

26 July 1966.

71 years of age Sir Richard resides in his old family domain in Aluwihare village, Matale. He had already begun writing his memoirs and was obviously keen in talking about his old Service days. A long interview of two and a half hours did not seem to bother or to tire him appreciably and he was quite responsive even during another half hour after a break for lunch. Thus, quite uninhibited and candid in his views with some exceptions: when it came to names of individuals who he was criticising on one point or another; and when it came to names of Ceylonese land speculating politicians. On three occasions - with reference to Edmund Rodrigo of the C.C.S., D.S. Senanayake and S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike - he requested that the recorder be switched off and then proceeded to give very frank opinions on the questions at issue. His memory, on the whole, seemed quite fresh. While referring to occasions when someone complimented him and talking about some of his achievements, he did not strike me as being highly egotistical.

I would say that he was an able officer in his day, fairly independent, articulate and assured. At the present his views struck me as balanced. He was critical of the British but gave them their due and did not indulge in sweeping generalisations. From the outset he distinguished individual British Civil Servants as being 'pro-native' or 'liberal'; or, on the opposite side, of being 'imperialist'. His comments on the subject of arrogance, aloofness, and Ceylonisation were quite interesting. Indeed, the pictures he gave of many of the European officers were of considerable value, particularly those on Stockdale, Stace, Woods, Codrington and Maybin. I do ^{not} say that his assessments of their abilities were correct - was Sandys 'able'? - but his pictures of their leaning on the racial and constitutional issue were probably on the mark. In this connection, his experience as D.J., Nuwara Eliya (1931-34) were interesting in that it was rather unusual to have non-European officers in that preserve of preserves.

A good deal of the interview was devoted to agrarian matters. This was largely because he was under the Director of Agriculture for a while (1922-23) and was also an A.S.O. (1929-31). What is more, he was the son of a Ratemathmaya in a Kandyan district and though schooled in Trinity, was bound to have some acquaintance with rural affairs. Indeed, an unusual feature of his interview was that he supplied threads of information which went back to the early twentieth and late nineteenth centuries from the stories he had picked up from his father and grandfather. Needless to say, the historicity of such points are open to question; but neither can

they be neglected.

This background left a distinct influence on his approach to the question of the plantations and their impact on the peasantry. His views remain the traditional Kandyan viewpoint as it stands today and has stood for decades: the plantations and the effect of the Waste Lands Ordinances deprived the Kandyans of their land besides restricting the villages from expansion. But he also admits that improvident sales by villagers contributed a great deal to this process. As part of this interpretation, he even goes so far as to believe that in the 1900's - 1920's (i.e. till the Ceylonese gained some constitutional power) the Land Settlement Department was not very liberal and was a weapon under which the villager lost land. The diaries and comments of Settlement Officers of this period certainly do not support this. On the other hand he is the repository of a tradition and an experience that has been handed down from father to son. These may well be embellished and exaggerated in the course of their lengthy travels but they would surely retain a nucleus of truth.

My questions on his Land Settlement work and on the Land Development Ordinance of 1935 suffered from some disjointedness. This was in part due to mental fatigue and in part from a desire to avoid covering ground that I had furrowed in my interviews with Leach, Sandys, Hudson (all A.S.O's) - i.e. I did not wish to draw out certain facts and descriptions I already knew about from other interviews and recent reading (e.g. See Appendix to Final Report of the Land Commission of 1929).

With regard to agrarian matters in general Sir Richard's revenue administrative service in Kegalla, Anuradhapura and Kandy were also of value in the experience it gave him. His stint in the Customs brought some information on a strike which Goonesinha led in 1927.

In political sympathy he was clearly on the U.N.P. side; indeed he was one of D.S.'s camp and did not stint himself in his admiration of the man. Non-communalistic minded. But very much in favour of the Ceylonese line on the question of giving civil status to the Indian immigrants.

The fact that he was in the Trinity Cadet Corps which took a hand in suppressing the riots in Kandy in 1915 is of some historical interest. I think I should have asked more questions on Alex Fraser. It is obvious, however, that he is one of Fraser's admirers for there are two pictures of Fraser in his study. Born a Buddhist, he was converted to Christianity in Fraser's time in Trinity but in more recent times seems to have reverted to Buddhism. It is of some import that he pointed to two statuettes of Buddha and of Christ and remarked: 'These are the two men I most admire'.

M.W. Roberts
26/7/66

INTERVIEW WITH SIR RICHARD ALUWIHARE

26 JUNE 1966

- I. For instance, when you were attached to Jaffna Kachcheri, were you given any sort of training?
- A. Very much so. The Government Agent was Constantine. And the Office Assistant was M. Prasad. And they had more or less [a] scheme for training the Cadet, in preparing him for his service, for his work in the Service.
- I. Yes, but this training was largely law and office routine, wasn't it?
- A. Office routine and the examination in law and languages.
- I. Were - did they ever discuss larger problems with you? Questions of cultivation, land tenure and things like that?
- A. That you had to pick up from your general orders, which had, you know, chapters devoted to the various subjects which came within the province of your duties.
- I. Oh, I see. I mean, over dinner or at the club you didn't discuss some of these things?
- A. We very often went on circuit with the G.A. And that particular circuit gave us the opportunity of seeing him work, and dealing with land problems. Repetition with various other subjects which were to come our way when we got the substantive appointments in the Civil Service.
- I. Yes, I see. This is useful and - but I notice that earlier on, some of the early Ceylonese, like the Coomaraswamys, had not been taken on circuit by the G.A. There seems to have been a change?
- A. Change later on. I went along with the G.A. on several circuits. There was, of course, in those days - that's 1921 - one car given to the G.A. and he used to lend it to various other Civil Servants who had to go out on circuit. Now, I was given that car once to do gun and cart licenses. I spent about two weeks out in the field. And incidentally I had plenty of time for studying my law and accounts for the two exams.
- I. Would you have liked some sort of theoretical training in law and philosophy and other things and political science as they had at Oxbridge later on? There is a debate on
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this thing.

- A. There is a debate. It might have been useful. But on the whole I saw more of the practical part of work, both in the kachcheri as well as when I went on circuit.
- I. What about the technical part - if I may say so, you were probably more a townsman and you were an Arts - you were educated on Arts lines, were you?
- A. Arts.
- I. I was thinking about sort of elementary irrigation work and some other land - agricultural knowledge.
- A. Now, its a curious thing. My first substantive appointment in the Civil Service was Office Assistant to the Director of Agriculture. Now I knew nothing of agriculture.
- I. That's right.
- A. I just went there in order to assist him with the administration of this particular office. And in the process I was able to pick up the actual technical side of agriculture from the reports and from the conversations I had with the experts there.
- I. How did you find Stockdale?
- A. Very, very able and a very charming person. I learnt a tremendous lot from him. The actual office work and his capacity for dealing with a particular problem, particularly agriculture.
- I. How did he get on with the politicians later on?
- A. I think very well, very well. Very well.
- I. How about Constantine and Prasad, how did you find them as ...?
- A. They were very charming. Particularly Prasad, whom I met in India when I was High Commissioner there. He is now retired. Two of his sons are now in the Indian Civil Service. They were in Trinity then. And he was very charming, very acceptable. And Constantine too.
- I. He was approachable - approachable?
- A. Approachable? ... yes. But a very hard task-master. I mean, he very often came in and looked at your tray to find out what work you were doing. And very often said, 'Well, will you draft a letter to the Colonial Secretary on this subject'. And you had to send the draft to him and he would deal with it.
- I. How much responsibility were you given? Were they willing to give you a fair latitude?
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- A. You see, latitude up to this point: as a Cadet you were really just a recruit in the army till you picked up your work. And till you passed your first examination. Then you would get a substantive appointment. Where you had to assume responsibility, as an Office Assistant, as a magistrate. There you were on your own.
- I. What were Constantine's particular interests? Because I notice that G.A's usually have their particular hobbies in administration. Was he interested in a particular line of activity?
- A. Not - I can't say - the only thing he was a very good bridge player and a very good tennis player. Ha - ha. And he was very fond of his tennis and bridge in the evenings at the club. And I used to often give him a lift in my horse-and-trap. And he used to drop in at the office at about four o'clock when we were hurrying out and say, 'How about a game of bridge this evening? Are you coming for tennis? And will you give me a lift?'
- I. Yes, I see. Jumping to this other post you had as Office Assistant, what was the policy towards cooperative societies at that time?
- A. Well, I was Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies too. They were - it was in its infancy. They were just developing the idea of cooperation. And it hadn't really got under way till it came under men like Campbell, Maybin and others.
- I. What sort of men were Campbell and Maybin?
- A. Very able, very able Civil Servants who did really a very good job of work. Particularly Campbell. And Maybin, who later on went as Governor, I think, or Colonial Secretary to (?) (?). Very pro-Ceylonese. Very pro-Ceylonese.
- I. Very?
- A. Pro-Ceylonese.
- I. Oh, that is very interesting. You said it was in its infancy. So there were very few societies then?
- A. Very few societies. You see, the idea had to be put across to them and you had to explain it to them, what cooperation meant. And the start was very, very slow.
- I. At the same time you didn't want to impose it on them?
- A. Not impose it. No, we tried to prevent the headmen and others having their fingers in it. The moment they came in,
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- it became an official machine, organisation.
- I. What ...?
- A. We wanted it to be private.
- I. What about private big-bugs? You didn't want big-bugs?
- A. Well, we wanted the leaders in the village to take an interest in the work because they had, well, money. And they had the, you know, business.
- I. What do you mean by the leaders in the village? The - say, the ...
- A. Well, the - oh, you know, the man of property, the man who owned a business. Various things like that. Who wanted credit for various things. They had to come in.
- I. It had been started before the war really, hadn't it?
- A. It had been started before the war, that's right.
- I. But I should think that it really developed from the late 20's to the ...
- A. That's right. You remember a man by the name of Calvert, an Indian Civil Servant, came here. One of the best experts on 'Cooperation' and he did a lot of pioneer work.
- I. And was ...
- A. With Campbell and these people then I think later on. And he would be - he got the machine working.
- I. And the subsequent development was on the lines he suggested?
- A. That's right. That's right. Because India had been in considerable advance in cooperation at that time. Particularly in the Punjab, I believe.
- I. Was Campbell as pro-Ceylonese as Maybin?
- A. they were not - I don't - can't - I shouldn't like to say that. I did not know Campbell very well. I knew Maybin. And the subordinates who worked under Campbell gave a high opinion of him.
- I. I know he took a great interest in training his Cadets.
- A. Staff.
- I. Yes.
- A. His staff. And he knew his Sinhalese very well too. Both Maybin and Campbell.
- I. Yes, very essential. Turning to a general aspect: I was thinking of British rule as the period really before 1931. And in that period did you feel that there was too great a tendency to rely on precedence and routine?
- A. I believe there was. We always wanted to find out: 'Well
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was this done before. Is there a precedent here?' Unless it was covered, you know, by the financial regulations or general orders or something like that.

I. Did you feel also that there was a lack of drive and a lack of purpose really? Merely run efficiently along certain lines but not looking for ...?

A. There again it depended on individuals. Very much. Now, take J.G. Fraser in Colombo. Took a live part. Took a personal interest in town development, in various things. And simply got the whole team working, you know, full-time. And with zeal. There was no slacking. He wouldn't allow it.

I. Newnham?

A. Newnham too was very efficient, very efficient in his own way. He took an interest in his work. I mean, those - it depended on the individual. Now, here in Matale, I remember my father telling me that there was - there were A.G.A's who actually took a personal interest in his school work. There was an A.G.A. by the name of Sharpe who actually got my grandfather to send my father and company to school and used to actually check their work to find out exactly what they were doing.

I. Yes, I know him. W.E.T. Sharpe.

A. Yes. I remember my father telling me that he had a personal interest in their own education.

I. Then as part of this question, you come to this conflict between the provinces - that's the G.A's and A.G.A's - and the centre sometimes. You find the Secretariat tending to quash new ideas and to create difficulties. There's always this problem but ...

A. Well, that certainly happened. Fortunately in those days you hadn't got that telephone - thank God - that telegram or something - and the G.A's for all practical purposes could be independent. And very little interference really in that way. And very seldom did the Secretariat, or the Colonial Secretary's office then, interfere with what they said or what we wanted to do. Unless it paid the money. Then they bring(?) the Treasury and very often the Colonial Treasury checkmated ... but even then, at that stage, the Treasury was not all-powerful. It was the Colonial Secretary.

It was the Secretariat that delivered the goods.

I. And how was our Secretariat in those days?

A. Again it depended on the ...

I. Men.

A. ... men in charge. Some were exceptionally able.

M.A. Young; Fletcher when he was Colonial Secretary - very liberal. Sir Graeme Thomson when he was Colonial Secretary took a very liberal view and wanted things done. And whenever they went on circuit they wanted to know, 'Well, what's happening - let's see what you're doing?'

I. Yes. Were there other types who could be described as Secretariat-wallahs?

A. Very much, very much so. Very much so, a good deal. They were hidebound with regulations. Now I'll give you one instance. You know Sir Wilfred Woods who was ...

I. Finance.

A. Finance - Financial Secretary. Now I went to the Treasury as Controller of Finance and Supply and I remember him telling me. He said, 'Look here, Mr. Aluwihare, I have brought you here because you'll find in the Treasury all chaps for office work. They're competent. They don't appreciate the difficulties that the field officers Now, you have been a field officer, and you, in your own way, must guide these chaps and say, "Look here, although this is not in the financial regulations, you must approve it for this reason. That is, this is meant for village development, for land development, for irrigation and so on"'.
I. How did you find Woods as a boss?

