

CHAPTER XII

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

DISTRICT BOARD

THE premier institution of Local Self-Government in the district is the District Board, which was constituted under Act III (B. C.) of 1885. Under the same Act five Local Boards were simultaneously constituted, viz., one in each of the five subdivisions of the district. Elections for the Local Boards were held, for the first time, in 1886, and the 31 elected members fell under the following classes: zamindars, 16; pleaders, 9; traders, 3; and other occupations, 3. On an average for the whole district, the attendance of the electors was fair, the percentage of those who recorded their votes varying from 20 in the Kotwali Thana to 83 in the Gangni Thana. As soon as each Local Board was completed by the appointment of the nominated members, it met to elect two members to represent it on the District Board; the ten members thus elected were supplemented by ten nominated by Government, and the District Board, thus constituted, took the place of the late District Road Committee on 1st October 1886. The constitution of the District Board has remained unaltered since. At the general election which was held in the year 1905-06, the attendance of the electors left a good deal to be desired, and elicited from Government the remark that "it is still the case that, except in the neighbourhood of Calcutta, little or no interest is taken in the elections." At the last general election, held in 1908-09, the attendance of the electors was small, and little interest was taken in the proceedings.

During the year 1895-96 four Union Committees were constituted, namely Muragachha and Kissengunge in the

Sadar Subdivision; Poradah in the Kushtia Subdivision; and Chuadanga in the subdivision of the same name. These same four committees are still working, and their number has not been added to. The committees have been entrusted with the control of pounds, village roads, sanitation and water-supply; in regard to Primary Schools their authority is restricted to inspection, and no power of control has been given to them.

The District Board consists of 20 members, exclusive of the District Magistrate who is *ex-officio* Chairman. As already stated, ten of the members are elected by the five Local Boards, and of the remainder five are *ex-officio* members* and five nominated. Nadia is a poor district for its size, and the sources of income of the District Board are more inadequate than in the other districts of the Presidency Division. Its average annual income, including provincial grants, for the seven years ending with 1904-05 was Rs. 1,55,350, and the average annual expenditure for the same period on major heads was Rs. 1,04,910 made up as follows: civil works, including public works establishment, Rs. 63,512; sanitation and water-supply, Rs. 2,400; medical relief, Rs. 2,966; and education, Rs. 36,032. In 1907-08 the total income, excluding opening balance, was Rs. 1,96,149; the principal receipts were Rs. 88,680 from rates, Rs. 47,567 from civil works (including Rs. 40,010 from contributions and Rs. 6,042 from tolls on ferries and roads), Rs. 34,423 from pounds (which are more profitable in Nadia than in any other district in the Division), and Rs. 21,192 contributed by Government. The incidence of taxation per head of the population was ten pies. The total expenditure in the same year was Rs. 2,31,324, of which Rs. 1,51,820 was spent on civil works; Rs. 47,543 on education; Rs. 8,516 on medical relief; and Rs. 8,477 on famine relief.

The Board maintains 107 miles of metalled, and 716 miles of unmetalled roads, in addition to a large number of village roads with an aggregate length of about 526 miles. The cost of maintaining these roads in 1907-08

averaged Rs. 313, Rs. 29 and Rs. 17 per mile, respectively. The following extract is taken from the quinquennial administration report of the Presidency Division for the period ending with 1904-05:—"The District Board of Nadia expended Rs. 57,857 on the improvement of roads and construction of bridges, of which the metalling of the Krishnagar-Plassey road, the improvement of the Bhairamara-Taragonia road, the bridging of the Hansdanga and Bhauga *khals* on the former road, and of the Arangsdrisa *khal* on the Krishnagar-Meherpur road, were the most important. For all those special grants were given from provincial revenues. The Board could not spend much on new works, and in all such enterprises they had to be materially assisted by Government, as the district is large, while its cess income is limited, and it contains a number of district and feeder roads originally constructed from provincial funds before District Boards came into existence." In 1871, according to Hunter's Statistical Account of the district, there were in it 284 miles of roads (number of miles metalled unspecified), regularly kept up, besides minor tracks and routes from village to village, and 44 roads maintained by the land-holders and peasantry. The annual cost of maintenance of these was about Rs. 45,000; whereas Rs. 1,13,000 was spent on roads in 1907-08.

The Board leased out 250 pounds, from which it derived the substantial income of Rs. 34,423 in the year 1907-08. Its expenditure on education during the same year was Rs. 47,543, the greater part of this sum, *i.e.*, Rs. 37,090, falling under the head of grants-in-aid to primary schools, and Rs. 2,114 only going towards secondary education. It maintained three Middle schools, and 45 Aided: it also aided 97 Upper Primary, and 643 Lower Primary schools. Its expenditure on hospitals and dispensaries was Rs. 6,255 (for which sum it maintained two and aided nine dispensaries), and on sanitation Rs. 864.

