SIR FRANKLIN GIMSON, K.C.M.G. b. 10 Sept. 1890.
B.A., Oxon.
C.C.S. 1914 - 1941.

28 Nov. 1914	apptd. to C.C.S.
22 Dec. 1914	attached to the Col. Sec's Office & the General Treasury.
8 May 1915	attached to the Office of the Naval Intelligence Officer as well.
1 Aug. 1916	Additional P.M., Colombo as well.
29 March 1917	Additional Municipal Magistrate as well.
20 May 1918	on service in the Army.
23 July 1919	Additional Asst. Col. Sec. on return to Ceylon.
8 Sept. 1919	O.A. and P.M., Anuradhapura.
4 March 1920	Additional Asst. Col. Sec.
21 Sept. 1920	Fourth Asst. Col. Sec.
7 Feb. 1922	Acting A.G.A., Mannar.
13 June 1923	on leave.
15 Jan. 1924	Additional Landing Surveyor, Customs.
7 March 1928	Acting Deputy Collector of Customs.
22 May 1928	resumed duties as Landing Surveyor.
8 Oct. 1928	on leave.
19 March 1929	attached to the Education Dept.
30 March 1929	Additional Asst. Dir. of Education.
9 July 1931	Sec. to the Minister of Education.
6 Feb. 1932	A.G.A., Trincomalee.
8 March 1932 to 28 May 1932	Acting G.A., Eastern Province as well.
26 July 1933	on leave.
7 Dec. 1933	A.G.A., Kegalla.
12 Aug. 1935	on special duty in connection with the revision of the Register of Voters for 1935 and the General Elections of Members of the State Council.
1 June 1936	Chairman, Kandy Municipal Council and Additional A.G.A., Kandy.
9 April 1937	on leave.
26 July 1937	Acting Controller of Labour.
11 Aug. 1938	Acting Deputy Chief Sec.
23 Oct. 1938	Controller of Labour.
1941	transferred to Hong Kong.
Post 1946	Governor of Singapore.

Comments on Interviews with Sir Franklin Gimson, K.C.M.G., 24 and 25 November 1965.

Fully alert mentally, I found Sir Franklin very helpful, frank and down to earth. The tape-recorder only inhibited him a trifle and that only when it came to remarks on individuals and on matters in which he himself was involved with some credit to himself; and even on these he was willing to be wholly candid when we were chatting during the several journeys in his car.

I found him remarkably liberal, objective and even radical in his views. For instance he stated that most underdeveloped countries, and certainly Ceylon, needed authoritarian states. This, of course, is not a novel view today, but note the sentence that followed: "I do not mind if it is right or left [but a totalitarian state is essential]". One will naturally wonder if it is a mellowed view of a retired Civil Servant. In his case it was certainly not so. On his own showing he was one of the few Ceylon Civil Servants who was strongly in favour of universal franchise. A measure of his radicalness is seen in the displeasure he incurred among Sir F.G. Tyrrell and Sir M.M. Wedderburn, two more conventional men who were Chief Secretaries in the 1930's. A measure too was the intense hostility he aroused among some planters. Indeed from reading Dr. Kumari Jayawardena's thesis on trade-unionism he emerges as a radical-minded officer for his day. From a remark made by another retired C.C.S. man one wonders whether he was too biased against employers in general.

He was certainly not a run-of-the-mill type. Having a questioning mind which looked ahead, he was intensely interested in the political developments. If we can rely on his own evidence, he got on well with the Ceylonese politicians (with his views I should think he would). The only question here is whether he had a streak of perversity which made him act counter to the general inclinations of the Civil Service and/or whether he had decided that it was best to run with the hounds. But I think such a view would not be treating him fairly.

Even on non-political questions, his thoughts and actions were of the sort which would not have stuck to orthodox lines come what may. He was ready to be very critical of Government. It is significant that he went so far as to be in general agreement with Freeman's views. On racial issues too he was ready to be critical and not gloss over the question.

Because of these traits I was not only impressed by but thought highly of his personal appraisal of individuals; i.e because not merely orthodox I should have thought he would have spotted the average, stereotyped, type of officer who was able within limits.

But recently I have had some doubts whether his judgements are all that sound. For instance he believed Caldecott was out of his political depth and that he was just an average, affable Governor; but

470

the Soulbury Commission regarded his Reforms Despatch as a very able and perceptive statement while Sir J.B. Nihill and Sir Charles Hartwell - who were in a better position to judge - thought him greatly underestimated, farsighted and able.

M.W. Roberts
14.1.66

INTERVIEWS WITH SIR FRANKLIN GIMSON, K.C.M.G.

FIRST INTERVIEW 24 NOVEMBER 1965

[While I was setting up the tape he made a remark about being unpopular with the planters in 1940-41, just before he left for Hong Kong. Our conversation got round to the question of the trade unions, Indian immigration and the Indian Government's attitude. He said that once the Indian Government barred those long resident in Ceylon from returning to India any immigrants who were dismissed found themselves in a stateless position. And this had repercussions on trade unions and relations between immigrants and planters.]

G. .... And I differed actually - I was, frankly, fighting a lone battle. And I regarded this as being chiefly responsible for all the trouble in Ceylon. But I couldn't get anyone else to agree with me - that the matter was worthwhile taking up. You see, they had this man Jackson. He'd been Attorney General and Legal Secretary. He came out to enquire into this problem of emigration.

I. St. John Jackson?

G. That's the one. He came out to enquire into this trouble and he published a report. And the theme of his report was that there was no need for any restrictions because when Indian labour was wanted in Ceylon, and there was a full circle of employment, they came to Ceylon. When they weren't wanted in Ceylon, there was unemployment in Ceylon, they went back. INTERRUPTION

G. I (?) with Jackson's Report because he said - he rather - what shall I say? - criticised the Sinhalese for their inability to attune themselves to other forms of employment than working on the fields.

I. On the fields. And what do you think of Jackson's views?

G. I thought Jackson's views were correct.[1] But I couldn't get anyone to believe in them. I - if - after all, as I was saying before, the Sinhalese peasant is a very independent person. Peasants always are. And you couldn't expect him to

---

1. From what follows it would appear that he disagreed with Jackson's criticism of the Sinhalese but agreed on other points.

go on to be on an estate, to be subject to the discipline of a very strict labour force.

I. Yes. I see.

G. You see? They won't - I mean, they are peasants. I mean, after all its hard - its very disciplined work on a tea-estate. And as I said you could never expect the Sinhalese, actually, to attune themselves to that particular form of labour.

I. Mmm. And what about this Indian Government's standpoint? This is in the 1930's?

G. This is in 1937, I think.

I. '37?

G. Yes.

I. And what do you think of their views?

G. I thought their views were - they were - they were really most unreasonable. I mean they - you see that's - you see, as a result of that attitude - as the result of the prevention of this ebb and flow of labour, which Jackson said took place, it ...

I. The labourer was in a spot?

G. The labourer - and he became a stabilised - the Indian labourer became stabilised on the Ceylon estates. You see.

I. And the Ceylonese trade unions took this up as such?

G. Well, the ... Yes, the - yes, there were ... Who was it? Philip Goonewardena and N.M. Perera. They - they took the matter up. And they - of course the one reason why they took the matter up ... Another reason of course ... One reason why they took the matter up was because all these people had the vote. You see, if they hadn't had the vote, then it wouldn't have become a political issue. And it made, actually, the development of the trade unions extremely difficult. And it prejudiced, actually, their development. As in this country.

I. What did they demand and what did they ask for?

G. Well, the chief - as I said there was - the chief thing they demanded in my day was the question - was with regard to the question of dismissal.

I. What did they want specifically?

G. Well, they - well, they were ... I suppose that that was practically the only demand they made. If a man was dismissed then they went up in arms. You see? That was the - and we made some sort of agreement actually with the - between the planters and the trade unions with regard to the procedure

---

with regard to dismissal. But it didn't work really very satisfactorily. It was a wonderful agreement of course.

I. Both sides were a bit recalcitrant were they?

G. Yes. And another thing too, you see, I differed very, very strongly from the trade unions - from the planters. Because I regarded the agitation among the planters - among the labour force as being signs of nationalism, you see. It was the nationalist wave which was spreading among the coolies. And this wave of nationalism is something which is very, very difficult to define. Its more of a - more an emotion than anything else, you see. And I considered that you had to take in account that it was actually something which was felt by all the labour force. And it wasn't those - just the responsibility of individual agitators. I was very - I was very impressed ... I don't - is this interesting you?

I. Oh, yes. Very interesting.

G. Well, I was very impressed by what ... A man called Sir Harold Butler who came to Ceylon - he was Director General of the International Labour Office. And he visited Ceylon when I was there. And he wrote his report afterwards on his visit to Asia and the Far East. He wasn't - he didn't go to China. I don't think he went to Japan. But any rate he went to India, Ceylon, Malaya and Indonesia and everything. And he said one of the - [and] I think he was probably right - he said that when the history of the twentieth century comes to be written - this was in '37 - when the history of the twentieth century becomes written the most significant feature will not be the rise of Hitler and Mussolini but the rise of nationalism in Asia. That was in 1937. That was the result of his report. But he was Director General of International Labour.

I. Yes, I see.

G. And I was very, very impressed by that. And perhaps - I don't know - I'm perfectly prepared to admit I was perhaps too impressed by it. And attached too much importance to it. But it was all, the basis of my attitude in the labour field.

I. Were the - were the planters very extreme in their views? I mean, they were totally against trade unions were they?

G. Well, the main trouble with the planters, I think, was that they weren't their own masters. You see they were dependent - a large number of them were dependent on, well, a board of directors in London. And the board of directors in London were mostly composed of people who'd been out in Ceylon years

---

before. When there had been no trouble with labour of any kind, you see. And they thought if one of their - if one of their superintendants was not controlling his labour properly that he was a bad superintendant. And they hadn't the sympathy therefore of the people in London. And they were very terrified actually of their insecurity in the face of this trouble in London.

I. Would you say that this policy emanating from London was in a sense reactionary?

G. It was. Certainly. Very reactionary. Now what was I going to say? Well - oh, yes, another matter, you see. Well, I was so worried about this and I couldn't get the planters to agree with me, you see, on my attitude. But I asked them to appoint a Commission to enquire - from their own members - to enquire into this question of labour unrest, you see. And they - we got one planter, called Wilfred Retty, with whom I discussed the matter quite well. He was - and he agreed with me. He'd read this report of Butler. And also a man called Luddington, who was in the Civil Service. I don't know what's happened to him, he's probably died. He had been Controller of Labour before me and there was some other man. At any rate they were quite prepared actually to undertake this investigation. The people in the Ceylon Association in London who were, as I said, composed of those who'd been in Ceylon before, wouldn't have anything to do with it and they never met.

I. So it was only a few who were reasonable?

G. Only a few who were.

I. In Ceylon?

G. In Ceylon.

I. What were the conditions of labour as such? The master-servant law aspect?

G. Well, of course, the criminal provisions of the labour code had been abolished of course. You know that had been abolished some time before. Well, in what way do you mean exactly?

I. I mean, the laws were up to date were they? The labourers weren't at any disadvantage as such?

G. No, I don't think they were on the whole. One of the troubles was of course - in Ceylon was the kangany system.

I. Mmm. Its always been.

G. Its always been. Well, they, the planters, actually believed in the kangany system. And any suggestion that it was a handicap to the development of labour relations was, oh,

---

completely discounted.

I. They did believe in it, did they? Because in the nineteenth century you get criticisms from the planters of the kangany system because they lost some of their advances. But they tried to reform this. Government did and the planters too. But they - it was retained and one of their arguments was that the coolie would have his kangany and that the coolies wouldn't do with the kangany. So its rather a changed state of affairs in the twentieth century.

G. Yes. Well, certainly I remember because I - one of my - one of my - what do you call it? - in one of my annual reports I mentioned the fact that the kangany system must go. And they got - they went right off the deep end about it. Now when I was in Singapore I was very - I came there with the definite notion, you see, of the idea that the kangany system was a handicap to the development of labour relations and happy - you know, a probably happy approach to the employee. But I realised, actually, the kangany system, as you were saying a few moments ago, did perform a useful service. In that it enabled - in that it gave advances, you see. And if they were ill it gave them money to tide over the illness and that sort of thing, you see. Well, I said to a man in the harbour in Singapore, I said, 'If you want to abolish the kangany system (they didn't call it the kangany system but ...) you must put - you must have some substitute in the place of the kangany , who will be able to provide means for them when they want advances and things like that'. And he said, 'Yes, he quite appreciated that'. And I don't know what he did. Any rate, but he abolished the kangany system and he must have substituted something in its place because as a result of that the relations between the employers and the employees were very, very much happier.

I. I see. And were these coolies badly indebted to their kangany?

G. I think they were. Very badly indebted.

I. But you couldn't find out how much and you couldn't check this?

G. Well, I never did it myself ....

I. What sort of influence did the Minister of Labour - was there a Minister of Labour?

G. Oh, Corea. Yes, he was excellent.

I. Oh, I see.

G. I was in entire sym ... Well, I wouldn't say he was in entire - perhaps I should say I was in entire sympathy with him. Not that he wasn't in sympathy with me.

I. He was in effect your boss?

G. Yes. He dictated the policy.

I. Oh, I see.

G. But he - his policy and my policy - I mean were quite the same.

I. Quite the same. It was on your advice that he ...?

G. Well, I don't say - I think it was our mutual ....

I. Yes, I see. But you were in a position of Permanent Under-Secretary?

G. That's right. Yes.

I. And I asked about the labour laws because Colonel Wright in his book says that the labour laws did, 'no justice to the employer'.

G. I wouldn't have said that for a moment.

I. Yes. It seems a rather ...

G. No, I wouldn't say that for a moment.

I. ... a patently selfish point of view. In effect I would say that it gives the lie to their contention that trade unions were not called for.

G. Ah, definitely. I quite agree with you. Trade unions were definitely called for.

I. And what sort of pressure did the planters bring to bear in 1940-1941?

G. In what way do you mean?

I. You said that you were unpopular among the planters?

G. They tried - I got on so well with Corea and I also had the entire sympathy of the Governor that they didn't bring any pressure to bear. Though there was talk at one time of making representations to the Government to have me removed.

I. Oh, I see. They did talk about it. No, I was wondering whether they, well, in social talk and remarks in the club and so on and so forth ...?

G. Oh, I should think the remarks in the club were ghastly. I can remember going into one club where they turned their backs on me. The whole place.

I. Oh, in Kandy was it?

G. No, this wasn't in Kandy. This was - this was in Darrawella. No.

I. Oh, yes. I know. Its one of the rugger places?

G. Yes.

I. Well, well.

G. But they couldn't have had any influence because I had the confidence of not only of the Minister but the Governor and

---

the Colonial Office too, you see. Otherwise I wouldn't have got ...

I. They disliked Sir Andrew Caldecott because of this, did they?

G. They thought he might have taken stronger action. But you - there was no question of taking action. I mean, you can't dismiss the whole of the labour force. They had to - they had - they had to face the fact that the Government were definitely for - well, keen on fostering the, well, development of the trade unions. And another thing which happened as a matter of fact I remember is this. Before I became Controller of Labour the Controller was very much under the thumb of the planters.

I. Yes, I see. This was in the 1920's or ...?

G. No, this was - oh, this was later. The early 1930's. Until I came along on the scene.

I. Oh, I see.

G. And then I regarded myself in a different capacity. I regarded myself as a protagonist to the labour, you see. And when I went to the - when I went to visit Ceylon on my return from Malaya - from Malaya, 1952, I called in the Labour Office. Some clerks who were still there remembered me. And the senior ones said to me - one of the senior ones said to me - he said, 'Well, you put the Labour - you're always regarded as having put the Labour Department on its feet'. I made it independent.

I. Independent of the planters?

G. Independent of the planters.

I. I see.

G. That's my own view entirely, of course. Ha-ha-ha.

I. If I may go back in time to the 1920's, when you had arrived and when of course you were not in charge of the Labour Department, there were some changes in these conditions of immigrant labour in the 1920's wasn't - there was a Commission wasn't there?

G. Yes. I remember. But that was ... I think the point about that was that the Indian Government had - I can't - I don't know very much about this myself - but the Indian Government, as far as I know, had laid down certain conditions with regard to the immigration of labour to Ceylon. And the employment of Indian labour in Ceylon. When I say Ceylon I shouldn't have: As a matter of fact they were very excited in India about that

---

time about the treatment of Indians overseas.

I. Malaya?

G. Malaya, the West Indies, Africa.

I. Mauritius?

G. Mauritius. It was ... And Fiji. It was always a cry which appealed to the politician in India. And the Government very often raised this cry when they wanted to divert attention from some internal trouble. Any rate they made a lot of regulations with regard to Indian labour. And as a result of that certain regulations had to be formulated in Ceylon and a Controller of Labour - he was called the Controller of Indian Immigrant Labour [was] ...

I. Established?

G. E.. established. And it also affected, actually, the - in South India there was a Ceylon Emigration Commission which had been appointed besides the Indian.

I. Well, this was sort of - this Commission was a labour recruiting agency was it?

G. Yes. Labour recruiting agency.

I. Well, Colonel Wright again says that before Government took it over the planters ran it better?

G. Well, that wasn't ... Well, I wouldn't say that because I didn't know. But I shouldn't have thought so.

I. Yes.

G. When I was there - when I was there it was very well run indeed.

I. Well, I should think that he means that the planters ran it better from their own point of view?

G. Yes, probably.

I. Regarding 1937 again, this Indian viewpoint. Do you think it was the policy of the Indian politicians as such or did British administrators in India have any hand in it?

