 the total annual expenditure under this head averaged Rs. 1,13,580. In 1907-08 the District Board had under its charge 78½ miles of metalled roads and 428 miles of unmetalled roads, besides village roads having a total length of 588 miles; the average cost of repairs in that year was Rs. 446, Rs. 45 and Rs. 15 per mile, respectively.

After civil works, education entails the heaviest charge on the Board, including the cost of inspection, maintenance of Middle schools, grants-in-aid especially to Primary schools, and scholar-ships. The expenditure on these objects is, however, met from the sums transferred from Provincial revenues; and since the transfer (in 1906) of the control over Sub-Inspectors of schools from the Board to the Education Department, the charges under the sub-head "Inspection" have been reduced by 60 per cent. In 1907-08 the Board employed 12 inspecting pandits, maintained two Middle schools and aided one High school, 43 Middle schools, 105 Upper Primary schools, 866 Lower Primary schools and 21 other schools, such as *taluk* and *madrasahs*.

The medical work performed by the Board consists of maintaining or aiding dispensaries, deputing doctors to treat patients at markets and fairs, meeting the cost of vaccination, organizing measures to check epidemics of disease, and improving the sanitation of selected villages. In 1907-08 the Board maintained four dispensaries and aided five others, besides deputing a doctor to the *Asst* at Panduā; while it spent, mainly through the Local Boards, Rs. 11,000 on improving the sanitation of villages. A Veterinary Inspector is also employed to treat sick cattle and to inspect affected villages, besides working as an Inspector under the Glanders and Farcy Act, in which capacity he inspects stables



and cattle sheds in the riparian municipalities. There is as yet no veterinary dispensary, but it is proposed to establish one. A contribution has been made during the last two years to the Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition held at Chinsura during the cold weather.

LOCAL
BOARDS.

Under the District Board there are three Local Boards and five Union Committees. Local Boards have been constituted for each of the three subdivisions, viz., Hooghly (Sadar), Serampore, and Arāmbāgh, and consist of 13, 15 and 9 members, respectively. In the Hooghly Local Board five members are nominated and ten are elected; in the Serampore Local Board four are nominated, ten are elected and one is an *ex-officio* member; the Arāmbāgh Local Board has one *ex-officio* and eight nominated members. The Local Boards here, as elsewhere, have only a few unimportant functions to discharge, being in charge of pounds and expending the sums allotted by the District Board for village roads and the improvement of village sanitation.

UNION
COMMIT-
TEES.

The formation of Union Committees was the result of an attempt to provide for the improvement of village sanitation in smaller areas. Committees for Haripāl, Chauditālā and Bālī (Dīwānganj) were constituted on 1st July 1895; while the Panduā and Balāgarh Committees were formed a little later, viz.,

	Area in square miles.	Popula- tion.
Bālīgarh ...	30	12,870
Bālī ...	10	9,473
Chauditālā ...	2	16,171
Haripāl ...	2	9,781
Panduā ...	6	8,477

on 3rd and 8th December 1895, respectively. The marginal table shows the area and population of each of these unions. The income of the committees is derived partly from the receipts for

pounds and partly from small contributions made by the District Board, the maximum not exceeding Rs. 400 a year each.

MUNICI-
PALITIES.

There is a large urban population along the west bank of the river Hooghly, in the narrow strip extending from Bally Khāl to Tribeni. Hooghly contains the largest number of municipalities of all the districts in Bengal except the 24 Parganas. This riparian strip contains no less than 7 municipalities, viz., beginning from the south, Uttarparā, Kotrang, Serampore, Baidyabāti, Bhadroswar, and then, on the north of French Chandernagore, Hooghly-Chinsura and Bānsberia; while there is only one municipality in the interior, viz., at Arāmbāgh. The elective system is in force in all the riparian municipalities, two-thirds of the members being elected; but in Arāmbāgh all the members are nominated. The bulk of the municipal income is derived from rates on holdings, except in Bānsberia, Arāmbāgh and one ward of Bhadroswar, where they are replaced by a tax on

persons. Latrine and conservancy fees are not levied in Bānsberia and in a portion of Kotrang, but in the other municipalities they form the second largest source of income. A fair amount is also obtained in all the municipalities from taxes on animals and vehicles, taxes on professions and trades, pound receipts and fines under the Municipal Act, while ferries yield a considerable sum in the Hooghly, Baidyabāti, Serampore and Uttarparā municipalities. The average incidence of taxation per head of the population in 1907-08 was highest in Uttarparā, viz., Rs. 2-4-1 (the highest in the Division except Howrah) and was lowest in Arāmbāgh, viz., annas 10-1.