A. Very good. Very able, extremely able and very encouraging. He used to often say, 'Very useful minute. Approved'. (?)

I. Was Bickmore there?

A. Oh, Bickmore was there - very much so. Extremely able.

I. Was he more an office type?

A. Office type and bound by regulations. And kept to himself. You hardly had ten words with him outside his work.

I. That's by what? - by nature or ...?

A. By nature.

I. It was not a question of Ceylonese - European?

A. No, no, no, by nature. Everybody. Everyone was treated the same way. The Britisher did not like him one bit.

- I. I see.
- A. There was no question of colour.
- I. This question of Woods, I have one thing against him on hearsay: that is that he didn't allow Turner to reform the Treasury. L.J.B. Turner's system.
- A. Well, I can't tell you that.
- I. That was before your time?
- A. Before my time. Before my time. But on the whole he was receptive to ideas. I mean, now, I know one or two cases where I suggested - said, 'This might be done differently for these reasons.' And very often, despite Bickmore's protesting, he said, 'I think the idea is a good one. And we'll give it a try'.
- I. That is very useful, very interesting. How did he get on with the politicians? There was some ...
- A. Very well. Very well.
- I. He was a tough customer who could give his own back?
- A. His own back and the Governor he was - the Governor was completely guided by him.
- I. Who was that?
- A. Manning.
- I. Oh, it was not Stubbs or Thomson?
- A. No, not Stubbs.
- I. Thomson perhaps?
- A. No, no - yes, Thomson - Graeme Thomson, later on. But I think Manning definitely. If I remember correctly.
- I. Because as Financial Secretary and as custodian of the Treasury [i.e. since Woods held this post], I was wondering whether D.S. Senanayake and others - in the 1930's, in that stage when you were there - whether there was some friction?
- A. Not with Woods. In fact friction was in the Colonial Secretary's office and Woods completely, you know, undermined the influence that the Colonial Secretary had over finance.
- I. How?
- A. Said, 'Well, the Treasury is an independent unit and I am in charge of the country's finances. It's my job, the Colonial Secretary has nothing to do with it'. And he succeeded in getting, at least, minimising or completely - completely - what shall I say now ...?
- I. Undermining?
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- A. ... - yes, undermining the authority that the Colonial Secretary exercised underneath the old system.
- I. That's very interesting. Going back to the '20's and to a general problem of the times, namely Ceylonisation of the Civil Service and the Public Services: it was not, it would seem, till the late 1920's that they began putting Ceylonese into G.A'ships, A.G.A'ships?
- A. That's right. Revenue appointments, they were called.
- I. So in the earlier period it would seem to be a deliberate policy that non-Europeans were kept in judicial and other lines?
- A. Completely.
- I. Have you any idea why?
- A. [Pause]. The Revenue Officer or the Government Agent had so much power ...
- I. Status?
- A. Status, vested in him that all the village population, high and low, had to look to him to get a thing done. And he really represented the imperial power and the imperial prestige. He safeguarded it. He did not want the Ceylonese to exercise that authority, because it would then interfere with that white prestige which they safeguarded so zealously.
- I. As a matter of fact some of the Civil Servants I met have made the same point. And, well, there was some racial prejudice coming in there. But also at the same time I've seen a memorandum by Bowes which presented some arguments against this - against the higher employment of Ceylonese. And - but I was wondering how far these arguments were rationalizations for a prejudice and for this - for the real and root cause as you ...?
- A. Well, I told you. I mean, the imperial - the direct - the direct representative of the imperial regime had to maintain the prestige of that regime. The other man was merely a servant who had to do certain work which really did not give the prestige attached to that particular post.
- I. Bowes argues that the people themselves would never accept the verdict of a non - of a Ceylonese because they would say that he was being partial to someone or to some caste. But ...
- A. That was disproved the moment Ceylonisation started.
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- I. Exactly.
- A. I mean, very few - no representations were made against me when I was G.A., when I was I.G.P., when I was Permanent Secretary, saying that I did a thing on this basis based on caste, creed or colour.
- I. Basically I think it was a question of prestige and also a question of distrusting Ceylonese - distrusting non-Europeans?
- A. Distrusting non-Europeans and I must say certain sections of our own people had developed that mentality. That the white man is the man who can mete out justice without fear of favour.
- I. Yes, this is a very interesting aspect. Sometimes you get Ceylonese telling the white Civil Servants, 'Oh, only you can be trusted, etc., etc.'; and perhaps flattering them in this way and they come to believe it.
- A. Who?
- I. You know, some Ceylonese might have put this idea across - they might have believed it - but sometimes they might have said so to flatter the ...
- A. Ah, yes, yes, that may have happened. That may have happened. Particularly the type - you know, the subordinate staff, ratemahatmayas and the mudaliyars and that type may have, in order to win the, you know, ...
- I. Favour...?
- A. Favour of the rulers. They may have flattered them and said, 'Well, our people can't manage. You have to do this on your own'.
- I. What about this question of aloofness and arrogance? You see Stace makes both points. In a criticism of British rule he says that the European community were arrogant at times and also he says that the Civil Service was too aloof from the educated Ceylonese.
- A. Now, I worked under Stace ... (?) as a Land Settlement Officer.
- I. Yes. Yes, of course.
- A. And had the highest regard for him. And he was one of these people who took a very liberal - and was definitely pro-Ceylonese. And had no use for imperialism in that, you know, rugged and aggressive form where caste or creed or colour came into the picture.
- I. And would you say that even officials - some officials -
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were rather arrogant in their attitude?

- A. Oh, yes: a number of them were. And in fact you felt(?) humiliated(?) in dealing with them.
- I. And apart from that even those who were not outwardly aggressive and arrogant, did they somehow or another give an air of patronage? Have a superiority complex and somewhat - be somewhat condescending?
- A. Patronage was there. Generally the patronage was there. And very often you resented it really. And felt that that was another way of humiliating you.
- I. Were there many exceptions to this? I mean people who were completely ...
- A. A number of them. A number of them. Who took a very liberal view and who wanted you to do a particular job of work in the sense that you were talking for the people, for their benefit. Without any distinction of colour or patronage.
- I. Maybin was like that?
- A. Maybin was like that.
- I. Was there a difference in attitude between the younger Civil Servants who came after the First World War and those who had been there before, on this point?
- A. I believe so. I believe so and ... I think so because I came in contact with the War Cadets, as they were called, and I found them, to start with, very liberal and hadn't this particular complex of colour. But later on they took
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- I. That's because of the circles they were moving in?
- A. Moving in. Its a curious thing that.
- I. Would you say that all these traits that we've just talked about were more pronounced in the commercial and planting circles?
- A. Well, I believe they were. Although I didn't have particular experience, but I did have this experience when I was District Judge, Nuwara Eliya.
- I. Nuwara Eliya. Yes, I was going to ask you how you fared there because - I spotted it at once. That was a European preserve, wasn't it?
- A. European preserve. And I was there for two and a half years. And they were very, very off-hand and very often went out of their way to maintain their prestige and show that as
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planters they were generally Britishers(?) - even in court. I had one particular case where - when I was on the Bench doing my work. I had a telegram to say that there was a murder at a particular estate. Well, I at once told the police, 'Tell them that I'm coming there. After - in the afternoon for enquiries and have everything ready at the hospital. And I hope to be there by about two or two-thirty'. Well, when I reached the place it was about three or three-fifteen, half-an-hour late. And the Superintendent who was there with the witness, everything ready, wanted to know: 'Why are you late? What's the meaning of this?' And I had to tell him, 'Now, who is this? Now, who is this?' 'He is the witness'. I said, 'Well, will you please ask him to (?) (?). I'm not prepared to discuss my work with him, why I'm late'.

- I. And that story told in Kandy of a planter who didn't want anybody to carry an umbrella - that is an open umbrella - when they went through his estate.
- A. (?) (?) (?) (?) (?)¹ in Matale as well.
- I. That is when you were a child in your ...?
- A. Child, yes, and my father took exception. He said, 'Not a hope and don't you do it'.
- I. What was your father doing at that stage?
- A. R.M. [ratemahatmaya]
- I. R.M.!
- A. He was a village headman. A ...
- I. Yes, he would have ...
- A. Very independent type, and he got into trouble through that too.
- I. He would have been in rather a peculiar position having to have - deal with these planters on some matters?
- A. Yes. But he maintained his position. There's a story that I believe to be quite true in[sic] my grandfather's day. You see, this road you came on - now, gravel road - led to the estate through the family property. And the superintendent then wanted to take over the - at least cut the road by force without consulting - without the consent of my grandfather. And he rode up to the house and told him, 'Well, I'm going to cut this road and I've started work'.

1. I think he said that he himself had to face such a ban once.

The story is that he pulled him down and gave him a thrashing. And he said, 'You can't do that.'

I. That's your grandfather?

A. Yes, grandfather. Then Sharpe I think had said - had told the young chap, 'You're a fool. He owns that part of the property and he has tremendous prestige. And if you want to get on for goodness sake work with him. Be tactful and treat him as an equal'. And the result was that they used to often bathe together and share a beer. And became very good friends. And they had no trouble at all thereafter.

I. What about the impartiality of the European Civil Servants and judges and administrators when it came to deciding cases between a European and a Ceylonese? Its difficult to generalise.

A. Very difficult. I shouldn't like - some of them were impartial, some were partial. That's the type of

I. No, I raised it because I was rather surprised but some Ceylonese have made the statement that, in administrative matters even, when it came to such a case the European Civil Servants were generally partial to the European.

A. I can't contradict this, definitely. I wouldn't ...

I. There were some cases?

A. Yes.

I. You can recall some cases?

A. Yes.

I. That's what I want to establish.

A. I know of one case when - it may not be an exact analysis up to a point but yet ... When Mr. D.S. Senanayake was not in politics then, but he was a landed proprietor, returning from visiting one of his estates via Moratuwa when a very influential planter in the Kalutara District then went in the opposite direction and took Mr. Senanayake's driver to task, for not stopping his car and allowing him to get ahead - overtaking him. Well, old Senanayake got out and, 'What do you mean by this? I have a right(?) (?) (?) and why do you want to abuse my driver when my wife is in the car? What do you mean by this?' And they had a tremendous argument and this planter then made a complaint to the Superintendent of Police who was a white man. And he without checking up the facts put Senanayake in court. I heard the

- case incidentally as magistrate, Panadura. And I discharged the accused.
- I. Yes, that's the sort of example I was - that is of some use.
- A. And I believe it came to the ears of even higher authority but the Colonial Secretary then said, 'No, he was acting as a judicial officer and we're not prepared to take any notice of representations made by you'.
- I. Again the prestige thing coming in?
- A. Yes.
- I. Any other cases you can recall?
- A. I can't remember any more. I remember another case. Now, that was again personal. When I was Cadet in the kachcheri a very senior Civil Servant - I won't disclose the name - European - came on circuit, came to the kachcheri office. And there were two British officers, O.A. and the Cadet - I was extra O.A. He invited these two to tea at the guesthouse and left me out. And I remember the O.A. telling me: 'Sir, he[meaning Aluwihare] if (?) (?)'. 'Oh, he may come if he wants'.
- I. Who was the O.A.?
- A. ... Ah, I am not telling you that.
- I. No, I was not thinking of the senior Civil Servant, I was thinking of the O.A.
- A. Don't want to ...
- I. Oh, I see.
- A. He was a very nice chap at that stage.¹ He too was spoilt later on. This is the ...
- I. Turning to - to another sphere, what was the attitude of most of the Civil Servants - the European Civil Servants - to the question of self-government in the, say, early and mid 1920's? Did they realise that it was coming eventually?
- A. They did.
- I. They did.
- A. At a certain stage when the elected members were in the majority and when ministers took over. You remember that Committee system came in. Then they did.
- I. Yes. No, then its obvious they would have had to realise ... but I was wondering about the earlier period, whether before the Donoughmore Commission ...?
- A. It wouldn't work. I think their whole attitude was that its ...