G. I should - well, I don't know because its only my opinion but I should think it was very much on the part of the politicians.

I. And what about the trade unions, the estate trade unions in Ceylon? Do you think it was marred by political purposes and political intrigues? At that time? Its rather a difficult question.

G. In point of fact(?) I should have said 'no'. They didn't really take as much advantage actually of the situation - the politicians didn't take as much advantage of the situation as they might of done. But, you see, the difficulty was with the trade unions, there were no employees themselves, no members of the trade unions, no employees themselves who were really

---

educated enough to give the leadership, to teach the trade unions to develop. So it had to automatically be the politicians. People from outside. They didn't actually give as much attention, I think, to the development of the trade unions as they might have done. There was a Natesa Iyer. I suppose you know him by name? He ...

I. Who?

G. Natesa Iyer.

I. Yes. I've heard of him.

G. Well, he was the one, apparently, who was - the planters hated him of course. He was - I always found him very reasonable.

I. What were your impressions of N.M.Perera and Philip Goonewardena?

G. This is only my personal ... I liked them. I think they were sincere. I think they were sincere nationalists myself. I'm sorry they have developed in the way they've done but I - possibly - but I liked them and I think they, looking back on it now, I think they really had a sincere point of view. They were inexperienced of course, and they hadn't really much knowledge of trade union development. But we found that in dealing with them that they were prepared - I had a lot of dealings with them of course until they were shut up[1] - but I always found they would react actually to an argument. And I think I captured to a certain extent their confidence and I wouldn't have - I always found them very pleasant and I'll always be glad to meet them again.

I. Yes. What was - turning to the political field - what was the Government attitude to the L.S.S.P. Party as such?

G. Oh, that's - well, of course, they locked them up.

I. That was in 1941?

G. Yes. That was ...

I. Why?

G. Well, because - well, I'd had really - I had nothing to do with it.

I. Yes, of course.

G. But it was entirely a police matter. But from my point of - they, I think - from my point of view they were accused actually of fostering disorder on estates. They certainly - certainly that was coming about. And, I think, for that reason they were locked up. Definitely after they were locked up things on estates were very, very much quieter.

I. Mmm. And would you agree with the view presented by Sir R.A. Stubbs, 'that it was a small local party run by young men with more money than brains'? And that these men were 'generally

---

1. They were imprisoned during the Second World War.

regarded as half-wits and degenerates'?

G. No, I wouldn't say that. No. Ha-ha-ha. I have great respect for Stubbs. I mean, he was a much cleverer man than I ever was but I wouldn't regard that at all as correct.

I. Yes.

G. There - there were some of them who were - they were some of them I met who - in whom I had very little confidence. But the leaders of them like, well, for instance, now - well, I mean Colvin R. De Silva. I'd a great respect for him. And I certainly had for N.M. Perera and Philip Goonewardena. I met a lot of others who were rather, well, immature. But I wouldn't have said anything more. I wouldn't agree with Stubbs at all.

I. No. What seems wrong about this view is that he says they were 'generally regarded'. If he presented it as his view he's justified.

G. Oh, that's right. That's right.

I. But...

G. Ha-ha-ha.

I. ... using the word 'generally regarded' he gives a rather ...

G. Well, I - this is - don't - yes, but don't take my view. I mean - don't take my view as being a general view.

I. No. But I recall, I think, Mr. Tilney was surprised by this. And, well, certainly looking at it in retrospect - I mean, looking at men of - such as Colvin R. and N.M. and Philip Goonewardena its difficult to stand by such a view.

G. Oh, yes.

I. Do you know what - have you any inkling of the attitude taken by other politicians to this new group? Mr. Corea for instance.

G. I don't remember talking over the matter with him at all when I was there. One I remember actually - I remember talking ... This was a different matter. You see, I ran the general election,you see, in 1935 or ...

I. '36.

G. '36.

I. Oh, that was your "special duty"?

G. Oh, yes.

I. I was wondering what it was.

G. And I was attached to the Attorney-General's Department. And worked with Illangakoon. Extremely nice man. And we were talking .... I don't know how but we'd come up against Colvin R. De Silva somewhere or other. I've forgotten where

___

it was. And Illangakoon said to me, he - I said, 'Isn't he rather difficult?' He said, 'Oh, no, no, no. He's an extremely nice chap and you'll find him very reasonable'. And I did. I found him extremely reasonable. Well, that's the only thing, you know, with regard to the others. But I never knew what Corea thought. I know, actually, Senanayake didn't like Goonewardena.

I. Goonewardena? Why - what sort of thing did he say?

G. Well, he had a row with him an they had a fight. I don't know what happened. You see, there were two views. Senanayake was definitely of the view that - he was very, very violently anti-Communist, as you know. And he disliked any suggestion of any project which - with - any way related to communism. And I remember talking it over with Corea because I wanted to introduce - I don't think it succeeded - it was in the Puttalam District - a big collective farm. I don't know... I got the idea actually from ?? - from a book I read on the West Indies, which said it might be - might be a good idea. They said they were surprised that England - that our colonies hadn't introduced it. And I don't know - a man, Ingleside, was put in. He's dead now. He was especially put in charge of it and I think he made - he didn't put the drive and energy into it which I'd hoped actually. Anyway I was talking with Corea over this, you see, and he said that Senanayake wouldn't look at it at all. He always - he wanted these small patches, you see. I mean, you were talking, you see, about Japan when we were coming up. You see, the cultivation as far as I gathered in Japan is very, very different, actually, from the cultivation in Ceylon. When you got - you see, in - I don't know Japan except that I was prisoner over there. I always imagine from the lay of the country they haven't got these big irrigation works which you've got in Ceylon which ...

I. Yes, I see.

G. ... are especially - well, very good for the development of big collective farms, you see.

I. Farms. I see, yes.

G. You see. But I know Senanayake - Corea said to me that Senanayake was all for peasant proprietors and small farms. And any idea, any suggestion of a collective farm would have been anathema to him.

I. Mmm. So would you say that in his attitude to the masses and this sort of thing he was rather too rigid and too much of the

---

old-school?

G. Senanayake?

I. Yes.

G. Yes, I would have said so. But then, of course, I mean, that's only my own view.

I. Yes, I see. Yes.

G. Because I feel myself that some totalitarian state is absolutely essential if these Asian countries are to develop.

I. Yes. Well, so do I.

G. Either right or left-wing. I don't mind which it is but I think something like that is imperative.

I. Regarding the L.S.S.P. do you - do you remember the Bracegirdle affair?

G. Well, as a matter of fact I was in England at the time.

I. Oh, so you don't really know much about it?

G. I don't know much about it. I only know ...

I. It was rather a hot issue.

G. My own view was that it was a ridiculous issue.

I. Well, I don't know whether it was a wise move to try and get him deported.

G. It wasn't. It drew too much attention to him.

I. Who was responsible for that order? Wedderburn I presume? Colonial Secretary? - yes?

G. Yes. I suppose it was. Stubbs actually - I suppose Stubbs made the order. He was the Governor. I don't think ... I think ... I remember reading the account of it but its such a long time ago.

I. I was wondering whether any planters brought pressure to bear to have him deported?

G. Oh, I think so. I think there's no doubt about it.[1]

I. Mmm. And from statements made in the State Council, which are, of course, not all that reliable, I was wondering whether there was a feeling on the part of Stubbs and the planters that this chap was letting their side down so to speak?

G. I think there probably was. I think there probably was.

I. Because, I mean, if a man like that had turned up in Britain he would have been allowed to speak ...

G. Oh, yes, quite.

I. ... at Hyde Park Corner.

G. Quite. Quite. The planters were very apprehensive of any trouble in their labour, you know. One way or the other. I mean any suggestion of any unrest among them really made them

---

1. Hardly. See interview with Ferguson.

terrified. That's putting it a bit strongly but ...

I. Mmm. Do you think they tended to make mountains out of molehills?

G. Well, I should only say in that particular way.

I. In that particular way. Mmm. And if I may say something about the Mooloya incident, I think after this shooting on the estate a commission was appointed. But there were going to be some prosecutions and I think, if I recall correctly, the Minister asked the I.G.P. or someone - maybe it was not the I.G.P. but someone - to defer the prosecutions till the commission reported. And he refused I think. And this became a contretemps between the ministers and Sir Andrew Caldecott. And the ministers ...

G. I can't remember the Mooloya incident, as a matter of fact.

I. Well, ...

G. I don't know. I can't remember. I know there was some trouble on the estate and a policeman shot.

I. This was the occasion when the ministers resigned in a body. Can you recall that?

G. The ministers resigned? Yes, but the ministers resigned in a body ...

I. 1941?

G. 1941. But that was not to do with the Mooloya incident. That was to do, actually, with matters arising out of the Bracegirdle, you know, because they had a ... I've forgotten exactly what they ... That was due to the Banks incident.

I. Banks?

G. Yes.

I. Oh! What happened?

G. Well, you see ...

I. He was I.G.P. wasn't he?

G. He was I.G.P., yes. But I can't remember the sequence of events. But there was some enquiry which was presided over by the Chief Justice, Abraham. I've forgotten what the issue of the enquiry was. Oh, as to whether - how far Jayatilaka had been responsible, you see, in the matter of the issue of the warrant against Bracegirdle, you see. Oh,I've forgotten exactly what it is now. But I think - I'm not quite sure but there was an enquiry and the ministers took strong exception to the findings of the enquiry. And the result was they resigned in a body.

I. I see, yes.

G. I'm not sure about this at all, I mean, some people would know far more about it than I would.

I. I remember my father saying something about this in passing. And he said this enquiry in effect found that it was between Banks and Jayatilaka. And they decided that Jayatilaka was a liar, in effect.

G. That was what they did. I don't(?) think(?) he was a liar. As a matter of fact his memory was so short that he'd forgotten it.

I. Well. Ha-ha.

G. I think Jayatilaka was a nice old(?) bloke.

I. He was not as strong as Senanayake was he?

G. Not a bit. No.

I. A weak man?

G. I shouldn't have said he was a weak man. I should say, actually, that he was able by his personality to bring the opposing parties together who wouldn't have come together under Senanayake.

I. Oh, I see.

G. I think that's possibly the case.

I. He was more genial?

G. More genial, yes. And he commanded very much more confidence, I think, among the people. Senanayake matured tremendously you know. He became really a wise statesman. The more one saw of him the more one liked him and the more one appreciated him. He stayed with me in Singapore for about a fortnight[1] and I got to know him extremely well. And I also went to India with him, you see, on the - when we had this conference with the Indian Government with regard to the relaxation of this immigration law.

I. That was in 1939?

G. No. That would be in 1940 I think.

I. '40. Mmm.

G. Would it be 1940? Yes, 1940.

I. I mean, did you find it very hard to deal with the Indian Government?

G. Yes.

I. What was it - what was your policy when you went? What did you want?

G. I wanted - well, I wanted these - all the restrictions to be abolished.

I. To allow them to go up and down?

---

1. This was when Gimson was Governor of Singapore, post Second World War.

G. Up and down, yes.

I. And what was the Indian Government's standpoint?

G. The Indian Government wouldn't allow it at all. I remember saying - of course, there were a lot of politicians in Ceylon, Indians like I.X. Pereira and people like that who opposed me. Who wanted these restrictions enforced. Because they felt, actually, that the Indians were not being given their proper status in Ceylon. And I remember saying, actually, to I.X. Pereira who was quite a nice chap but rather a narrow-minded man - because he was a very strong protagonist of the Indian community in Ceylon - and I said to him, 'Surely these people in India are suffering terrific hardship as a result of this ban on immigration?' He said, 'They must suffer - they must suffer for Mother India'. I remember that remark.

I. 'They must suffer for Mother India'?

G. Yes.

I. I see. And weren't some of the Sinhalese politicians for restrictions on the ground that these Indians were swamping Ceylon?

G. I think they were. But they didn't sort of realise actually. They wouldn't accept, you see - they wouldn't accept at all the recommendations of the Jackson Commission, or the findings in general of the Jackson Commission. You see, they wouldn't ... I remember when we had this conference in India. You see, I attended it and I wasn't a member of it; I was merely an observer. Senanayake, Huxham, Corea - I don't - Bandaranaike? yes, Bandaranaike - were the ones; and there was a man called Badgepie. I don't know whether you've heard of him?

I. No.

G. India's(?) Under-Sec.(?) He was Nehru's right-hand man until he died. And there was a man called Ramasamy Mudaliyar or something like that. Anyway they were extremely able chaps. I think there were one or two Europeans among them. I'm not ... But I remember suddenly one of them said - Ramasamy Mudaliyar, who was an extremely able chap - said ?? ?? said, 'You don't accept the findings of the Jackson Commission?' 'Oh-no', they said, including Huxham who knew nothing about it, 'We don't accept either the findings or the facts'. They ...

I. What sort of man was Huxham?

G. Well, I ... He was a clever man. But I never thought that he - he really - he really ...

I. ?? ...?

G. No. What he - my own - I don't really know very much about him but the impression I got was that he was extremely able. He didn't put forward his own financial views with regard to the state of the colony but, on the other hand, when the budget was passed he was prepared to place restrictions through the treasury on expenditure which was never contemplated in the budget.

I. Very treasury-minded then?

G. Very treasury-minded. He regarded the treasury as being the - as occupying the same position in Ceylon which it occupied, used to occupy in this country.

I. Would this have made him rather unpopular with the politicians?

G. No, no. He was popular with the politicians.

I. He was?

G. I don't think they realised what he was doing.

I. Ha-ha. I see. What did you think of young S.W.R.D.[Bandaranaike] at that stage?

G. Oh, I'm afraid I didn't like him.

I. Well, my father said that he thought he was a careerist.

G. Well, I think - I remember - I always think of Bandaranaike in this sort of way. In one of the tales of Kipling's the Viceroy had a very doctrinaire secretary, shall I say. And he used to be very worried because the Viceroy had no policy, you see. And the Viceroy said, 'Policy is the blackmail levied on the fool by the unforeseen'. Well, that seems to me typical of Bandaranaike's attitude. He had no policy but he regarded himself as clever enough to meet any circumstances which might arise.

I. Oh, I see.

G. He had no basic policy. I don't ...

I. Opportunist in other words?

G. Opportunist.

I. Was he career-minded at that stage too?

G. Yes. I remember, as a matter of fact, talking to this fellow Rajanathan. You probably ... I don't know if you've come across him?

I. I have heard of him.

G. He was a very clever bloke. He was my deputy. A most clever bloke. And he was very worried about Bandaranaike's appeal, actually, to the, well, racial element in Ceylon politics. He was very, very worried about it.

I. Well, he was not the first of course. I think in 1931

Goonesinha, when he was beginning to lose his hold on the trade unions, brought this Indian issue up. Around the early 1930's.

G. Yes, he did. He was actually pro-Indian at one time.

I. At one time. And then I think he changed. If I may take that issue up and go back to the 1920's when you were in the Secretariat.

G. Yes.

I. Was much notice taken of Goonesinha then?

G. No, no, no, no. No, we rather regarded him as ... When I came across him later - I was in the Customs for four years - ...

I. Yes.

G. There was a strike then.

I. Yes.

G. ?? ?? And I saw a little of him then.

I. Was he an opportunist? Or rather unreasonable or otherwise?

G. Well, I found him unreasonable then. But looking back on it I don't think he was. Ha-ha.

I. Oh, I see.

G. And I think a lot of these people, when I think, they were sincere. It was probably perhaps 75% sincerity and 25% personal ambition.

I. Well ... Yes.

G. It is with many people. I mean, I think that's pretty well ... If you put that element in front of a British politician I think it would be rather flattering to him. Ha-ha.

I. Well, I've come across references to him, to Goonesinha. You know, 'agitator' and all that almost as if ... Well, in the same terms as McCarthy used the word 'red' in America.

G. When I was ... I had very little to do with him, actually, when I was in the Labour Department. The little I had to do with him I found him extremely reasonable.

I. Mmm. But ...

G. He sobered a great deal, as a matter of fact.

I. He sobered did he?

G. Umm. I must say I don't mean alcoholically. Ha-ha-ha.

I. No, I know. I know what you mean. But it is strange that in this respect, somewhere around the late 1920's, someone in the Secretariat, somewhere, wrote, 'I don't think Mr. Goonesinha is as black as he is painted out to be'. So this is ...

G. I can't remember that. I probably didn't - I was very junior in the Secretariat then. I don't think actually he ... When

---

I was in the Secretariat I don't think he was mentioned. You see I was in the - I went in the Customs early in January 1924 and I was there until well into the - half way through 1928. And that was when he was coming up. You see, that was when he was backing the Indians.

I. I see. And what was the Government policy towards the trade unions in the 1920's? Well, embryonic trade unions.

G. I don't - well - well, that I couldn't say as a matter of fact. I wasn't very much - I was out of touch with them then.

I. Yes. You were in the Customs?

G. I was in the Customs. And I don't know exactly what the view would be then. But I should have thought that they were ... At that time, you know, the Sinhalese - the Ceylonese politicians were of a very limited class, weren't they?

