

CHAPTER XII

LOCAL
SELF-GOVERNMENTDISTRICT
BOARD

Outside the Municipality of Dinajpur local affairs are managed by the District Board and the Local Boards of Thakurgaon and Balurghat subordinate to it. The District Board consists of 22 members, of whom the District Magistrate is *ex officio* Chairman while the Civil Surgeon, the Road Cess Deputy Collector, and the Sadar Deputy Inspector of Schools are *ex officio* members, eight are elected by the Local Boards of Thakurgaon and Balurghat, and ten are nominated. In 1909-10 the number of Muhammadans on the Board was eight. It might be urged that as Muhammadans constitute 48.84 per cent of the total population their representation on the Board is hardly adequate, but owing to the backward state of education amongst them and to their disinclination for public affairs, it is difficult to get men suitable for membership. It should also be borne in mind that nearly all the large landowners are Hindus.

INCOME

During the decade ending 1901-02 the average annual income of the Board was Rs. 1,71,500 of which Rs. 83,000 was derived from the road cess. In 1904-05 the income, excluding the opening balance, was Rs. 1,64,500

out of which the road cess accounted for Rs. 79,000 and Government contributions for Rs. 18,000. In 1909-10 the income from all sources, excluding the opening balance of Rs. 36,000, amounted to Rs. 2,28,500. Of this Rs. 1,05,000 was realised from road cess, Rs. 26,000 from rent of pounds and sale proceeds of impounded cattle, Rs. 4,500 from rent of ferries, while provincial revenues contributed Rs. 35,000. It will be seen that the income from road cess has risen materially of recent years, as a result of a general revaluation of the district completed in 1906. Ferries are not a very important asset, as competition for them is not great, which is due in great measure to the fact that for some seven months of the year nearly all the rivers are fordable. There are 144 pounds from which a steady income is derived. Of the total income from this source the sale proceeds of unclaimed cattle realise some Rs. 10,000.

The average annual expenditure during the ten years ending in 1901-02 was Rs. 1,67,000, of which Rs. 89,000 was spent on civil works, Rs. 29,000 on education, and only Rs. 2,500 on medical. The expenditure in 1904-05 was Rs. 1,91,000 out of which civil works accounted for Rs. 1,17,000, education Rs. 38,000, and medical Rs. 4,000. In 1909-10 the expenditure totalled Rs. 2,59,000 of which Rs. 1,33,000 was spent on communications, Rs. 32,500 on education, and Rs. 12,000 on medical. The more liberal expenditure under this latter head is due to the fact that the local officials and gentry have become alive to the unhealthiness of the district, with the result several new dispensaries have recently been opened and other measures for combating disease have been adopted. There is, however, still room for improvement. The latter half of 1908-09 and the early part of the following year was a time of scarcity caused by failure of the autumn and winter crops for want of rain, and Rs. 46,000 and Rs. 32,000 respectively were spent on famine relief operations in these years. The heaviest expenditure incurred by the District Board is on communications. It maintains five miles of metalled roads and 988 miles of unmetalled roads, besides 346 miles of village tracks. The cost of maintaining these in 1909-10 was Rs. 660, Rs. 45, and Rs. 12 per mile respectively. The number of maintained and aided schools is 770 with 23,493 pupils. Of these 742 are Primary Schools, 10 are Middle Vernacular Schools, 16 Middle English Schools, and 2 are

EXPENDI-
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High English Schools. Of the ordinary income of the Board 7.02 per cent. is spent on medical relief and sanitation. It maintains five dispensaries, while seven dispensaries receive substantial grants-in-aid. It also employs two supernumerary hospital assistants, whose duty it is to visit localities affected by cholera or small-pox, and, besides treating the sufferers, to check the spread of the disease by the adoption of sanitary measures. The Board maintains a veterinary dispensary in the town of Dinajpur, and employs an itinerant Veterinary Assistant to inoculate cattle in the interior against rinderpest and treat any other diseases of cattle which may be brought to his notice.