1. Almost certainly referring to Kaufman.

- I. Not possible?
- A. Not possible. It wouldn't work.
- I. What about people like Stace, who were more liberal-minded?
- A. Oh, they were ... Mind you, you must give credit to the Britisher in this way. That he did leave behind, when independence came, personnel who were capable of taking over this machine and working it. I believe in other colonies that was never done. Whatever prejudices the Britisher may have had yet there was, you know, a group or body of Government servants in the higher rungs, who were able to take over and run the machine.
- I. Yes. Did you feel that any of these Civil ...?
- A. That I would say came after the more liberal reforms, after the committee system, the Donoughmore scheme, that was the time that Ceylonese were associated with the actual administrative side of Government. The first G.A. was C.L. Wickremesinghe in Mannar.
- I. Was there - were some of the Civil Servants - sorry - did some of the Civil Servants have a sense of mission or was it just a job for them?
- A. Sense of mission. Particularly the pioneers. I believe - my father and company told me - that the pioneers had very little company-in the first place, no company. There were no clubs; they were on their own. And they said, 'Well, this was a mission. I mean, our duty is to do so-and-so. Train them for so-and-so, so-and-so, so-and-so'. And went out of their way to help them.
- I. In your time I was wondering whether of those who had a sense of mission some of them happened to be Christian. I mean, I'm not talking in terms of - well, [not implying that] Christianity had a necessary influence, but I was thinking of two people in particular, Sandys and Bond, who were - who may not have been particularly able but who, I know, were the conscientious, dedicated sort. And I was wondering how far their religiosity had anything to do with it? There were others, who were non-Christians, who ...
- A. I can't - I can't say that. I can't say that. I know - I mean, religion had very a Christian Civil Servant
- I. There were very few really who were Christians.
- A. Very few. And even that type had this superiority complex.
-

- I. Complex, mmm. Sometimes it comes because of Christianity perhaps. Really the other aspect that I'm interested in is Land Settlement work which you were involved in, and this period in 1929 when you became A.S.O. ... Were you given any sort of special training?
- A. Well, we went out with Stace and the senior settlement officers and picked up the work with them.
- I. And what did you think of the Land Settlement Department at that stage?
- A. With Stace as head, very liberal. At that time, mind you, it was more or less self-government; self-government had come gradually. And it was being, you know, pushed through.
- I. And what - I know something about Land Settlement work. Is it correct to say that between - that generally the benefit of the doubt in most cases was given to the peasants?
- A. At that stage.
- I. Yes.
- A. I'll tell you one case where we settled nearly 44,000 acres in Gilimale in Ratnapura. A group of us: A.E. Christoffelsz, H.E. Jansz, myself, Stace - it was called 'Stace's Circus'; we were all under canvas - Northcote and some others. We were chosen for this particular settlement. And I happened to have particular knowledge of these nindagamas, viharegamas, devalegamas and dalamudiya. gabadagamas, because my background is that. And Stace wanted me to be given(?) the list - to do the(?). It was a gabadagama. And when I took up the case there was a land by the name of gamaryudakalay(?), you know the ...?
- I. Yes, I know it.
- A. Obviously the property of a particular devale. Now, the Temple Commissioners in the 1880's had declared it Crown. And the Ratnayake Nilame appeared before me. And he said, 'Sir, you know this'. This particular plot known as gamaryudakalay(?) was declared Crown by these people. And we hadn't a place even to cut a stick for our ceremonial(?) at the devale, for a pandal and various things. And we want your help. Then I went at once and got in touch with Stace and said, '(?) (?) (?)'. You must give them so many acres of land. As their property, because gamaryudakalay obviously belonged to the devale. And it should never have been
-

declared Crown'. And I believe that he did that.

I. Why was it obviously ...? Because of the name?

A. Gam-aryuda-kalay.

I. And you said this was the policy in your period. What had happened earlier?

A. They say that Land Settlement and the Waste Lands Ordinance were used rather harshly to deprive people of their ancestral lands.

I. What do you mean by earlier - in the 19.. - early '20's or 19...?

A. Possibly '20's. Till, you know, the Government - the form of Government became liberal.

I. Yes.

A. When the Land Development Ordinance and various things were passed, by the Legislature.

I. That was in 1935.

A. '35 - that was the period really that the Settlement work also became liberal.

I. But, for instance, did you in going into past cases of land settlement work done by officers previous to your time, say in the 1910's, did you come across any cases where you felt they had been hard?

A. I did in one case.

I. Yes.

A. Let me see. I can't for the moment think of any other cases.

I. Yes, I know that British land policy was criticised pre-18 - after 1897, after this Ordinance. They say that they were expropriating village land. But weren't you in the 1920's, late '20's, following precedence which Fraser and others had set in this very department in - for two or three decades?

A. Up to a point, yes. But where we found that the precedent was clearly unreasonable and harsh we said, 'No, we can't accept it'.

I. Did you find many such cases? Where the precedent was unreasonable and harsh?

A. I may have come across cases. I can't remember them at the moment, you see.

I. What was the process? You went and examined the land on the spot I know.

- A. Oh, yes. Before we brought them under the W.L.O. - this Lands Ordinance - we inspected them and if they had been cultivated and in possession we exempted it. Declared it ...
- I. Private.
- A. Private.
- I. Between five and twenty-five years of cultivation what did you do?
- A. Five and twenty-five years, declared it private.
- I. I thought it was over twenty-five that it was declared private?
- A. No, where we found that there was a particular cultivation less than five, ten years we declared it Crown(?).
- I. Didn't you sell it to them - to the ...? If it was Crown land ...?
- A. Oh, if it was Crown land that depended on the title. That entirely depended on - if they brought a summons or if they brought a deed and we found that they really had title then we said no.
- I. No, say it was clearly shown that fifteen years ago it had been Crown land, but subsequently encroached on and cultivated for fifteen say, or twenty years, what did you do?
- A. We sold it. We sold it. We took it over and sold it, for a particular sum. Unimproved value.
- I. Unimproved value?
- A. Unimproved.
- I. What if it - the owner of this plot of land was a non-villager and a big landlord did you sell it to him?
- A. Well, we had occasionally such(?) things(?) occurring(?). Certain very influential people had bought land belonging to the nindagam and granted it on ... and I had to declare it the property of the Crown. And sell it at a particular market-rate. Not unimproved value. We said, 'Sorry. You had no business to go in there. We can understand the villager doing this'.
- I. They had encroached on the land or had they bought it from them[the villagers]?
- A. They had bought it from the villagers.
- I. From the villagers?
- A. The villagers who had the right to cultivate in that area.
- I. But not ...?
- A. Possess. They hadn't possession ad domine.
-

I. Ad homine?

A. Ad domine.

I. Ad domine. Oh, I see. So in that sense this Waste Lands Ordinance was very useful because you could use it to protect the villagers? To an extent? I mean ...

A. Oh, yes, later on, later on. I mean, settlement really became a way of investing definite(?) title(?) (?). Then these family squabbles stopped and litigation stopped. The moment you gave them title - and they were keen to get this.

I. So the tendency was, say, if a villager had sold land held on dubious title and probably Crown land to an outsider What if that land which had been sold was very essential for the village, did you give it back to the village?

A. In certain cases, yes. Oh, yes, if we felt that that land was necessary to the village expansion or village development, yes.

I. But the man who had already cultivated some land?

A. We said, 'Alright. Put that in court. If you don't withdraw we will put you in court'.

I. Yes, in fact when people went to court it tended to hold up settlement, didn't it? If they decided to go to court, it held up the settlement of an area?

A. Every Settlement Officer tried to get that through as early as possible. That was important from our point of view.

I. Regarding the early period when - I mean, before you served [in the C.C.S.] - there was this criticism of British land policy led by Corea and others - Senanayake and others said that they expropriated land. But also it would appear that some of these politicians were themselves speculating? Isn't that correct?

A. I believe so, very definitely.

I. And therefore one wonders about their bona fides?

A. Yes, yes.

I. For instance, ...

A. They were themselves people who had bought land and cultivated it - from villagers. And deprived the villager of his land, particularly in the Kandyan country.

I. Kegalla?

A. Kegalla, Kandy, Matale, everywhere.

- I. Was A.A. Wickremesinghe one of those?
- A. ~~Ha~~-ha-ha. That you might say. I shouldn't like to commit myself. But there were a number of people who ...
- I. In fact, was there a class of Ceylonese who could be called landbrokers?
- A. Definitely. Definitely.
- I. Were there some Europeans also indulging in this sort of thing?
- A. Not very many. There were not very many.
- I. But didn't they encourage it by buying land from these brokers knowing that if ...
- A. Yes, yes, yes, true.
- I. For instance, in Sabaragamuwa, can you remember Thornton - E.K. Thornhill?
- A. G.K. Thornhill.
- I. G.K.
- A. G.K. Thornhill.
- I. Yes. Wasn't he a noted speculator?
- A. I can't - I can't tell you. The Thornhill I knew ... No. He was^a/Government Servant.
- I. Oh! But again regarding British agrarian and land policy in the 1910's and 1920's, before Brayne, didn't it strike you as being haphazard and lacking - lacking ...?
- A. In consistency?
- I. Yes.
- A. Very difficult to say because I hadn't the experience. But, now, for instance, Lawrie in his Gazetteer¹ says that my own grandparent was deprived of something like two hundred and fifty acres of land by an unreasonable order of Government confiscating that land. And I believe he said that it was (?) (?) (?) (?) (?) against the family.
- I. What was Alexander like as a Controller of Revenue?
- A. Well, he was a personal - more or less, friend of mine. A friend - not a friend - I would say an elder, you know, who extended his patronage even when I went on leave in England. To Lords - he was a member of the M.C.C. and looked after me.
- I. Oh, I see.
- A. And went out of his way to be nice to me. And in Matale

1. A.C. Lawrie, Gazetteer of the Central Province, (Colombo 1896 & 1898).

he had a very great reputation. For being very liberal, very just, although imperialist. And he, I believe, condemned the whole administrative system. He and Burroughs - M.J. Burroughs, who was later professor at Oxford. They - particularly Burroughs - condemned the whole system. He said, 'What are they doing? After taking this wretched place from the legal, legitimate owners, we have done nothing to improve their country. If at all its worse today. And what is our justification for being here'. And he at least gave(?) it to them. As a result he was very unpopular.

I. Who? Burroughs?

A. Burroughs, yes.

I. Unpopular with the Civil Service?

A. With the Government.

I. I believe that Cumberland was also a sort like this? Do you know - did you know Cumberland?

A. Very much, very much.

I. He was like this?

A. He was, very much. He hadn't very much use for these white people. Now, its a curious thing when I went to England he came all the way from Yorkshire to take me to his home in Yorkshire. He and (?). Both ... my wife and I. He knew both families, Aluwihares and the Moonemales. And a very harsh type, very severe. But no question of colour complex.

I. Talking about Alexander, he doesn't seem to compare at all with Brayne who followed him, you see. Brayne had drive, didn't he?

A. Brayne was a different type. He followed his brother in India, who was also a very liberal type. And unfortunately he wasn't very popular with his own kind and they used to call him 'Brainless Brayne'. Ha-ha.

I. Other Civil Servants?

A. Yes.

I. Why? Because he was a livewire?

A. Livewire and liberal. Pro-Ceylonese. He wanted things done. Cooperative movements, various things, ...

I. I see. And coming back to land settlement work, did you find that sometimes the villagers themselves had been quite

- sharp and sold the same plot of land twice or ...?
- A. Oh, yes, there was the village broker too.
- I. Oh, I see.
- A. The village - oh, yes - landbroker.
- I. And what was your impression about the village rural situation in, say, Sabaragamuwa? Were they - were the villagers short of land?
- A. Very. Very much. Because landbrokera~~ge~~ had taken place on a very large scale in those areas(?) in Sabaragamuwa. And really very influential Ceylonese had been the landbrokers. And when I went to settle at Girimale, I remember the villagers telling me, 'Sir, So-and-So bought our land and sold it to So-and-So'.
- I. But why did they sell it?
- A. They said, 'Well, he came and said to me, "What's this land? What's the use? You are chenaing it. We will give you the money, cash. And you (?) (?) (?)". He had so much influence.
- I. Were they dependent on chenas in Sabaragamuwa?
- A. That area.
- I. Were they wholly dependent on it or did they have other sources?
- A. Partly.
- I. But, on the other hand, did you find cases of a villager selling a portion of his land and using the capital he got to develop the other portion?
- A. I can't - I can't see that happening, that I came across cases like that.
- I. Was there ...?
- A. I believe if there was a case like that we were very liberal in dealing with it. I mean, where there was genuine development of land on the part of a villager for his own maintenance we took a very liberal ... But if he, on the other hand, acted the part of the broker, then we were strict(?). 'Now, look out'.
- I. I was wondering whether the politicians who criticised the British Land Settlement Officers in an earlier period were criticising them because they found that they couldn't buy land because of the Settlement Officers coming and preventing this sort of thing?
- A. This is quite true. Oh, yes.
-

- I. And in your investigations, for instance, did you discover whether villagers were - many villagers were absolutely landless? Landless - without ...
- A. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Now, when I came to the Central Province as G.A. I found that in one area or district, in one R.M.'s division, the Crown land available was about sixteen acres while the rest had been sold. Not to the villagers. The villagers wanted the land but there was no land to give. Therefore I suggested that we should take over from the estates certain acreage. Where an estate had one thousand acres we said, 'Well, we'll take over three hundred acres, for village expansion'.
- I. And was this done?
- A. Later on. I believe they are doing it now. But I remember sending a memorandum. I said, 'The only way to solve the village problem - village expansion - is to take over certain acreages from these estates which have come to the back compound of the villages'.
- I. Was this in Dumbara?
- A. All over. Not only Dumbara but all over.
- I. Was this process purely the result of sales by Government or was it also due to sales by individuals, private individuals to estates?
- A. Improvidence on the part of villagers too.
- I. So, two causes?
- A. Two causes. You see, this money economy unfortunately upset the old economy which was more or less on the barter system, particularly in the Kandyan country. And everything - now, take litigation - had become prolific. If a poor villager was put in court he had to find the money. And how could he find the money? The only asset he had was his wretched garden or land or chena and he had to mortgage that. And raise the money.
- I. Was there, in your experience, was there a lot of foreclosing going on? Foreclosing on mortgage?
- A. Mortgages - oh, yes. That's why - that's how they got the land. That's how ultimately they got the land.
- I. One of my criticisms of British rule is that they never tried to stop this and did not - at least until the 1930's -
-

and did not build up any body of statistics as to the extent to which this sort of thing was happening. Because its only with the statistics that you can measure the size of the problem.

A. Mmm, mmm, mmm.

I. And, I mean, G.A's and others - A.G.A's - say that this was going on but they haven't any idea how much. Why wasn't there some sort of investigation? Even ...

A. I believe certain G.A's were very good in that way. That they did tackle the question.

I. How?

A. And reported to Government that these people were landless. And they should be given land. There were a number of cases like that. Depended on the personal interest of the G.A. or A.G.A. The liberal-minded man, who had the interest of the villagers and the local population at heart, took that liberal view. The others, it became routine. Red-tape ... sort of routine work.

