

EDWARD HENRY LUCETTE

b. 5 March 1896.

B.A., Oxon.

Military Service.

C.C.S. 1921 - 1938

May 1921	apptd. to C.C.S.
16 June 1921	attached to Anuradhapura Kachcheri.
25 March 1922	attached to Trincomalee Kachcheri.
14 Nov. 1922	attached to Col. Sec's Office.
28 July 1924	Private Sec. and Acting A.O.C. to Governor.
2 April 1925	Additional Asst. Col. Sec.
11 Sept. 1925	on leave.
11 Feb. 1926	P.M., Gampola.
13 Dec. 1926	P.M., Kandy.
16 April 1928	D.J., Badulla.
23 Feb. 1929	P.M., Colombo.
27 July 1930	on leave.
26 Dec. 1930	Asst. Registrar of Co-op. Societies.
7 July 1931	Additional D.J., Kandy.
24 Nov. 1931	Asst. Registrar of Co-op. Societies.
2 Oct. 1932	A.G.A., Kegalla.
12 April 1934	on leave.
24 Sept. 1934	Additional Registrar of Co-op. Societies.
4 Oct. 1934	Registrar of Co-op. Societies.
25 March 1935	Deputy Registrar of Co-op. Societies.
1 April 1936	Acting Registrar...
1938	retired.

Comments on Interview with Mr. E.H. Lucette, M.C., 8 January 1966.

Mr. Lucette had not been very well of late and was not sprightly but was fully alive mentally. Rather doubtful about his competence to help me, he expressed his views very candidly and took little notice of the "devilish machine" as he called the tape-recorder. He was a shade guarded when it came to detrimental comments on other Civil Servants and perhaps moderated his punches. But he was fair in his assessments and did not lay on any praise as a matter of course while ready to mention failings in those whom he otherwise regarded highly.

A humble and highly competent officer with a critical ability and an unwillingness to accept things as they were, he revealed these qualities during the interview. He was ready to criticise aspects of British rule without being sweeping in such views. He agreed with several of the criticisms raised by Messrs. Newnham and Strong. Very objective. Also realistic; e.g. he did not seem to overestimate the benefits of the Co-operative Movement which he helped to set on its feet.

Since he is the only surviving member of the trio of W.K.H. Campbell, Maybin and Lucette - the British Civil Servants who were in charge of the Co-operative idea which Campbell inaugurated^①, it was but natural that I should concentrate on this field. His information and views on this subject were particularly useful. His appraisals of other individuals too were very useful for I am sure he was pretty perceptive in judging men, while very fair at the same time.

As member of a specialist department he was not cast into the political battlefield, but he showed a fair amount of interest in the political changes. He stated quite firmly that he disliked democracy. But he was by no means a diehard and was ready to see the other side of things. As stated before, on many points - whether administrative, social and even political - his was a critical, if not radical, view.

His memory was dim on some points no doubt because he retired early (1938) and held another job for 25 years between then and the interview.

M.W. Roberts

8.1.66.

① I believe the idea arose in the pre First World War years, possibly from (Sir) Frank Stockdale but Campbell was the one who seems to have got it really going and is certainly most associated with it.

INTERVIEW WITH MR. E.H. LUCETTE, M.C.

8 JANUARY 1966

- I. Can you recollect in what period you were associated with the Cooperative Credit Movement?
- L. Oh, dear, yes. When you say period, what do you mean? Period of my life? Period of history? Or period ...?
- I. Exact dates if possible.
- L. Yes. Well, I should think my first slight contact with Cooperation would be about 1926, after I was - yes, after I was married.
- I. Mmm.
- L. And I went in to the department then and I arrived when one or the other, Maybin or Campbell, were on leave or else came into the department permanently when Maybin and later Campbell, of course, retired.
- I. That was in 1931 or so?
- L. Well, I don't know. But ... Yes. In that, I should say - I should say it would have been - I should say it would be 1931 or so. That would be about right.
- I. And what would you say were the main aims of this Cooperative Credit Movement?
- L. Well, you know, that's a very comprehensive question. I think its real main aim, in the eyes of Campbell, Maybin and myself, was really to teach self-reliance. Now that is one of the - is one of the cream aims of Cooperation and one which Campbell who, after all, trained and taught us, made his very particular - favoured objective. So much did he make it his favoured objective that I would say, on the whole, he didn't exploit in any way the good relations he could have had with the Minister, who thought very well of Cooperation and indeed favoured it greatly. Senanayake. And I think - here I am now generalising what took place over a period of time - Campbell's emphasis was always on the, 'you must do it yourselves'.
- I. Mmm.
- L. Always say, 'you must do it. You mustn't look to Government.
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You must do it yourselves'. Senanayke was, I think, always willing to see that more financial - our help was available - and he actually thought was suitable for that particular movement.

- I. Mmm. So in a sense Senanayake wanted more Government aid pumped in and more ...?
- L. I wouldn't - I don't want to say that. I had a great admiration for Senanayake but he was willing - he was willing to go more than the whole hog to help. But I don't think he ever realised that the Movement, as we conceived it, was one in which you didn't look to somebody else to solve your problems. But you said, 'We're going to solve this ourselves'. And in point of fact Campbell succeeded very greatly - we all succeeded very greatly in one or two places. Now ...
- I. Like?
- L. Oh. Jaffna particularly. A boat service, a hospital. Those were the things - you notice I'm not speaking about Cooperative Credit which was in fact their main and their instructional platform as Cooperative Credit. To teach them to create - I don't mean in a banking sense but to get - to build up money for themselves and to be honest and punctual in meeting their obligations. Now this sounds very grandmotherly stuff but it really was absolutely vital. The whole idea was really to turn people to look to themselves to solve their own difficulties.
- I. Mmm. I see. That was the main aim. Would you say that as a subsidiary aim - I mean, or rather an associated aim - there was this idea of cooperative credit in the village areas to counteract the effects - well, not even in the village areas, in general - to counteract the effects of indebtedness?
- L. Well, certainly. Certainly, the idea was always debt redemption, and the Movement started and began - as it began everywhere that I know - on a business of increasing your credit-worthiness and the money which you handle. It was, to begin with, a form of banking on a village scale aimed at village needs.
- I. But while this was the immediate aim, the larger and ultimate aim was to teach self-reliance?
- L. Ah. But I mean - yes. The associated aim ... - unquestionably. Cooperation - [the] Rochdale pioneers helped themselves in very great difficulties. And that idea of building up yourself for your own effort was really basic to the whole thing. And I think that's absolutely true. Curiously enough it had very great success, as well as a very great failure, in associated
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members. Now, we started stores and a great many of those stores were really very successful, particularly in certain areas, where they were pushed - worked rather hard. And it was really a very great success and that was not a credit movement but it was a movement in which people did help themselves to solve - meeting of [sic] some particular need they felt. And that was a success because your - quite a number of these estate - because the estates were an ideal place for them to start in. There were great successes for them. I think more particularly in the Passera area.