LOCAL BOARDS

The five Local Boards at Krishnagar, Ranaghat, Chuadanga, Meherpur and Kushtia exercise jurisdiction over the

subdivisional charges of corresponding names. They were among the first Local Boards to be established in the Province. The Krishnagar Local Board has 12 members, of whom 2 are elected and 10 nominated. The Ranaghat Local Board has nine members, of whom 6 are elected and 3 nominated. The Chuadanga Local Board is similarly constituted. The Meherpur Local Board has nine members, of whom 6 are elected, 2 nominated and one is *ex-officio*. The Kushtia Local Board has nine members of whom 4 are elected and 5 nominated. The functions of these bodies are unimportant, consisting mainly of the administration of village roads, the control of pounds and ferries, and the distribution of grants-in-aid to Primary schools.

UNION COMMITTEES

There are four Union Committees, as noted above. They each have jurisdiction over 10 square miles, with an aggregate population of 42,890, ranging from 13,197 in the Muragachha Union to 8,545 in the Poradah Union. Muragachha has nine members, and the other three seven members each. Each Committee received a grant of Rs. 300 from the District Board in 1907-08, and each expended its full income. The duties at present entrusted to these Committees consist of attention to village sanitation, and the up-keep of village roads and drains within their respective jurisdictions.

MUNICIPALITIES

There are nine Municipalities within the district, viz., Krishnagar, Santipur, Ranaghat, Nabadwip, Kushtia, Kumarkhali, Meherpur, Birnagar and Chakdaha. In 1907-08 the total number of rate-payers was 26,340. The percentage of rate-payers to total population within municipal limits varied from 23·1 in Meherpur to 36·1 in Nabadwip, the corresponding percentage for the whole of the Presidency Division being 19·8. The average incidence of taxation per head of population was Re. 1-4-7, ranging

from 8 annas 3 pies in Meherpur to Re. 1-10-2, in Krishnagar; the Divisional average for the same year was Re. 1-8-9.

KRISHNAGAR

The Krishnagar Municipality was established in the year 1864, and its affairs are administered by a committee consisting of 21 members, of whom 14 are elected, 3 nominated and 4 *ex-officio*. The area within municipal limits is about 7 square miles, and there are 6,226 rate-payers, their percentage on the total population being 25·3. The average annual income for the five years ending with 1905-06 was Rs. 48,129 and the expenditure Rs. 45,107. In 1907-08 the total income, exclusive of the opening balance, was Rs. 48,317, and the incidence of taxation was Re. 1-10-2 per head of the population. The main source of income was a tax on holdings, which was levied at the rate of 7½ per cent. on the annual valuation, and yielded the sum of Rs. 23,389. Part IX of the Act is in force, and latrine fees are levied in accordance with a sliding scale on the annual valuation of the holdings; the tax collected under this head amounted to Rs. 11,836. The only other item of any importance on the receipt side was the rent of pounds, which yielded Rs. 869. The total expenditure during the same year amounted to Rs. 48,479. The largest item in this was Rs. 17,748 (equal to 36·6 per cent. of the total expenditure) for conservancy. Public works accounted for Rs. 11,728 (24·1 per cent.); medical relief, for Rs. 8,480 (17·4 per cent.); education, for Rs. 950 (1·9 per cent.); while Rs. 923, or 1·9 per cent. of the total expenditure, was devoted to water-supply.

SANTIPUR

The Santipur Municipality was established in 1865 with Commissioners of whom 16 were elected and the remainder nominated. The Subdivisional Officer of Ranaghat was the *ex-officio* Chairman.

This constitution continued till the year 1903, when the Commissioners were superseded by Government for contumaciously refusing to introduce Part IX of the Act, and give proper attention to the conservancy of the town. The municipality was, however, re-established in September 1904, with nine Commissioners appointed by Government, and the same *ex-officio* Chairman as before. The elective system has not, however, been restored up to date (1909).

The area within municipal limits is about 7 square miles, and the number of rate-payers is 7,824 or 29·1 per cent. of the population.

The average annual income for the five years ending in 1904-05 was Rs. 30,386, and the average expenditure Rs. 29,725. In 1907-08 the total income, exclusive of the opening balance, was Rs. 43,646, and the incidence of taxation was Re. 1-5-2 per head of the population. The tax on holdings is in force; it is levied at the rate of 7 per cent. on the annual valuation of the holdings, and in the year mentioned it yielded Rs. 19,775. The latrine tax, which was introduced during the year in which the Commissioners remained superseded, is levied at the rate of 7 per cent. on the annual valuation of the holdings, and it yielded an income of Rs. 11,871. Pounds produced Rs. 704. No other item on the receipt side calls for notice. The total expenditure in this same year was Rs. 49,822, the largest item on this side being Rs. 18,588 (37·3 per cent. of the total expenditure) for conservancy. Rs. 8,078 (16·2 per cent) was expended on education; Rs. 5,732 (11·5 per cent) on public works; Rs. 2,933 (5·8 per cent.) on medical relief, and Rs. 647 (1·2 per cent) on water-supply.