I. Yes. But I was wondering whether they should have had an investigation and had brought up some statistics and things like that to show how serious this was.

A. They should have. If really the interest of the country and the local population was the main thing; was the first concern.

I. And another thing that struck me was with regard to Clifford's paper on land policy. Did you - did it come to your attention in that period itself?

A. Which period?

I. In 1927-28. Can you recall his ...?

A. I remember when he was Governor ...

I. Yes, that was when he was Governor, yes.

A. He thought - I can't say I agreed with his views.

I. No, I was not thinking of his analysis, I was thinking of his suggestion for colonial - colonisation.

A. Oh, yes.

I. I was wondering ...

A. That might have been - that was a liberal view, I think, on the whole, if I remember the memorandum correctly.

- I. I was - I was wondering whether that paper was popularised. Whether it was circularised among Civil Servants?
- A. Oh, yes, it went round I think.
- I. It went round?
- A. Oh, yes, I remember reading it. I forget the contents but I remember reading it. Parts of it I did disagree with, but his general development scheme I said, 'Yes, that seems to be liberal'. Because he sponsored the Waste Lands Ordinance.
- I. 1896?¹
- A. Part of it. Because my father-in-law opposed it. He was a Member of the Legislative Council. Moonemalle.
- I. Moonemalle.
- A. Yes. He opposed it. Voted against.
- I. Of course this Waste Lands Ordinance was an attempt to prevent encroachments and also to reduce chena cultivation and to preserve forests. And I don't quite agree ...
- A. But also they say it was another way of ...
- I. Grabbing land?
- A. Grabbing land and giving it to the ...
- I. Planters?
- A. Planters and the Companies. That was the main grievance that the political element had against the Ordinance.
- I. Yes, in fact, what was the attitude of the villager to the Land Settlement Officers? And the Land Settlement Department?
- A. At the time I went there they were rather frightened of the Land Settlement Officer thinking that he would declare his [the villager's] own land the property of the Crown. He was very, very worried thinking that he might lose his land, by the Settlement Officer being rather harsh. And saying that it wasn't cultivated.
- I. But afterwards ... This was before any settlement work had been done in the district?
- A. Yes, that's right.
- I. Had there been any settlement work in the district before?
- A. There was. That's why he was prejudiced. At one stage the Settlement Officers seem to have been rather harsh.

1. Both of us are muddled up here. Clifford's scheme was in 1927 and had some bearing on the Land Development Ordinance of 1935, but obviously did not influence the Waste Lands Ordinance of 1897. Clifford had nothing to do with the latter anyway.

And evidently, if the land was uncultivated the people had some very good reasons for it. Despite that, they [the Settlement Officers] declared the land the property of the Crown.

- I. For instance, when you were testing a particular plot of land and seeing whether it had been cul ... - owned or not, did you take parole evidence - testimony into consideration?
- A. Oral evidence? Oh, yes. Oral evidence was very useful, particularly when the whole village was present. I mean, if a man came out and lied the whole village would start laughing. Ha-ha. And they would say, 'Boru, boru [All lies, lies]'. You could hear ...
- I. Or if it was a case of a particular plot of land between private and Crown wouldn't the village support a liar?
- Say a chap says, 'This is my land. I have cultivated it'?
- A. Not generally, you know. It may be local jealousies, but yet if a chap came and started lying, the headman was there and the other villagers were there and ...
- I. What about chena land? Could a chap show that he had cultivated a particular plot once in ten years - once in ten-twelve years - on three occasions would you give it to him? Or would it be Crown?
- A. Generally you - it depended on the area which was brought under the Settlement Ordinance. If it was - you see, if he - if it was a nindagama then the position was simple enough. If it was a gabadagama then obviously it was Crown. If it was not a gabadagama, then the village title had to be considered. Because the villagers were in possession.
- I. Even in gabadagamas - say gabadagamas of the nineteenth century, perhaps they had encroached on the gabadagama and had got prescriptive ...
- A. Mind you, the people who did work in the gabadagamas had other land given to them for that work.
- I. Oh, I see. So that was there?
- A. That was there. It was there really in the property.
- I. What if a chap could show that he had ...
- A. Now these dalumure gabadagama, that's the gabadagama that provided or supplied betel and other requisites to the Palace in Kandy.
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I. What gabadagama?

A. Dalumure.

I. Dalumure.

A. Dalumure: betel gabadagama. Now, the people who worked there, the families had got land themselves. And they had unfortunately sold a part of the gabadagama. And we said, 'No. Withdraw at once. You can't. You have been given such and such land for the work you did as supervisors of the gabadagama!'

I. What if a chap encroached on Crown land and cultivated it for thirty years or so without being caught?

A. Then he got it. Then he got it.

I. Was there a certain amount of grumbling by the villagers against your decisions and against the L.S.O's?

A. Well, they went to court then.

I. Petitions?

A. No petitions. Petitions occasionally and we really at that stage, when we were in the Land Settlement Department, we never tried to deprive a villager if he had evidence(?). And very often the benefit of the doubt went to him.

I. That was in your time? Not before?

A. I can't say. The general talk is that it worked against the villager.

I. And was it the talk among villagers, or was it the talk among the ...

A. Intelligent circles, who said that it worked rather harshly.

I. Did the villagers say that?

A. The villagers too. That's why they were so frightened.

I. Oh, that's very interesting. What did you think of the other L.S.O's in your time, the European L.S.O's?

A. The standard was very good. Stace was very good, and ...

I. Able or liberal?

A. Liberal. They were on the whole liberal.

I. Northcote?

A. Northcote, yes. He too was quite liberal. We used to - he was a very good friend of mine and we used to discuss things.

I. Hunter and Leach and others?

A. Oh, Hunter was a Burgher. He was alright. Leach was alright. Leach was very liberal, I believe. Mind you, there too, as

- you said, they went by precedence really very often, and there was that routine way of doing things. But on the whole if there was a claim and they felt it was genuine, it certainly was recognised and accepted.
- I. Turning to an entirely different aspect which you might have had to deal with when you were G.A., North-Central Province, the question of shifting cultivation - chena - in the Dry Zone - wasn't it Stockdale's policy to try and restrict this?
- A. It was. It was, I think, not only Stockdale's but the general policy of Government was that. But Freeman you remember ...
- I. Was against it?
- A. Against it. He said, 'What is the alternative?'
- I. I agree with him. Don't you?
- A. Absolutely. When I was G.A. I told them. I said, 'Either repair the tank and give them this paddy land or they can't exist'.
- I. You see, Stockdale's and Government's idea was that if they continued to do this, it would lead to a dust-bowl. But I say that they are thinking in terms of another country and if it had - if it was going to be a dust-bowl it - most places would have already become a dust-bowl. In Anuradhapura for instance.
- A. You see, how I looked at it, it was the human element against the jungle. How are they going to survive? Are you going to preserve the jungle and kill this chap, who had to find his food particularly when malaria was rampant, and his supply of vegetables, his kurukkan came from chena land.
- I. Don't you think this was a typically British attitude? They couldn't - to them this form of cultivation was primitive and something that was not ...
- A. They couldn't understand it. They couldn't - they couldn't appreciate the fact that for survival it was necessary. That you couldn't bring the chena under permanent crops for lack of irrigation. There was no water.
- I. Didn't they give some allowance for this human factor and at least give a certain amount of ...?
- A. Chena land? In certain cases, yes. They had set apart
-

certain chena reserves.

- I. But then when you set aside a chena reserve and the people continually chena it, the chena cycle becomes shorter and shorter?
- A. Yes.
- I. So that's bad?
- A. Bad.
- I. You must also at the same time feed in a few more forest areas for chenaing?
- A. That's right.
- I. Should do it?
- A. Should do it. That's right, should do it.
- I. Did they do it?
- A. Depended again on the personnel. Now, a man like Freeman, yes.
- I. I know that Strong also did so. Strong.
- A. Strong, mmm. It depended - it depended on the person. Chena was certainly a wasteful way of cultivating land. I mean, we too recognise it. But there was no alternative. You must get the irrigation facilities and then say, 'Well, now, you have got your fields, you have got your water, no more chenaing'.
- I. Did you find in your experience that Government had pushed these restrictions too far? Restrictions on chenaing in the Dry Zone?
- A. Well, Freeman is the best guide. Because he worked both in Jaffna, North Central Province, Sabaragamuwa. His view was that.
- I. You knew him?
- A. Knew him very well. When I was G.A. he was a Member of Parliament [sic., the State Council], yes.
- I. Oh, still?
- A. Oh, yes, a most charming person. One of the most selfless men I have ever met in life.
- I. Not patronising to the villagers?
- A. Never. He was just a thoroughly good man. I'll give you one instance, where a particular chap used to come and get an allowance from him monthly. And used it on opium. And I got to know this and the wife complained. She said, 'He gets the money, sir; he buys the opium and we get
-

nothing'. And I told Freeman. I said, 'You are very liberal I know but here's a case that has come to my attention, and I thought I might tell you'. 'Thank you very much', said Freeman, 'But, you know, my principle has always been this: I'd far rather be robbed by the ninety-nine, rather than turn away one deserving case'.

I. Did you feel that at times, or even as a whole, he was rather impractical and naive?

A. Impractical?

I. Rather credible? You know, guileless?

A. He was guileless. I must say that. He was easily taken in by people.

I. But his views: were they naive and impractical?

A. Beg pardon.

I. Were his views naive?

A. No, I can't say that. You know, he, after all, took the practical view of: how are these people in this province going to survive if the one source which gives them the wherewithal is taken away from them. You must replace it with something substantial and the alternative must be done before you interfere with their system. They had survived because of this. Even with that the death-rate exceeded the birth-rate.

I. Yes, I agree with him on this point. I was just trying to test a view put forward by another Civil Servant and see how far that fellow was correct, you see, regarding Freeman. Someone else said that Freeman - while admiring Freeman, he said that the villagers often took advantage of him ...

A. Did they?

I. ... and laughed behind his back or played tricks?

A. May have. But he wasn't such a simpleton as all that. He knew: 'eershiava thianava [there is jealousy]'; he used to tell me, 'eershiyakarayek [a jealous man]. Musn't accept it'. I remember when the internal purchase scheme came I told him, explained to him, 'I'm going to do this'. He said, 'Perfectly alright with me. Only see, athpita kasi [cash to hand] ; that the money is paid to the man the moment he brought the rice. No question of headman saying, "I paid", or the Revenue Officer saying, "I'll send the money to So-and-So".

- So please see that you pay cash to the man. Give the man his money and he'll get it'. I had a tremendous admiration for him. I'll give you one instance. I remember travelling with him one night, by the night train, and got out about two in the morning, at Anuradhapura, two a.m. And I said to Freeman, 'Come along, I'll give you a lift'. (?) (?); then he said, 'You see that body. That man depends on me for his maintenance too in a way. I must give him his hire'.
- I. Yes, I see. Pity there weren't more men like him in the Service.
- A. He was an exceptional man. Believe me, as I told you, for exceptional virtue, I haven't come across another more virtuous man. I mean, no question, you know, of being insincere. That he put it on in order to impress people that he was liberal. He was very - he was a - he was religious minded. It was part of his religion. To be just. Maithri karuna, the true words, that's the best thing. (?) compassion, love, consideration were qualities innate in him.
- I. Turning to the period when you were A.G.A. Kegalla, did you feel that there was a lot of - that the peasants there were landless? I mean, many people were landless? Kegalla? Or was ...?
- A. Kegalla was a bad area. This Land Development Ordinance. We tried to give them land. And particularly Mr. Senanayake, who was very keen that the Kegalla area should be given as much land as possible because the villagers hadn't the land. And whatever Crown land was available we tried to give it under the L.D.O. Ordinance so that they can't alienate it.
- I. And who had got the land, the European planters or the Ceylonese planters, in that district?
- A. Well, both.
- I. Both?
- A. Both, I think, (?). But whatever Crown land was left, we never sold it to them except to the villager.
- I. Now, I'd like to really take up this L.D.O. Ordinance. Did you consider the ideas behind it good?
- A. I did. It did a lot of good.
- I. What were the chief aims?
- A. Aims? So that the villager who'd got the Crown land could
-

not alienate it and become again a pauper.