- I. What sort - what estates? The European owned ones or both Ceylonese and European owned?
- L. Now, as far as I remember, the European owned ones. But that - that wasn't an objective at all. I mean ...
- I. Yes, I know. But the point was - the point I'm getting at is that with European direction it was more likely to be ...
- L. There was no European direction.
- I. Oh, I see.
- L. There was only European toleration. I mean there was just this toleration. And in one of the cases I remember [the] Cooperative Movement came into conflict with the village traders. The people whom - who were affected by their emergence wasn't - the estate profited by it - the people who didn't like it were the village traders. And they - and they were inclined to squeak quite hard at one stage. Now it must have been a fairly solid movement because I believe that when the war broke out - I believe that the whole food distribution scheme or whatever that was - I don't know what it was. I'm told that it was more or less based on Cooperative Stores, which were hastily constructed to carry all these new Government schemes. Now I may - I may be quite wrong over that but that's what I believe.
- I. Mmm. Now, as - having this aim of self-reliance what were your methods? And principles? In effecting it?
- L. Well, if you take the Cooperative Movement, a very simple method was to be punctual in paying your debts. And if you couldn't pay it all to pay something. I mean it was wholely simply a question of - of teaching people to be trustworthy and reliable to a degree that they could achieve. And not, if they were going to default in part, to default in toto. It was entirely teaching people to sustain whatever they want to sustain. I think that's good - that's really the
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method. If you can't pay all, pay what you can pay. It is essentially based on reliability and honesty. And so to some extent you teach honesty by teaching people to be punctual and to fulfil your obligations in debt repayment.

- I. Yes. But when you got down to brass-tacks and to the details, how did you go about teaching them this?
- L. Well, I mean, merely by talking to them. I say I suppose this?? - but they formed societies and they paid a certain amount of money in and they used the money they paid in in loans to themselves. So if they didn't pay it back they were ruining their own society. It was a fairly simple lesson. I mean a lesson which very soon taught them. It taught some by success, it taught others by failure. But there were very good societies and very honourable societies. I remember how frightfully good some societies were, particularly in tobacco growing areas. Because they need - they need their loans and they can repay them when the crop comes. So they were almost ideal societies for illustrating the theory.
- I. Had it any influence on paddy-growing?
- L. Well, there were societies. Its - well, as I said, I - it certainly worked in areas where paddy was grown. But, you know, that is really a much more chancy crop. And so the work tended to be considerably more difficult, because often paddy itself - you sow it and its a half-failure.
- I. Yes, I see.
- L. And the end [was] to teach people - well, if its a half-failure you can pay back half. You see, you had to work a good deal harder and you needed to exercise a good deal more influence. And to be believed. But tobacco was an easy crop because to get your crop you sow it and that amply covers a loan. But in paddy certainly its worked in Sinhalese societies. It worked there alright but I don't think it worked - I don't think it worked quick enough. I think a whole demand - I think a demand of the people was the speed and - that's for them to talk about that - and I think they were I suggest that the biggest objection, the biggest difficulty one encountered was the fact that this scheme of self-help is a - is such a slow solution. It doesn't flash like that and produce a marvellous answer.
- I. Yes, I see. How did you go about starting these societies? I mean each one. I presume you went round and talked really?
- L. Go around and talked to them. You see, somebody - I think
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you'd say the solution would be this, that somebody catches the idea and continues to talk and to canvass when you're not there. Because its a self-help movement. I mean in the growing, the growth has got - has got to spring - its got to spring from a local root. Its not imposed, you don't say, 'I'm going to plant a Cooperative Society'. You really do say, 'I'm going to assist a Cooperative Society to grow up here'. And ...

- I. I see. And so that - would it be correct to say that you never - you did - you made it a point never to initiate a society in a particular area? I mean, you see something, some tobacco-growing area and you think, 'Ah, there should be a society there'. And you go there and organise one for them. You didn't do that sort of thing?
- I. Well, I ... I don't know. I would have thought it was done. But the way in which it was done was not that of saying, 'Look here, you chaps, you're going to have a society here'. It was getting somebody interested in the idea. I mean, it was a question of talking but you certainly would try to start a society wherever the need for it[existed]. Because you would hope you could need ... - open people's ears to what you were trying to say. But its one thing to open their ears, quite another thing to open their minds. I mean, I have in mind, when I was Registrar there was a very great desire among some of the furniture groups to get a cooperative society. And that was a good enough idea. But their idea was for a cooperative society to spring up and that would solve their immediate problems. They didn't so graphically(?) get the idea that you've got really to address yourself[to] the type of behaviour you need to import to make this quite strenuous class of society work.
- I. Mmm. Did you feel that quite often it was necessary to dampen the anticipations of these people who were starting a cooperative society?
- I. Dampen their impatience?
- I. Dampen their high anticipations, in the sense that many of them might have expected cooperative credit to be a panacea for all their ills. When it was not so.
- I. Well, I should say yes. But - but I think we were remarkably well aware of how easily people hope too high. And so the whole - the whole training would really be to make them see things as they were. Its worthwhile remembering that in the
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Eastern Province, which had been worked up at a time when the Cooperative Movement was in the hands of the Agricultural Department, we wound up the whole blessed thing. It had been started not by us. It had gone absolutely - it had gone absolutely wrong, rotten. We wound up the whole blessed thing.

- I. Wrong and rotten in what sense? Corruption?
- L. Oh, no, no, no. Just mere failure. Default, gross default.
- I. Yes, I see. That's in part because the Agriculture Department was running that?
- L. Well, I mean, don't - don't ... I was saying it. They were not instructed or trained in the way which we tried to train them later on, where we were very slow because we did feel that its not a bit of good starting a society in one year and regretting it in the next. And so we never registered until we felt they really understood what the basis of a healthy existence could be. And really were resolved at least to attempt to achieve it.
- I. Yes. That's very interesting. Because I think someone else mentioned the fact that Campbell wanted to go slowly in a very gradual traditionalist manner. Whereas Senanayake, when he came, wanted to go a bit faster. Would that be correct?
- L. I would say it would be correct. But I don't awfully like - I don't awfully like just attributing ... Its perfectly true that Campbell wanted to go slowly. Not because he thought slowness was any good but because he realised what he was preaching just had to be grasped, appreciated and understood. And since human nature doesn't flick black and white, black and white, just like that segregated(?), he wanted to go slowly. He wanted to do his work properly. Now Senanayake, who was a really a great friend of the Cooperative Movement, was tremendously anxious, I think, to get a move on. And at that I'll leave it because I think he was a - I think he was a jolly good man. But I do think that he really expected to see results far quicker than the very nature of the Cooperative Department allowed. After all what we were doing[was] in accord with Government activity but in point of fact its a complete personality activity. It was really involved entirely in the reconstruction of personalities. And, I mean, I think its fair to say that one of the reasons the Tamils were on the whole more successful was from their very nature. You know later on I tried pretty hard to form Sinhalese Labour Societies.
- I. Labour?
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- L. Yes. The whole idea was you should have a group of people, say two hundred if you like. As many people as the village would do, and they should undertake a contract for work, 25 people a time. So you could allow for 90% default. Well, they were not a success. And they were not a success because in point of fact the nature of the people didn't allow them, I think, very readily to organize themselves so that they could turn out what they were contracted to turn out. But quite a number of - quite a number of planters were quite willing. But its one thing to be willing in theory, its quite another thing to be willing to turn out in the rain. For example, tea plucking.
- I. Yes, I see.
- L. I mean, you see, there are a great many things. When you get down to it in fact your words get frozen(?) with reality. And you - its one thing to say, 'Yes, I'm willing to turn out'. Its quite another thing to turn out at six o'clock in the morning, on a wet morning. And at four thousand feet.
- I. Mmm. For this sort of thing would you say that the Sinhalese were generally too ill-disciplined? In - well, ill-disciplined.
- L. Well, yes, they certainly are. I mean, I think that's an outstanding example. They simply would not accept the regularity of saying, 'I will turn out every Monday, every Tuesday or whatever day it is. Or if I can't turn out myself I'll get somebody else to turn out'. I mean simply submitting to an ordination. Submitting to a rule is what they couldn't do. 'If I feel like it, I'll do it', was much more their attitude.
- I. Yes, I see. Actually I was going to ask you that question: whether the Tamils were better than the Sinhalese and you ...
- L. But don't quote me as saying so. Because its not my way to think like that, at all. I mean I think they're two quite different characters. And I think, in point of fact, Cooperation could have helped either of them but Tamil is a very different type and already he's half trained. And after all, clearing up and cleaning up the land in his Northern Province has accustomed him to steady, unremitting work. And he - and he produces it with a very - a very high degree of skill. But they had great successes in Jaffna you know. They started a Cooperative Hospital, a Cooperative Boat Society to tour round the islands. Well, they - they were - they were very high and very successful forms of organisation
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of cooperation.