RANAGHAT

The Ranaghat Municipality was established in the year 1864 with 14 Commissioners, of whom 5 were appointed *ex-officio*, and the remaining 9 nominated by Government. When Act III (B.C.) of 1884 came into force, the number of the Commissioners was raised to 18, of whom 12 were

elected and 6 nominated; there has been no change in the constitution since then. The area within municipal limits is about 2½ square miles, and the number of rate-payers is 7,824, or 29·1 per cent. of the total population. The average annual income for the five years ending with 1904-05 was Rs. 11,810, and the average expenditure Rs. 11,775. In 1907-08 the total income, excluding the opening balance, was Rs. 14,128, and the incidence of taxation was Re. 1-6-5 per head of the population. The tax on holdings is in force, and it was levied at the rate of 6¼ per cent. of the annual valuation. The latrine tax is also in force and is levied at the rate of 5½ per cent. on the annual valuation of the holdings. The income from the former of these two sources was Rs. 6,252, and from the latter Rs. 4,283. There is no other item on the receipt side which calls for notice. The total expenditure in this same year was Rs. 15,004. Rupees 6,217 or 41·4 per cent. of the total expenditure, was devoted to conservancy; the next most important item was public works, on which Rs. 2,558 (17·04 per cent.) was expended. On medical relief Rs. 2,576 (17·1 per cent.) was expended, on education Rs. 386 (2·4 per cent.), and on water-supply Rs. 303 (2·01 per cent.)

NABADWIP

The Nabadwip Municipality was constituted in the year 1869. There were originally 12 Commissioners, of whom 8 were elected and the remainder nominated. But in January 1904 the Commissioners suffered the same fate as those of Santipur, and for the same reason. They were superseded until March 1905 when the Municipality was re-established with 9 Commissioners appointed by Government. In September 1907 the elective system was restored, and the town has now (1909) 12 Commissioners, of whom 8 are elected and the remainder nominated. The area within municipal limits is about 3½ square miles, and the number of rate-payers is 3,931, or 36·1 per cent. of the total population. The average annual income for the five years ending with 1905-06 was Rs. 12,777, and the average

expenditure Rs. 11,535. In 1907-08 the total income, excluding the opening balance, was Rs. 14,801, and the incidence of taxation was Re. 1-2-4 per head of the population. The tax on holding is in force, and it is levied at the rate of $6\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. on the annual valuation of the holding; it produced an income of Rs. 6,227. The latrine tax is also in force, and it is levied at the same rate as the tax on the holdings; it produced an income of Rs. 5,577. The income derived from fees paid under the Puri Lodging House Act, which is in force in this town, is not included in the above figures; the sum realized under this head amounts to about Rs. 3,000 per annum. The total expenditure during the year 1907-08 was Rs. 15,214. The principal items of expenditure were as follows:—Rs. 6,955 (45.7 per cent. of the total expenditure) on conservancy; Rs. 2,737 (17.9 per cent.), on public works; Rs. 1,886 (12.3 per cent.) on medical relief, and Rs. 498 (3.2 per cent.) on education. The expenditure on water-supply was only Rs. 23, or 1 per cent. of the total expenditure.

KUSHTIA

The Kushtia Municipality was established in the year 1869, with 12 Commissioners, 8 of whom were elected and the rest nominated. There has been no change in the constitution since then. The area within municipal limits is about 3 square miles, and the number of rate-payers is 1,290, or 24.2 per cent. of the population of the town. The average annual income for the five years ending with 1904-05 was Rs. 9,258, and the average expenditure was Rs. 8,534. In 1907-08 the total income, exclusive of the opening balance, was Rs. 9,236, and the incidence of taxation Re. 1-6-1 per head of the population. Both of the main systems of taxation are in force, viz., that on holdings, which is levied at $6\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. of their annual valuation, and that on persons, for which there is no fixed rate. The former produced Rs. 1,600 and the latter Rs. 1,556. The latrine tax is also in force, and the income from it was Rs. 2,343; it is levied at the rate of 5 per cent. on the annual valuation of the holdings. In the

year under reference the total expenditure amounted to Rs. 10,785, out of which the chief item was conservancy, which accounted for Rs. 3,200, or 29.6 per cent. of the total expenditure. Other important items were public works Rs. 3,084 (28.6 per cent.) and medical relief Rs. 1,116 (10.3 per cent.). The expenditure on water-supply was Rs. 634 (5.8 per cent.) and on education Rs. 297 (2.7 per cent.).