**LOCAL
BOARDS**

The Local Boards of Thakurgaon and Balurghat have 11 and 9 members respectively, of whom 10 are Muhammadans and the rest Hindus. The Deputy Collectors in charge of the Sub-divisions are usually Chairmen. The powers delegated to these Boards are small. Every year a sum of about Rs. 1,000 is set apart by the District Board for each of them, and this constitutes their income for the year. They are expected to arrange for the repair of certain village roads through the agency of the villagers themselves and have no staff. The administration of pounds, ferries, primary education and village sanitation is also entrusted to them, but in point of fact the supervision exercised by them in such matters is slight. The office work involved by their proceedings is done in each case by a clerk of the Sub-divisional Office who gets a small addition to his pay for doing it. Bills for expenditure incurred by them have to be passed by the Chairman of the District Board. Eight of the District Board members are elected by these Boards, *viz.*, five by that of Thakurgaon, and three by that of Balurghat.

**MUNICI-
PALITY**

There is only one Municipality in the district, namely that of Dinajpur, established in 1869. It is administered by a Municipal Board composed of 15 commissioners, of whom five are nominated and the rest elected. The area within municipal limits is some four square miles, and the number of rate-payers is 3,119, representing 21.8 per cent. of the population, a very high proportion. The Pulhat quarter, in the extreme south of the town, has recently been included in the Municipality.

INCOME

The average annual income of the Municipality in the decade ending 1901-02 was Rs. 35,000 and the expenditure Rs. 31,000. Since 1901-02 the income has been stead-

ily increasing, partly as a result of the extension of municipal limits and partly of more careful assessment and a more rigorous enforcement of the Municipal Act. A revision of assessment was effected in 1901-02 and had the effect of materially increasing the income in the following year. In 1903-04 this had risen to Rs. 45,000, the expenditure being Rs. 43,000. In 1908-09 a further revision of assessment was carried out, and in 1909-10 the Hackney Carriage Act was introduced, and license fees were charged on carriages plying for hire from the 1st October in that year. In 1909-10 we find the income of the Municipality totalling Rs. 72,810 from all sources. Of this Rs. 38,030 was derived from municipal rates and taxes, of which the most important were a tax on animals and vehicles Rs. 6,719, conservancy (including a charge for scavenging and a latrine tax) Rs. 9,719, and a tax on persons according to circumstances and property (the most important source of revenue) Rs. 14,490. Tolls on roads and ferries are not an important source of income and realised only Rs. 2,785 in 1909-10, and this as the result of especially keen competition. Dinajpur is one of the most heavily taxed municipalities in the province, the incidence of taxation being Rs. 2-10-5 per head of population.

**EXPENDI-
TURE**

The expenditure in 1909-10 was Rs. 56,019, in addition to Rs. 16,529 allocated for advances and deposits. The last instalment of a Rs. 10,000 loan from Government was paid off in 1908-09, and the Municipality is not in debt at present. The heaviest expenditure, Rs. 16,125, was incurred on conservancy, including road sweeping, latrine clearing, drain flushing, etc. Hospitals and dispensaries, represented by the male and female hospitals in the town, constituted the next heaviest charge, namely, Rs. 14,126. The charge under this head was an exceptionally heavy one as the share of the cost of these institutions contributed by the Municipality in an ordinary year averages about Rs. 4,000, Rs. 7,114 was spent on repairs to roads and Rs. 3,555 and Rs. 3,456 on education and lighting respectively.

Dinajpur like many other municipalities in the province, is in urgent need of a better system of drainage and better lighting. As regards the first, it is seldom that more than Rs. 1,000 can be spared in a year for construction or repair of drains, and to any one who knows the town it is obvious that this is quite inadequate. A scheme for making

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

a portion, at all events, of the Kachai Nala, which receives most of the sewage of the town, *pukka*, has been on the tapis for years, but this would mean borrowing from Government, and, as a larger scheme for improving the beds of both the Kachai and Ghagra streams is under the consideration of Government, nothing has been attempted so far. In 1908-09 the greater portion of the Gudri Bazar, a daily market in the heart of the town, the property of the Maharaja, was burnt down. As it was merely a collection of shabby huts with very little system or arrangement about it, the loss was not serious. Early in 1909 the Sanitary Commissioner prepared a plan for reconstructing this market on improved lines with corrugated iron roofed sheds, *pukka* plinths, and a better system of drainage, but the plan was not accepted on the score of expense. In 1909-10, however, a shed with a corrugated iron roof, on the plan approved by the Sanitary Commissioner, was constructed for the use of the fish and vegetable dealers. A more detailed account of the town will be found in the article on Dinajpur in Chapter XIV.