The first attempt at municipal administration in Hooghly was made in the beginning of the last century under Regulation XXII of 1816, which contained provisions for conservancy, lighting and other urban requirements. In a Minute dated May 1823, granting the surplus town duties for the improvement of the town, the Governor-General in Council directed that they should be expended in "filling up hollows, stagnant pools and useless ditches, in the construction of *pucca* drains and bridges, the opening up and widening of the public roads, and in other minor improvements." A Local Committee under the control of the District Magistrate was formed, the road near the Collector's outcherry was widened, several roads were metalled with brick, the fine casuarina trees which may still be seen along the roads were planted, several tanks were excavated, scavenging carts were brought and a staff of scavengers employed. Owing to financial stringency, the Government withdrew the grant in 1829 and dissolved the committee, transferring its functions to the Magistrate.

On 5th June 1840 a public meeting of the inhabitants was held at Hooghly, at which a committee was appointed to take into consideration measures for the municipal management of the towns of Chinsura, Hooghly and Chandernagore. The committee, which consisted of nine members (three from each town), requested the Magistrate to make over to them the full control of the conservancy and *sanitation* establishments, but this the Magistrate could not legally do. At length, after a year's correspondence, the committee asked the Magistrate to move the Government to define its duties, powers and responsibilities; and the outcome of this request was the passing of Act X of 1842. This, the first purely municipal law in Bengal, did not, however, get into fair working order till 1846.*

* Toynbee, *Sketch of the Administration of Hooghly*, pp. 123-27.

Hooghly-Chinsura was constituted a regular municipality in 1865, and is now governed by the Bengal Municipal Act III of 1884 (B. C.) as amended. The municipality has an area of about six square miles and is divided into six wards, the rate-payers numbering 7,326 or 25 per cent. of the population. The Municipal Board consists of 18 Commissioners, of whom 12 are elected, 4 are nominated and 2 are *ex-officio* members. The average annual income of the municipality during the quinquennia ending in 1899-1900 and 1904-05 were Rs. 49,197 and Rs. 58,147, respectively; while the average annual expenditure during these periods amounted to Rs. 46,478 and 55,474. In 1907-08 the total income was Rs. 56,071, the incidence of taxation per head of the population being Re. 1-13-5. The chief sources of income are a rate levied at 7½ per cent. on the annual value of holdings, which realized Rs. 29,659, and conservancy fees (Rs. 15,603). In the same year the expenditure amounted to Rs. 56,460, the chief disbursements being on conservancy (51·3 per cent.) and public works (16·9 per cent.). A proposal for the supply of filtered water to the town is under consideration.

Serampore.

Serampore is the most important municipality in the district, having both the largest population and the greatest income. Its local administration can be traced back to 1845-46, when the inhabitants held a meeting and asked for the introduction of Act X of 1842. It was constituted a regular municipality in 1865, and in 1873 was granted the right of electing Commissioners, being the first mofussil municipality to receive that privilege. It has an area of about 3½ square miles and is divided into four wards; there are 7,081 rate-payers forming 15·8 per cent. of the population. The Committee consists of 18 members, of whom twelve are elected and six are nominated. During the quinquennia ending in 1899-1900 and 1904-05, its annual income averaged Rs. 57,541 and Rs. 60,634, respectively, while the annual expenditure averaged Rs. 52,779 and Rs. 57,105, respectively. In 1907-08 the income aggregated Rs. 65,899, the incidence of taxation per head being Re. 1-4-3, while the expenditure was Rs. 76,265. The main sources of income are (1) a rate assessed at 7½ per cent. on the annual value of holdings, which brought in Rs. 31,348, and (2) latrine fees at rates ranging from annas 12 to Rs. 4½ per cent. on the annual value of holdings, which amounted to Rs. 16,070. The municipality is slightly indebted, having borrowed Rs. 30,000 from Government for drainage works in 1891, of which Rs. 9,054 remained unpaid at the end of 1907-08. A proposal for supplying filtered water from the Howrah waterworks, the intake of which

from the Hooghly river lies within this municipality, has been sanctioned, and work is in progress.

Arāmbāgh was constituted a municipality on 1st January 1886 ^{Arāmbāgh.} its old name, Jahānābād, was changed to Arāmbāgh in 1900 in order to avoid confusion with the town of the same name in the Gaya district. It is the most rural of all the municipalities in this district, consisting of a group of 17 villages, spread over 3 square miles. The rate-payers number 1,750 or 21·1 per cent. of the total population. The elective system is not in force, and of the 10 members serving on the Committee, two serve *ex-officio* and eight are nominated, the Subdivisional Officer being the Chairman. The annual income averaged Rs. 6,309 in the five years ending in 1899-1900 and Rs. 6,454 in the subsequent five years. In 1907-08 the total income amounted to Rs. 8,066, the incidence of taxation per head being annas 10-1—the lowest in the district. The main sources of income are a tax on persons assessed at ½ (12 annas) per cent. according to their circumstances and property, which yielded Rs. 3,224, and conservancy fees (Rs. 1,114). The expenditure in the same year amounted to Rs. 7,341.