I. Yes.

G. And they would rather have regarded Goonesinha as being very much of an upstart.

I. Oh, they did.

G. I should think so. But I don't know.

I. That's the feeling I've got too. I was wondering whether there was any caste feeling on this?[1]

G. I should think very likely.

I. Mmm. And so they - would you say that they disliked him intensely? Your impression?

G. I shouldn't have said they'd have got so far as intense dislike.

I. But just as an outsider?

G. An outsider that's all. I shouldn't think they regarded him seriously enough to dislike him.

I. Do you recall the labour legislation in 1929?

G. I was away in England then.

I. Oh, I see. Because I think this labour law was disallowed in England. But it was not by the Labour Government and ...

G. What was that?

I. That was ... There was a trade union law and, oh, I think Sydney Webb, Lord Passfield, who was Secretary of State ...

G. Oh, was he? I don't know.

I. ... for the colonies. And it was disallowed.

G. You see I was in the Education Department for three years, you see. Quite a nice break it was, from 1929 to 1932.

I. Yes. I noticed that. And I was going to ask you something about educational policy. What was the policy?

G. Ha-ha-ha. Again I'm rather doubtful but it was ... Well, I

---

1. There was. Goonesinha is of the Karawe caste. Many of our leading politicians were Goigama.

should think you - I mean, what way do you mean, actually? - 'policy'?

I. Well ...

G. I mean it is the promotion of literacy, that was all I should have said. And possibly introducing a bi-lingual element of English and Sinhalese or Tamil.

I. I see. Bi-lingual element ... Was there an attempt to foster vernacular education?

G. No. I should say definitely not.

I. There wasn't?

G. No, there wasn't. No. I - you see, I was - really, actually, I wasn't in ... All I was put in the - what-do-you-call-it? - in the Education Department for administrative purposes. Really to control the Government schools. I wasn't concerned actually with what they were taught or anything like that. But I shouldn't have said, actually, from my own point of view, there was any question of promoting the vernacular.

I. What about technical education?

G. There was very little of that.

I. Don't you think there should have been some more?

G. Oh, I definitely think so.

I. Of course there is this great problem in Ceylon. I consider it a bane today. This white - what I call the white-collar mentality.

G. Oh, it is all over the place. You can't - it is very much - its very, very prominent in England now. I saw only the other day, quite recently - I look at these things because I'm naturally interested in the labour problem. But there was a tremendous agitation in the I.C.I. works. You know, International Chemical Industries which is up here in this part of Yorkshire. And again there was a tremendous amount of agitation, ill-feeling between the white-collar workers and the ordinary - the ordinary artisan.

I. Mmm. Can't you fight this sort of thing?

G. Well, they are trying to fight it. Its very difficult to fight.

I. Wasn't it a bit easier in Ceylon, in say, especially in the late nineteenth century and twentieth century, to have done something to stop this thing?

G. I shouldn't have thought so. You see because in Ceylon there was no industry. If there'd been a ... I mean, there was no occasion for it, you see. And in any case the question of - the artisans were usually sort of - I mean, they were Indians

---

for the most part, weren't they?

I. Don't you think that educational policy, as such, was too attuned to turning out a stream of clerks?

G. I quite agree. I think it was. I think it was. That was the trouble in Ceylon I think all ... I mean that was the criticism of our colonial policy but I won't - when I say 'criticism of our colonial policy' I don't think its justified because the same policy was pursued in this country. There was no question of the government development of industry, you see. There should have been in Ceylon.

I. Too much laissez-faire then?

G. Too ... Yes. But that was the policy in this country too. You see it was the policy all over the world except in the communist countries like Russia.

I. Yes. And this applies to education policy too. When you have so many mission schools and so many, what one might call, well, private enterprise in this field its difficult to mould it as such, isn't it? Education?

G. Oh, it is. Yes, I quite agree. With the - with the ... You see, that was the trouble in Ceylon. Well, trouble in any country in Asia I think. A man who's revolutionised it in - is the man in Singapore, Lee Kuan Yu. He's introduced, actually, a sort of socialistic element into the government of the country, which is absolutely essential. I mean when I - it was - there were only half-hearted attempts at it in Ceylon. For instance, the man who was appointed under Corea, Balfour; I don't know if you've ever heard of him?

I. I've heard of him. Director of Education later on or Irrigation was it?

G. No, no, no. He was ...

I. There were two Balfours?

G. Yes. He was - this was another Balfour. This was - the Balfour I'm thinking of was in the Civil Service. He was a very good tennis player. He used to play with Walker I think. And anyrate he was appointed sort of - he was asked to develop industry in Ceylon and he was a hopeless failure. He had no idea about it at all. He was a bit of a chemist himself and he spent most of his time sort of trying to develop things in which he was sort of technically interested. He was hopeless. And they want - it wants to be done on a big scale. You really want a ... It would have been far better

---

if they had got someone out of England, I mean, or somewhere. Russia possibly, if you like, who'd have been able to develop sort of commercial enterprise.

I. Yes, I see. And turning to these Government schools, you administered them, did you?

G. Yes. I was responsible for discipline.

I. And what did you think of them?

G. Well, I thought(?) - they varied so considerably, you know. And I think the trouble - what I found was that if you had in a government school a teacher who had been trained at the government training college, which was excellent, the school was first-class. If you hadn't that it was a toss-up whether it was good or bad. But the government training college turned out first-class people.

I. Don't you think the curriculum was too English?

G. I do. I do. Definitely. It was due - I mean you just take Geography for example, History for example, they were too much rather inclined to look at Ceylon, I mean England, rather than Ceylon.

I. I mean, now, who was responsible for this? Couldn't the governor or someone else have changed this sort of thing? If they were so inclined?

G. They could have done it but you see the - as you were saying the whole object, actually, of the government really was to produce clerks for government service. And that was the height of ambition of the most of the Ceylon youth who went to these places. I mean that was the damnable part of Ceylon. I mean there was very few openings for an educated Sinhalese and Tamil.

I. When the Donoughmore Constitution came into being did local politicians try to change this?

G. Look, I don't really know. I don't know. I don't think they did. I made one effort which - to change it which - when I was the head of the Labour Department which failed, much to Corea's annoyance. Because I got a - I was reading the report of the Tea Research Institute and they said there was a wonderful future, actually, for Ceylonese graduates in the tea industry. If they were - had a science background and they were trained actually for the Tea Research Institute. So I took this up and I evolved a scheme whereby they'd be trained - they'd be trained at the Tea Research Institute and they would then, after that, they would be sent to an estate. And this -

---

I got the scheme that the Government would guarantee their pay for at least a year, you see, until they attuned themselves, actually, to the work on the estate. And I tried to get the Planters' Association to accept it. And they wouldn't. Lionel Corea was very, very disappointed. He told me so about it after that. Because they wouldn't look at it.

I. If I may turn to a point at which I was going to begin. I was going to ask you why you joined the Colonial Service?

G. Ha-ha-ha. I wanted a job. Ha-ha-ha.

I. Yes. Would you have, for instance, preferred the I.C.S.?

G. Looking back - I might have done at the time but looking back on it I much preferred doing what I did.

I. With what sort of feelings did you set out for Ceylon? 1919?

G. 1914 it was.

I. Oh, I thought you were on war service?

G. Well, I was; and I was also in Ceylon in '14. And then I went - from Ceylon I went to war service. I don't know. I was young and I hadn't visualised the future much.

I. Took it as it came?

G. I took it as it came.

I. You were in a public school in Britain?

G. Well, no. Actually in grammar school.

I. Oh, I see. I was wondering because ... Did this grammar school life help you at all in colonial service?

G. No, no, no, not at all.

I. University?

G. University did. Because the college did. You see Balliol had a tremendous tradition and I remember ... Its rather a long story but ... Balliol actually had the tradition of accepting a - I mean that if a person put forward a point of view, you see, you analyse it - you accepted it as a point of view, and you analysed it and you didn't disregard it as being nonsense. Well, that - I remember being frightfully impressed with - actually it was A.L.(?) Smith - he was a senior tutor and I dealt with him. And when I came - it made an awful lot of difference - when I came to serve under the Minister, Corea, you see. Because he [Corea] approached things from a very different basic standpoint from what I did, you see. Naturally one had the traditions of the service and government service and red-tape and that sort of thing. And he introduced - he questioned basic principles; quite rightly too. And this attitude which I'd learnt in Balliol,

____

you see, made me more receptive to these ideas than I might otherwise have been. This is only my own view. I don't say its exactly true. But it made me sort of analyse basic principles in a ways that I'd never done before, you see. Now, continuing, when I went as a prisoner of the Japanese[1] I was head of the camp which no one in the whole period of my service - which no one else has done in any Japanese camp at all. And I believe it entirely due to the fact that when I met the Japanese I was exactly prepared to - in the same way to accept their questioning of my basic principles, [with] which I approached certain problems. And I was prepared, actually, to accept their point of view in a much more ?? way than I would have done. And I always think that saved my life.

I. Quite likely. What about military service, did it ...?[2]

G. I was only in the army for a year.

I. Oh, I see.

G. Only a year. I just got a commission at the end of that.

I. And what were your impressions of the Civil Service, coming back into it as a rookie?

G. Oh, I was very impressed with them. They were very good men, the large majority of them. There were some bad-hats, of course.

I. Was there much, at this stage - the 1910's, the 1920's - was there much cynicism?

G. Well, my difficulty was I was attached to the Secretariat at once, you see. And I didn't know the people - that was - I was always - I was never out in the districts, you see, as a young - until very much later. So I couldn't really say what their attitude was.

I. Mmm. You see, in Bowes for instance, in his writings I see a strong strain of cynicism. But I was wondering whether Bowes was untypical?

G. Well, Bowes was a cynic himself.

I. He was a cynic?

G. Yes.

I. And what was the prevailing shade of thought in British political terms? Tory, Liberal, Labour?

G. Oh, Tory.

I. Tory. Did this have any bearing on day to day matters?

G. Oh, I think it did. Of course, there - one of the troubles in Ceylon when we went out there was that the commercial people

---

1. He arrived in Hong Kong a few days before it fell, having been appointed Colonial Secretary there.

2. In the First World War.

and the planters dominated the political scene entirely from the Government angle. I mean everything they - they thought - though the view was that in fostering trade and in fostering the plantation industries that they were benefiting Ceylon; they were providing revenue for the development of Ceylon. And the planters and the commercial people dominated the scene considerably.

I. Well, this I found to an extent in the nineteenth century too. And I think its Furnivall, who was in Burma, who makes this criticism. There's a tendency in policy to equate economic progress with social welfare. Whereas its not necessarily so. You know what I mean, taking ...

G. Yes, I know. Yes, quite.

I. ... the country as a unit.

G. Yes. Yes, quite, quite. I mean it - when I was - it was scandalous in actual fact. I mean, for instance, if a - in Nuwara Eliya for example if a District Judge didn't get on with the planters he was moved. District Engineers in exactly the same way.

I. Mmm. Well, I suppose they couldn't do much about it, regarding Nuwara Eliya anyway? Could Government have - do you think they could have changed this policy?

G. No, they couldn't in Nuwara Eliya. But they could in places like - where it was more pronounced, I should have thought, was in places like Ratnapura and Badulla. Kandy not so much.

I. And regarding this emphasis towards Conservatism - Toryism - would you say that Liberal and Labour supporters would have been more inclined to push for government interference? Less of laissez-faire?

G. Liberals(?) wouldn't(?)

I. Liberals(?) wouldn't(?)?

G. Liberals(?) wouldn't(?). And the Labour didn't - people didn't come until ...

I. Until much later?

G. Until much later. But I don't think they would ever - I mean ever have fostered industry in the way that is done at the present day. Which they should have done of course.

I. And would you say that it was a predominantly Tory attitude to, say, trade unions for instance?

G. No, I should have said - of course trade unions didn't develop until very, very much later. I mean Goonesinha - it was really childish - I mean stupid. I mean he wasn't really doing

____

anything very - very much. But by the 19 - by early 1930's I should have thought the development of trade unions was very, very much accepted. Both by the Conservatives, by the Liberals and by the Labour.

I. Early 1930's?

G. Early 1930's. It wasn't until - actually it wasn't until I became, actually, Controller of Labour that the trade union movement really developed in Ceylon. Or occupied a position of prominence.

I. Mmm. Respectability?

G. Well, that I shouldn't have ... I'm not in a position to judge because I was fostering them you see.

I. Yes, I see. Among the Civil Servants I've noticed a preference for the revenue administrative side, rather than the judicial side?

G. Oh, yes, that was definite.

I. That was definite. Why was this?

G. Much more interesting.

I. Was it a question of higher status?

G. I think there was something of that in it. But you were much - I mean you were tied to the bench. I don't think people liked it, judicial service.

I. Oh, yes. And you would have the opportunity to ride out when you were G.A.?

G. Oh, yes. It was a lovely life.

I. In this regard I would say the British colonial tradition, which was seen in Ceylon too, was to - there was this tradition of pragmatism, rule of thumb, sending young officers out into the country. And do you think this was pushed too far?

G. I think ... Well, I don't think it was originally. Well, I mean when - before Government became more complex. But now the Government has become complex I think it was - it could be carried too far because ... The problem doesn't arise now but I can say from my own particular point of view of the labour I was - I was meeting new - I thought I was meeting new problems every day. But when I came to study, actually, the trade union developments in other countries I found the path that was followed in Ceylon was very, very similar to that which was followed elsewhere. But if I'd only had the opportunity, actually, to visit, say, Australia or England or something like that and got some idea of the developments of the labour movement I should have been much more successful

---

in Ceylon. Actually I was so extremely busy with coping with current problems I had very, very little time to study. I'd a little time but not enough.

I. Do you think that some sort of preliminary theorising in the shape of the courses they had later, the Devonshire courses, do you think that sort of thing was called for in the 1920's?

G. I think so. I think so. Definitely so. And I think that ... Well, I know because the Devonshire courses never affected me but the second - there were two as far as I can gather. One before you went and one when you'd been there for some time. But the second one I should have thought was more valuable than the first.

I. Mmm. And also I have a suspicion that - you know when you went out as an Office Assistant or as a young A.G.A. that more discussion was called for with your superiors and more looking into the history of the administrative history of a particular problem in Ceylon. For instance the chena problem. If they'd studied past Government policy this might have helped them to ...?

G. Oh, I don't think it effected the Office Assistant. It effected the Government Agent. You see the Office Assistant, he didn't do very much about policy himself. I mean he left - he wasn't - he was very rarely allowed to make an original order.

I. Yes, I see. What I was getting at was that this process of trial by error, though there is much to be said for it, also can do quite a lot of harm?

G. Yes. The amazing part of it is that it did so little harm. I mean - have you read Furse's book?

I. Yes; oh, no, not Furse's book. But I've read Robert Heussler's.

G. Yes. I don't know that.

I. Yes.

G. I haven't read that. I don't think I've read that.

I. He's consulted Robert - Ralph Furse isn't it?

G. Yes. Yes, that's the fellow. Well, his is interesting. And he goes into the whole development. I don't know whether its by him or whether its by someone about him. I've forgotten. But I read the book and his whole theory was that when recruiting Civil Servants for the Colonies was a public school education put together with a university education. So you got the public school and the 'varsity background to develop character.

____

I. Mmm. Elitist approach?

G. What?

I. Elitist?

G. Yes, that's so. Yes. But I don't - I think a varsity education, as a matter of fact, is absolutely imperative - was absolutely - would be absolutely imperative.

I. Mmm. Despite this pragmatic approach I was wondering whether, in the end, precedence dominated? In day to day matters?

G. It did a lot.

I. Even in policy matters?

G. Yes.

I. Too much so?

G. Its very difficult to know, you see, at the time. Because it was this laissez-faire method of - adopted. I know - I wouldn't say too ... - its very difficult to say. I know in the Secretariat they had a precedence book, you know, and ...

I. Pardon?

G. They had a book of precedence, you know, and they looked them up and that sort of thing. And if precedence was established with regard to one thing you accepted it. But I remember, actually, writing a minute in the Secretariat saying that, 'It is Government policy to do so and so' - when I was very junior - and a fellow above said, 'Government has no policy'.

I. No. Because - I make this point because Stace has written an article in which he says it was routine, too much routine. He uses the word 'blind routine'. I wonder whether this is being rather harsh?

G. Well, it - I think it depended so much on the individual. I mean you - there were all types of Government .... The danger was, I think, actually, with the Government Service was that people remained there too long and they got rather tired. And they would ...

I. Lethargic?

G. Yes. They got lethargic and they would hide themselves behind a precedent which was a much easier way of tackling any problem than instead of sort of trying to sort of find out some new solution for it.

I. Mmm. At the policy level and even at the local policy level, at provincial headquarters, do you think there was too much of a tendency to preserve the status quo?

G. I ... No, I don't think that was so. I mean, they were quite prepared for development. But what I - the developments would

---

come of course in the agricultural side, and the engineering side and that sort of thing. I think the trouble was that there was rather - they rather left, actually, the agricultural and other departments to work out their own policy, as apart from that of the general administration. I mean you wouldn't - now take - what I mean to say is, now, take the G.A. Kandy for instance. I don't think he'd work actually with the Agricultural Department and Irrigation one in the way that he should have done.

I. Not sufficient liaison?

G. Not sufficient liaison. Whether he ...; mind you, I was very little outside.[1]

I. With regard to the 1920's I would like to ask two questions in association. Don't you think there was a lack of purpose and drive in British rule? And, that is to say, wasn't efficiency made an end in itself?