- I. Mmm. What was the general response in Ceylon to this appeal to start societies?
- L. Well, you know, I don't know really that such an appeal was ever made. Because I would say that the whole idea was [that] cooperation had got to meet a need. So first of all you don't try to say, 'Here, you work cooperatively. You'll find its very good for you'. You have to find out what the people's need is.
- I. Alright then. Where you found a need and was - were - where you were trying to raise up a cooperative movement of sorts, what was the response like? In general? I mean, did you find for instance that in several places where you thought it was good to have a society and try to rouse up this local root the - this idea did not take root?
- L. I don't think its a case of the idea not taking root. Its a question of whether it took sufficient root to sustain the strain of endurance. I think if it had only been a matter of rousing enthusiasm it would have been remarkably simple. But the point is you have to whip enthusiasm into being persistent.
- I. And in that sense did you find that, well, the response was not very good? Sort of persistent and enduring response?
- L. Funny - I would say, on the whole, response was good. But it was disappointing in fact that from time to time a good early response was not followed up by persistent effort. I mean the amount of work which my inspectors did was colossal. And if it hadn't been colossal a great deal would have perished much earlier. But that's the disappointing aspect, that it needed such a lot of digging and working and repetition to keep it going. I wouldn't be inclined to attack the actual response, only the lack of persistence.
- I. What about the enthusiasm among these inspectors and the lower ranks of the Government Cooperative Service?
- L. I think we had a very fine staff. I think we had a very fine staff. I mean, I think we had a very fine staff indeed.
- I. And it was primarily a - mainly a local staff?
- L. Entirely.
- I. Entirely. I suppose this was really essential because of the language question in itself?
- L. Well, I suppose so. But we - the only Europeans were Campbell, Maybin and myself. But the staff, I think, was extremely good.
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A very loyal, a very unassuming people and they, I think, worked with great enthusiasm. I'd really rather not discuss that further because I realise and you realise that there are a great many inducements to work when this is your livelihood. Well, now, I don't want to talk about that because I don't want to - I don't want to and I don't belittle people. I think we had some very, very fine - some very devoted inspectors. Whom I have the greatest opinion - really have the highest opinion, and certainly we had some Assistant Registrars, very excellent metal.

I. If I may ask, what were Campbell's particular qualities?

L. Well, he was rather a - an outstandingly fine man. He was a man of very great drive. Very great force. He could lose his temper. He could also keep it. He was also a man of very great kindness. He was a person who was very prone to help and assist.

I. Well, that's what I gathered. You would - he was definitely an initiator wasn't he? I mean in this movement itself. It was a sort of pioneering movement.

L. An initiator?

I. Yes.

L. Yes. I think he was.

I. And also I gathered that earlier he was - he had refused Secretariat posts and he was, in a sense, very much a provincial man. And I presume he was very much interested in the villager and that's what led him to start this movement?

L. I should think that's true.

I. Mmm. And - but what made him leave? In the 19... - he left rather prematurely.

L. I'm just trying to remember. He left - he went on working in Cooperation.

I. He went to the U.N. later, I think. Or the League of Nations?

L. Well, he went to China before he did. He went - he went to China. And after that, I know, he went over to Geneva. But I think his first thing was to accept a job in China. And he certainly went round most of the countries inside the Commonwealth. Advised about Cooperation. But I think that was really - I think that was personal - personal enjoyment I should say. He was very keen on the Movement and I think he thought he could offer a great deal of advice to many people. I think, if I were you, it's right to say Campbell was a great friend of mine. A man came to Ceylon in my day from India,

from Punjab. Calvert. Now he was a first-class 'Cooperator'. He really understood - he understood the whole theory and principle of the undistributed - undistributed reserve fund, and its use. Perhaps better than anybody had at all. Campbell always felt that if the reserve fund was just thrown into common use it would be less attractive. At least I think he thought that. Anyhow the difference between him and Calvert was that Calvert made the non-division of the reserve fund the very essence of cooperative reconstruction. And of cooperative safety too.

I. Safety?

L. Yes. Because, you see, if people chose to use their own money they weren't risking anybody except themselves. They weren't borrowing money. They weren't borrowing money to lend it. They were building up their own reserve fund and their own undistributed profits. And if those were good enough presumably you made a society which was considerably stronger than one which distributed its profits and hoped to raise loans from somewhere to spend money.

I. Yes. What was its success in reducing indebtedness, where it was started?

L. Well, that depends what you're thinking of. Whether you mean terms of island-wide indebtedness, or whether you mean terms of village indebtedness.

I. Village indebtedness.

L. Well, I should say that it was just as good as - as good as the people were who practised it. If somebody really practised it he'd find himself out of debt. But if you found someone who carried a lot of slipshod ways into the Movement ...

I. Did you find it necessary, for a movement to endure and to succeed, that it was necessary that a, what I would call a local big bug, should have a hand in it rather ...?

L. No. Indeed not. I would prefer - I would say that was perhaps the most dangerous thing you could get because a man's qualities wouldn't be as big buggery; it would really be of service. And if you ever found a person who joined to serve you would find a gem. But just getting a big man in was absolutely fatal. It was the one thing we didn't want. He comes in and he overcrowds the society. Everybody looks to him.

I. Yes, I see.

L. And he gets the focus entirely wrong. Away from self-help into concentration on the big man who's succeeded and will help us, you see.

I. Personal aggrandisement?

L. Entirely. The very antithesis of any sort of good and reliable and enduring Cooperation.

I. Did you find big men trying to push their way in like this?

L. Well, I - I haven't any doubt there were a certain number. Because there - its just as likely to exist in that class of society as anywhere else. But if you mean, 'was it encouraged or enjoyed or appreciated', no, it wasn't at all. And it wasn't necessary; it wasn't right. I mean occasionally you have people coming in from really entirely philanthropic motives. You could at least bleed them to make substantial deposits. That finds capital for the society. I don't like generalising about that because there was some - there were some very noble-minded people who helped to the best of their ability. And there were plenty of people who were only too prepared to exploit an opportunity(?) which might be available for them.

I. Yes. I think you're being very fair here and its very good. What about the politicians themselves? And even in Senanayake's case, for instance, he had rather high hopes. Did you feel that, politically, politicians were inclined to have high hopes because - just because they were politicians and because this was something they could talk about?