- I. That's one aim. Did they also hope to increase production by having economic units?
- A. You see, whenever a colony was established under the Land Development Ordinance ...
- I. Or village expansion?
- A. Village expansion, I had a model allotment there so that the villager may know how to cultivate his allotment if you had the model.
- I. Even in Kegalla you had one?
- A. Yes, at Vadulla I had.
- I. Pardon?
- A. Vadulla.
- I. Vadulla.
- A. I had a model allotment, and I held my land kachcheries there, under the L.D.O. And I said, 'Now, look here, - after giving the land [I said], 'Come with me now. I'll show you a model allotment. Now, this is how you must cultivate the land. This particular allotment has been cultivated by a villager'.
- I. What was the size of the allotments? Five acres and three?
- A. Those days it was one and a half acres. Later on ... It depended on the extent that was available.
- I. And were these garden allotments or paddy or ...?
- A. Mudland and highland.
- I. Highland?
- A. Wherever possible we gave the mudland and the highland.
- I. And was it your idea that the units should not be reduced beyond a certain size?
- A. At least, not beyond one acre, [sorry] not less than one acre. The five acre and the three acre [grant] came later on where the land was available.
- I. In the Dry Zone?
- A. Dry Zone.
- I. Right. It was not supposed to be divided, therefore one heir. But in practice didn't some of these allottees share-crop the land to several individuals, or give it in ande to one individual, therefore defeating one of your purposes?
- A. They did. Then we confiscated it. We withdrew - cancelled it.
-

- I. Did you do it ...?
- A. Oh, yes, yes.
- I. Often?
- A. Very often. We got them out. I know of several cases.
- I. Evicted them?
- A. Oh, yes, yes. Said, 'No! Sorry!' Because we did not, you know, confirm the allotment till we found a cultivator.
- I. Cultivator. But what if it was cultivated by someone else on a concealed share-cropping basis?
- A. Well, if we found it out, we knocked him out.
- I. I agree that the aims were good, but could you find it out? Isn't it difficult to administer? So many ...
- A. Not easy, but generally the headman was there, the R.M. was there, the villagers were there, when we went to give them permanent titles. And we were able to get at the facts sometimes.
- I. Did petitions help you out to ...?
- A. Anonymous, yes, in their own way. (?) (?). Anonymous. They had their own ways.
- I. But, you see, Farmer and others found in the 1950's, in the colonisation schemes, that over half or, you know, more of the land was share-cropped.
- A. Oh, I see.
- I. But this is in colonisation schemes.
- A. I don't - I did not come across it.
- I. Of course it was just developing [re in your time].
- A. Yes.
- I. No, what I'm stressing is ...
- A. I was - I found in the colonisation schemes - now, Parakrama Samudra - the first scheme was opened by me. And all those chaps are very well. They said, 'The land is our own'. And they are doing extremely well. Mind you, improvidence, in every, you know, society and in every group. And you can't safeguard the interest of the villager a hundred per cent. If the fellow is that type who will not get down to it, and will try to overlook or disregard the regulation, he'll do so. And try to get away with it.
- I. I was thinking from the administrative point of view, say, in the late '30's and early '40's, before all these D.L.O's¹

1. District Land Officers.

were appointed, was it practicable to administer? Could you examine every lot and every allottee in, say, Kegalla District?

- A. Not every allotment, but when we did go there we did do the surprise inspection to see how things were going. We never said that we were inspecting but we did the surprise inspection as we went. We went off(?) route(?) or a particular area. And saying, 'What are you doing now? Why are you cultivating this? If you're not cultivating, well, alright, come, there will be an inquiry'.
- I. And you were not quite - I mean, what we have found recently is that D.L.O's generally don't evict people if they're share-cropping the land?
- A. Don't at present you mean?
- I. Yes.
- A. I don't know. I can't tell you.
- I. You see, they feel that eviction is too severe a punishment. They feel that just because he had ...
- A. Share-cropping, I mean its not a ...
- I. Giving it in ande to someone else? They're not supposed to do it.
- A. They're not supposed to do it. Ande cultivation certainly ought to be discouraged. I mean, he's supposed to cultivate it himself. Because he gets obviously a better share. Its a lazy chap who will give it on ande cultivation.
- I. But technically ...
- A. Unless he got some money too with it. On the money consideration. I can't imagine the average labourer who has one or two acres of paddy land giving it on ande cultivation. If he hasn't got the labour, he may do it. If he can himself cultivate it, obviously it pays him to do it. But if he can't afford to find the labour and the means he may say, 'Come and share'.
- I. You see, the present view seems to be that its too harsh to evict a person who is ...
- A. Depends on the case. I would say it depends on the merits of each case ...
- I. But what appears to me to be - has happened is that formerly the former Civil Servants - British and Ceylonese - were
-

less frightened to evict a person or less, I mean - well, less non-inclined to evict a person than the people today who feel that they can't do it, they musn't do it.

- A. Maybe. Maybe - quite so. Because then you will have the petition, then you will have the representation, then the M.P.'s will come in and intervene; and difficulties may arise. Personally his [the D.L.O.'s] own job, he-he-he, may be in jeopardy; he-he-he, or transferred to some remote place. He may be frightened.
- I. No, 'also they say that there should have been some intermediate punishment. Not as severe as eviction but something like a fine for these sort of cases. What do you think of that suggestion?
- A. You see, as I told you, it depends on the merits of each case. Now, if I had three acres of mudland and I couldn't afford the labour - I couldn't pay the labourer to cultivate the land and I had to do it by myself, I'd say that ande cultivation is justified up to a point. Because he couldn't afford the labour.
- I. But what if its one acre?
- A. One acre? Then ...
- I. Evict him?
- A. Yes, yes. He's a lazy chap in other words. He evidently depends on something else.
- I. But if there was a fine also [i.e., as well], wouldn't it have given the officer a greater degree of flexibility in the course he took? If he had - now, he can only let him be or evict him. But if there was something intermediate he has greater room to manoeuvre?
- A. Possibly, possibly. The - I mean, the better alternative ...
- I. For instance, in the grant stage, after the permit stage, did you still continue to keep an eye on the land and make sure that ...?
- A. That was the duty of the revenue officers, the R.M.'s and the D.R.O.'s¹. And, of course, now you have the Land Development Officers² and others. It is their job to see that it is done.
- I. I was just wondering whether from the area you had to cover

1. District Revenue Officers.

2. Error. District Land Officers.

- it was too much for one man to supervise and ...?
- A. Maybe, but if surprise inspections and if he had his heart in his work, if he worked with both the head and heart, there were ways of doing it. (?) practically.
- I. In fact, I have some evidence from a European source that some of the older Civil Servants didn't like Brayne and didn't like his ideas and his ways. And therefore rather opposed this Ordinance and didn't put their best foot forward?
- A. Maybe. Maybe. I can't say. I'm not quite certain.
- I. For instance, who was your G.A. in Kegalla?
- A. (?)
- I. Kegalla?
- A. No, no. The G.A. was in Ratnapura.
- I. Ratnapura.
- A. Poulier was Acting. He was a very liberal man. I had no difficulty with him.
- I. Because I heard that even Codrington of all people was against this sort of thing?
- A. Codrington was a peculiar type.
- I. In what way?
- A. He was an imperialist and very conservative.
- I. I should have thought that his study of land tenure would have ...?
- A. That was purely scholarship.
- I. Not liberal at all?
- A. Not liberal. Not liberal-minded.
- I. Even arrogant?
- A. Arrogant. Very good to me, personally. Discussed historical subjects and Kandyan customs. He was that type. I don't think he had any interest in administration at all. He was the scholarly type. He gathered information, published a book. That was his hobby. As far as practical administration was concerned he was useless.
- I. In fact that reminds me of - brings me to Stace. I know he was a philosopher. Was he down-to-earth?
- A. Very much so, as far as his job was concerned.
- I. Practical?
- A. Practical. As a Settlement Officer I had the highest
-

regard for him.

- I. Seems to be a very versatile personality?
- A. Very versatile, very versatile.
- I. I would just like to sort of jump from that really to the constitutional and political - and I think this is the last aspect. What did you think of the situation in the late '20's when you had these - when you had the unofficials in a majority in the Council and therefore they had some - quite a lot of financial power and they were able to criticise heads of departments and Civil Servants. Wasn't this unpopular?
- A. Very unpopular. Naturally the heads of departments took great exception to it. That they were being bullied and badgered by people who did not know their job.
- I. But was this because the heads of departments were not used to this, not politically-minded?
- A. Yes. Because they were arbitrary rulers. They exercised power in an arbitrary way and the moment the popular element came in and there was criticism, naturally the reaction was there.
- I. Did the politicians go too far in their criticism?
- A. In certain cases [yes]; far too far.
- I. Was it uninformed criticism at times?
- A. Uninformed. Uninformed and vindictive.
- I. Oh, there was that element?
- A. Some, some element...; there was an element [of vindictiveness], yes.
- I. And weren't Fletcher and Elphinstone rather unpopular because they didn't protect these chaps and because they gave into the politicians?
- A. Even Woods.
- I. Pardon?
- A. Even Woods. Elphinstone, Fletcher. Because they were really - they felt that the bureaucrats had to yield. That it must change. That the time of the bureaucracy is past and it must change. And the change must be effected by those at the top. If the people below wouldn't accept it and wouldn't change.
- I. So it was a - was Fletcher in particular trying to play the
-

- political game? Trying to win popularity?
- A. I can't say that. I mean, he had to manage the Constitution and naturally he had to make allowances. Either he had to come to a deadlock and have a message to the Colonial Office for some other way. Well, he did not want to risk that. It wasn't worth doing that. His own job was in jeopardy.
- I. And he seems to be a person perhaps lacking in courage because he never reported to the Colonial Office that Clifford was intermittently insane, and that was his duty to do so.
- A. I don't know that. He was - I think he should have done at one stage. At least, I would have thought that someone - even if Fletcher failed to do it - that some other high official would have told Fletcher: 'Its about time you did it. He's not all there. He was a very able man but that ability has given way to insanity'.
- I. What sort of man was Fletcher?
- A. Very liberal, very fine. I found him to be cordial as Governor, Acting Governor in Nuwara Eliya.
- I. Can you remember any particular cases where departmental heads were assailed and where it was unjustified or rather taken too far?
- A. There may have been. I can't think of any definite case but there was bound to be. I mean, you can't help it. Even in England today heads of department are very often on the mat for nothing at all. And they may have grievances.
- I. What was the point of view expressed by the C.C.S. delegation led by Newnham, which met the Donoughmore Commission in secret?
- A. I forget. I can't tell you at the moment. (?) (?) (?) or not. But I know the Ceylonese section were not in favour.
- I. Not in favour? Were they consulted?
- A. Well, they were, I believe, but we certainly refused to subscribe to it.
- I. That's very useful.
- A. Particularly C.L. Wickremesinghe, P. Saravanamuttu and company. They were seniors and we said, 'Not a hope'. I mean; 'we want the whole thing(?) and we're not going to prevent home-rule, self-rule. Not a hope.'
- I. Oh, you discussed it and argued against it?
-

- A. Oh, yes.
- I. Where was this done? Privately?
- A. Privately, yes. When the memoranda was circulated, we said, 'No, we can't subscribe to these'.
- I. And they wanted special protection for the Public Services, didn't they?
- A. I believe so.
- I. But wasn't the Public Service Commission itself a good idea? A separate body of that sort?
- A. I think it was.
- I. Its generally done nowadays.
- A. Yes. I think its good. Public Services Commission is good.
- I. How did you find Stanley as a Governor?
- A. Liberal.
- I. Genuinely sympathetic to the ...?
- A. I believe so. He was, as you know, a Jew.
- I. Was he unpopular because of that? Did some of the Civil Servants dislike him because he was a Jew?
- A. Very difficult to say. I mean, that may have been in the background. But he was a very liberal type, and he was an imperialist himself; I mean [an] empire-builder but he wanted the Commonwealth, the Commonwealth idea was there.
- I. That's interesting.
- A. You know, he wanted to have people - self-rule encouraged whilst remaining in the Commonwealth, or in the Empire - under a different name, whatever it is.
- I. Was he unpopular with the Civil Servants because he encouraged this?
- A. Ha-ha; well, I don't know the reason. Certain elements may have.
- I. One thing that strikes me about the pre-Donoughmore Commission is that Clifford took one look at it and said its unworkable but Stanley in defence, in his own defence really because he was being criticised, said that it was a Constitution which was workable and that cooperation had outweighed opposition in practice?
- A. That is the committee system?
- I. No, the previous - before that, with the unofficial majority.
- A. Oh, I see. I see. Yes, yes.
- I. What did you think of the Constitution?
-

- A. What?
- I. Having a Constitution with an unofficial majority?
- A. Well, it had to come. I mean, that was the only way to give the people of the country - the necessary power to ...
- I. That's the Donoughmore. I agree with the Donoughmore but this 1924, the Manning Constitution, where the unofficials had financial powers
- A. Responsibility, yes.
- I. ... but not much responsibility.
- A. Yes.
- I. They didn't have the direct ...
- A. You know, that was the transitional stage. They said step by step. And people were prepared to accept anything; far better than having the old system. They said this means something else very soon.
- I. But when the Donoughmore people suggested their rather novel Constitution, E.W. Perera and many of our leaders didn't want it.
- A. That is, Committees.
- I. Yes. It just got through the Legislative Council and even afterwards people were saying: 'This is not good enough'. Why was that? They got quite a lot of power then.
- A. Pardon?
- I. They got quite a lot of power.
- A. And not only that, it was a workable system. I yet feel the Committee System is far more suitable for our country than the system we have today, the party system. This is my personal view.
- I. In what way?
- A. In what way? Every ounce of talent will be used. And [there is] no question of having parties ... I say, today, the village is divided, because of the party system, on colour, on creed, on personality, ...
- I. On policy.
- A. ... on policies. And we must understand that the democracy of - British democracy can't be imported into a country wholesale without taking into consideration the local traditions, history, the background. That's why I say that Committee System ... I mean, it had a few(?), a few fellows made money, but look at the present system.
-

- I. But wasn't the Committee System rather slow and cumbersome?
- A. Was it slow and cumbersome? I mean, any system can be slow and cumbersome. Even today the British system is criticised for being slow and cumbersome. I mean, democracy is that. It is a slow and cumbersome way of working. I mean, the other one [alternative] is the dictatorship. If you want results overnight. Surely isn't that accepted? That really democracy working in a certain particular way is a very slow process?
- I. Didn't you feel that the politicians who opposed this Constitution, opposed it because it was a novel type of system and they wanted the Westminster model?
- A. That's right. This Cabinet-idea was in their heads. And the Committee they never took the trouble to analyse this and find out: "I say, on the whole, possibly this system may work better than any other system", as Bandaranaike thought. He told me, 'Sir Richard, its a great pity that we abandoned that system and I'm sorry because every ounce of talent And we hadn't this wretched, you know, mis-conceived opposition merely for the sake of opposition'. That is your danger.
- I. And what did you think, at that stage, of the grant of universal franchise?
- A. Well, I must say, I was opposed to it myself. I had reservations. I said, 'Well, universal franchise in England came only in 1919 or something.' And I think our leaders themselves ...
- I. Most of them were against it?
- A. Were against it. I know. And [they] said, 'Go slow. I mean, you took so many years. Please don't thrust it on us, wholesale, in sort of "hey presto" style'.
- I. But wasn't it their argument that if they gave universal franchise it would prevent the growth of an oligarchy, or at least ...?
- A. Possibly that was the idea. I think Shiels, Drummond Shiels was the main person who wanted it. I think Butler and company were inclined to agree with our leaders too; that it must go slow.
- I. For instance, what was the attitude of the British Civil
-

Service, and perhaps the other Britishers to this Constitution? Did they not like it, this universal franchise and this ...?