G. Yes, I should think it probably - I should say the trouble - well, I should think, peace at all costs.

I. Let sleeping dogs ...

G. Yes.

I. ... lie?

G. I mean the tenden - the criterion as to whether you were a good district officer or not was whether the country was quiet. And whether you were - whether there was an absence of petitions, and that sort of thing. Absence of complaints.

I. Yes. Who was the Colonial Secretary in 1919, when you went into the Secretariat?

G. Oh, Graeme Thomson.

I. Graeme Thomson.

G. He came in very quickly I think. No, wait a minute. Yes, he was, yes.

I. And General Manning was the Governor?

G. Yes.

I. And what are your opinions of these two men?

G. Well, Graeme Thomson, I think, was - we didn't like him as much as, well, we liked .... I mean, we had - but I think he was definitely progressive.

I. A progressive. Bowes says that he disliked Ceylon intensely? And he was the only Civil Servant he knows of who did so?

G. I didn't know - I haven't read Bowes' book, incidentally. I didn't know he'd written one.

I. Well, actually, its in typescript.

---

1. He means that he did not serve in provincial jobs a great deal but was largely in office jobs in Colombo.

G. Oh, I see.

I. It happens to be in Oxford. That's how I ...

G. Oh, I see. I shouldn't have said that actually. No, what - the little - well, I thought of actually was that Graeme Thomson relied very much on the Secretariat officers. And Bowes had a very, very different idea of running the Secretariat from what Graeme Thomson did. I didn't know that he disliked Ceylon. I thought he did but ...

I. Yes.

G. I thought he liked it, actually.

I. Well, there - I was trying to check on this. I was wondering whether Bowes was wrong?

G. I should say Bowes was definitely wrong. I was there with him a second time. I know he came[sic] when he was Governor. He came and visited me in Trincomalee.

I. He was rather ill then, wasn't he?

G. He was ill then. But he was - he was really very much alive. I think he wouldn't have come back to Ceylon if he disliked it.

I. Yes. That's true. What about General Manning? He was a ...

G. Well, lots of people regarded - I didn't know very much of him, as a matter of fact. But I've heard some Sinhalese refer to him as one of the best Governors Ceylon's had.

I. I thought he was, more or less,a pedestrian personality?

G. No, he was concerned very, very much with the constitutional problems.

I. Mmm. I was coming to that later. Who succeeded Sir Graeme Thomson?

G. As Governor or as Colonial Secretary?

I. Colonial Secretary. Clementi was it?

G. Clementi I think. Yes, Clementi.

I. What sort of man was he? He was rated to be very clever but ...?

G. He was very clever.

I. Was he impractical?

G. Well, that I wouldn't know. You see, the difficulty was, you see, that there was no sort of economic policy pressed from the Secretariat at the time. They left, actually, the economic development to private enterprise. All they were concerned with really was, more or less, with ...

I. Administration?

G. Administration, you see. And, if anything, finance.

I. Mmm. Didn't people like - surely capable men like Sir Hugh Clifford might have thought of something?

G. No, no. I think their most - its sometime ago now and I was very young then. I wasn't matured at all. But I shouldn't have thought that they - I - their idea of Government was rather a sort of investigation of problems which were put up to them. I doubt whether they had any original policy themselves. Not in the economic field. Not in the sense that you have it in now at the present moment.

I. Mmm. What about Tom Southorn, is it?

G. Southorn. Well, I knew him very well indeed.

I. Yes. He married Sir - I mean Mr. Leonard Woolf's sister?

G. Yes.

I. He was a very capable officer was he?

G. Well, I shouldn't have - he was very mediocre.

I. Mediocre.

G. Don't quote me as saying that because he was a great personal friend of mine.

I. Well ...

G. But I don't think he was really ...

I. I think you are correct because that's the impression I got from Leonard Woolf's book.

G. Yes. He's not - he was a very nice chap. Very nice chap indeed but I don't think - I don't think he was - I can't imagine him showing any initiative. He didn't do particularly well in Hong Kong.

I. Mmm. And what about Sir Herbert Stanley? Was he a mediocre Governor?

G. Well, again he had a difficult time. He was there when the Donoughmore Commission was introduced. And he introduced that quite satisfactorily but ... From a constitutional angle, yes. But none of them really sort of were responsible for definite sort of progressive policy. And when you think of it I mean ... The only man I can think of, who was before my time, was the man - the Governor who was responsible for the development of irrigational works.

I. Mmm. I see. Yes. And, well, wasn't Sir Andrew Caldecott quite progressive? Or was he just ...?

G. He was out of his depth. I always thought he was out ...

I. He was, was he? Mmm.

G. Well, you see, he - the trouble with Caldecott - don't quote me as saying any of these things - but the trouble with Caldecott was that he'd been in Malaya where there were no political problems. He'd been in Hong Kong where there were no political problems. And then he came to the intensely

developed political atmosphere in Ceylon. He was out of his depth.

I. But I thought he was fairly popular with the politicians? That's the impression I've got.

G. He was popular with the politicians, I think, because he was a nice, hail-fellow-well-met.

I. Oh, I see.

G. You see? But I got on very well with him because he had - perhaps I say what I shouldn't - he had perfect confidence in me. He must have done because I would never have got promoted the way I did.

I. Mmm.

G. I should have thought actually that the most advanced governor, in my time, was Sir Graeme Thomson. I don't know whether people would agree with me but ...

I. Mmm.

G. Stubbs was exceedingly clever.

I. But wasn't he rather officious?

G. No, I shouldn't think so. He was rather a cynic.

I. Cynical?

G. Mmm.

I. I think I - I got the impression that he was the sort who would think of matters in - well, he would be concerned about details rather than about general questions?

G. No, I think he - no, I should say general questions.

I. General questions too. Mmm. If I may go back to the 1920's, this - when Ceylonisation was rather an issue and ... Was it Government policy to limit Ceylonisation? Have it very, very gradual in the early 1920's?

G. No, I shouldn't have said that at all.

I. They were trying to Ceylonise by then were they?

G. Yes.

I. There was a political demand and I know that politicians were dissatisfied with the extent of it.

G. I should have said, actually, that the people in Ceylon were in favour of Ceylonisation.

I. Ceylonisation?

G. It was the Colonial Office who ...

I. Who opposed ...?

G. ...(?)

I. Oh, I see. And what were the arguments used by the Colonial Office?

G. Well, that I don't know. You see, I wasn't in touch then with the Central Government at all.

I. Mmm. No, I was wondering whether in the Secretariat you saw any of these dispatches?

G. That I didn't see, no. I was very junior in those days. And a definite step had been taken, actually, to abolish the local division of the Civil Service. That had(?) occurred in my day(?) and that was the only step. It was gradually sort of - came on 50%, 50 - increasing, increasing. And actually I know at one time, actually, we were advocating in Ceylon that no more Europeans should be sent out. That was the Ceylon recommendation.

I. Oh, I see.

G. The Ceylon Association.

I. That was in the 1930's?

G. The 1930's and Britain said, 'No'.

I. Mmm. Because there's also a feeling among the Ceylonese Civil Servants that they were shunted into the judicial line and certainly excluded from the top administrative posts, as G.A's.

G. They weren't in my time. There were quite a number of Ceylonese G.A's.

I. This was late 1930's. No, I was thinking of the 1920's?

G. I think definitely so. I - the first - when I was A.G.A., Mannar in 1922-23 and I was succeeded by C.L. Wickremesinghe, who was the first Ceylonese A.G.A.

I. Mmm. So it wasn't so in the 1920's?

G. No, it was just beginning; just coming in.

I. Mmm. Is - certainly Bowes was against this rapid - any rapid form of Ceylonisation. And by that I think he meant a very limited Ceylonisation when he was arguing. And one of his arguments that - was that the stability of Government would be indermined and ... Would you comment on that?

G. Well, I shouldn't have said so. No, not for a moment. And in fact the Ceylonese - I had great respect for a lot of the Ceylonese. Because whenever you get in a government - I mean you look at the Europeans among the government servants, among the Civil Service. There were quite a number of them - well, some of them who were complete failures. And you couldn't judge - I mean, you're not going to judge people by their failures, you're going to rather judge them ...

I. Yes.

G. ... by their successes.

I. I notice this tendency in Bowes to - you know, to cite a case. You can always cite one case and prove your point but it doesn't ...

G. I mean there were some very brilliant ones. There was - who was he? V. Coomaraswamy; and Rodrigo. Those are two of the people I'm thinking of. Some of them weren't so good.

I. Actually the principle argument he employed is that they wouldn't be accepted by the masses. He says for instance, 'In the Oriental mind there runs a streak of distrust of his own brother and number'. And that the people wouldn't believe in their impartiality.

G. Well, I wouldn't like to - I wouldn't - my own view is that they - that wasn't - that wouldn't be so in Ceylon ...

I. Certainly it wouldn't apply in Ceylon because, coming from these middle-class and being a bit more assured than the peasantry and invariably coming from good families, they were highly respected by the people.

G. They were able. V. Coomaraswamy was a very able chap. So was Rodrigo.

I. And anyway once you have this self - I mean, if you maintain this policy, self-government could never be achieved.

G. No. Well, actually ... You see, what I should have liked to have seen myself, much more local government on the lines that there is in this country. Where you've got, actually, to a certain extent, checks on the autocracy of the Civil Servants. I mean, you make him more responsive to public opinion and to public criticism if you have him associated with a democratically elected body. I mean if you put - the danger is definitely - I mean if you put a man - even if he isn't a European, anybody, if you put him in charge of a province, in, say, Kandy, or somewhere like that, towards the end of his time he becomes extremely autocratic. And you get, I mean, the same thing in England. I mean MacMillan, when he was Prime Minister a bit too long, and he got unresponsive to public criticism. That was one of his troubles. I mean, I've had the same thing myself. I shouldn't - I should like to have seen Bowes - I don't suppose I ever shall - Bowes' book's not likely to be printed I suppose? But Bowes, he was quite a clever man himself.

I. He was. He was very able. I mean, that's the impression I get.

G. Yes.

I. If I may turn to the constitutional aspect. Who was responsible for these constitutional reforms in 1920 and 1924? Governor Manning?

G. Manning. Oh, yes. Very much so.

I. Very much his idea?

G. Yes, yes. Well, I - he was responsible for the reforms but I should think the reforms were being pressed from England too.

I. Mmm. And after these 1924 Reforms would you say that the centre of gravity shifted from the Executive Council to the Finance Committee of the[1] ...?

G. Oh, it did. Definitely.

I. It did. And ...

G. That was before the Donoughmore [Commission] came out?

I. Yes. That's right. And government didn't try to stop this?

G. Well, they couldn't.

I. They couldn't. And what about these criticisms which politicians levelled at the Civil Servants in the Legislative Council? There was much personal criticism wasn't there?

G. Yes. I know we used to get very worried about it ourselves. But ...

I. You were criticised?

G. ... I think it was in a - of course it was - its only just occurred to me but possibly this personal criticism, which occurred actually in the Legislative Council, was more an indication of a wider based criticism of the fact that the European Civil Servants were not devoting themselves to the welfare of the people at large but rather the welfare of the particular sections of the people, like the planting and the commercial industry, you see. And they - it was so. I mean you could find criticism of any particular body whether they'd been Ceylonese or Europeans. But looking back on it now, it - they were - they weren't ... My own view is that - I know Mark Young was very surprised when I said so - the introduction of universal adult suffrage in Ceylon made the whole difference actually to the whole outlook of Government. There's a huge electorate now whose welfare had to be considered. And to my mind it was a tremendous advance there. Its an advance in the right direction. And it was really an - it appeared an indication possibly of the politicians like Senanayake, who was voicing the fact that the Europeans were considering, as I say, not the welfare of the people at large, but the welfare of one particular section; and they weren't paying enough

1. Legislative Council.

attention, actually, to the welfare of the villagers themselves.

I. Were the Civil Servants demoralised by these criticisms?

G. I think they were.

I. They were. Mmm.

G. Well, as a matter of fact, they were much more demoralised actually - not so much by the criticisms as by the attitude that the Colonial Secretary of the time, Fletcher, paid to the criticisms.

I. He didn't do anything?

G. He didn't defend the Civil Servants.

I. But the point was, I suppose, he wanted to placate the politicians?

G. He - oh, yes, he had a difficult task.

I. Mmm. And besides it might have brought the constitution to a standstill?

G. It might have done. Yes. It was a very difficult constitution to work. Impossible, as the Donoughmore Commission said.

I. And you agree with Clifford's view of the constitution then?

G. Well, I've forgotten what it was.

I. Well, he was - said it was unworkable.

G. It was unworkable.

I. But Stanley said that cooperation outweighed opposition?

G. No, I think Stanley was ... I read Stanley's ... and I don't think - Stanley didn't understand the position.

I. He didn't? Well, looking ...

G. He was - he was remote from it, you see, when ...

I. Looking at it from the point of view of constitutional principles it looks unworkable.

G. No doubt it was. Yes.

[First Interview ended here. I'm afraid the last few questions were rather hurried and I couldn't get through the period thoroughly. But I hope to cover the other points tomorrow.]

SECOND INTERVIEW 25 NOVEMBER 1965.

I. I was not quite clear what you had done when you went in 1914. When did you go on leave, on war service?

G. I went - oh, 19 ... I was in the army. I went home in 1918, you see.

I. Oh. So from 1914 to '18 you were in Ceylon?

G. In Ceylon, yes.

I. Whereabouts?

G. Well, I had a funny job. Because I was in the Secretariat and I was also attached to the Naval Office in Colombo.

I. Oh, you'd have helped Mr. Newnham capture his prize ships?

G. No, no, no. I was working in the office.

I. Oh, in the office.

G. No, no. No, that was rather later, actually. I'd been in the Secretariat, I don't know how long for. For six months or more. Nine months possibly.

I. Mmm. Yes. But you were in Colombo during these riots?

G. I was in Colombo during the riots, yes.

I. And did you have to go out on duty?

G. Well, yes. But I - very little.

I. Mmm. These riots were interesting. What were your views about the riots? The causes and origins?

G. I haven't very much view. I'd just come out. I really didn't know. Even looking back on them they seem to me rather sort of - I mean rather vague and indefinite. I don't know - were they - they were inter-racial of course?

I. Yes, of course. They were. It was against the Moors and I think, well, there was this religious conflict in Kandy.

G. There was a religious side - yes, there was religious conflict which was - there was religious conflict in Kandy. And then, I think, it - after that, if anything, it became economic.

I. Yes. I also feel so. In Colombo, I think ... Mrs. Jayawardena's thesis has brought new facts to light, relating to Colombo only. There was some industrial unrest; in the railway workshops in particular. From 1912.

G. That I wouldn't know anything about.

I. And she says that some of these workmen led the attacks on boutiques.

G. I wouldn't know. I know very little about it as a matter of

fact.

I. I was not sure. I didn't think you'd know much about the origins. But I was thinking of Government's reactions. Did they consider it a premeditated uprising? Post Kandy, the other ones?

G. I don't know. I was very vague about the whole thing, you see. And I think everyone was vague about it. I know the police took one point of view. I mean Dowbiggin and people like that. I think they thought that the people like Senanayake were very much involved in it. But how far they were involved in it I don't really know.

I. Mmm. They were convinced that Senanayake and them had instigated ...?

G. The police were. Well, I don't know whether the police[sic] had instigated or whether they took - whether they thought they took advantage of it once it had broken out.

I. Oh, I see. I know that Governor Chalmers, in one of his first despatches, which has been published as a command paper, says that it was not political. He contended that it was not aimed at the British as such. But a few months later, certainly, many members of the European community as a whole - well, I wouldn't say many, but some members - considered it an uprising against the British and the European community, and then in 1916 Bonar Law called it a premeditated uprising in Parliament.

G. Did he? I don't remember. I shouldn't have - I know extremely little about it but I shouldn't have thought that it was premeditated at all.

I. Yes. I was wondering about the strength of this feeling in the European community. Did the officials you came into contact with think on these lines?

G. Well, you see, I was in Colombo. I didn't really know except - I didn't - I wasn't in touch with the people outside at all. But I don't think - I don't think the European - I don't think the European Civil Servants thought it was premeditated. I think some of the planting - members of the planting community, especially in the Kegalla District, rather panicked a little bit.

I. Mmm. Yes. Of course ...

G. I know there was one incident where they were - where they were marching on Colombo. There were crowds of people.

You've probably heard about it?

I. Victoria Bridge?

G. Victoria Bridge incident. I wasn't there at the time but I knew a few people were and ...

I. There was shooting there?

G. There was shooting there. And I think really, as far as I can make out, that they were coming in, actually, to fight the Moors, from the look(?) of(?) things(?).

I. Yes. No, I think a few people - a few of the European community, Bowes included, have seized on the fact that these riots broke out in different places at roughly the same time. And taken this coincidence as proof of premeditation.

G. Oh, I don't think - I wouldn't have said that myself but then I - I have really no evidence otherwise. But - I mean the fact that they broke out in various places almost simultaneously, to my mind, is not logical proof that they were premeditated.

I. Yes.

G. I mean rumour spreads very, very quickly.

I. Yes.

G. And also when rumour spreads it easily becomes distorted.

I. And a few local instigators could seize on a rumour and, well, incite a mob. But there need not be premeditation about this?

G. No, no, no, no, there needn't. I really know extremely little about - a man who would know more about - well, Newnham, of course, himself would know a lot more about it than I do.