L. Well, you see, I personally - I think Senanayake was a very notable man. But to begin with he's a perfect menace to us because he wanted - he felt that if he wanted to, you know, [he could] make it work twice as fast. Well it just wasn't possible. You just can't tell human nature to buck up and stir up. And he never could - he never could accept that fact. And he didn't accept it, you see. In the War I believe it was his influence which really made the Cooperative Movement the hub of controlled distribution, in wartime. So that I've no doubt he - he or his son would - would have answers which wouldn't agree with mine. But from the point of view of national reconstruction, which is what I've really been talking about, he was quite wrong. The best thing he could possibly have done would have been build up the Cooperative Department and let it go on. And let it go on solidly and see what he could do. But its only right to realise, Mr. Roberts, that the speed was too slow not only for Senanayake. Its too slow for the world too. Much too slow for the world. After all Cooperative - Cooperation started in England way back in 1860.

And it had plenty of time to be jolly slow. And it was jolly slow. And today its simply swamped and lost. And, you see, that old tempo was its own worst enemy. It was doing a good thing but it was doing it so slowly that people wouldn't wear it. And I don't know what to say about it today. And I feel not only Ceylon wouldn't wear it. I doubt whether anybody is wearing so slow developing a thing. It may be - I still don't know - I don't know any way - I don't know any way by which you can change human nature. For after all that's what the Cooperative Department really set out to do. But it set out to train people to look at themselves, for themselves. And that was the monumental problem which everybody tried extremely hard to achieve. And incidentally I must pay tribute here to Yatawara Senior because ...

I. Yatawara?

L. Yes indeed. He was a man who always kept his cooperative ideals absolutely clear and true. He was a very fine man. I have - I have the highest opinion of him.

I. What was he?

L. He was a Registrar in my day. He was a very fine man. I was very fond of him indeed. If only there could have been more men of his quality. They're rather scarce. More men like him. It would be a marvellous thing because really he was absolutely outstanding in his assiduity and understanding of what he was teaching.

I. I was wondering whether Campbell left because of Senanayake?

L. Oh, I don't think so. I don't think so because Campbell was a fighter and I don't think he would have left because of anybody. I know so little about that. But it would - it would be strange to me to think that he did. I would just as easily think that Campbell left because the Department moved out of Kandy down to Colombo. Which was, of course, one of Senanayake's moves I know. And Campbell didn't enjoy being in ...

I. Colombo?

L. Colombo. Because he was very much a countryman.

I. Yes. What about the rural marketing, was that - the rural marketing scheme which was started later - was that associated with this or entirely separate?

L. No, its - there's a Marketing Department but marketing's a very difficult form of cooperation. And while there are two marketing societies I never believed myself that they were at

all well founded. Nor at all well understood.

- I. Weren't you a Commissioner for Development of Agricultural Marketing?
- L. No, that was Mr. Bassett. I think that department was started very largely because It wasn't started on cooperative lines. I think they hoped to bolster up this provision distribution - not only provision, distribution of things produced - so [it was] a marketing department that was - that was, except here and there, disassociated from cooperation. There were Cooperative Marketing Societies.
- I. Mmm. Who ran those? The Marketing Department or you?
- L. Well, we ran those that were cooperative. Those that were not cooperative were run by the Marketing Department.
- I. I see. Within the Cooperative Movement as a whole, speaking from what I know of it [its working] - very vaguely - nowadays, what about the question of embezzlement and corruption? Did that arise at all in your time?
- L. Well, yes, it arose. But then ... Yes, it certainly arose alright. Ha-ha-ha.
- I. Well, it was bound to. I mean I'm - I'm ...
- L. Bound to arise. And it did. You see, just - opportunities existed for me. People had to put their fingers into something. And it took - but then many people didn't take them. There were many people who did.
- I. Did you find it, well, rather dampening? I mean did it dampen your enthusiasm? Your personal enthusiasm?
- L. Oh, well, I suppose so. Yes. But I don't think it ever dampened me seriously. Because, I think, one tried to turn all those episodes, where it existed, into something on which you preached a sermon. You tried to say, 'Well, look here, don't do the same as you've just done, done there'.
- I. Yes, I see.
- L. 'If you - if you do, you'll have the same consequences'.
- I. And as one of your methods I suppose - I mean you proceeded on the principle of trial by error? Well, I - its not a good way of putting it really.
- L. Well, I'm just trying - I'm just wondering what to say to that because I think what you tried to do was to explain a very simple system. A very simple system which was fitted squarely into honesty. You'd illustrate - you'd illustrate the folly of running away from that by experiences which other people
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had from not following the doctrines, what is what I'd really rather say about it. You see, there were societies in Batticaloa which had a colossal figure of default. Batticaloa, as you know, is a paddy raising society, a paddy raising district. Opportunities of defaultation were numerous and were taken. And there was a tremendous amount of liquidation of those who had defaulted too grossly. But the only point of mentioning that is that we did try to use those unfortunate experiences to tell people, 'Look, if you want to go to hell in your own way, you go like that. And you certainly will go there. But it won't be Cooperation'.

- I. When you look at it, this has a lot of analogies to democracy too, doesn't it?
- L. I expect it does. Yes. I expect it does. I'm not very wedded to democracy.
- I. Pardon?
- L. I'm not very wedded to democracy. I agree with Aristotle. I think its the worst form of government.
- I. If I may turn to an entirely different sphere, and take on general administration. If I may ask, what made you join the Colonial Service?
- L. Colonial Service?
- I. Yes. Government Service. What made you join Ceylon Civil Service?
- L. Oh, I think having taken an exam I was offered a post with the Ceylon Civil Service. I took it.
- I. It was just a question of a job?
- L. No, I don't think so. I'd always hoped when I was at school before the War, I thought it would be very pleasant to go to the Sudan. Then after the War I found that the examination was opening an offer to me of the Indian Civil Service and the Colonial Civil Service and the Home Civil Service. Well, I didn't - I could have got to India but I didn't want to go there ...
- I. Why?
- L. I - what?
- I. Why? Political situation?
- L. Yes, I didn't - I just wasn't interested in India. And I therefore accepted a post in the Colonial Service. I didn't get the Home Civil Service.
- I. Mmm. What are your impressions of the C.C.S. as a whole?
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- L. I think that's too big a question to answer really.
- I. It calls for a lot of generalisation I'm afraid. For instance, when you went out and you were a Cadet, did you find that you were expected to pick up your job very much on your own?
- L. Yes, I did. It - I did. I regard my first appointment as really fantastically, inappropriately managed. I was sent to Anuradhapura and really the amount of instruction I then received was negligible.
- I. Mmm. This has been - this point has been made by others too. For instance, when you were met at the Colombo Jetty by someone and taken to meet the Colonial Secretary, did he give you any idea of what was expected of you?
- L. Same thing again, no.
- I. None?
- L. No.
- I. Mmm. And you were just shunted off to Anuradhapura and expected to ...?
- L. Expected, as far as I remember, to check books.
- I. Yes. This is very much in the British empirical tradition of sending their men out to the bush to ...
- L. Well, its a tradition which, thank God, they've altered a great deal. Because in the years since I've retired they've sent people - they've sent them up to universities to get some sort of instruction in some sort of government. But I can only say that as far as we were concerned there was no such instruction given, either at home or in Ceylon.
- I. Yes.
- L. You were left entirely to whatever training the G.A: to whom you were posted was inclined to give you.
- I. And your G.A. was not inclined to give you much?
- L. No. Seymour I don't think - I don't think he was - I think his strongest ability was in the Stock Exchange. As there was no Stock Exchange and I wasn't interested in the Stock Exchange anyhow, I don't think it was very useful really.
- I. Would you have liked to have this sort of university training? General theoretical training?
- L. No, not at all. I mean, I don't believe it necessary for me. I was at Oxford myself. I then - I didn't really feel - I didn't really feel that I needed ... What I should have liked to have understood and received was some slight disquisition about Ceylon's place among the nations in history.
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I mean I should have liked to have known a great deal more than I did know about the place of China, and Ceylon on the fringe of China, and, in fact, all those civilising forces which more or less joined or touched each other in the Dutch East Indies. I do think that that should and could have made one's service very much more valuable.