A. They had no choice, they had no choice. They had to accept it.

INTERRUPTION

I. What did you think of the Officers-of-State? This also was bound to lead to friction, didn't it?

A. Friction. Unfortunately at that stage.

I. And there was friction?

A. Friction? Oh, yes. And they couldn't really - they ... Oh, yes, they did not hit it off at all. They were called the 'watch-dogs'. And the ... What's this ...?

I. Policemen?

A. Yes, policemen.

I. Would the personality of the chaps who were chosen contribute to this friction? Tyrrell, Bourdillon, Woods?

A. No, Woods was popular.

I. He was popular?

A. Yes. He was able to work it.

I. But Tyrrell?

A. Tyrrell?¹ But mind you a very liberal-minded Christian.

I. Tyrrell?

A. Oh, yes. In his own way.

I. I thought he was old-school, and rather ...?

A. Old-school imperialist, but very liberal-minded imperialist. He never wanted the bullying and badgering of a local man. I know of a case, my own case, where I had a tremendous argument with a British officer, when there was a strike in the harbour.

I. 1927?

A. '27, when I was the first man to be given a staff post there. And there was a row outside the customs' premises and I wanted the police to intervene, the superintendent. And we had a tremendous argument. He said I had no authority. And I went for him. And he made a complaint to Tyrrell. And Tyrrell called me and said, 'There is a complaint made by (?) (?) (?)'. And I said, 'Sir, you haven't the correct facts. The facts are so and so and I'll tell you' - I

1. I think he shook his head here indicating that Tyrrell did not get on well.

explained - 'And you can check it up if you want from So-and-So'. Well, he did. And he called the other chap and gave him hell and said, 'You go and apologise. You tender an apology. It was perfectly alright'.

I. The police seem to be very reactionary?

A. At that stage it was really doing the work of the army as well as the police ...

I. It was rather a European preserve at that time?

A. Absolutely.

I. I notice they were very careful with the police and with the Irrigation Department?

A. Umm. Irrigation Department too. I don't know why that was. The Irrigation Department particularly was very, very anti-native.

I. Anti-native?

A. Hardly any Irrigation Engineer was Ceylonese.

I. Wasn't there a lot of internal friction within that Department too?

A. Which?

I. Within the Irrigation Department, between the European officers themselves?

A. I don't know. There must have been. I can't tell you. I came in at a later stage really.

I. Coming back to this Officer-of-State, how was Wedderburn as a Chief Secretary?

A. I believe he got on fairly well with the national leaders.

I. But wasn't he also rather an old-school type of G.A.?

A. Very.

I. And I was wondering whether he was a good provincial officer but a bad person to put in the centre?

A. Centre. Well, seniority too counted, but I believe he later on got on very well, you know, at the centre.

I. Yes, I think the friction was more pronounced at the start.

A. Start [yes]. Later on they had to accept it and they didn't - they couldn't, you know, check it. They couldn't road-block, in other words.

I. Of course, later on, I think, they also had some better men in Caldecott, Drayton, Nihill?

A. Very, very, very fine men. Very fine men. And I had the

greatest admiration for Caldecott. The most liberal-minded Governor we had. And no kind of superiority complex in that way. Very human, humane. He was very good.

I. Drayton and Nihill?

A. Both [i.e. also good men]. In fact, I met Nihill in Kenya, when he was Chief Justice there, the other day. He's retired now. His son is there now I think.

I. He's - I've met him too. And he struck me as being very liberal and he's quite mentally active. He's quite old now but ...

A. Where did you meet him?

I. In London.

A. In London. I met him in Kenya. I have the greatest(?) regard(?) for(?) him(?). Drayton too was very liberal.

I. But he had a row with Senanayake, didn't he? Later on?

A. Drayton? I don't know of a row, what the row was. But I think they got over it in the end.

I. Oh, I see.

A. Or at least I think so. Of course even Caldecott thought that old D.S. was a bit aggressive.

I. Oh, did he?

A. Yes.

I. There was one incident when D.S. resigned. Can you remember that?

A. Yes, yes, that's so.

I. Over some estate strike. And ...

A. I¹ He was uncompromising. I mean, Ceylonisation came with him.

I. With D.S.?

A. He was the pioneer who insisted on Ceylonisation; and all our land development, irrigation, agriculture is entirely due to that man.

I. I would grant a lot of that but I was - just recently, I've been wondering about one or two things. I know that the Irrigation Department was rather anti-native, but I was wondering whether he was moving too fast in getting rid of these European officers? Didn't he drive some fellows away?

A. Depended, depended. Depended on the personal element. He

1. He clearly did not remember the details.

kept some back and got rid of some others.

- I. Yes. But was it wise in view of his expanding programme to get rid of staff which they badly needed, because you must have the machinery?
- A. Possibly he thought that our chaps could deliver the goods.
- I. Yes, its not a question of 'our chaps'. We didn't - I think we didn't have enough men then to take the place of men who, after all, had some experience of Ceylon. And you can't replace experience just like that. And however much they were conservative it might have been wiser from the point of view of his programme ...
- A. To keep them back? Maybe. I know one or two who - because he was very friendly with me. I mean, very confidential chats(?) with me. He had a tremendous confidence in me and I used to discuss things with him.
- I. I was wondering whether he was such a progressive sort - I mean D.S. - that he wanted yes-men?
- A. All people want that, isn't that so? I mean, people who exercise authority want people who will carry on his policy, but on the whole I found that I was able to discuss the thing with him and say, 'I don't think this is the right thing to do', and he very often said, 'Yes, take it back'.
- I. You see, because whatever they may say about the European irrigation officers couldn't be said about Edmund Rodrigo and he did get rid of him as Director of Agriculture?
- A. Yes, ha-ha-ha.
- I. He was too independent, was he?
- A. Are you recording this?
- I. I will knock it off.¹
- INTERRUPTION
- I. ... purely paper work!²
- A. I believe he [Edmund Rodrigo] did a certain amount of good work in the Agricultural Department. He got his field officers to do a job of work. Oh, yes, he checked their work very carefully too and (?) (?) .
- I. Didn't D.S. also have some bees in his bonnet about some things? Some, you know, particular ideas which he wouldn't drop even if it was proving incorrect?
- A. That is a natural human character[sic] isn't that so? We

1. See Confidential and Unrecorded Information.

2. I have obviously repeated a point he had made at the end of the interrupted conversation, namely that Edmund Rodrigo was not practical and was a paper-wallah.

have all bees in our bonnets. Very difficult thing to convince people that that is possibly the wrong attitude.

- I. What did you think of D:S. the man, and D.S. the Prime Minister?
- A. I admired him tremendously. In fact, he was riding with me that morning when he fell off the horse.
- I. Yes, I know.
- A. And I had to take him to hospital. I simply admired him, had the highest regard for him, and I consider him to be the real national leader, No. 1.
- I. Didn't he rather fall off as Prime Minister in the sense that - didn't, well, act according to the promise which he held? And didn't show the same skill and the same sort of guiding - control as he had when he was Minister of Agriculture?
- A. You know, you must understand he preserved national unity.
- I. Yes, that's true.
- A. I mean that - he always told me ... He said, 'We can't afford to bully and badger the minorities. There must be this national unity'. I mean, the Sinhalese man is [in] a majority. I mean, he need not worry. He said, 'If he [the Sinhalese man] survived under imperial rule, he's bound to survive under our own rule'. And I remember a deputation of priests and others went to see him about the language question. Incidentally, I happened to be there. And he said, 'Richard, you better remain here. This is a deputation that's come. I would like you to see what they have to say. Listen to them'. Well, they started about the Sinhalese language and various things. And he said, 'Now, look here, did we win independence to destroy the Sinhalese race? To destroy our language? What are you talking about? I say we have got other problems too. Our people haven't got enough to eat; our people haven't got places to live. These are problems we must solve first. Our language is not going to be destroyed. If it could not be destroyed under their[British] rule, it can't be destroyed under our rule. Please don't worry about that. Let us go slow and give priority to things which should get priority'.
- I. He must have been disappointed at the support he got in
-

1948? Didn't he expect more? I mean he was forced to rely on Bandaranaike.

- A. Oh, yes, he did. That Sinhalese Maha Sabha. He wasn't in favour of it. He had other views.
- I. I think he made a mistake. I don't know how far its true, but it would appear that Bandaranaike was promised that he would get the Prime Ministership and - or given to understand that. But ...
- A. If you'll knock that out, I'll tell you.

INTERRUPTION

- I. In fact, I wouldn't rate Kotelawela much as a Prime Minister.
- A. Beg pardon?
- I. As a Prime Minister even he was not ...¹ Coming back to the '30's and '40's, can you remember the Bracegirdle case?
- A. Oh, yes. (?) (?) (?), my brother had a lot to do with it.
- I. How?
- A. Bernard? He was in Parliament then.
- I. Oh, yes.
- A. And he defended D.B. Jayatilaka too. I remember D.B. telling me, 'Your brother - I'm grateful because he put up the best case for me and defended me in Council'.
- I. But wasn't this Commission a bad idea for D.B.? It ...
- A. Beg pardon?
- I. The Commission - having a Commission worked against D.B. because the final findings - the findings didn't help him, no?
- A. Oh, yes.
- I. And later he was pushed ...
- A. Yes. D.B., they said, was very ineffective at the later stages.
- I. He was - I think his intellect was ...
- A. Dotage. And they felt that they want a more dynamic personality.
- I. And, well, D.S. delivered the goods as far as independence was concerned.
- A. This is absolutely correct. There is no question about it. And the way that old O.E.G. and D.S. combined. It was another team. We all had ...
- I. Sir Ivor also helped did he? Ivor Jennings?
- A. Beg pardon?

1. Long pause. Cue not taken up.

- I. Ivor Jennings?
- A. I did not know him very well. He did a tremendous lot of work for them I know.
- I. Who were the other people who were in this scheme, in the planning to get independence? Was Wijewardena there?
- A. Of course, he did a lot there.
- I. Were you taken into their ...?
- A. Oh, yes, a lot. I remember, ... Well, this is ... He came in - the Soulbury Commission came and stayed with me.
- I. Here [Aluwihare village, Matale]?
- A. Anuradhapura.
- I. Oh, I see.
- A. I put the whole lot up. And they went round inspecting my administrative work and wrote - Soulbury wrote a very nice letter to D.S. saying, 'Well, if a young chap can administer a province with this efficiency there's no reason why others ... well, why self-government should not be given to these people'.
- I. Arthur Ranasinha also seems to have been close to D.S.?
- A. Oh, very, very close. Very, very close.
- I. He was taken to England?
- A. Yes, that's right. Very close. He¹ was really (?) that I Old D.S. told me. He said, 'You have done as much for our independence as anybody else'. He made that statement and that's why he was so good to me. I mean, most questions he used to come and discuss. I mean, this wretched knighthood and this and that, I never thought of, C.B.E., I got from Caldecott after he inspected my food production schemes. Layton and company came there and they said ...
- I. That's in the North-Central province?
- A. Yes. They - I saved Ceylon at that time.
- I. Pardon?
- A. I saved Ceylon. (?) (?) (?) [They used to send orders:] 'We want rice. For goodness sake, send us so many bushels, so many (?) (?)'.
I. This was sort of mass production?
- A. This is not self-advertisement but this is fact. They told me: 'Do that(?)'.

1. I think he means Lord Soulbury. He's jumped back.

- I. But I was speaking to one officer who was in charge of Land Development in the war period and he was criticising those in Colombo, saying that they had enormous targets which they never reached, in bringing new land under cultivation?
- A. Well, I told you. There are people who exaggerate and love to talk, ad lib.
- I. You also felt that they were aiming too high?
- A. Mmm. Impossible I said. I mean, now, one chap who was under me said, 'We'll bring ten thousand acres under cultivation'. I said, 'Don't talk a whole lot of damn nonsense'.
- I. He was a Civil Servant?
- A. Yes. 'Ten thousand acres! How? Tell me. I mean, don't talk for the mere sake of talking. Let's be practical'.
- I. That's what - this is an irrigation chap called Kitching. He said that they only reached about twenty per cent of the target set. And he says that the people in Colombo didn't take into consideration the difficulties posed by the jungle which came - which always came back, you see.
- A. Secondary growth.
- I. Yes.
- A. I mean Freeman used to tell me, 'This is our problem, the secondary growth, overnight'.
- I. Coming back to the post-war period, what did you think of Moore as a Governor?
- A. Well, he belonged to the old colonial type. He had to work the Constitution in a liberal way. That was, more or less, under compulsion. He had no choice.
- I. Mmm. And what did you think of Stubbs? He was rather a cynic and a reactionary?
- A. He had a tremendous intellect. Very intellectual, but very cynical.
- I. Snob?
- A. And very snobbish and sceptical. But he wasn't anti-Ceylonese.
- I. Oh?
- A. Oh, no. Never. He had that virtue, as Colonial Secretary, as Governor.
- I. But as Colonial Secretary he was involved in the 1915 riots
-

and I wonder what his stand was? Can you recall the riots in Matale?