I. And do you know much about Brigadier General Malcolm? What sort of man was he?

G. I know very little of him. I didn't know him personally.

I. Because is it true that he gave the order, once martial-law was declared and they were sending out patrols, did he give the order 'take no prisoners'?

G. I don't know. I shouldn't have said there was - to my mind he - I should have thought that was definitely untrue. Because the casualties I believe were very small. Very small indeed. I shouldn't have said that was untrue.[1] Of course, you see, it was in wartime. It was the beginning of war. And people hadn't really attuned themselves to the atmosphere of war.

I. Well, funny, Bowes seems to be - well, suspected and virtually - he's virtually convinced that there was some sort of German instigation behind it.

G. I don't think so at all.

---

1. Obviously a slip of the tongue. He meant that it was untrue.

I. Yes. What sort of man was Dowbiggin? Certainly very able.

G. He was very young then and very impetuous.

I. Oh, I see.

G. I mean he was - I don't think he would care - later of course he matured and he did an awful - he did a tremendous lot for the police. But in those years - in those days I mean he - he was ... What shall I say?

I. Well, impetuous I suppose?

G. He was impetuous, yes. And he hadn't sort of really attuned - I use the word attuned quite a lot - attuned himself to the position of responsibility, I think.

I. Would you go as far as to say he could be irresponsible?

G. No, no, no, I don't think that.

I. Reckless?

G. No, he wasn't reckless either. I think that's what - that's what I'd say, that he behaved more as a junior superintendant of police rather than an Inspector General.

I. Mmm. Yes, I see.

G. I mean he didn't - I don't perhaps - he dashed - I know one of the criticisms of it was that he dashed up to Kandy whereas he left Colombo completely alone. But if he ... Well, he would have done much better to stay in Colombo, you see, and either despatch someone from Colombo, who he could trust, if he didn't trust the man in Kandy, or leave it to the man in Kandy. The man in Kandy wasn't a very good chap as a matter of fact.

I. Who was that?

G. I think a man called Thornhill, I believe. But I don't know.

I. Thompson?

G. Thornhill.

I. Thornhill. A policeman or ...?

G. A policeman. Yes.

I. For how long did these sporadic outbreaks occur? Do you remember?

G. I don't remember. But I shouldn't think more than a month or more.

I. Because there was considerable criticism levelled at the Governor for retaining martial-law for so long. Some people even questioned the fact of martial-law but reading the accounts of the riots I think it was necessary.

G. Well, I should have said - I have very little knowledge of them

---

as I was more involved, actually, then, with the work in the Naval Office than anything else. And - but I should have said, actually, the martial-law was maintained in order that the people concerned might be tried by court-martial and not by the ordinary civil law.

I. Mmm. Do you think that was wise? Cases under court-martial?

G. I don't know. At the time I think it was, yes. I should have thought it was. But I know actually - I remember seeing the case of the - remark of the Chief Justice who was quite - Wood Renton - who was quite a sort of - I mean a man of considerable judgment. He said the actual court-martials were extremely fair.

I. Oh, he did?

G. He did.

I. Yes, I think Bowes also makes that point. But some of them were drumhead court-martials weren't they?

G. Yes. But they were wholeheartedly condemned after.

I. Oh, that lot. Yes. The only part about this court-martial was that these Moors took their own back. You see there was a tendency to concoct evidence against ...

G. That would be natural I think.

I. Yes.

G. That would have happened whether they'd had civilians or not. A civilian trial.

I. What - was Sir John Anderson highly unpopular after ...?

G. Very unpopular.

I. Because of this - his verdict on this [issue]?

G. Yes.

I. Any other reasons? I mean if - did he have any qualities which angered people?

G. No, I don't think so. I can't - as I said I was very young at the time. He was a sick man. And he shouldn't - he should have left. But that was the - he was very - I don't - he was unpopular with the Europeans, you know. As to whether he was unpopular with the ...

I. Officials?

G. No, whether he was unpopular with the local community I don't know.

I. Oh, he was fairly popular because of his view on the riots.

G. Yes. But it was the Europeans who didn't like him.

I. Even the officials?

G. Well, that I don't know. I should ...

I. Bowes disliked him.

G. He disliked him because he - when he - you could always ... I was in the Secretariat at the time. Some of the time when he was there. And you could almost tell from the Secretariat point of view that when he was ill his judgment seemed to be rather always sort of, you know, astray.

I. What sort of man was Governor Chalmers?

G. Well that I - I was very young really and I couldn't ... He was - I should thave thought actually, the little I know of him, that he was quite a good governor.

I. Mmm. Do you think - I think he was a bit unfortunate to come in just before these riots?

G. Yes.

I. Do you think Bowes had a lot of influence at that stage? Because I know that he was Chalmer's blue-eyed boy, as someone, I think ...

G. Well, yes. I wouldn't know that at all.

I. If I could switch to another sphere. I know you were not in the provinces for very long but did you have any experience of the working of the village councils, gansabhas?

G. No, I didn't.

I. No?

G. Not really. They weren't very - I had a little in - a very little actually when I was in Trincomalee. I remember that's where I came in contact with them more than anything else. I can't say really. I remember in Trincomalee, I remember going to one of these village councils, a meeting of one of them. And the headmen of course, the chief headmen, were very much against them. But I spoke - I went with my mudaliyar of course, and with the headmen and spoke to them. I don't [sic] know what their attitude was going to be but the line I took was this: I said, 'I've noticed actually their expenditure and such as, was within their limits', you see, 'and I was rather impressed by the way they were doing it'. And I thought that the policy they were adopting, as far as I could see, was the right view, you see. I rather thought - I mean I tried to encourage them. And I know the headmen didn't like it but ... Any rate I thought this - this was my only feature[sic] that they were doing quite good work. That was - I've only had that one. I didn't ever come across - you see, when I was in Kegalla, you see, again the - it was - we had this very severe epidemic, you see. And there was no question of anybody doing anything except dealing with the epidemic.

I. Mmm. What did you think of the headmen as such? The Kegalla area? Were they useful?

G. Good.

I. I ...

G. Some of them weren't. Some were very ...

I. Pardon?

G. Some of them were very good.

I. Was there much corruption?

G. I don't think there was, actually. I remember going round to - there was an awful - I remember going round, actually, hearing a tale of corruption. I immediately dashed down to make enquiries, you see. I got one. It was forwarded to me by a planter, called Bentley Butler(?), who was very, very well-known. Before your time I should think. And I went down and luckily when I was there there was an inspector who'd come round about the rubber restriction scheme, you see. And there was a man there who said to - who was said to have been approached by a headman in order to get a bribe, in order to get his particular rubber-plot registered. You see, he couldn't get it registered and the man had come down to register it, to make enquiries so I was very lucky. And I asked this fellow and I said, 'What about it?'. And he said, 'Well, a clerk from a proctor or advocate approached me, said, "If you give me 50 rupees, I'll square the headman and you'll get it"' I said, 'Did you give him 50 rupees?' He said, 'No, of course, I haven't got it'. And he said, 'Another man approached me and said 25 rupees you see. "Give it to me and I'll square the headman". 'Oh', he said, 'I haven't got it'. You see, there were people who were profiting by the fact that the headmen were supposed to be corrupt.

I. Yes, I see.

G. There was no question of this fellow - of this fellow being registered, you see. But the man came along and he looked at it and said, 'Oh, its perfectly alright. You're registered. Here's your coupons'. You see?

I. Yes, I see.

G. You see, there were people who were definitely profiting by the fact that the headmen were supposed to be corr - were supposed to be corrupt.

I. Mmm. And what about these petitions? Didn't you think that much of these - much of these petitions were stark futility?

G. Oh, yes, they were. As a matter of fact I'm pretty certain,

actually, the villager would come in to the kachcheri - into the kachcheri. And the petition drawer would be there. And the petition drawer for the sake of earning a rupee or so would draft a petition for him. I mean it was - when he came back to the village he'd probably boast of the fact that he had a petition.

I. Yes. And did - regarding headmen do you think it was a good thing to have hereditary influence; in selecting them?

G. I think in the stage Ceylon was in it was a good thing. It - afterwards, I mean, when you want the electoral principle introduced, then, of course, it probably wasn't. But certainly at one stage it was definitely the - it was definitely a good thing. They had the influence. I mean, they could - in - they could do lots of things which had to be affected you know without the process of law.

I. Wasn't there - didn't it lead to much government by clique?

G. Oh, I suppose you could say that. I mean one of the things, actually, you see, which happened was that - one of the things which definitely happened was - I've forgotten what I was going to say. Yes, one of the things that definitely happened was that the caste system was maintained in a manner which it shouldn't have been, you see.

I. Yes, I see. If I may turn to a rather more interesting field. In the 1920's I wonder what your views - what your attitude to the Ceylon National Congress and the political people was?

G. Well, I don't - I came across them extraordinarily little in the jobs in which I was in. Well, in normal times one never came in contact with [them in] the Customs, you see, and Education and the Secretariat. I never came in contact with them at all.

I. What do you think of the Donoughmore Commission's view that communal representation tended to widen the gulf?

G. Between what? Between ...?

I. Between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. There was a gulf but they criticised communal - this principle and said that it tended to widen the ...

G. I should hate to contradict the Donoughmore Commission but I don't think it did. I mean I think the present moment - I don't think it did at that particular stage. It may have done it later because, you see, such policies that the unofficials had was anti-Government, you see. And they all united for that purpose. There was no question of the Tamils fighting the

---

Sinhalese of Sinhalese the Tamils in order to get better development for their own particular area.[1] I shouldn't have thought that it did at all but ...

I. Regarding the officials' outlook would you say that in the 1920's the tendency would have been to consider trade union activities seditious?

G. Yes, I think so.

I. In the 1920's that is?

G. Seditious in the sense that, I mean, it was not conducive to the maintenance of law and order. I mean I don't mean to say it was constitutionally seditious.

I. Yes. This is sort of different. I was branching off. And I was wondering about the influence of Indian constitutional developments. Did you for one think about that? Think about Gandhi's activities?

G. Oh, yes. I think we definitely thought about them. I don't know - we thought about them, but I don't think they had any effect on the developments in Ceylon. I mean there was no question of any passive resistance or anything of that description. There was no appeal to any [of the] parties. The only(?) - satyagraha never sort of entered into the minds of any of the politicians I don't think.

I. No, but since this was - [since] it was obvious that some sort of - especially after the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms - that some sort of self-government process was beginning in India, were the implications regarding Ceylon thought about?

G. I should have thought actually from my own experience of Ceylon that the politicians were quite satisfied actually with the process of constitutional development that was taking place in Ceylon.

I. Yes, I see. Yes.

G. I mean the passage from pure colonial rule to self-government was a very, very peaceful one. And there was no particular striking the agitation from time to time for any hasty approach to it.[2]

I. Yes. But I was also struck by a remark in - well, by Bowes. He seemed to feel that these Ceylonese who'd come to England and received a liberal education should have - when they came back to Ceylon should 'show their gratitude by working with Government rather than criticising Government'. And he was - well, he considered them agitators when they ...

---

1. While they worked together vs the British there was considerable infighting. By 1923 the Tamil and Sinhalese leaders had split.

2. This sentence is not an error in transcription, the passage being clear.

G. Oh, no, no. I wouldn't agree with that at all.

I. Yes. But I wonder how - whether he was untypical in this sort of view?

G. I should have thought he was. Definitely untypical. I've never heard the view expressed before.

I. And regarding Indian events did you discuss it socially in the club with other officials?

G. No.

I. No. Not really. Mmm. And before coming onto the Donoughmore Constitution I wonder if you can remember this anti-Poppy Day Movement?

G. Oh, yes. I remember that slightly. That was a very small affair.

I. Yes. Of course they were making much of a small thing. I was wondering whether this annoyed the official ranks?

G. I don't think it did. I think there was an awful lot of abuse of the Poppy - of the Poppy Days' celebrations. I mean - I won't mention names, but there was one wife of one A.G.A. [who] used to go around the country and that sort of thing, bullying clerks to buy poppies.

I. Yes.

G. But/while ~~she~~ did it, I mean, I don't suppose she realised that she was bullying. But they resented that sort of thing you see.

I. Yes, I see. You think it was a natural reaction?

G. I think it was a natural reaction.

I. Was it - I know it was, well, it was symbolic for the L.S.S.P. and the other people who were using it. But - using this anti-Poppy Day feeling. But - and they took it seriously - but I wonder how seriously the official people took it?

G. I don't think they were very worried about it, as a matter of fact. But they had something - I think the anti-Popply Day people had something in their favour. You see, the story was that the money was going to England and not enough actually was being spent in Ceylon, for the purpose of those who had suffered.

I. Well. Would you give your comments on the Donoughmore Constitution? I know you favour universal franchise. I favour it myself but what would you say about the - well, the two arguments against it? One: that the people were not in a position to judge complex questions?

G. Well, they're not in this country.

I. Mmm. Yes. I think that answers that.

G. I - my own view actually was that the - on - by and large the electorate exercised a wise choice - a wise choice. I mean I had to - I published a confidential report on the elections when they were ... Just as Sir John Howard wanted. I wrote a confidential report. And one of the points I made was that I thought generally that the electorate had given their votes to a man, elected a man who had some claims to be elected, who had some type of personality which appealed to them. And the people who came - I mean the people who came forward - I mean they weren't all sort of the highest grade. But quite a number - I mean the large majority of them were people who had some degree of responsibility.

I. Mmm. Yes. And as you said over lunch ~~is~~ you feel its great advantage was that it made Government more responsive to the people. To the mass of the people.

G. Yes, quite, quite.

I. In that sense would you say that it prevented the growth of an oligarchy?

G. Oligarchy in what?..?

I. Well, if it was a restricted franchise based on the middle-class alone it would have been in effect a middle-class - what you might call a middle-class oligarchy of sorts.

G. Oh, yes. It prevented - oh, it certainly did that. And one thing which always struck me about it, as a matter of fact, was from the analysis - from the comparison actually with the English voting, the bigger the electorate the less chance of corruption.

I. Mmm. I see.

G. I mean in England when they had a restricted franchise, you know, the number of election petitions was enormous. But immediately they got a wide franchise with a large electorate no-one could afford to indulge in ...

I. That was in England?

G. In England. I imagine it was the same in Ceylon.

I. Well, recently there have been lots of election petitions.

G. I know one of the difficulties, of course, was in the thing, that, with investigating the election petitions, because I mean it was so expensive. You see, there were no party funds available. And you couldn't leave it with the - I mean you couldn't allow the Attorney General to investigate this because if you did that everyone - every election would be challenged. That is one of the great difficulties actually in Ceylon, that

---

no really good machinery exists for the examination of practises in elections.

I. What about the second argument against the universal franchise. That in Ceylon it heightened appeal to racial and communal issues?

G. Well, that was only the result of people like Bandaranaike himself. It didn't - it didn't until Bandaranaike came along.

I. Yes, I see. There was nothing before him?

G. I don't think so.

I. Not even - yes, well.

G. Not between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Of course there was the riots, you see, between the Sinhalese and the Moors.

I. Of course universal franchise is a point in itself and it could come with any constitution. What would you say about the other aspects of the Donoughmore Constitution?

G. Well, the Donoughmore Constitution never really worked did it? I mean their idea was that far more things should be discussed actually in the State Council than there should be. Than there actually was. I mean no - you know the principle. I mean the report would go from the Minister to the Minister, to the State Council, to the Governor. Well, that never happened. I mean so you got actually a minister - say of labour for example, which I knew very well of course; I worked there for 4½ years - they were entirely responsible for the labour policy. And there was no question of any cabinet collective responsibility of any kind. And very few matters - well, I don't know - I wasn't - very few matters, as far as I know, of general policy went up to the Board of Ministers. I can give you a case as a matter of fact. One thing which I know I did because I was responsible actually for - as head of the Labour Department - for relief measures too. I mean charitable organisations and things like that. We had various employment schemes. In Colombo, It was the only place we had them as a matter of fact. And we tried to persuade the Minister of Works, Kotelawala, to be reponsible for these things - for these schemes. As a matter of fact the matter went to the Board of Ministers and they ruled that he should be. But he wouldn't take it on.

I. I see. No collective responsibility.

G. No collective responsibility at all, you see. And then there was the difference of responsibility. As a matter of fact as I said, as we were talking about it yesterday, between Senanayake's policy and Corea's policy. You see? There was no

---

collective responsibility, no cabinet responsibility of any kind.

I. Do you think - was there any initiation of policy from the Executive Councils - Committees?

G. From the executive?

I. From the Executive Committees. These ...

G. Oh, Executive Committees. Oh. Oh, I think so. Definitely, as far as I was concerned. I mean I think - I mean, for instance, there was the Labour Movement. The promotion of trade unions.

I. I see. They were for it?

G. Distinctly so.

I. Of course there's been another criticism made that these Committees and these Ministries tended to work in water-tight compartments?

G. They did. I quite agree with that. That's my point.

I. Yes. Part of the collective responsibility?

G. Yes.

I. In other words it was conducive to a great deal of delay?

G. I wouldn't say conducive to delay. What .... It didn't cause delay. It would have caused delay if they'd worked on the Donoughmore lines. I don't think it would delay .... As a matter of fact I think it was rather the opposite.

I. Oh?

G. Because, you see, a thing could go to the Minister and the Minister would make a decision himself.

I. Yes, I see. I see the point. And would you say that it was more inefficient than the ministerial system? Simply because of the lack of collective ...?