- I. One of my hobby-horses has been the fact that they should have had a small period - a short period of instruction and discussion in Ceylon itself, by someone with experience on some aspects of Ceylon history and administrative history. Pretty recent history and a discussion of problems. Unusual problems like chena question, land tenure. And also in the light of comparison - in the light of policies in other countries like Indonesia and India. Would that sort of thing have helped?
- L. I think what would have helped most would have been a way in which a young man coming to Ceylon could really have met and moved in Sinhalese or Tamil society easily. So that instead of just going to his own community, if he had really met the two major communities and made himself learn to make himself agreeable to them I think that would have - that would remarkably soon have assisted him very greatly. Because, you know, I haven't any doubt that the serious minded people, who joined the Royal Asiatic Society and suchlike, could have found answers to some of the problems which I didn't find an easy answer to. If in point of fact he had not merely found his life bounded by European clubs.
- I. Mmm. This is a criticism that has been made by other Civil Servants, though only a few. You would say then that the Civil - Ceylon Civil Service was far too aloof from the people?
- L. Well, yes. Well, if you like. I'm not sure [that] I wouldn't also say that the people were far too aloof from it. Anyhow there was a distinct - a distinct cleavage. And, you know, this is very interesting because if you go back to the early days of Ceylon there was no - there was no cleavage at all between Europeans who then developed and owned estates, or whatever it may be. They moved and mingled freely with communities of the country.¹ But that became completely lost after the introduction of the Limited Liability Company and the establishment of Civil Service separate from and governing the country.

1. This is not wholly correct. Some of the pioneering planters were arrogant if not brutal. But doubtless, being out in the wilds they could not be as aloof as in the time of improved communications and motor cars.

- I. Mmm. W.T. Stace has gone even further. He has written some memoirs in typescript and in a general review of British rule in Ceylon he says that - one of his criticisms is that the British community - that's not - unofficials included - were guilty of arrogance.
- L. I haven't any doubt they were.
- I. Mmm. And you feel that there were many occasions when there were slights?
- L. Well, that sort of thing - I mean the arrogance - was a thing which was gradually built up. But, as I say, it did not start with the early conqueror or anything to do with him. I haven't any doubt the very early community was very largely military. And I'm perfectly certain that what started things that way - and was also assisted by the development of the country in private hands. I mean private hands. I mean there was no good admitting liability. They took a personal risk and they mingled freely with the people with whom they needed to mingle. And there was no - there was no smart division by communities. Now those qualities were largely lost and it's a great pity they were lost.
- I. Mmm. On the other hand did you feel that sometimes the Ceylonese themselves, especially the educated Ceylonese, were ultra sensitive on the racial questions? Colour-bar questions?
- L. I think they were highly sensitive. But then I don't - I don't see why they shouldn't have been. After all this sensitiveness really became a form of self-expression, self-assertion. And I don't know that it was entirely ...
- I. Unjustified?
- L. No. I don't know that it was. I mean ...
- I. Yes. I don't think so either. It's, well, it's a natural reaction.
- L. Absolutely. I mean you - if you find someone who apparently is asserting himself against you the whole time it's not necessary - it's not surprising if you assert yourself against him.
- I. Mmm. In - would you agree with the view that the Civil Service could have done with more Freemans?
- L. More Freemans? Well, yes, in his mind not in his method. His method was frightful. He recorded nothing. He gave no reasons for anything. I've seen a number of his minutes you know. They were all nothing but obiter dicta. Well, the dicta on the whole - since he happened to favour one view of the chena question, his views regained in popularity. But I do think - and
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he did have the guts to dispute with the Government about certain things, and his attitude about the chena question was really good. But his attitude about everything else wasn't good. I think he was a humane man. I think he was a really humane man, a really understanding man but he - he really lacked method appallingly.

- I. No. I was not referring to his method as much as to his spirit and sympathy with the people.
- I. Oh, no. I think that was good. That was first-rate.
- I. As a Cadet, working in the office, did you feel that you were working blind? And just didn't know what you were doing? As ...
- I. [I] certainly didn't know what I was doing. I would have said that my years as a Cadet - my year as a Cadet really-just left me understanding and learning what the Government system of accountancy was. So that in point of fact I took no greater part in the management of Ceylon than really seeing that its various funds were properly brought to account and were themselves capable of audit. And I felt that it was absolutely inadequate in(?) explaining(?) anything(?) as yet unexplained but against that it was extraordinarily useful and extraordinarily good to find yourself pinned down to understanding how various contributions are brought to account. I do think that was good. What was damned bad was in giving nothing, any further intention than merely making a certain number of entries in a certain number of books.
- I. Mmm. Did you find that your superiors, and your senior officers, tended to treat you with, well, a sort of amused tolerance and little respect?
- I. Who?
- I. Whether your superiors - whether the senior officers treated the Cadets as, well, very young fry? Inexperienced fry?
- I. Well, no, I shouldn't think they'd do that. Because after all I went out after the First War and I had four years in the army and I - I think he'd have been a - he'd have been a very bold man who really treated me as very small fry. I mean, I'm quite prepared to agree that we were small fry but I don't think many people - their attitude towards people returning from war wasn't quite that. I think they were very anxious - very anxious to come down to size but not quite without respect.
- I. Mmm. Regarding one of Stace's other criticisms he says the chief - one of his chief criticisms of British rule in Ceylon
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was that there was too much routine. And he even used the word "blind routine".

- L. Well, I mean, I don't know. I daresay it is so. I mean ... But routine is one of the words which has become dirty. But, you know, if you routinate stuff which after all has to be done fairly quickly - to get a routine attached to it is fairly useful. And so when somebody says there's too much routine I wonder how much routine there is in local government in this country. A thumping lot I suspect. I suspect its one of the vices by which you're enabled to get through your work. Excuse me.

INTERRUPTION

- L. I think on the whole its really quite stupid this view of the sort of position which the Ceylon Civil Service held and I think was meant to hold. It should have been not concerned beyond the point of understanding a system to follow up flocks of accounts and suchlike. It really should have been a body of people who really were concerned, as we were concerned in the Cooperative Department, to teach something which was of much more permanent value. And I think that its quite easy to think that if you routinate the highest spheres of office excessively its a very grave - a very grave defect of your use of manpower.
- I. Well, I think this is what Stace was getting at. And certainly this is one of Mr. Newnham's points. That, by and large, British rule lacked drive and purpose in the sense of ultimate aims.
- L. Well, that, I think, is quite true. Because I remember so frightfully well - I was a part(?) of a body of opinion which at the time of the Donoughmore Commission ... We said, 'Look here, we want some instruction. We want to know whether, in point of fact, we are to hand over at speed or whether we're to hand over at slow'. And there was no answer to that either from the Civil Service Commission or from the Governor or from the Secretary-of-State. And I still think that it was a really relevant question which was addressed actually to the purpose of our being in Ceylon.
- I. You put that question to the Donoughmore Commission, did you?
- L. God, I can't remember. But I put it there. I put it to a thousand and one people either there or in the Civil Service afterwards.
- I. Did you feel that in British times, that's in the 1920's, that they didn't know where they were quite going and that they were just making efficiency an end in itself?
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L. Well, I should think so. But in point of fact I don't really quite feel like that because I myself in due course retired because I believed that at the head of the Cooperative Department there should be a man of the island. And I thought the right thing to do was to hand over to a man of Ceylon. And that was when I really felt my own service came to an end.