A. Oh, I remember ...

I. Were you in Kandy then?

A. Oh, yes. I was in Kandy. I was in charge of a section of the [Trinity] Cadet Corps.

I. So you had to march?

A. Oh, yes. But we were given instructions, 'No shooting on any account'. Although the Cadets were ..., not a hope.

I. Were you there on that occasion when a Cadet detachment stopped a small riot where they had killed a Sinhalese, and, I think, a Moslem was also injured?

A. Yes, yes, I did, I did, I did.

I. Can you recall what happened then?

A. Well, a Moslem - at least a Sinhalese chap I think, one of these rowdies who wanted to threaten the Moslem chaps and said, 'We'll burn your houses', and this and that and there was some argument and the Moor stabbed him.

I. And then the Sinhalese attacked the Moors?

A. Yes, yes.

I. And you managed to bring the ...

A. Oh, yes, yes.

I. Brought order?

A. Oh, yes.

I. What did you think of Fraser's role in Kandy itself? In bringing ...?

A. I think he did everything possible to prevent bloodshed. That was his sole aim. And I think D.S. now after he became Prime Minister when he went to England he travelled hundreds of miles to say, 'How-do-you-do?' to Fraser, he had such a regard.

I. Oh! But Fraser is a controversial figure because Trinicians then tend to like him and no doubt he was a good principal, but others felt that he was very imperialistic in his attitude?

A. At one stage possibly. Later on he changed completely and became an absolute leftist. 'Empire was no use'. He told me so many times.

I. When was this. In the 1920's or earlier?

- A. 1920. After he went to Achimota [in Ghana].
- I. That was after that?
- A. He was completely changed.
- I. But when he was here?
- A. Here he wanted not the - [he wanted] that liberal imperial - the Commonwealth idea he had. But later on he got rid of that. He said, 'Well, you all must be independent. This empire building is nonsense'.
- I. Well, the riots themselves. I mean, the British view was that this was organised in some way and ...
- A. Yes. It came at an unfortunate time.
- I. The war?
- A. And there was a military chap who was a madman?
- I. Malcolm?
- A. Yes, Malcolm.
- I. Oh, how did you know? I also heard this. How did you know?
- A. Well, I mean, the orders he gave. And the planting community played a very bad role in certain areas.
- I. Played them up?
- A. ... played a very bad role. Misled them completely, some of these up-country, low-country planting chaps simply played havoc.
- I. I think some of them were looking for a scrap, you see, and ...
- A. Oh, yes, and got the opportunity.
- I. On the other hand I'm not saying that - I'm not justifying them wholly but to explain their actions - in certain areas there was some suspicion or some justification for organisation. You know, in that you can't get ...
- A. You know there was loose talk going round: '(?) gahala arimu. Uun elavala arimu'.¹ That sort of element was there.
- I. And this mob cry, 'British rule ...'
- A. Yes.
- I. 'British rule is ended'.
- A. Absolutely.
- I. That gives a sort of ...
- A. Idea. (?) I mean, and not a single European was touched. I mean, not a single church was burnt. It was the Moor. Taking (?)

1. 'Let's hammer them and send them off. We'll chase the buggers off'.

- I. Alright it was not anti-British; but the question is: was it against the Moors? Because ...
- A. You see, it started in Kandy.
- I. Rumour - I think rumour was the chief cause.
- A. Absolutely. Even in 1946 you had that, didn't you?
- I. '58?
- A. '58. Rumour. 'So-and-So did so-and-so'. 'So-and-So did so-and-so'. 'So-and-So are coming to burn this temple'.
- I. Yes, but someone has to start it, and was it possible that some elements incited people by spreading rumour. And, for example, in Colombo certain boutiques were marked 'Sinhalese boutique', 'Sinhala Boutique', like that.
- A. Trade jealousies may have come in. And they said: 'This is the opportunity to collar these chaps and knock them out'. Then may have incited the people to knock the Moor out. But there was no thought of rebelling against the British. That was a lot of nonsense.
- I. Yes.
- A. Although possibly the sympathy was that they said, 'I hope they'll get a kick in the pants. Its good for them'.
- I. But didn't you feel that the British after the riots were deliberately trying to put down these ideas and to make the - to suppress this sort of feeling - to cow the people. This levy and, you know, methods they employed?
- A. Which levy?
- I. On the Sinhalese villagers and on the ...
- A. Oh, compensation?
- I. Compensation.
- A. Well, my father, here, refused to collect the compensation. And he was asked to resign. He sent in his resignation. But again Malcolm Stevenson(?) said, 'Please, on a voluntary basis can you collect the money. We don't say its compensation'. Because the thing was. Daddy, here, said, 'I went to town and stopped them and asked them to go away. And how can I go and collect money from them. For doing what?'
- INTERRUPTION
- I. What did you think of Bandaranaike in his abilities? Say, as Minister of Local Government how was he? Because someone said that he had left a tremendous backlog of work?
-

A. (?) administrator. Poor(?) administrator. I always felt that he should have been the Leader of the House and Prime Minister; but the practical part of the work should go to someone else.

I. He was not practical?

A. No.

I. Someone else made this very same comment, and ...

A. He had ability. He was a great debator, a great talker, but I don't think he, well, devoted much time to actual administrative work.

I. And even politically wasn't he really the last word in opportunism, in whatever he did?

A. He-he-he. [I believe he nodded and chuckled acquiescence and asked me to switch the tape-recorder off.]

INTERRUPTION

I. What did you think of the older set of politicians, Ramanathan, Arunachalam and Pieries and crowd?

A. They served their time in a very great way. Finally. They were all able, exceptionally brilliant.

I. But, on the other hand, it would seem that Ramanathan, and then a bit later, Arunachalam, who began this communal split, began widening it by asking for safeguards?

A. You know, there are rights and wrongs on either side. Its like the Congress. You know the Indian National Congress alienating the Muslims - of the Muslim. I mean, these things happen usually. And naturally people get suspicious.

I. In fact, there is some suspicion that Manning tried to ferment it? Built up Arunachalam and ...?

A. I can't tell you whether - he may have at the beginning, but not later on.

I. It was there of course.

A. Yes, yes.

I. And what sort of man was E.W. Perera?

A. Exceptionally independent man who loved the country. And very straightforward, called a spade a spade. Thoroughly impracticable but very honourable.

I. Of course, this other figure, Tambimuttu, was a bit of a noted character, wasn't he?

A. He-he-he ... Yes, he I didn't know him very well, but

from what I hear.

- I. How were the Ministers under the Donoughmore Constitution? How were Periya Sundaram and Marcan Marcan and Panabokke?
- A. Steady on the whole. They did some very good work. They hadn't the experience but, on the whole, they carried on (?). There's no question about that, except one or two.
- I. But didn't they try to influence appointments? Usually?
- A. Very seldom. They(?) say(?) so(?) but I don't think so. Not very much. May have ... I mean, that's a danger in this country. That's what I say: that our own traditions and our own past history and the social atmosphere is conducive to this kind of interference. My very(?) cousin will come to me and say: 'Aiya, mehe mekak thiyana mata; uthavuvak keranna one;' ¹ a fellow I hadn't seen before. Now, people come here to me today, says; 'I want a correct certificate'. I hadn't seen the chap before. I said, 'What is the character certificate I can give you, man?' And you must understand this idea of corrupting the Public Services, the public who do it; by offering these wretched things; by offering them various things like that.
- I. Turning to a completely - another aspect that's struck me. What did you think of Goonesinha and these strikes in the '20's and harbour strikes, for instance?
- A. I say, I had a very high regard. He was the kind who really had the guts, had the courage to do a thing which was thoroughly unpopular.
- I. At that time?
- A. At that time.
- I. And it was with justification, wasn't it?
- A. Justification, and I admired him. Oh, as a pioneer I do admire him. He was thoroughly unpopular with everyone; at least, the people
- I. Yes, what was the Britishers' attitude to him, the Secretariat?
- A. Oh, they did not like him, obviously.
- I. They considered him a crook too?
- A. Mmm. That I don't know.
- I. But, no, this shows how conservative they were. They couldn't

1. 'Brother, I have this [interest] here, you must do me a favour'.

adjust themselves?

- A. They couldn't - you see, that liberal leftist idea hadn't come in here. They were confined to England. He took the cue from there; Goonesinha. And, in fact, in the Customs I told Tyrrell, who was my chief. I said, 'Sir, some of the grievances are genuine. The only thing to do is to appoint a board of arbitration; for them to examine the whole thing and give an award'.
- I. Yes, the impression I get is that always because they were so - because they considered him an agitator, whatever he did they dismissed off-hand, whereas the people may have had genuine grievances.
- A. They did not care to examine it. You know, these wharfage companies, people were ...
- I. Exploited by them?
- A. Not only that. In England they had all these laws. Laws in step(?), and the whole lot.
- I. Laws ...?
- A. Inspect(?). And even the local people were frightened of them.

INTERRUPTION

POST-LUNCHEON SESSION

[He had begun writing his memoirs and was reading a portion from it when I turned the recorder on and continued the interview.]

- A. ' ... the extra O.A., who could not stand this any longer, one morning told the O.A. that he should not choose to come so silently into the kachcheri for fear of his assistant being caught sewing(?) the dead, ha-ha. May be useful. Isn't that so? quite useful?
- I. Yes, I think so. And I would like to see the finished product whenever you've finished with this ... Definitely.
- A. I have to touch it up here and there.
- I. And if you - in fact, if you get it typed and add some photographs and things, it would be very ...
- A. And I - I had it. I was reading it.
- I. What else have you got in your book? in your notes I mean. You haven't got any of your old diaries?
- A. Oh yes, I have.
- I. You have?
- A. Yes. I haven't got them here, but I've locked them up
-

somewhere. Because my wife kept my diaries. They used to go to the Governor. And he used to read them. And often there were marginal notes, 'An interesting diary', 'Why is this complaint made?' 'What has been done to remedy it?', very often. The whole diary went to the Governor. And he read every bit.

I. Every Governor?

A. Every Governor. Till the new administration came [in] the colonial administration the revenue officer's diary went to the Governor.

I. So you've got all your diaries all along?

A. Some of them.

I. Some of them. Oh yes, I was going to ask you about the headman system because, I mean, there was this political attack on the headman system. What motivated this political attack?

A. Pardon?

I. What ...?

A. Mind you, it was the relic of the previous age. And naturally when democracy came in it couldn't be maintained because it entirely depended on the prestige of the persons appointed and persons in charge. In its own day, in its own way it served its purpose. But when the change came over, it had to go. It had to be modified. Put it like that.

I. Yes. Already, by the '20's and '30's, would you say that the influence of the headmen was being undermined?

A. Oh yes, definitely. He was losing ground. But there was a time in Anuradhapura, when I was G.A., the headmen had enormous prestige.

I. Even then?

A. Even then. His word was law. They used to very often say: 'Muladaniya kivuva [the headman said]'. Not in the more sophisticated areas.

I. In fact, talking about sophistication and this Land Development Ordinance, Farmer and others have criticised the concept of individualised land-holding which they [the architects of the L.D.O.] established in colonisation schemes. They said that the traditional village and the villagers are used to this cooperative system with communal

aspects. In the colonisation schemes this[sic] is a very individualised unit and therefore it is unpopular.

A. I don't know whether Farmer is correct there. There was certainly exchange of labour in the village society when it came to cultivation. If I cultivated your field, you help me to cultivate my field. There was that communal cooperation.

I. But it was on an individualistic base, wasn't it?

A. Oh yes, I mean, it was merely another way of bartering your services. I work for you and you in return work for me.

I. What about the bethma system?

A. Well, that ... Bethma? What is the bethma?

I. Under the tank, when there isn't enough water, they ...

A. Yes, bethma. Well, that was also supervised by the vel muladani.

I. Vel vidane?

A. Vel vidane. And he was the chief man there. And generally the vel vidane had to be fair. Because he got his remuneration from the land itself. According to the acreage that was cultivated.

I. Yes, I see.

A. He was paid in kind. He wasn't paid in money. He got no salary at all.

I. So you think that continuing this - that having this - these individualised units of five, eight - five or eight acres ...

A. Five: three.¹

I. Five: three - that's eight acres, in colonisation schemes, without the traditional sort of - without the emphasis on collective activity ...?

A. Collective activity - the assistance given to each other at the time of cultivation.

I. Yes, but that sort of thing you wouldn't get in colonisation schemes.

A. You can't expect it. The point may come to that later on - I mean, I can't ... Imagine if Appuhamy went and helped Ranhamy on his allotment, Ranhamy may come round and help Appuhamy on his allotment. It works purely automatically.