G. No, I shouldn't have thought so. I should have said on the whole that it was quite as efficient as the - generally as the other - the other colonial machine. Looking back on it now.

I. And would you say that it was - as a Constitution it was very useful as an instrument of political education?

G. Quite certainly so. That was definitely so.

I. Both to the people and to the politicians?

G. Certainly to the politicians.

I. In what way?

G. Well, it made them a sort of - intimately acquainted with the ...

I. Administration?

G. ... administration.

I. In these Executive Committees I - a criticism has been made

___

that they concerned themselves far too much with trivialities?

G. Well, of course, they were intended to do that weren't they? I mean the Donoughmore Report ...

I. Wanted them to?

G. I mean he thought actually that particular type of government was one actually which appealed to the Sinhalese. To the Ceylonese rather. I mean he definitely introduced it, he said, because they were more interested in detail, at that particular stage, than they were actually in the broad lines of policy.

I. Do you know if Donoughmore himself was an able man or was it Sir Geoffrey Butler who was chief ...?

G. Oh, it was ... I should have said Donoughmore was rather the sort of coordinator rather than ...

I. Originator?

G. Mmm. But that I don't know. I mean that's the only - I didn't - I was quite junior in those days.

I. Were Civil Servants consulted?

G. Oh, yes. The senior Civil Servants were very, very freely consulted. I mean I think we were ... I was told, whether it is true or not, that the Donoughmore Commission was rather worried and peeved because we hadn't a ready-made constitution for them. Ha-ha.

I. Oh?

G. Most of us were concerned, at the time, actually, with the safeguarding of our interests, you see.

I. That is these attacks in Council?

G. Well, no. Our salaries and that sort of thing.

I. Oh, yes, I see. You say the Civil - in the 1920's the Civil Servants were a bit annoyed with Sir Mark [sic] Fletcher for not defending them?

G. Yes, well, yes. But actually what is - what was the trouble, you see ... You see, we were very annoyed with him. Whether the annoyance was justified or not I don't know. But a G.A. would be very annoyed because one of the members of council in his area would go to Fletcher and say, 'So-and-So sacked a headman and can't he be replaced'. And, you see, Fletcher would send down to this G.A. and the G.A. would think it his duty actually to replace him. But that's an extreme case of course. There were other matters ...

I. He tended to act over their heads?

G. Yes. He tended to act over their heads.

I. Mmm. What sort of man was he?

G. Well, if you want to know a very real - a pretty good description of him you can read in the report which I've read of the Riots in Trinidad and Tobago.

I. Oh, this was when?

G. I don't know. In 1930 I think. When he was Governor there.

I. Oh. Whose report?

G. Well, it was - there were - I there was a report. There were a lot of riots there and a commission of enquiry was appointed after to look into it, you see. And they damned Fletcher uphill and downdale.

I. He was a mediocre personality was he?

G. I know Stubbs said he was the cutest brain in Asia. But no-one understood exactly what Stubbs meant by cute. Ha-ha. But he was very, very badly criticised in that - in the - in that report. I mean people - and actually I was told - I don't know if its true or not - that they wouldn't give him a Governor's pension.

I. Yes, I see.

G. Again, you see, it was unfortunate, as a matter of fact, that he came from Hong Kong, where there was no ... He came from Hong Kong where there were no political problems. The whole place was dominated by the European community. And he had no political experience of any kind and coming into Ceylon was very, very unfortunate.

I. Yes. And regarding the Donoughmore Constitution would you make some comments on the elections and electioneering methods?

G. Well, I did the second election.

I. Yes. In 1936. What did you say in your report?

G. I said I thought they were well conducted.

I. Mmm. And do you think there was much corruption and impersonation?

G. A tremendous amount of allegations of impersonations. But how far those allegations were true I don't know. It was impossible to investigate them.

I. Yes, I should think so.

G. But I shouldn't have thought there had been sufficient impersonations to affect any particular election itself.

I. Mmm. I was very interested in that point you made about the bus companies having a crucial influence on each election?

G. Oh, yes. As a matter of fact one of the things they asked for afterwards [was] that voting should be made compulsory.

I. Who asked for?

G. The politicians. In order to overcome this tremendous influence

of the bus companies.

I. So in effect the candidate had to have a backing of some sort of company?

G. Yes, quite, quite. Otherwise the people wouldn't come to vote.

I. This couldn't have been in all the electorates. It must have been in ...

G. No, I - it was only in the thickly populated areas. I shouldn't have said it was the same actually in the ... I know - I was thinking of - the Kandy one was the one. George de Silva told me. You remember George? Perhaps you don't?

I. I've heard of him, yes.

G. He was telling me about it. But he said it didn't matter with him because he was in favour with the bus companies. Sometimes the bus companies took the money for the petrol and things like that and then refused to come at all.

I. In effect it favoured the moneyed candidate?

G. Yes, yes.

I. Any other factors which influenced the people?

G. Well, I - one factor [which] definitely influenced the people, but to what extent I don't know, was the colour question. You see, the - it was the colours they had. You see, white - yellow for the Buddhist robe and that sort of thing. And red was always a popular colour.

I. Yes, I see. Would you agree with the view that the constitution discouraged the growth of parties?

G. Oh, I think it did. It was definitely so.

I. But wouldn't you say it was not so much the constitution per se but the social situation which, with caste prejudices and other extra political considerations, which by necessitating what I might call a tribe of fixers, local fixers, discouraged the growth of parties?

G. I wouldn't have said the constitution discouraged the growth of parties. I should have said it was the stage of political development at the time in Ceylon.

I. Yes, I see.

G. I mean you get the same in India. You see before the British came - I mean there was only one political party in India. That was the Congress which was rather striving for home-rule. It was very, very much the same actually in Ceylon. You got the Congress who were striving for self-government and they had no really other cry but that.

I. Mmm. Do you think the politicians were easily able to mislead

the people? Or did the people show a lot of horse-sense?

G. I thought they showed a lot of horse-sense myself. But I ...

I. Its difficult to generalise anyway.

G. Its definitely difficult to generalise but I remember meeting Mark Young when he was on his way to Hong Kong. I had lunch - I had dinner with him, you see. And he asked me about the development of the Constitution. And he said that - 'What do you think about it?' Well I said I thought the development of the Constitution had a lot to be said in its favour. So he said, 'What do you mean?' Well I said to him, what I've said to you, that I thought the grant of universal franchise introduced a new element into government policy and that was the care of the underprivileged. I mean I didn't(?) put it like that. 'Oh', he said, 'That's quite new'. He said, 'And I've heard other signs that the result of the universal franchise is the wrong - is that - is that a whole different trend has come. An unfortunate trend. A demagogy as opposed to democratic if you like to put it like that'. And I said, 'Well, I don't agree that this has been unfortunate. I agree - I think my own view is - is the - it has been that the development has a tremendous amount of element of satisfaction'. He said, 'Well, its the first time I've heard that view expressed'.

I. Without - before the politicians had had any experience of the working of this Constitution, in the early 1930's they were strongly opposed to it. Have you any inkling why?

G. Who? The politicians?

I. Ceylonese politicians. Senanayake and crowd.

G. Well, I think because it was a strange one.

I. Simply because it was ...?

G. You see, the novelty of it didn't appeal to them.

I. They wanted a Westminster model did they?

G. I think they wanted - yes. They hated to think that the development of Ceylon, I think, would be on very different lines from what it was in the West. I remember actually when this fellow Sir Harold Butler came down-the Director General of International Labour - he met the Executive Committee and he was actually then coming out to Ceylon-to Asia - to explore actually the question of holding a regional conference of the I.L.O. in Asia you see. And incidentally it met in Singapore when I was Governor of Singapore so it was interesting(?). And one of the questions which N.M. Perera and D.P.R. Goonewardena asked him, you see, as to whether he thought that the

---

principles underlying the relation - underlying the labour problems were the same in the East as in the West. And they were obviously asking and expecting him to say, 'no'. But he said, 'Oh, no, no. They're quite, absolutely identical. And the same principles come in the development in Europe as in Asia'. But they obviously were rather anxious, you see, to get his assurance that the lines of development were not exactly the same.

I. Mmm. So do you think there was a feeling that they had been fobbed off with something else?

G. There may have been. I think that's very likely. But then when they got to the working of it I think they were very much happier. You see, I remember seeing some - I don't know, Senanayake - some despatches actually which had been published between the Governor and the Secretary-of-State. And I saw Senanayake's copy where he'd underlined something or other. The Governor, the Minister having definite individual reponsibilities apart from his Executive Committee. Because the - I think the idea of the Donoughmore Commission was that the Minister should have no responsibility apart from his Executive Committee.

I. Yes.

G. But ...

I. In practice it was the other way?

G. In practice it was definitely so. And that's the - Senanayake had underlined this in this despatch of the Governor.

I. Mmm. And it is said that there was much friction between the Officers-of-State and the Ministers at the outset? Do you know if that was so?

G. No, I don't know if that was so.

I. What sort of man was Sir Francis Tyrrell? Would he have found it difficult to adapt himself to this ...?

G. I should think that he was. He was an extraordinary man Tyrrell. I knew him very well personally. He was very impetuous.

I. So he would have found it difficult?

G. Yes. He was probably like Caldecott, you see, who said that he was a democrat, you see, but who only - the only way in which he interpreted his democracy was a strict adherence to the instructions to the Governor issued by the Secretary-of-State.

I. Oh, I see.

G. I mean I don't think either of them were really sort of democratic

at heart.

I. But was he a capable man?

G. Who?

I. Tyrrell.

G. I should have ... Well, I remember his ... ha-ha.

I. Was he sharp? Did he have - would you say he had a profound intellect?

G. No. He was an extraordinary man. I sometimes saw some of his minutes, actually, in some of the Executive Council's papers which perhaps I shouldn't have seen. I was awfully impressed by the sort of - by his deep thinking on particular subjects. The little I came in contact with him... He was very conscientious in a way.

I. What about Sir Maxwell Wedderburn?

G. How far are you going to quote me on these subjects?

I. Yes, that is a problem. I wouldn't quote you in your lifetime but there are ...

G. Ha-ha-ha.

I. No, I was wondering if there was anything in him that - well, I was trying to ascertain whether he didn't get on with the Ministers.

G. Well, of course, he had that awful trouble with Jayatilaka, you see. And the Bracegirdle case.

I. Oh, I see.

G. You see, that was one of the - it came out very, very much in that, you see. I've forgotten actually the episodes of the Bracegirdle affair ...

I. Yes, but he would have been responsible for the deportation order?

G. It was - yes. The question was who should have issued it, you see. And I think actually Wedderburn did issue it and there was ... The question was as to whether really Jayatilaka - really passed the buck on to Wedderburn, you see.

I. I was wondering whether you would call him a man who sort of - well, I mean, while able, someone who was not imaginative enough and far-sighted enough to be able to adapt himself to this changed status?

G. You see, it was a very, very difficult position.

I. Oh, very difficult position.

G. You see they [the Officers-of-State] were Chairmen of the Board of - of the Board of Ministers.[1] And I really never

---

~~1. This is incorrect. It was Wedderburn not Tyrrell who was Chief Secretary then.~~

1. This is incorrect. One of the Ministers was elected President by the rest.

had any dealings with them. I mean dealings with the Board of Ministers at all.

I. Do you know if these Officers-of-State - for instance, they had some powers. I wondered whether they used their red pencil on any occasions? With any frequency?

G. I shouldn't have said so. I shouldn't have said so but that - you mean countermanding the orders of ministers?

I. Yes. Well, the Financial Secretary through his financial powers?

G. No, I think the grave - the complaint against Maxwell(?)[1] was that he didn't use it enough.

I. Yes, I see. What about St. John Jackson? How did he get on?

G. Oh, he got on. They liked him very much indeed.

I. Oh, I see.

G. But he was an extremely ...

I. Affable?

G. Very affable and they admired his brain very much. But he was very lazy. You see, it took years for him - I mean he wrote this report - he came out to report on this immigration question. And it was - we couldn't get the report out of him. And then again, you see, he'd got some report about - I've forgotten what it was - in connection with the elections which he was supposed to publish. And he left it until the very last moment and the result was that when I came in it was a tremendous rush to get the registers out in time for the elections to be held within the time we were constitutional.

I. What about Sir John Howard? How did he get on with them?

G. They didn't - he had a rather bad time in the State Council. They used to rag him, you see.

I. Why? Wasn't he able to answer back?

G. No. I don't know why. I don't think - I know he wasn't happy in the State Council very much.

I. Oh, I see. Did the Officers-of-State attend all - at least - attend all the Executive Committee meetings? Was there always some official there?

G. No, no, no. They were very rarely in our - in my case.

I. You rarely attended them?

G. I attended them when I had to. I did everytime when matters of mine came up. I was in very close contact with them all.

I. This is what committee?

G. This is Labour.

I. Aha. Did it have to deal with only labour or were there other

---

1. Possibly Huxham.

subjects?

G. Oh, yes; labour, industry and commerce. But I only attended for the labour ones, you see.

I. Yes, I see. And that was so in the other Executive Committees too? Always the Permanent Under Secretary or, well, the ...?

G. He had to be present.

I. He had to be present?

G. I think he had to be. You see, he put up the reports, you see.

I. And what was your attitude to the State Council's attitude on passage allowances. They refused to vote the money didn't they?

G. Oh, we regarded it as a joke.

I. It was - oh ...

G. So Tyrrell told me. They did it - they did it because, I mean, they felt they must do it but they didn't really mind.

I. Mmm. You mean both sides considered it a sort of symbolic thing?

G. Yes, quite. I mean the Governor certified them. They knew the Governor was going to certify.

I. Yes, I see.

G. It was entirely a joke.

I. And then of course Sir Andrew Caldecott's Reforms Despatch.[1]

G. Well, I remember that. A long - I ...

I. You think it was a bad analysis?

G. I think it was a bad analysis. What I - my own personal point of view was that he wrote it without consulting people who had contact with the Executive Committees. For instance he didn't consult me at all. And I ...

I. Did he consult Wedderburn on ...?

G. Well, he must have done. He must have consulted them. I suppose he must have done but that was my complaint about him that he really knew very little about the workings of them.

I. Wouldn't the answer be that he was - coming from outside he was trying to bring some sort of objectivity?

G. Well, that was definitely so. I mean he was definitely - the idea was that he was supposed to come in, actually, for that particular purpose. But I don't think he understood it. I mean he didn't - I hadn't been very long with the - as Head of the Labour Department but I think if he'd consulted me - if he'd consulted us a little bit, you see. I suppose perhaps he didn't - perhaps he thought it inadvisable to go behind the back of the Minister, you see, in order to find out exactly what was happening.

---

1. He had spoken about this after the first interview the previous day.

I. In what way would you say that his analysis was ...?

G. Well, I've forgotten very much of it, as a matter of fact. But - I've forgotten it entirely. If you could quote from him I could probably say.

I. I'm afraid I haven't quotations here. You said over lunch - you told me you felt he was out of his depth?

G. I did. Yes.

I. Mmm. And one of the things he said, I know, was that in Ceylon public statements were invariably in superlatives and in over-painted tones. Would you agree with that? Public statements.

G. I shouldn't have thought so. The difficulty - I should say the difficulty would be - the difficulty was that the political atmosphere became very emotionally charged. And that of course leads to exaggeration; when emotion begins to play a part. And I - we got this - well, I was in a particularly difficult position with this very acute labour problem, you see, which ... Its very funny because when this fellow Butler came, you see, he met the Planters Association and he had various other people with him. And they were all very impressed about the high regard which the planters had for their labour force, you see. And spoke very, very highly of them indeed. Then almost in about a year's time there was suddenly this terrific unrest displayed throughout. Probably it wasn't on every estate but it seemed every one was very, very conscious of the fact that the unrest might break out at once on their estate. And it altered their whole attitude - the whole attitude of affairs up-country. One planter was killed of course.

I. Murdered or ...?

G. Murdered, yes. (?) (?)

I. That would have heightened matters - fears?

G. Yes. They were always very worried about it. He asked - I know he was having some trouble with an agitator and eventually he got rid of him. It was very difficult to get rid of them, you see. You see even if you prosecute them with a criminal trespass and they'd go to jail for a month or something like that. And they'd come back and come on the estate. And he was happy that he'd got rid of him and I think they put a barricade on the road, and his car came into it and they shot him when he got out to attend to it. To move the barricade.

I. I see. Of course Caldecott's reference to these sweeping statements could be explained by the fact that he came from Hong Kong, did you say?

____

G. Hong Kong, yes.

I. And other places where they didn't have the same sort of political ...

G. No, no, no.

I. Do you have any idea what Mr. Corea thought about the Constitution?

G. No, I don't. I never heard him comment on it at all, as a matter of fact. I don't think I ever discussed it with him.

I. I have just a few other odds and ends I have to ask you about. In the 1920's - I don't expect you to know much about this but can you remember this political criticism of the land policy?

G. No, I can't. I didn't come in contact with it at all.

I. No, I was wondering whether you had any - what your impression is. Whether the Land Settlement Department, in the 1920's, would have been trying to protect the peasants from speculators and land-buyers and (?) ...?

G. Yes, (?) (?) (?).

I. Were they?

G. What, the Land Settlement Department?

I. Yes.

G. Well, that was the idea.

I. Oh, I see.

G. It was a very good idea as a matter of fact. I don't know - I should think the agitation - I mean, if there was agitation it would be very much self-interested.