I. Yes. That brings us to the question of Ceylonisation. But before that, again raising one of Mr. Newnham's points, do you - did you feel that at the top and in the Secretariat there was a tendency, or even a policy, of quieta non movere? Preserving the status quo?

L. I know, I know. But I'm just wondering whether there was. I think he should work that one out. I daresay there was. I mean I daresay there was because there was quite enough I mean you say quieta non movere, but really what was quiet? There was a whole world of change going on anyhow and that is really only another form of asking the same question that I'm asking. Are we to hand over quickly or slowly? I felt that question needed answering and it was not answered. Either in the Colonial Secretary's Office or anywhere else. Nor by the Local Governor. And therefore I suppose since I did ask that and I know that it was never answered I feel that I'm bound to agree with you. But I shouldn't - I shouldn't say it was not a question of disturbing what was peaceful but was really a question of not adding one more change to a whole body of change which was moving, but we didn't know in what direction or with what purpose. And what's more anyone who could say was not willing to say. But I don't think that lay with the Governor. I don't think it was for the Governor to decide to hand over in Ceylon. He - when the Governor was all powerful in Ceylon it may have been up to him. But when ultimate authority was buzzed back to the Secretary-of-State it was not for him to say but it was for him to get a direction. He should have raised the question. And of course whether or not he would have had it answered in Downing Street is another question.

I. Yes.

L. But he should have raised the question. The question was due to be raised. It should have been raised.

I. At a slightly lower level did you feel that the Secretariat was rather obstructionist when it came to trying out new ideas, new improvements?

1. I only experienced the Secretariat at close quarters in William Manning's day. William Manning was a soldier. He tended to place great reliance on his Civil Service but he himself was not an obstructionist. Its a very curious thing. I mean, I should think politically he was always against Goonesinha. He couldn't bear - he couldn't bear this sort of disturbance. Yes, but I don't think he was at all opposed to the sort of development that wasn't merely a political disturbance. And I think that he had a soldier's ability to face difficulties. But he had only a very limited soldier's - a limited personal ability. I don't know. I'm not talking about that.
- I. Oh, I see.
- L. But I think that his - I think that his frame of mind was conventional but tolerably broad. And I grew to distrust people who had been of remarkable scholarly attainment at university and came out. I tended to believe that they were far more ossified in their views than those who would come up and looked to other people to guide them into ways of thinking because they didn't think they'd already thought everything out for themselves. But that's entirely a personal view. I mean, I actually felt that William Manning was a soldier, not a very enlightened one but on the whole a very, very shrewd, practical, liberal-minded man.
- I. Would Clementi and Stubbs be examples of your other types?
- L. Clementi definitely. Quite definitely. Yes, quite definitely. Stubbs? I hardly knew Stubbs. I knew his widow very well indeed. She was a charming woman. But I - Clementi quite definitely. But he was a typical sort of man who, on the whole, thought he knew everything.
- I. Impractical? Bowes says he was.
- L. Well, I wouldn't - I daresay. I haven't any great opinion - I haven't any great - I haven't any great admiration for him.
- I. What about Fletcher and Tyrrell and Wedderburn?
- L. Well, I always regarded Wedderburn as merely a Civil Servant. Fletcher and Tyrrell I think were - I think small-minded people. But don't - don't quote me as saying this.
- I. Mmm. What was Manning's attitude to Goonesinha?
- L. Well, I can only remember one particular occasion. He was on leave when Goonesinha's famous strike ...
- I. Yes.
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- L. And he came back and was horrified to discover that Clementi had met Goonesinha and he always felt that really Goonesinha was made a big man from that moment. And that was an absolute stock example of Manning's really very great penetration. He may not have known much about political issues but he did know how to make or not to make a man. And he felt that Clementi had really blown Goonesinha up to twice lifesize.
- I. Mmm. But I notice the tendency to look down on agitators of this sort and ... I mean, would you say that they were against trade union activity because it was led by men like Goonesinha or because they were against trade union activity per se?
- L. I haven't any idea. But I would say in this particular case, William Manning believed that the leader of a trade union dispute could be made a big man or be kept in size. And he thought that when the Colonial Secretary went down to meet him, he was really making him a big man. And that he was not in favour of.
- I. Mmm. But there are notions of prestige here?
- L. Maybe. I don't know at all. But, I mean, prestige was what Clementi gave to Goonesinha. And whether Goonesinha exercised that wisely or not is [for] somebody else to decide.
- I. Returning to the question of Ceylonisation I know that the non-European Civil Servants had a feeling that they were shunted into the judicial line and excluded from the G.A.'ships in particular. Was there a definite tendency at the start, in the 1920's, to exclude ...?
- L. Well, I should think - I don't know - I should think there was. Because in the 1920's there were some very senior Europeans. I mean I - and so without knowing anything about it at all I should say - I should say that Europeans automatically and probably largely by seniority ... But at a much later date since my own two deputies - and not G.A.'s jobs - my own two deputies and subsequent Commissioners were Sinhalese I don't feel - I don't feel that that really lasted ...
- I. No. I know it didn't last until the 1930's.
- L. No, I didn't think it did.
- I. But I was wondering whether it - there was a sort of definite tendency to keep them in the judicial line, even in the 1920's? The first Ceylonese A.G.A. was in 1923 but he had been fourteen years in the Service before he was made an A.G.A., which is quite a long time.
- L. Yes. I should think so but I don't ... Who was he incidentally?
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- I. C.L. Wickremesinghe.
- L. Who?
- I. C.L. Wickremesinghe.
- L. Oh, really. Was he indeed? Now, he was a very efficient man anyhow. What did he end up as?
- I. Commissioner of Lands. Well, he was one of the, I think, Land Commissioners. One of the chief men.
- L. Yes, yes. No, the G.A's whom I knew in the 1920's were all Europeans. But so far as I can recollect they were all Europeans who in point of fact were G.A's by a sort of seniority. But I would have to - I would have to look up the facts. I don't really know. I just thought they were all G.A's by seniority. People like - Dyson was a ...
- I. Yes, I know. But, you see, there were men like Paul Pieris and even my father who felt that they were kept in the judicial line.
- L. Yes. Well, I mean ... Then I should say - I should say if that's so he probably was personally conscious of it and I should just accept his word for it.
- I. Mmm. I've seen a memo by Bowes, who's a bit of a diehard really, on this ...
- L. Who?
- I. Bowes. Freddy Bowes.
- L. Oh, really. Yes ...
- I. Against the higher employment of Ceylonese.
- L. Oh, really?
- I. Arguing for it [sic, against it]. One of his arguments - the principle one I should say - was that Ceylonese, the people of Ceylon, would never trust the impartiality of a Ceylonese Civil Servant.
- L. Well, that's obviously - that is obviously one of these things that will always be said.
- I. I mean ...
- L. How you say it with any seriousness unless you've tried it and found it to be true, I don't know.
- I. Mmm. And also he said - Oh - Ceylonese lacked coolheadedness in a crisis. And the stability of Government would be undermined. But ...
- L. I think Paul Pieris is the name you've given me. I'd entirely forgotten him but he was a very senior man. And so far as I know he was always a District Judge, wasn't he?
- I. Mmm.
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L. Yes.