Uttarpāra, the southernmost and smallest of the municipal ^{Uttarpāra.} towns along the Hooghly, was made a municipality in 1865. It has an area of 1½ square miles and is divided into four wards with 1,250 rate-payers, representing 19·1 per cent. of the population. The Municipal Committee consists of 12 members, viz., four nominated and eight elected. The annual income averaged Rs. 13,675 and Rs. 14,770, respectively, in the quinquennia ending in 1899-1900 and 1904-05. In 1907-08 it was Rs. 16,567, chiefly derived from a rate on houses and lands assessed at the rate of 7½ per cent., and from latrine fees levied at the rate of 4½ per cent. on the probable letting value of holdings. The expenditure in the same year was Rs. 14,282, and the incidence of taxation per head was the highest in the district, viz., Rs. 2-4-1.

Kotrāng, immediately north of Uttarpāra, was constituted a ^{Kotrāng.} municipality in 1869. It covers an area of 2 square miles and is divided into two wards, the rate-payers numbering 1,275 or 21·4 per cent. of the population. Of the nine Municipal Commissioners, three are nominated and six are elected. In the quinquennium ending in 1899-1900, and in the subsequent quinquennium (1900-01 to 1904-05), the average annual income was Rs. 4,276 and Rs. 6,133, respectively. In 1907-08 the receipts were Rs. 7,588, chiefly derived from a tax on holdings levied at the rate of 6½ per cent. on their annual value and from a tax on

professions and trades, the incidence of taxation being Rs. 1-4 per head. Conservancy or latrine fees have been levied in some parts of the municipality since 1908. This municipality has the smallest population and the least income of the municipalities in the district.

Baidyabāti, lying immediately north of Serampore, was constituted a municipality in 1869. It has an area of 5½ square miles and is divided into four wards; the rate-payers number 3,955 and form 23 per cent of the total population. Of the twelve Commissioners, eight are elected and four are nominated. During the quinquennia ending in 1899-1900 and 1904-05, the annual income averaged Rs. 20,462 and Rs. 22,120, respectively. In 1907-08 the income aggregated Rs. 25,083, the incidence of taxation per head being Rs. 1-4-4, while the expenditure was Rs. 25,066. The bulk of the receipts is derived from a tax on houses and lands at the rate of 6 per cent. on their annual value (introduced in the second quarter of 1907-08), a tax on animals and vehicles, and latrine fees at the rate of 6½ per cent. on the annual value of holdings. The amount derived from the tax on animals and vehicles is very considerable owing to the fact that the important *dhāt* of Sheorāphuli is held within municipal limits; this tax yielded Rs. 5,249 in 1907-08. This municipality has a small reserve fund, Rs. 2,500 being invested in the 3½ per cent. loan of 1854-55.

Bhadreswar lies between Baidyabāti (on the south) and French Chandernagore (on the north). It was formed into a municipality in 1869 and has an area of about 3 square miles, divided into four wards. The rate-payers number 2,417 or 15·9 per cent. of the population; this small percentage is due, as in the case of Serampore, to the presence of a large number of mill hands who do not pay rates. The Municipal Committee consists of 12 members, of whom eight are elected and four are nominated. The average annual income in the quinquennia ending in 1899-1900 and 1904-05 was Rs. 11,805 and Rs. 10,556, respectively. In 1907-08 the receipts amounted to Rs. 20,709, the incidence of taxation per head being Rs. 1-2-1. In three wards, Bhadreswar, Gaurhāti and Teliniparā, there is a rate on holdings at 6½ per cent. of their annual value, and in the fourth ward of Mānkunda there is a tax on persons, for which there is no fixed rate, but which is generally 7 per cent. on the annual income of the rate-payer. Latrine fees also have no fixed rate, but are generally assessed at the rate of Rs. 4-11 per cent. on the annual value of domestic holdings and of Rs. 9-6 on the annual rent of cooly huts. In 1907-08 the expenditure aggregated Rs. 21,407, the bulk being

spent on conservancy and public works. Altogether Rs. 30,000 are invested in 3½ per cent. Government paper.

Bānaberī, the most northerly of the municipal towns, was constituted a municipality in 1869. It has an area of 5½ square miles and is divided into four wards, with 1,499 rate-payers or 23·1 per cent. of the population. Of the nine Municipal Commissioners, six are elected and three nominated. The annual income averaged Rs. 6,722 and Rs. 8,082, respectively, during the two quinquennia 1895-96 to 1899-1900 and 1900-01 to 1904-05. In 1907-08 it was Rs. 8,487, the incidence of taxation per head being annas 12-1, while the expenditure was Rs. 9,700. The main sources of income are (1) a tax on persons at 1½ per cent. on their annual income, and (2) receipts from burning *ghāṭe*. The income under the latter head is considerable owing to the sanctity which attaches to cremation on the bank of the Bhāgirathi at Tribeni.