I. I was - you see there's a thesis on this and there is a very strong suspicion that some of the politicians, though not all, because D.S. was included in the critics, some of them were land-speculators and land-owners and planters, Ceylonese, who found themselves baulked by the Land Settlement Department. Who were prevented from their ...

G. I don't think that Senanayake was. I should have thought Senanayake was a pretty honest sort of bloke.

I. No, no, that's why I don't think Senanayake was. But he was also a critic. What I was getting at was that some of the critics, but not all, were self-interested?

G. I should think so. I heard cases. I'm not going to mention names. I heard cases of people actually who did acquire land actually ...

I. Politicians?

G. No - yes. Well, this fellow was a leading public man, scarcely a politician. But he wasn't - he didn't dabble in politics.

But he'd supposed to have acquired quite a lot of land in order to - on which he'd built - on which he had a tea-estate.

I. Oh, I see. Well, there's strong suspicion that Mr. Madawela, who was one of the leading critics, was one of these speculators and buyers. He's in the Kurunegala District.

G. Oh, yes.

I. And earlier on I have a feeling that Mr. Corea, C.E.V.S. Corea, was one. In the Negombo area.

G. Yes. Chilaw.

I. Chilaw, yes. Chilaw, sorry. But its difficult to establish. And ... So regarding the Land Settlement Department did they have the power to rescind a sale of Crown land on dubious title and give it back to the villagers?

G. Well, that I don't really know. But I always imagine that if Crown land had been taken by a planter, or something like that, that they'd offer it back to the planter, in the first place, on definite terms.

I. But what if the villagers or village needed it?

G. Well, I don't think they would worry about it then. I don't know. I'm just talking. I mean there are other people who ...

I. Yes, I know.

G. ... who know much more about it than I do. I mean I never worked in the - I don't know. I was trying to think who could tell you. There's one ...

I. Well, I'm meeting Mr. Sandys and ...

G. He - he - I don't think - oh, he worked in the Land Settlement Department, didn't he?

I. Yes. Frank Leach would I think.

G. Oh, yes, he's a clever man. Sandys was always regarded as being a bit of a ...

I. Idiot?

G. What? No, I liked Sandys. He was at the same college as I was, at Oxford. We were the same year. And I thought Sandys was always rather maligned. Because he showed a tremendous amount of initiative, far more initiative than most people did. But then people thought it was in the wrong direction.

I. Yes, I see. Was he impractical?

G. I don't think so.

I. Oh, what about Mr. Freeman? Do you know him?

G. Oh, I admired him tremendously.

I. Mmm. He seems to be very popular with everyone?

G. Yes.

I. But would you say that he was impractical?

G. No, I shouldn't think so. He - he - I shouldn't have said so at all, as a matter of fact. He was very - when you came to examine what he did you found out that he'd really sort of ...

I. Thought things over?

G. ... thought things over very carefully. And he - of course he got up against Government on this chena policy, you see. And he was really trying to safeguard the interests of the villagers. I got on with him extremely well.

I. Bowes calls him naive and guileless. This is referring to him in his early days.

G. That may have been in his early days. I came across him later when he'd retired. I never had to work with him in Government Service. And perhaps though I say it but shouldn't, he regarded me as sort of viewing problems in the same way as he did himself.

I. Mmm. What did you think of Government's chena policy in that area?

G. Well, what I think actually - in many cases, you see ... This is only my personal opinion again, I have very little comment on it. The chena, of course, policy [sic] was extremely wasteful. And its no good trying to eradicate some particular evil unless you are going to ...

I. Give an alternative?

G. Give an alternative. And the alternative, of course, of settled cultivation was a difficult one. But - and it required, actually, very, very careful, I mean, analysis of the underlying factors of it. And a tremendous amount of education of the people concerned. And I don't suppose Government could have put forward the money actually for - to have a really drastic land development scheme. Or whether they could have done it. The people who could have done it - I mean the people who - it was really a question of tackling the problem in a way that Lenin and Mao Tse Tung have tackled their particular land problems.

I. Yes. Apart from the question of chena lands was there any Government land policy as such? In the 1920's?

G. Oh, I think so. Though I don't know but they were definitely very, very conscious of the fact, actually, that the land problems presented a very, very difficult aspect of the Ceylon development. But they had some policy and they were groping for it. Brayne was the person I mean who did very, very much

---

in the Eastern Province.

I. He was a progressive sort of man was he?

G. Yes, he was progressive. People used to rather laugh at him and said that he was - his ideas were absurd.

I. Again I see this - a tendency here to - in Sandys case too, to hold back initiation. To squash new ideas?

G. There was rather that tendency.

I. Returning [to] land policy what was the - I mean one policy was to try and sell land to the planters. Would you say that another aspect of the policy was to conserve the native peasantry? In their holdings?

G. Oh, I think so. Definitely.

I. But where did the balance lie? Sometimes the planters could - [sometimes the] sale of land could hit the peasantry, couldn't it?

G. Yes, but I don't think that the planters for the most part - again this is only a, you know ...

I. Impression?

G. Impression I got. I don't think the planters profited by the sale of Crown lands so much. It was - what they profited by was the ...

I. Private sales?

G. Private sales. And very often they bought up claims which really amounted to nothing.

I. Did you - Government Agents and L.S.O's try to prevent this?

G. Well, I should think in my day they did. But whether they did in the old days I don't know.

I. I think the tendency was to try and - try and do as much as they could. Especially the L.S.O. though coming afterwards. He had quite wide power.

G. I should have thought actually - I think they accepted generally the - Land Settlement Department was an extremely , well, efficient development, shall I say. I haven't got the right sort of word but that sort of - it was a very good step.

I. What about - 1920's, the Donoughmore Commission said the Secretariat was rather a bottleneck?

G. It was.

I. It was?

G. Oh, definitely so.

I. Was there any other alternative?

G. Well, one of the things that Bowes advocated, I think, and other people advocated too was to have a system as they had in

---

India. Where they had secretaries for various ...

I. Have the Colonial Secretary and have assistants with departments?

G. No, no, no. That was colonial - what we did in Ceylon, you see, - in Singapore, which was a development for it. We had a Secretary for - we had a Secretary, a Colonial Secretary, there, you see. And then a Finance Secretary or we'd call him Legal Secretary. And then we had a Secretary for Economic Affairs, you see.

I. Yes, I see.

G. You see, things like that. Secretary for Trade and Commerce, Secretary for Welfare, you see.

I. Well, wasn't this realised in the 1920's? I mean why couldn't Government do something about it?

G. Well, it was realised but I think they were expecting reforms on another scale, you see.

I. And you said that the Secretariat didn't quite like Thomson? Why?

G. I didn't know I said the Secretariat didn't like Thomson?

I. Well, you were beginning to say that 'we didn't like him' and then you said something else about him being, well, a very able man.

G. No, I - what I - when I - probably what I wanted to say was that probably - I think the Secretariat liked him.

I. Oh, I see.

G. But it was the other officers of the Civil Service, who'd had Secretariat experience, who didn't like his methods in the Secretariat ...

I. Oh, I see.

G. ... when they came across them.

I. Yes, I see. It was a sort of administrative friction?

G. Yes.

I. And in your Education Ministry days who were the Directors of Education?

G. McCrae the whole time.

I. McCrae the whole time. Was - did he tend to move in fixed grooves? His policy?

G. I should have said no. I should have said, actually, looking back on it, that he was a very enlightened Director of Education.

I. Yes, I see. And another point you made was that Mr. Corea and the Ceylonese politicians approached problems from a basic different standpoint, from the Civil Servants. Could you elaborate on that? In what way?

G. I can't give any particular instances. But, you see, a Civil Servant works in definite grooves, you see. I mean he takes a certain thing for granted, you see. That you wouldn't do this and you wouldn't do that. Or you'd do this. Well, he rather questioned these things. Which I - he was quite right to do so. I mean it was very good for us in every way. Another thing too, you see, I mean in England, I mean, you know, the constitution has grown up against a definite historic background. Well, that historic background is absent in Ceylon. They've got their own historic background. And therefore they approach things in a different manner.

I. You were trying to get the same sort of background into Ceylon before you ...?

G. Well, we did have the same background in Ceylon, you see. I mean we had the English traditions and everything. And it was wrong to - wrong of us to expect really that the Ceylon Constitution would develop along the same lines. Because they hadn't got the traditions and conventions of the House of Commons. And the relation of the Ministers to the Home Civil Service.

I. Were there any strikes in your time in 1938, '39, '40?

G. Oh, plenty on estates.

I. On estates?

G. Oh, yes, plenty of them. We got ...

I. Instigated from outside were they?

G. No. Most of the strikes were instigated, as I said, by the fact that one man was dismissed. And the - he probably sort of - probably got hold of his fellow workers to back him by striking, you see.

I. Yes. Wasn't it - well, don't you think it fair that the estates' planters should have had the power to dismiss workers? Or was it ...?

G. Oh, they should have had the power. There's no doubt, I mean, in those days certainly. I mean its different now. I mean if you dismiss a worker, I mean, you've got to give him probably more than one month's notice or something like that. But the difficulty was - it was an extremely difficult problem. You see, as I said, if you dismissed them they couldn't go back to India. I mean a lot of the people, as a matter of fact, had lost touch with India. And if you did sack them from the estate, which was their home, they had nowhere to go.

I. What was your role in the strikes? Arbitrator?

G. Oh, mediator.

I. Mediator.

G. There was no question of arbitration. No one wanted arbitration. We couldn't - it was quite enough mediating.

I. And regarding this master-servant law, in say, in the 1920's and 1930's, I think, well, I know that in the nineteenth century it was an advancement on the British law. And in theory master and servant were treated as equal. But I was wondering whether in the 1920's, the judges being mostly, well often, Europeans, sometimes there was a bias towards the planters?

G. No, no, no, no. Quite a lot of the bias, actually, was the other way.

I. The other way? Mmm.

G. I mean magistrates in Nuwara Eliya, for example, got into difficulties with the planters because they ...

I. Because they ... Yes, I know the Civil Servants were quite - were generally impartial on this point. But I was asking this because you had said that, regarding policy before your time, Government had been rather attuned to the commercial interest.

G. Oh, it had. I mean usually if a fellow - if a man didn't behave - I remember there was one man who messed it up there. He was regarded as being a sort of anti-planter and there was agitation to get him transferred. Well, I said - told you about myself. One planter told me that they were discussing actually in the - in one local planters' association whether they shouldn't make representations to the Governor to get me removed. They had done that before.

I. Well, ending with post-war developments, I know you were not in Ceylon but I presume you were following developments?

G. Oh, yes.

I. And there's one point. When Senanayake came to London in 1945, after the Donoughmore Report was out - I mean the Soulbury Report, he asked for full independence and they didn't give it then. But they agreed to it in 1947.

G. Yes.

I. When in effect the same arguments applied, on both dates. I was wondering how the change came about? And why?

G. Well, I can only surmise, as a matter of fact.

I. Yes.

G. But I spoke to the Governor about it, Sir Henry Moore. No, he spoke to me about it. Said, 'Did I think it wise?' And I said, 'Yes, I thought it was wise'. I mean he thought that

---

any sort of restrictions placed on the working of the Constitution by the Governor, would lead to friction which was in - which would be entirely unnecessary. There was much more chance of amicable relations and cooperation from the Ceylonese Government if they had full independence, than if there was the - a British Governor-General to safeguard the British interests in the Colony. Which I think was correct, at that time. I think it was certainly a wise decision.

I. Have you any idea why it was not agreed to in 1945? I know there were four factors I would - well, there was what I would call jingoistic pressure in England itself; some people were against it. Then I think the Government was genuinely concerned about the communal tensions between ...

G. Oh, yes, there were. That was definitely so. I mean who was the fellow who - Ponnambalam, who dashed away to London when he ...

I. And of course they were worried about their obligation to the Civil Servants and again they worried about the question of the bases and security.

G. I shouldn't think they worried about the Civil Service at all.

I. They weren't?

G. No.

I. But still this - these objections still stood in 1947 as they did in 1945. And in 1947 they agreed to go ahead with full independence.

G. Yes. But I - you see the - one thing, you see, was that, I know, the Governor, Henry Moore, having agreed to - I mean having put forward the idea of independence he got very much - the result was he got very much in favour with Senanayake. And Senanayake then was quite prepared to make a treaty with England, you see, safeguarding the bases and safeguarding various other interests of Britain, you see. And that - a treaty was signed which was, well I suppose, was very satisfactory to both parties. And there was the question that if matters had been delayed the question is whether a treaty so satisfactory would have been signed.

I. Would have been signed. Mmm. I was also wondering, from reading Jeffries' book, whether the fact that Creech-Jones had replaced Hall made much of a difference?

G. I shouldn't think so.

I. Mmm.

G. No, I shouldn't think, actually, that made any - it was the

whole attitude of the Cabinet in England.

I. Yes, well, I think he said that Hall didn't quite push the point in 1945.

G. Well, Hall was new of course.

I. And Sir Ivor Jennings makes a rather strange point that if there had been a Conservative Government, independence would have come quicker? I can't quite see how?

G. No, I can't see ... Moore would have made the same recommendation I think.

I. Yes.

G. And though - I can't see how it came quicker. Because the War intervening had a sort of retrograde effect.

I. You think it would have come quicker?

G. Well, it would certainly have come quicker. I mean if there had been no war there would certainly have been - a commission similar to the Soulbury Commission would have come out earlier.

I. Well, on the other hand, if there hadn't been war things in India wouldn't have come to such a head, and ...

G. Oh, I should have thought they would have done. I should have thought they would have done.

I. I see. And also there's a rather - a possible theory. There were lots of strikes in Ceylon in '46 and '47, which were Left-inspired. And I was wondering whether D.S. and Oliver had made use of the fact of these strikes to say that it was better to give them full independence and let them deal with it rather than letting the ...

G. They may have said. I don't know. I heard they were very serious strikes but I shouldn't have thought - I mean it was very difficult to deal with a strike on this date.

I. These were not - this was a general strike and clerks came out.

G. Oh, did they?

I. Yes. It was quite serious. And just finally, what did Mr. D.S. Senanayake think of developments in 1952 when he - well, '50 was it, when you met him?

G. Well, he stayed - no, he stayed with me in '46.

I. '46?

G. Yes.

I. In Singapore?

G. In Singapore.

I. Oh, I see.

G. And I think - I don't know whether he stayed with me. He came

---

to Singapore a second time but Malcolm MacDonald was very anxious to put him up. I know I said - I don't know whether he did come or not. I don't know. I can't remember. But I can't remember him staying with me a second time. But he regarded me - I regarded him as a personal friend and he regarded me as a very great personal friend. Of course, for some reason or other, they thought I'd done a very good job in Kegalla.

I. That was the malaria time?

G. Yes. I suspect anyone else would have done the same. But they didn't seem to think so.

I. If I may ask what are your political sympathies now, here? Labour or Tory?

G. Oh, Tory.

I. Tory.

G. I don't like the sort of degree of gover ... - of control which the Labour people exercise.

I. Did your - there weren't many people with a grammar school background in Ceylon?

G. No. Of course the grammar schools then were different from - very different from what they are now. I mean we got a very, very different class of boy in the grammar schools from what you do today.

I. Which one were you in?

G. Cheltenham.

I. Cheltenham. Oh, well.

G. It was founded in - in ...

I. Oh, its quite old?

G. It was founded in - oh, five hundred years - four hundred years ago.

I. Well, thank you very much.

G. Not a bit.

END OF INTERVIEW

Confidential and Unrecorded Information provided by Sir Franklin Gimson during Interviews, 24th and 25th November 1965.*

~~To be used with due respect to their nature and to both Sir Franklin and the other personalities mentioned.~~

Sir Charles Collins he considered a rather stereotyped man [an impression confirmed by Mr. Bond's distinction between him and Sir. R. Drayton - on tape]; also very 'ambitious' and not very successful in rising as high as he wished.

Sir Francis Tyrrell and Sir Maxwell Wedderburn: without any reflection on their ability he considered them rather unimaginative and not progressive in their policies; i.e. rather inclined to move in the old grooves. He feels that he himself was not liked by both of them because (a) of his radical ideas (b) of his popularity with the local people and politicians. He made the point - a truism - that it is dangerous to be popular and that in the Civil Service this was regarded as 'suspicious.' In Wedderburn's case too Gimson was disliked as a Colombo wallah. It so happened that Gimson had spent most of his career in posts in Colombo and provincial officers tended to dislike such men, there being a feeling that a cabal kept jobs to their circle. [Points confirmed by Bond, a Civil Servant who spent his first thirteen years in the Provinces.] Now, Wedderburn had been an L.S.O. and a G.A. before rising to be Colonial Secretary and he had this feeling towards Gimson and believed Gimson knew little of Ceylon, Gimson affirms that he was not part of the cabal; also that he knew quite a lot about Ceylon [this would be after the mid 1930's especially] because his job managing the elections of 1935-36 took him all over the island [he was also A.G.A. Kegalla before that].

While Sir Franklin Gimson might appear to be claiming a great deal on his own behalf re (b) above, I accept his views - emphatically accept - his views and his assessment as correct. His radical views were just the sort that would make him popular with the politicians and suspect with many Civil Servants (i.e. those at the top).