I. I don't think he was a very good judge. But, well, I mean one can argue if they can't be given responsibility as G.A's, how can you make them judges? Its true there is appeal but it calls for quite a lot of discretion too.

L. Yes.

I. Getting on to another subject, did you suffer at all from political interference in the 1920's?

L. I wouldn't say that I did. I mean, I must have a moment to think about that. I know that much later juniors of mine said that they did. Well, I know that because they told me so here. But I can't remember any sort of political interference at my level. You see I was doing a special job. I don't think it would have particularly interested anybody. The only person who was inclined to interfere was Senanayake who, on the whole, interfered, so far as he did interfere, from very good motives. So I don't think that I personally experienced the sort of political interference that you have in mind. But I don't really feel - I don't really feel very - not very competent to answer it. I ...

I. What about when you were A.G.A., Kegalla?

L. No. I had no political interference at all. In fact the only period of interference I've ever had that I can remember was when I was District Judge at Badulla. When I had an extraordinarily impertinent letter from Fletcher, for which he apologised later on. I may say he, having written an extremely impertinent letter quite beyond his legal competence to me, he withdrew it and apologised for it.

I. This has been a ...

L. And really that was definitely not political interference of anyone on the Island. It was a bit of interference from the Colonial Secretary actually.

I. This has been a criticism of Fletcher, that he listened to advice from side-channels and took a decision above the head of an A.G.A. and G.A. without consulting them?

L. Well, I didn't know. But I'm not at all surprised. Its a particularly vicious form of administration by a rather inferior officer.

I. Mmm. Was the Secretariat a bottleneck in the 1920's?

L. I should think so. But I don't know. In the 1920's? No, because Maybin - Young and Maybin, I think, were in [there] in the 20's. And I should think they all worked so jolly

hard they rather killed themselves than hold anything up.

- I. I know that. I mean I'm not questioning the ability of the officers.
- L. No, I don't ...
- I. But I was wondering whether there was too much going through this channel?
- L. I should say so. I should say - I mean on a matter of general principle I should say that a queen Government Office sitting there is bound, in point of fact, to get itself inundated.
- I. Coming to the Donoughmore Constitution what was your reaction to their proposals?
- L. Yes. I think - I'm not sure about this, but I think the Donoughmore Commission chiefly raised the position and the service of the men like myself. In other words I should have said that you failed entirely - I failed entirely to appreciate what it was after. I'm not quite sure about this. I think I'm right. But after the Donoughmore Commission we had really much more - much more self-government for Ceylon hadn't we?
- I. Yes.
- L. Yes.
- I. Seven ...
- L. The first ...
- I. Seven ministers. Senanayake and crowd. Senanayake was in charge of the Lands and Cooperation and so on and so forth.
- L. Yes. I - that was it, wasn't it? And that was really the first time they had an elected council?
- I. That's right. Universal franchise.
- L. Yes. Well, in that case and with my own personal experience of it outside myself entirely limited to one night when I was staying in a rest-house on Cooperative duty and somebody - some newly elected member came - drove up in the rest-house compound, chucked crackers round and made the most frightful drunken noise. Ha-ha. And I thought, 'My God, this is awful'. Ha-ha.
- I. No, but I was wondering whether the grant of universal franchise, for instance, raised doubts and fears?
- L. Well, it raised considerable - me, myself 'yes'. Because I disagreed entirely with Gimson's view that education had nothing whatever to do with voting rights. And I still disagree with it. I disagree with [it] everywhere where the alleged democratic principle is asserted. It seems to me that to assert that merely to exist as a citizen is enough to give
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you the right to elect your controlling body is a theory which is fraught with danger. In fact I think you can see how dangerous it is when you[look at] some of the African states.

- I. Yes. But the idea behind the Donoughmore Commission's grant of universal franchise was that if they did not do so, they would in effect be setting up a middle-class oligarchy.
- L. Was it? Well, I don't know. I mean whatever it was I think it was Gimson who wrote - who authorised a white paper on the right to vote or something of that sort. I think it was.
- I. Mmm. This was before - it was presented ...?
- L. And in point of fact he absolutely eliminated any sort of educational claim to consideration in electoral rights. He may have - he may have pinned them on to existence, to be alive. You hadn't got to be - you hadn't to show any quality so far as I remember - any quality of responsibility at all. I always felt - I'm completely on my own here - I felt then and I feel now that in point of fact its a very deadly policy. And its a policy which is bound to lead - bound to lead to a degeneration.
- I. You see one of the arguments was that there had hardly been any social legislation before. And that the very fact that the middle-class didn't want universal franchise was the danger. And that once there was this franchise Government would be more responsive to social demands.
- L. Well, I mean, that presumably is an argument based entirely on some circumstances prevailing in Ceylon. But I don't know. But I still think that merely to say, well if you can breed quickly enough you shall gain sooner or later the supreme power is a - is a hellish proposition and one which fully justifies Aristotle's contempt for democratic government.
- I. What about this Executive Committee system?
- L. Well, I - I ... The Executive Committee? Oh, well ...
- I. Under the Donoughmore Commission you had these Ministries and these people in the State Council in the Executive Committee. About eight in each Committee; and they had a hand in administration.
- L. Yes. Well, I'm afraid I don't really know anything about it because I never experienced it at all. I never experienced any of their decisions or any activities of theirs at all. So far as I'm aware.
- I. Did you feel that this change from - before 1931 and after
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1931 brought a - a greater drive? And a sense of where you were going which you hadn't had before?

L. Well, I don't think it did to me because I was chiefly concerned with - with a specialist department. And I don't think any of them knew enough about it, I mean, to exercise the influence they might have. You see, they could be far more influential I've no doubt in other matters in other districts. But I was comparatively insulated. At least I suspect so. I certainly wasn't aware of any increased drive but I don't feel - I don't feel that that negative answer is of any value at all because its related entirely to a specialist employment of my own.

I. How do you assess Mr. D.S. Senanayake as a minister?

L. Well, I don't believe I'm capable of assessing ministers. But, you know, I think what I really feel is he had some of the gutty qualities of Churchill. He really had. I mean, whether that - if you get an American book of psychology, you'll find all the list of virtues attached to everybody wh'ds going to hold a responsible post and, of course, its all worthless bunk. But Churchill was a man of great quality and great leadership. And I think Senanayake had that - he had guts and he had quality.

I. Common sense?

L. Well, I - I ... He was always known as a buffler(?) buffoon(?) you know. So you wouldn't say that common sense was actually his outstanding quality. But purpose and drive certainly were. And there was nothing wrong with his main programmes, irrigation and suchlike. There's no quality of bad sense in them. Whether they were related to available finances of those days I wouldn't know. I just wouldn't know. But I do feel that, in point of fact, he was putting up a very good, a very, very good performance in a place where there was ample opportunity for someone else to try and unsaddle him.

I. Mmm. What sort of men were Stanley and Thomson?

L. Who?

I. Sir Herbert Stanley and Sir Graeme Thomson. As far as I can gather Stanley was rather colourless?

L. I would say so. I would say he was. I mean, I think that really just about describes him. But I think that Thompson was a very able man. You see he was - when he was Governor, you know, he was a very elderly man. I think that tends to make him far less incisive than he might have been. Besides

the times didn't really allow a Governor great scope. I don't think.

I. No, not then. Of course coming to this Donoughmore Constitution one thing that did arise in these early years, and which was to be expected to an extent, was the friction between these three Officers-of-State ...