I. But anyway I don't see how you could impose or effect such

1. In the 1930's and 1940's each colonist got five acres of mudland and three acres of highland.

- a system as existed earlier in these new colonisation schemes.
- A. Impossible.
- I. But, of course, the point that Farmer is making is that because it didn't have this collectivist features - these communal features - it was unpopular with the people who received land and therefore they tried to evade the conditions laid.
- A. I can't accept that. In the first place, ^{the} colonists came from different parts of the country; from different villages. And there wasn't that communal feeling.
- I. Right.
- A. They did not belong to the same village. And they more or less fended for themselves. That collective spirit was created when cooperative societies were opened. Then people were told, 'Well, there's no objection to your exchange - your doing work, I mean, [rendering] mutual assistance when cultivation is under way'. That comes naturally, no?
- I. Of course, Farmer was arguing for a system where they had colonists from a certain - from one village so that there was a homogeneous group.
- A. More the Indian background I think.
- I. But another point is ...
- A. I mean, even today, in this village. Now, paddy cultivators: there is mutual assistance - mutual assistance of labour against ... I cultivate, I get help from the adjoining field owner and when he cultivates I go and give him the same assistance. So it goes on till the threshing of the paddy. It goes on.
- I. In fact, when you chose colonists, or when you chose allottees under village expansion schemes - that's in Kegalla and Anuradhapura - how did you choose them?
- A. Landless.
- I. What do you mean by 'landless'?
- A. People who hadn't any land of their own.
- I. If they were tenants of a - if they were sharecroppers - ande sharecroppers?
- A. Beg pardon? Ande. No, other people ... We gave them land.
- I. They were also landless?
- A. Yes, they were also landless.
- I. And did you take the numbers in their family into consideration?
-

- A. Oh yes. Oh yes. If two people were landless, well, we said, 'How many children have you got?' 'How do you maintain yourselves?' And various things like that.
- I. You didn't try to search for a man who had more capital than another man?
- A. No.
- I. So that, you see, because a chap with more capital would develop his land.
- A. That is so. But we said, well, even without capital he should be able to develop his land, an acre of land or two acres of land, if he has got the energy to do so. And the enterprise.
- I. And, really, how can you test a man's cultivational - skill in cultivation?
- A. That's right. I mean, we said, 'Well, you can cultivate it. Others have done it'.
- I. So did you feel that the peasants liked these grants. You know, that they ...?
- A. There was a scramble for it.
- I. Yes, but were they objecting to all these conditions and this supervision?
- A. I don't think so, you know, because they got a grant for building the house, various other things, which were really helpful to them, provided they did the job.
- I. What about the fact that they couldn't borrow money on the land?
- A. Ah, that of course may have been a drawback but they did it. At the time they got the land they did it. I mean, the whole idea was to prevent that.
- I. Yes, that's right. You see, some people have criticised this condition today. They say that the peasants don't like it. Its unpopular because they can't borrow money. But you can't have the best of both worlds, can you?
- A. You can't. I mean, we wanted to prevent indebtedness too. The moment he borrowed/^{the}money, the land that was his goes to the other chap.
- I. Of course, that won't stop indebtedness because there is indebtedness in the colonisation schemes.
- A. Beg pardon?
-

- I. There is indebtedness today in the colonisation ...
- A. Bound to be - anywhere. But they can pay it, no? I suppose they could pay it back.
- I. At least, they won't lose the land?
- A. They won't lose the land.
- I. But you can't wholly prevent indebtedness?
- A. Very difficult, very difficult. Well, I suppose even - most people are indebted, even in the capitalist world.
- I. For instance, regarding the type of grant you gave, did the colonist realise that it was - if after he'd fulfilled the conditions of the permit stage, did he realise that it was going to be his land which he could transfer as he wants?
- A. Once his title - permit was consolidated or made - what is it?
- I. Granted.
- A. Yes. Granted - he knew the land was his.
- I. Yes. But some people think that the peasants didn't realise this because every year they were paying a bit to Government, because there was supervision, that they thought this was - these - and, in fact, in Nuwarakalawiya it is called badu idam.
- A. Nuwarakalawiya. Anuradhapura.
- I. Yes.
- A. Mmm.
- I. Its called badu idam.
- A. Mmm.
- I. Which would indicate that they think of it in terms of leasehold.
- A. Mmm.
- I. But its not leasehold.
- A. Its not leasehold. I don't think - now, under the L.D.O. they hardly paid a cent.
- I. Didn't they pay a sort of nominal sum every year?
- A. Nothing. We never recovered it. As far as I know.
- I. Oh, I see.
- A. We never worried about it.
- I. No, I was ... The point I was trying to grasp is whether the peasant who got this land understood that it was freehold? Was he ...?
- A. We made it clear to him that if he cultivated it and possessed
-

it for so many years according to our instructions that that land - that the land would be granted to him. On a grant - on a Crown grant.

- I. Mmm. Once a chap was given a Crown grant he could - could he transfer it to anybody he liked? To one person?
- A. Only one person. His own kin(?).
- I. He couldn't transfer it to an outsider?
- A. No.
- I. With permission?
- A. With permission? I don't think ... That clause was there. It must go ... He must nominate the person to whom it should go.
- I. What if he nominates an outsider?
- A. He can't. We won't give it to him, when he had children.
- I. Mmm. That's quite good. Jumping back to the headman system and these new developments, didn't the headman system still influence the 1931 and '36 elections considerably? I mean, ...
- A. In certain parts. On certain ... Take Anuradhapura. Oh yes.
- I. For instance, say in a Sinhalese ...
- A. Not in - not in Galle area. I don't think they ...
- I. Couldn't they - well, not in a town, but say in [the] rural Galle area, wouldn't a candidate have to get the support of the headmen?
- A. Would like to, naturally. I mean, the headman's support too helped him. I mean, they(?) would(?) say(?): 'Muladaniyath apé pathé [the headmen also is on our side]. Uthavu kerapalla [provide help]'.
- I. And, in that case, did the support of headmen bring a block of votes? I mean, a certain block of votes.
- A. At least (?). And his henchmen.
- I. So in that sense, wasn't it possible to bribe an electorate? Not necessarily with money but with favours?
- A. That may happen anywhere you know. In electioneering, even in England I suppose.
- I. Yes, that happens. Local ...
- A. Influence, local influence. (?) and so many other people. It was common.
-

- I. But were ...?
- A. The business-man, the big business-man, may have his own staff. Who'll say, 'Alright, we'll vote for So-and-So'.
- I. Yes, but isn't it more pronounced in Ceylon because in England at that stage, and as in Ceylon now, there were two parties and there was always party politics to bear on voters. But in the '30's there was no question of programmes, it was purely ...
- A. Personal.
- I. Personal, really.
- A. Personality.
- I. And I know that in certain areas, in Galle - Kannangara in Galle, and some others, alleged that the headmen influenced the elections by the manner in which they entered people on the electoral register.
- A. Ah! Ah-ha, ha-ha. I think that charge has been made and possibly its correct. But its for the candidate to check it.
- I. To check it?
- A. Yes. Its their duty. Because registration was going on the whole time.
- I. Civil Servants couldn't supervise the electoral registers? I mean, ...
- A. They(?) didn't(?) check(?).
- I. They were dependent on the headmen?
- A. Yes. And the men who registered themselves. If their names did not appear they should have made representations.
- I. What about the siting of polling booths? Polling booths?
- A. Polling booths. That was alright. I mean, the members themselves could arrange it now. They have got a big voice there. They had only to go and tell the returning officer, 'I want a polling booth here'.
- I. But a polling booth in a certain area might favour one candidate and not favour the other?
- A. Depended on the candidates. The candidates can check. Want it in a neutral area. I don't think that happens very much now.
- I. Of course there was a difference between '31 and '36 in that in '36 N.M. and someone else - Philip I think, yes - defeated some of the feudal, old families
-

- A. Yes, yes.
- I. Despite presumably the support of ...
- A. The headmen. Oh yes. Because that was a more sophisticated area. Those are sophisticated areas. Because they had gone left. They'd - they'd - they went for the old families. They said they [the traditional elite] have been your enemies: 'Walauwata giyama, kola uda thamiyi umba inthagannee. Athulata enna thenné nāa. Pita gahak yata inna thiyenné'.¹ Things like that. They were an easy target.
- I. No, I ... I have been told that some people who criticised the headman system in the '20's didn't criticise it in the '30's because they found it very useful to become M.P's - they used it to become M.P's?
- A. Mmm. In certain parts maybe. Certainly in Anuradhapura the headmen had tremendous influence.
- I. Of course but there it was Freeman, wasn't it?
- A. Freeman at that point, but later on when Bulankulame and company came in ...
- I. Oh, you must have conducted the '47 elections here?
- A. No.
- I. Kandy? no?
- A. No.
- I. When you were in Nuwara Eliya and in Kegalla and in the planting area, what did you think of the conditions of immigrant labour on the estates?
- A. Well, as far as I know, they were better-off than the villagers. They had the hospitals, they had the clinics.
- I. Provided by whom? Government or the planters?
- A. Planters, Government. They had various funds. The villager in that area was neglected really until recently. He had no facilities at all, not even a wretched road to his village. The only benefit he got was that his wretched cattle was seized and tied in the - on the estate.
- I. And they had to pay for it?
- A. And they had to pay for it.
- I. Wasn't cattle trespass a continual cause of friction?
- A. Tremendous. In fact, my father used to make very strong representations. You see, these cattle had been in this village from time immemorial. They're necessary for their

1. 'When you go to the feudal manor, you have to sit on a leaf. One is not permitted inside. One has to wait outside under a tree'.

- cultivation. If the estate is there let them fence the estate. They can't get rid of the cattle. And there are no pasture grounds because the estates have taken over everything.
- I. In fact, didn't your properties suffer from lack of pasture, or ...? Did your family itself ...?
- A. Oh yes. And my father, in those days, had about thirty head of cattle.
- I. Thirty?
- A. Thirty.
- I. And what about shortage of forests for village use?
- A. Shortage yes. And not only that: conservation of water.
- I. Mmm.
- A. I mean, they had no water supply here. The village has no water supply. All the catchment areas have been cleared.
- I. You mean there was a noticeable reduction of supply of ...?
- A. Water? Oh, definitely. Even here. I'm going to tell the Kandyan Peasantry Commission to declare the whole thing a reserve, forest reserve.
- I. You didn't get involved in this struggle for the - over the immigration question in the '30's and '40's?
- A. No, no, no. I had - as Inspector General of Police I had to ... When D.S. was there, I had to report (?) ...¹ If you go to one of their houses you'll find a picture of Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, all the Indian leaders, not a single Ceylonese leader. And every festival the [sic] Indian Union flag and not the Ceylonese flag.
- I. Oh, you reported that, did you?
- A. Oh yes. I mean: 'How could they call themselves Ceylon citizens if that is their background'. Obviously - it was too clear. It was self-evident. As I went round you should go and see.
- I. Well, that's about exhausted my

END OF INTERVIEW

1. He skips here and goes on to present a point he made in his report.

Unrecorded and Confidential Information provided by Sir Richard Aluwihare during interview, 26 July 1966

When recorder was switched of on his request:

No. 1. Edmund Rodrigo asked for his transfer from the Directorship of Agriculture. He was too clever by half; considering himself intellectually superior and habitually writing rude minutes to the Minister. P. Saravanamuttu, C.L. Wickremasinghe and Sir Richard used to warn him continuously and say, 'For God's sake, put it courteously at least'. They used to hack him and tell him that he was being as superior and imperialist as the worst type of European officer. But he never changed.

He seemed to agree with my query as to whether Edmund Rodrigo was an intellectual snob. He also stated that 'pen and paper' were Edmund's forte and clearly believed that he was not a practical administrator so much as an office-wallah, though he did add that as Director of Agriculture he got some pretty useful things done and kept his subordinates on the mark.

No. 2. D.S. Senanayake's greatest mistake - I think he said 'the one mistake' - was in not accommodating the ambitions of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike. His family loyalties got the better of him. Mind you, Dudley Senanayake had no desire to be P.M., refused to manoeuvre for it and, later, had to be pressed and bullied to take the post. Sir Richard made it clear that D.S. wanted to keep succession within his family. At the same time Sir John Kotelawala did a great deal to elbow Banda out. Sir John couldn't stand him and was also rowing for the Prime Ministership.

No. 3. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike aimed at the Premiership from his earliest days. As Bernard Aluwihare told Sir Richard, Banda wanted to get to the top and he did not care how he did so. Sir Richard, in fact, agreed with my suggestion that Banda 'was the last word in opportunism'. In response to my queries, too, he seemed to agree that Banda sought power and had a touch of megalomania.

In response to other queries he was quite clearly of the opinion that Banda was not a practical or an able administrator. A good talker, intelligent and full of ideas, yes; but down-to-earth in administrative matters, no. He also agreed with my suggestion that Banda (after 1956) failed to control the forces which he had put himself at the head of.

Over lunch. Talking from his experience as a boy in Aluwihare, Matale as well as his knowledge of Kandyan affairs, Sir Richard was definitely of the opinion that villagers had suffered from the expansion of estates. I raised the general question whether estates in the vicinity of villages were not an aid to the villager in that they could work part-time on the estates. He definitely disagreed. On further explanation he was willing to admit that this may have been so in the lowlands (i.e. Wet Zone rubber areas in the Western Province, etc.) but not in the Kandyan highlands. I asked whether the villagers were not 'better off economically' in that this was better than a precarious livelihood on rice etc. He did not answer this directly but devoted himself to the point that Sinhalese villagers considered coolie work degrading: 'කොහොමද කුලී දැඩි කර්මයේ' ¹ was their attitude. It did not have status or prestige.

He was also convinced that the growth of estates meant a reduced water supply for the valleys below; i.e. the removal of forest in the catchment area was detrimental. He pointed to the very locality we were in and said that this had happened in Aluwihare village itself.

M.W. Roberts
26/7/66

1. 'How can one do coolie work'.