Note that when around 1939 aor 1940 Gimson as Controller of Labour was asked to report on - I think - the labour conditions on estates in relation to the strikes (or it may have been re labour

---

* This is a retyped version. It was originally typed in elite and copies in London and Oxford are in that form.

conditions in general), Wedderburn as Colonial Secretary passed this on with the view that he disagreed with the report. In London, the Secretary of State, on reading it, asked for a similar report every month.

Gimson felt that improvements in land tenure were the key to the agricultural development of Ceylon. He was, in contradiction to D.S's policy, in favour of large farms, whether on the collective or capitalist model; at least, in the Dry Zone and tank country, he felt conditions were ideal for this sort of thing. He was, by implication, against fragmentation and subdivision. In answer to my allusion to the improvements affected through small farms in Japan, he was inclined to think Japan had peculiar conditions and certainly nothing like our tank country.

N.B. These are the gist of his views in my words, except where rendered in quotations when I am certain he used the word concerned.

M.W. Roberts
27/11/65

Sir Franklin Gimson's Answers to Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts
January 1966. *

Extract from letter from Sir Franklin Gimson - M.W. Roberts:-

I return the questionnaire you sent me and my answers to it. I hope my writing is legible enough for them to be deciphered.

I had difficulty in finding a condensed answer in almost every case and in giving views which were not coloured by the light of after events.

I cannot regard my replies as in any way as satisfactory as I could wish, as much requires to be elaborated and interpreted against a background of the atmosphere of the time in which the events occurred.

1. Can you recall the bus strikes in the late 1930's and particularly that of mid 1938? Do you think the drivers and conductors had genuine grievances? If so, what were they (as far as you remember)?

Answer:

I fear I cannot recall the bus strike of the late thirties or that of 1938 to any marked degree. In fact I am not sure if it is that to which you refer.

The one in 1938 or even in 1939 with which I had contact occurred in Panadura. The only degree of contact with it was a meeting with the bus owners whom I tried to persuade to recognise the Trade Union concerned and to negotiate with its officers. They were reluctant to accept advice.

I don't imagine the strike was serious as a settlement was reached without any further action on my part.

I did not investigate any of the grievances in respect of which the strike was called and cannot make any useful comments on the details of the conditions, of employment of the bus drivers and conductors.

2. Did Colvin R. and other strike representatives show a reasonable attitude?

Answer:

I fear I cannot offer any remarks on the attitude of Colvin R. de Silva and others as I never met them in relation to the bus strikes.

---

* This is a retyped version. It was originally typed in elite and copies in London and Oxford are in that form.

3. What about the attitude of the bus employers?

Answer:

Again I have nothing to say.

6. Were you given a free hand in dealing with this strike? Did Sir M. Wedderburn disapprove of your line of action? What was Sir A. Caldecott's stand?

Answer:

This question does not arise.

7. Regarding the harbour strike of mid 1941, did the workers have genuine grievances? If so, what were they?

Answer:

The conditions of employment of the harbour workers in 1941 were those due to the casual nature of these tasks dependent on the arrival and departure of ships. In 1941 the war caused marked irregularity in the presence in the harbour of cargo-working vessels and so accentuated the evils of casual employment, with no schemes of leave on account of sickness or of superannuation.

The solution of these evils lies in the decasualisation of labour. I had advocated the formation of a labour battalion for harbour duty as providing regularity of wages and of ensuring a degree of discipline to cope with the individuality of the Sinhalese character. However this met with no support but I am convinced it was right.

8. (a) What is your view of the contract system?
(b) Did it lead to any evils from the employees' point of view?
(c) Did it mean greater or less efficiency from the Government point of view?

Answer:

(a) I never had occasion to give any detailed study to the contract system as I regarded it as out-moded as against the development of Trade Unionism. The workers were appreciating that through medium of association they would secure a voice in their conditions of employment and in consequence it was imperative they should deal direct with their employers and not indirectly through a labour contractor. I advocated the abolition of the contractor though I realised he had played and did play a useful part in providing loans to cover illness, and certain domestic and social necessities.

I warned any reformer that in direct system of employment these requirements must not be overlooked.

(b) I cannot speak with authority on the existence of evils from the employees' view point. Many were alleged but I had no direct evidence of their presence.

(c) I am not sure if I understand this question. If an answer is required relating to the development of Trade Union policy, then I reply that the contractor did handicap this development as the real employer would take refuge behind the former if the services of the Labour Department were required in the event of a Trade dispute.

9. What was the attitude adopted by the Wharfage Companies towards these grievances and this particular strike? Your comments on this attitude?

Answer:

My recollection of the attitude of The Ceylon Wharfage Company was it stood aloof from the dispute and regarded it as one between the workers and the contractors. My inquiry was one into a question of wages: in fact it should have covered the whole system of port labour. If this had been so, the Wharfage Companies would have been concerned. Their attitude and that of the Ceylon Wharfage Company in no way differed.

I may add that the Colonial Office Labour Adviser who came to Ceylon in 1941 told me the conditions of employment in the harbour were such as to provide the basis for much labour unrest.

10. Would Government have been more conciliatory towards this strike and less severe on those L.S.S.P. leaders involved in it if the conditions were peacetime conditions?

Answer:

The L.S.S.P. leaders were not involved in this dispute in 1941. It was the Traders of an Indian organisation who were. N.M. Perera and others were in custody. Perhaps in dealing with this dispute I was obsessed with the ban imposed by the Indian Government on the departure of South Indian Tamils to Ceylon. If the harbour labourers left to go to India as they used to do periodically before the operation of the ban, they could return without difficulty. In 1941, they went to their villages but could not resume employment in Ceylon. The Port labour force was therefore gradually diminishing as the

Singalese refused to work in Colombo though I believe they did in Galle.

I regarded the removal of the ban as the panacea for the cure of all labour troubles. I gave too much weight to this view and am guilty of over-simplification.

11. Did you know that there was a split among the Marxists in 1939-40? and that they broke into two groups - the Trotskyites (L.S.S.P.) and Communists (U.S.P.)?

Answer:

I never heard of any split among the Marxists in 1939-40. As far as I know, all were united in Sama Samaja Party.

12. Did you come up against Dr. S.A. Wickremasinghe? How would you assess him?

Answer:

I knew Dr. S.A. Wickremasinghe in 1931 when he was a member of the Executive Committee of Education. I was then its Secretary. I never met him later.

My impression of him then was [that] he [was] by no means a fanatic. He was a pleasing personality with a sense of humour.

13. Did you get on better with Sir R. Drayton than with Wedderburn?

Answer:

I never worked with Sir R. Drayton when he was Chief Secretary. When he assumed that office, I had left for Hong Kong.

14. In the nineteenth and twentieth century, one aspect of British policy was to foster the growth of an educated class, in effect an educated elite, yet when it came to political reforms McCallum's despatch (in reality Sir Hugh Clifford's) denied that this class represented the people and denied their right to more power. (a) Presumably Clifford continued to hold these views and some others in the C.C.S. also agreed? (b) Would you comment on the seeming contradiction in these policies.

Answer:

It is difficult to give a concise answer to this question because the whole history of the development of the Ceylon constitutional problems is involved. I would consider that

Sir Hugh Clifford and some members of the Ceylon Civil Service were approaching the situation as if from the angle of bureaucracy both in the central government and even more so in the provincial sphere of authority. If that is so, and if the bureaucratic system was to be maintained, then the educational elite of the Ceylonese as bureaucrats probably could not be said to represent the people. No bureaucrat whether European or Ceylonese could.

When the elected principle was introduced, then this elite clearly had to take their place in representing the people and in educating them to assume political responsibility. The Ceylonese only could do this.

The introduction of democracy as essential in view of the rise of Asian nationalism made a different approach in the problems of Government imperative.

15. Admittedly the middle class did not quite represent the masses but surely they represented local aspirations?

Answer:

I would have said the national aspirations of the Ceylonese were widespread and with the grant of manhood suffrage any Ceylonese possessed of qualities likely to appeal to an electorate could represent the masses. Membership of the middle class was not essential.

16. Would you say that the G.A's, A.G.A's and headmen represented the masses better than the middle-class?

Answer:

The answer to this question depends on the personality of the officers concerned and in the era in which they functioned.

In the early years of this century, I should say they could voice the views of the mass of the populations. Later they lost touch and perhaps even later still they acquired a democratic outlook which enabled them to assess popular feeling.

The whole problem is an intricate one. Even with the establishment of a democratic government, the administration was still bureaucratic: there were no real local authorities. Members of the Legislative Council worked through the Government Agents and their officers and were chiefly concerned with details of administration and not with broad trends of policy.

On the broad principle of independence as opposed to

colonial rule, there was a definite urge for self-government but on other issues, I doubt if there were any marked expressions of opinion affecting the electorate as a whole.

17. Was not mass silence on political matters merely a question of limited horizons, apathy and being inarticulate rather than content with British rule as Clifford argued?

Answer:

Again in the Clifford era, I doubt if the masses held many political views. They possibly never, as they did later, visualise any change in the constitutional horizon. The 'elite', however, thought they did not get a fair share of the commerce of the country or of its resources and that this was due to the colonial policy of the reliance on British capital and enterprise. The economic attitude was one of laissez faire and it is only lately this has alterd. With this change, Government does direct economic development and in consequence if colonial rule still operated, the Ceylonese would be in a better position in the light of modern theories to participate in local enterprise.

In other words it was a mistake to criticise the policy of the colonial era as against the image of the post war years

18. I know Clifford was mentally unbalanced while Governor, but how would you assess him?

Answer:

I know too little of Sir Hugh Clifford to give any judgement on him. I was too junior to have any knowledge of what part, if any, he played in administration.

19. The 1924 Constitution introduced by Manning was based on patently bad constitutional principles - and was very similar to those which had been found unworkable during the First Colonial Empire and in Jamaica in the 1860's. What is surprising is that this was not realised either in Colombo or London. Have you any idea why not? Any comments on the point I make? As against it, one might place Sir Hilary Blood's statement that he worked similar constitutions in other colonies (presumably Gambia, perhaps B. Guiana) without any hitch.

Answer:

I only heard vague comments on the Manning constitution. One was that it was hoped the nominated members would vote if required with the officials and the other referred to the frequent use by the Governor of his reserve powers. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of these comments.

Probably Sir H. Blood, as I did later in Singapore, profited by past experience and had acquired through it an acuter political sense than had those who had to work the Manning constitution.

In the first place I think it was a mistake not to include in the Executive Council representatives from the Legislative Council who could have influenced the policy as well as the administration of the Government if they had been so included.

I had on my Executive Council in Singapore where there was an unofficial majority, in the Legislative Council, members of the former elected by the latter. Discussion in the Executive Council of motions before the Legislative Council ensured understanding of the issues involved in a way open debate could not.

In the second place I realised in Singapore the unofficial members would meet to discuss any motions on the agenda of the meetings of the Legislative Council. I arranged meetings of these unofficials to be held under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary and so suggestions could be received to anticipate further action to secure a majority if a division later occurred in a Council session. This procedure was welcomed and worked satisfactorily. As contrasted with Ceylon the unofficials became partners in Government and not the opposition to it.

The sense of co-operation in Ceylon was not developed with unfortunate consequences to the future of the island.

20. Would you call Sir John Anderson's views on the 1915 riots 'appalling'? Would you say that he was fooled by cases which were specially 'concocted and engineered' by lawyers? (Both points made by Bowes.)

Answer:

No. I would not say Sir John Anderson's views of the 1915 riots were appalling. He considered Ceylonese public opinion had been shocked by certain incidents which had taken place under the authority of some Europeans and thought the good name of the Government should be vindicated. I think he had

some justification for this view. He certainly antagonised the European community, then suffering from the nervous tension of the war but I would not consider him deserving of censure.

I do not think he was fooled: there were grounds for the charges made of misconduct in the suppression of the riots. I am not sure if it was not best these should be investigated.

21. You have stated that in the 1920's there was a tendency to consider trade-union activities seditious. Why? Was this an attitude that arose *per se* or was it because of the particular Ceylonese engaged in this activity?

Answer:

In describing the growth of Trade Unionism in Ceylon, I think I said it followed the pattern experienced in many other countries. In England the Unions were certainly regarded as seditious at their outset and a similar view was held in Ceylon where the inexperience of their leaders led to many mistakes which did not appear to be in the best interests of their members and which therefore give rise to questions as/[to] the bona fides of the Union officers.

Another aspect of the labour unrest was the high regard of the employers for their employees[1] and the complacency of the former that the conditions of work were so satisfactory that any discontent was due to seditious agitation.

I don't think that the personalities of the Ceylonese in the 1920's were considered possessed of sufficient influence to arouse the question of action being taken against them. Their seditious outlook was not thought to be of much practical consequence.

22. Would you say that, generally speaking, the official approach (in Ceylon) to the Donoughmore recommendations was to view them as a madness? I ask this because Sir John Kotelawala quotes a Governor (presumably Stubbs) as saying they were 'born in a delirium' and something to the effect of '.... a coma.'

Answer:

No! I would not agree that the official approach in Ceylon was to view the Donoughmore recommendations as madness. Reforms were regarded as necessary and the presentation of this necessity in the report of the Donoughmore Commission created a favourable atmosphere for their acceptance. Of

1. This does not quite make sense. The writing is not clear. "Employees" and "employers" are so written that they could be read either way.

course the Donoughmore Constitution did not operate as the Commission visualised but I do not think it was an unhappy step on the path to independence.

I doubt if the quotation of Sir J. Kotelawala is an accurate one.

23. Have you any inkling whether officials in London had similar reactions?

Answer:

I have no information on the attitude of the Colonial Office in regard to the Donoughmore Constitution.

24. Would you say that on political matters and trade-union questions the personnel in the Colonial Office were more liberal, imaginative and far-sighted than those of the old school - the Clifford-Stubbs-Tyrrell-Fletcher-Wedderburn school - in Ceylon.

Answer:

I had little contact with the Colonial office in the years between the wars.

I should have thought the objectives of the Colonial office and those of the persons you mention were more concerned with day-to-day administration and the maintenance of orderly government than in far sighted and imaginative developments. The achievements of these objectives were a necessary prelude to advance to self government and their establishment would be regarded as a justification to a transfer of power to the unofficials.

I would not pronounce this with anything like assurance but it is the impression I got as one not in touch with the pronouncements of H.M.G.

25. Did the British bring law rather than justice? or in more modified terms, did the law that was in existence tend to favour prostitution of justice?

Answer:

I scarcely think I can subscribe to the statement that the British brought law rather than justice. It is too sweeping a condemnation of those responsible for the administration of justice against which criticisms could be made. I feel

that I cannot express, however, any judicial opinion on this issue for reasons which have given me a prejudiced outlook to lawyers when a prisoner of the Japanese.

26. Did the law multiply litigation?

Answer:

I would not have said law multiplied litigation except in the restricted sense that the more the statutes the greater the chances of references to the courts. I can make no other comment.

27. Did you come into contact with A.C.G. Wijekoon (later Sir)? How would you appraise him?

Answer:

Yes: I met Sir A.C.G. Wijekoon and had a high opinion of him. He gave me the impression of being possessed of a balanced judgement and of a generous outlook.

Private letter: Sir Franklin Gimson - H.E. Newnham, 16 January 1957

Applegarth
Thornton-le-dale
Pickering
Yorkshire
16-i-57

My dear Hubert,

Many thanks for your letter and for your most interesting enclosure which I return herewith.

John's account of his visit to Ceylon made most depressing reading. It is sad to think that Ceylon was regarded as a model for the transition from colonial government to independence. Yet I often wonder if it will always be independent. Bandaranaike, with his policy of Ceylon for the Singalese, might easily antagonise India. In fact he was responsible to a great extent for the troubles with India over the Village Communities ordinance & for the breakdown of negotiations at the Delhi conference which I attended in October 1940. Bandaranaike speaks of my friend Mr. Nehru but that friendship would not save Ceylon if grave differences of opinion arose over the unsolved problems of the position of Indians in the island.

I once emphasized to Corea the danger of Ceylon being absorbed by India unless the differences between the two countries were settled. He told me that a similar warning had been given to him by some Indian leaders. The possibility of a second Kashmir is not too remote.

I am glad Malaya asked John Strong to advise the officers there about compensation terms. I know the Europeans in government service were very worried about their future and the Colonial Office is not inclined to show much sympathy to those whom it sent out in the full expectation of making a career there. I am not at all happy about Malaya. There the question of Malayanisation was the subject of a local commission of inquiry with proceedings held in public. Of course all the disgruntled members of the public took the opportunity to blackguard the Europeans whose case was in any event difficult to expound especially in public. The Commission, in due course, recommended the retirement of all Europeans so that in two or three years all would have left.

The Malayan Civil Service was staffed with but few Malays: Indians and Chinese were not admitted. In consequence there are no government officers of experience to take the higher posts of the service and few trained Asians to maintain the traditions and

standards necessary for a democratic state when the Europeans leave. In India & Ceylon Asians were admitted at an early stage and were invaluable after independence. Dr. Bullitt, former American ambassador at Moscow & Paris told India was governed entirely by those Indian members of the Civil Service trained in the British tradition. When they left, he despaired of the future.

Indonesia had no senior Asian Government officers & should have, in consequence, provided a lesson to Malaya. It did provide a lesson but not the one which should have followed.

I hope you will forgive these meanderings: I always find my pen runs away with me when I start writing about the East.

I am very glad you have established yourself so happily in Gloucestershire. I send my congratulations

Yours

[signed] Jimmie [i.e. F.C. Gimson]