L. Yes.

I. ... and the Ministers and the State Council.

L. Yes.

I. And in a sense while some of it was inevitable I wonder whether it could partially be attributed to the personalities of these Officers-of-State? That's Tyrrell and Woods especially.

L. Well, maybe, but you - I rather agree with you. If you put three people of any quality where they will be in contact and in conflict you're pretty certain to find the conflict prevailing unless in fact there are some other qualities which make two or more of them combine in friendship.

I. No, I was wondering whether Woods and Tyrrell, for instance, whether they were the rather standoffish kind?

L. Well, I tell you ... Yes, I think Tyrrell was a very awkward man, you know. I think he went out to Ceylon at a time when other qualities than those which were esteemed later on were highly esteemed. And I think he was a pretty awkward man. And I think he was a ~~dam~~ned awkward man to deal with. I mean, I was quite fond of him in a kind of way but I think he was a very awkward man. I should hate to be one of a team ...

I. With him?

L. I should, yes. Because I don't believe - I don't believe he has really any great gift of combining.

I. Mmm. And certainly Stubbs, I know, as Governor would - he was a rather cold man I ...

L. I should think so. Yes, I do think so.

I. What about Wedderburn? I know he was a very courteous sort but ...?

L. I should think he was rather colourless. But I don't pretend to know. I should have thought he was rather colourless. I should think - certainly colourless really.

I. Mmm. Have you any inkling whether the Ministers themselves were rather unreasonable and wanted too much?

L. No. I've no idea, I've no idea at all. I should be jolly surprised if it isn't. I'm sure that it must be a quality of any new man to expect to get a rather larger cut than

other people in anything that's coming his way.

I. Yes. To go back in time when - to the time when you were in the Secretariat and then later Private Secretary. Have you any idea whether this constitution, which was proposed by Manning at that time, was largely his work or a composite effort?

L. Well, I've no - I don't actually know historically which it was. But if - Manning did take a great personal concern in whatever he put his name to.

I. Oh, I see.

L. So I would say that ...

INTERRUPTION

... he read everything that was written to him with very great care so while I don't propose - I don't suggest for a moment he initiated anything, I'm perfectly certain he passed nothing just like that.

I. Yes. That was sometimes the failing of some of the Colonial Secretaries. They hardly read anything.

L. Yes. I should say so. I should say so.

I. Can you recall this strike at all? The one that Goonesinha led?

L. Well I can but very faintly. But what - what ...?

I. It was There were several strikes he led. I think this was the railway workmen? That's right. This was ...

L. The railway? I thought was ... No, the only one I know anything about was the harbour strike.

I. Well, yes. The harbour also came out. Why - what happened in the harbour strike?

L. Well, they simply struck. And it was there that Clementi met and negotiated with Goonesinha.¹

I. Mmm.

L. I think it was more or less - more or less settled then. At least I think it was.

I. Would it be correct to say that the Secretariat looked on him as an opportunist and a trouble-maker?

L. Who? Goonesinha? Well, I think they certainly ... No, I don't know at all but I would say they looked upon Goonesinha as a man who was building himself up. And, you know, was really taking the opportunity of building himself up.

I. While this may have been so I'm wondering whether they were being illiberal in the sense that Goonesinha may have been representing genuine grievances on the part of the workers at

1. Actually it was during the strike begun by the workers in the Railway Workshops that this occurred. In 1923.

the same time?

- L. Well, I couldn't say. I actually couldn't say. I wasn't in Colombo. I wasn't in the Secretariat in those days.
- I. Because strange to say in 1929 someone in the Secretariat wrote a minute saying, 'I don't think Mr. Goonesinha is as black as he is painted out to be'.
- L. Oh, really, yes.
- I. But this shows a change of opinion, at least on his part.
- L. Oh, really. Oh, really.
- I. And certainly I know Goonesinha while having an eye to the main chance also was passionately for the worker.
- L. Yes.
- I. And he didn't hit it off with the other politicians, who he felt were too divorced from the ...
- L. From reality. Yes. No, I ... That's rather beyond my scope. I mean, I can well imagine that it could be true but I wasn't concerned. I wasn't in the Port Commission. I really knew nothing about - I knew nothing at first-hand about port issues.
- I. What were your impressions of the Land Settlement Department?
- L. Oh, they - I can only say I was always jolly glad that I No, I don't really know. I believe that - I believe that they worked with some considerable accuracy. But I don't really know. I think that it was the habit - was the fashion to say that they took ...
- I. Took land and gave it to the planters. That's the political criticism?
- L. Oh, no. I was going to say that, in point of fact, they took a rather conservative, far too conservative attitude towards the general chena question. Otherwise they wanted to reach settlement they took great pains about clearing and settling claims but they were not inclined, I believe, to give great weight to nebulous claims which might have derived from nothing more than a use of land without any claim to ownership.
- I. You feel they were too strict here?
- L. Well, I don't know at all. I always admired them but - and I always thought that it was a very reasonable thing for a Government to take, that if you are going to secure title you've just got to stick to certain general principles of ownership. And I always imagined that if the chena question was to be solved it wasn't to be solved by arbitrary decisions but really - really required legislation. Recognising something
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and giving a cure for it. Because otherwise you'd find that nothing except repeated chenaing would give you any sort of title. You'd get a - you'd get a claim by constant use of a certain piece of land but apart from that you'd have no recognition at all. With chena you'd have absolutely no claim to show for it.

- I. You see, Leonard Woolf's point, and Freeman's, is that in the Dry Zone as distinct from the Wet Zone these restrictions on chenaing were unrealistic in the sense that most of the land was useless land, old jungle, scrub. And it was a matter of life and death sometimes. And that they should allow them greater liberty in chenaing.
- L. Well, I would accept the view of a man like Freeman about that. Because I think he - I think he fully realised the need for some liberality. But don't press me about it because when you find population pressing on the land it doesn't seem to be an answer really to distribute it - to distribute it prematurely. But it may - I just feel that the whole chena questioning[sic] really involved something far more elaborate than we ever contemplated. I think - I think it was not really to be resolved by questions of settled title. I think the establishment of claims, chenaing rights, would have been possible. But I don't think that there was any legislation which permitted recognition of chena claims which might have been extremely valid because I - on the very ground that Woolf is suggesting. And in point of fact there could well have been a historical, a traditional right of chenaing. Now I don't know that a right of chenaing was ever recognised.
- I. Of course, there was this political criticism of the Land Settlement Department in the 20's and there is some suspicion that the - some of the politicians, not all of them - you know, not D.S. for example - that some of the politicians were themselves land speculators and land buyers who were being balked by this Land Settlement Department.
- L. Oh, really. Oh, I reckon - that's news to me. No, I didn't know that.
- I. Oh, you didn't?
- L. No. I didn't at all. No.
- I. Mmm. Didn't you come - ever come across some proctors and Ceylonese who could be classed as land-brokers? Who bought up dubious claims and sold them again?
- L. I've certainly heard of it. Yes.
-

- I. Oh, whereabouts?
- L. Well, I think - I think that these matters came my way both in Kandy and in Colombo.
- I. Mmm. Did you ever come across conflicts between Ceylonese - Sinhalese villagers and planters? You know, for land?
- L. No, I never did but I ...
- I. Anywhere?
- L. I don't know[I couldn't say] it didn't exist, but I never came across it.
- I. Thank you.¹

END OF INTERVIEW

1. Mr. Lucette had a luncheon appointment and running short of time I was only able to touch on some topics during the last half-hour. There were many more questions I would have liked to raise.