KUMARKHALI

The Kumarkhali Municipality was established in the year 1869 with 6 Commissioners, all appointed by Government; the number of Commissioners was raised to 9 in 1875; in 1884 the privilege of the elective system was conferred upon the town, 15 Commissioners being allotted for it, of whom 10 were elected and the remainder nominated. There has been no change in the constitution since then. The area within municipal limits is about $2\frac{1}{2}$ square miles, and the number of rate-payers is 1,176, or 25.5 per cent. of the population of the town. The average annual income for the five years ending with 1904-05 was Rs. 5,876, and the average annual expenditure Rs. 5,702. In 1907-08 the total income, exclusive of the opening balance, was Rs. 6,092, and the incidence of taxation Re. 1-2-9 per head of the population. The main source of income is the tax on persons which is levied at no fixed rate; this tax produced Rs. 2,789. The latrine tax is also in force, and is levied at the rate of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the annual valuation of the holdings; the income from this source was Rs. 2,094. The total expenditure during the same year was Rs. 6,342. Conservancy accounted for the expenditure of Rs. 2,248, which represents 35.4 per cent. of the total expenditure. The other main items on this side of the account were:—public works, Rs. 1,476 (23.2 per cent.); medical relief, Rs. 530 (8.3 per cent.); and water-supply Rs. 170 (2.6 per cent.). The expenditure on education was only Rs. 120, or 1.8 per cent. of the total expenditure.

MEHERPUR

The Meherpur Municipality was established in the year 1869 with 9 Commissioners, of whom 6 were elected and the rest nominated. There has been no change in its constitution since then. The area within municipal limits is about $7\frac{1}{4}$ square miles and the number of rate-payers is 1,334 or 23.1 per cent. of the total population. The average annual income for the five years ending with 1904-05 was Rs. 3,841, and the average expenditure Rs. 3,440. In the year 1907-08 the total income, exclusive of the opening balance, was Rs. 4,324, and the incidence of taxation was 8 annas 3 pies per head of the population. The main source of income was the tax on persons (not levied at any fixed rate), which produced Rs. 2,370. Part IX of the Municipal Act is not in force. The income from pounds was Rs. 441, which represents the large proportion of over ten per cent. of the total income. The total expenditure during the same year was Rs. 3,958, of which Rs. 1,156, or 29.2 per cent. of the total expenditure, went on medical relief. Rs. 528 (13.3 per cent.) was spent on water-works; Rs. 915 (23.1 per cent.) on public works; Rs. 284 (7.1 per cent.) on conservancy; and Rs. 181 (4.5 per cent.) on education.

BIRNAGAR

The Birnagar Municipality was established in the year 1869 with 12 Commissioners, of whom 8 were elected, and the remainder nominated; there has been no change in the constitution since then. The area within municipal limits is about 2 square miles, and the number of rate-payers is 790, or 25.2 per cent. of the the total population. The average annual income for the five years ending with 1904-05 was Rs. 3,993, and the average expenditure Rs. 2,875. In the year 1907-08 the total income, exclusive of the opening balance, was Rs. 3,535, and the incidence of taxation was 15 annas 3 pie per head of the population. The main source of income was the tax upon persons, which is levied at no fixed rate; this produced Rs. 2,768.

Part IX of the Municipal Act is not in force, and latrine tax is consequently not levied. The total expenditure during the same year was Rs. 4,287, of which Rs. 1,504 (35 per cent. of the total expenditure) was devoted to public works; Rs. 844 (19.6 per cent.) to medical relief; Rs. 590 (13.7 per cent.) to water-supply; Rs. 350 (8.1 per cent.) to conservancy; and Rs. 114 (2.6 per cent.) to education.

CHAKDAHA

The Chakdaha Municipality was established in the year 1886, with 12 nominated Commissioners; there has been no change in the constitution since then. The area within municipal limits is about 5 square miles, and the number of rate-payers is 1,340, or 24.4 per cent. of the total population. The average annual income for the five years ending with 1904-05 was Rs. 3,739, and the average expenditure Rs. 3,605. In 1907-08 the total income, exclusive of the opening balance, was Rs. 4,293, and the incidence of taxation was 11 annas 1 pie per head of the population. The main source of income was the tax upon persons, which is not levied at any fixed rate; this produced Rs. 2,592. The latrine tax is not in force. A comparatively large income, Rs. 1,056, accrued from the tax on animals and vehicles. The total expenditure was Rs. 5,148. Rs. 1,093, or 21.2 per cent. of the total expenditure, was devoted to medical relief; Rs. 1,368 (26.5 per cent.) to public works; Rs. 854 (16.5 per cent.) to water supply; Rs. 274 (5.3 per cent.) to conservancy; and Rs. 174 (3.3 per cent.) to education.