

JOHN ARCHIBALD MULHALL, O.B.E.

b. 19 July 1899.

Military Service.

B.A., London.

C.C.S. 1921 - 1951(?)

23 Dec. 1921	apptd. to C.C.S.
25 Jan. 1922	attached to Kalutara Kachcheri.
29 March 1922	attached to Puttalam Kachcheri.
1 Oct. 1923	Extra O.A., Badulla.
30 June 1924	O.A., Badulla.
9 June 1925	O.A., Galle.
5 Nov. 1926	on leave.
26 May 1927	O.A., Anuradhapura.
26 Jan. 1928	Additional Asst. Col. Sec.
23 May 1928	Asst. Col. Sec.
10 Aug. 1931	on leave.
22 Dec. 1931	resumed duties.
4 April 1932	Sec., Retrenchment Commission.
6 Oct. 1933	Asst. Chief Sec.
4 April 1935	Sec., P.S.C.
27 April 1936	on leave.
11 Sept. 1936	A.G.A., Anuradhapura.
Oct.	
-Dec. 1936	A.G.A., Trincomalee as well.
22 April 1938	A.G.A., Nuwara Eliya.
26 Aug. 1939	Asst. Chief Sec.
25 Jan. 1943	Acting Deputy Chief Sec.
14 July 1943	Asst. Chief Sec.
17 Oct.	
to	Acting Deputy Chief Sec.
3 Dec. 1944	
12 Jan. 1945	Sec. to C-in-C, Ceylon.
1 April 1945	Acting Sec. to the Governor.
July	
-Dec. 1946	on leave.
23 Dec. 1946	Sec. to the Governor.
4 Feb. 1948	Sec. to the Governor-General.
1950	
-52	retired.



Comments on Interview with Mr. J.A. Mulhall, O.B.E., 14 January 1966.

A quiet, serious-minded man, Mr. Mulhall was very helpful. I am not certain how inhibited he was during the interview. I suspect that he was somewhat guarded on certain topics but not generally so. He was very conscious of the tape-recorder in the first few minutes but the topic at that stage was ~~on~~ the question of training and he was soon at ease.

A scientist who graduated from London, Mr. Mulhall strikes me as being an official with ability above the average, great industriousness and fairly wide interests. He would not have been the sort who pushed himself forward but did his work efficiently and unostentatiously. While his fairly liberal views, his receptivity to other ideas and his political imagination would have helped him to get on with the politicians, his reserve might have been a barrier though, perhaps, his rather charming and unpreposing wife would have corrected this. I do not, however, wish to stress his adaptability too far. He was far stronger against the political interference and such steps as the ~~refusal of~~ <sup>refusal of</sup> ~~that in which~~ the State Council ~~did not~~ <sup>to</sup> vote C.C. Servants' passage allowances than some other Civil Servants I have interviewed and less inclined to tolerate it. There is certainly a strong tinge of conservatism in his thought. But I found him ready to listen and to be fair. He was ready to <sup>give</sup> ~~critical~~ appraisals of individuals though always moderate in tone. He was ready to see the point in criticisms of aloofness and arrogance on the part of the Europeans though on this point and the question of Ceylonisation he took some trouble to stress the other side of the case. Regarding his general perceptiveness and his width of interest I have no doubts, for he saw the point very quickly on many of the more subtle questions I raised. I found him politically-minded during the interview and I should think this was so in his day too. Certainly his interest in many political subjects was obvious and intense. I was able to devote very little time to agricultural matters so I am not certain whether he was the more perceptive sort in this field, but in general he was not the stereotyped sort.

Though unostentatious, he seems to have been taken into the Secretariat fairly early and kept there for most of his career. I am certain he would have been a good office man without being a bureaucrat or a secretariat-wallah. Not being a pusher or a man who oozed drive outwardly, it is of credit to someone somewhere that Mr. Mulhall's qualities were tapped. I should add, however, that he would probably have been a good provincial officer as well.

A very, very useful interview. Indeed, I could not cover as many topics as I wished to cover partly because he had quite a lot to say (a reserved man!). Nor could I ask for his opinion on many individuals; a pity, because I would rate his appraisals highly.

His memory was far from vivid on many points, which was, again, a



pity given the posts he held in the inner-circle.

M.W. Roberts

14.1.66



INTERVIEW WITH MR. J.A. MULHALL, O.B.E.,

14 JANUARY 1966

- I. I usually begin by asking why you joined the Civil Service - Colonial Service?
- M. Oh, well, it was after the First World War. Its rather a difficult question to answer. It attracted me. I decided to take the open competitive examination for it.
- I. Yes.
- M. And I was offered a post in either Ceylon or Malaya. I selected Ceylon.
- I. Why did you choose Ceylon rather than Malaya or Hong Kong?
- M. Well, I wasn't offered Hong Kong so as I think the year I - I had rather hoped to get into the Home Civil Service. But there was only one vacancy the first year. There were two in Ceylon, two in Hong Kong and I think six in Malaya. Hong Kong obviously went to people higher in the list. And from enquiries I made I thought that Ceylon sounded the more attractive place than Malaya. A decision I've never had occasion to regret.
- I. Attractive from the climatic point of view or ...?
- M. Climatically. And geographically I suppose it was a bit nearer. It seemed, and it was, the premier Crown colony at the time.
- I. Yes.
- M. Oh, it always has been. It always was, naturally.
- I. I'm very interested in the training you received, or the lack of training. And the way you picked up the job. For instance, when you were met in Colombo and taken to meet the Colonial Secretary, did he, or anybody else, give you any idea of what the job was like?
- M. No. I think they assumed that I ought to know. Either that or that I knew nothing and I would learn it better on the spot. I was sent, after some days in Colombo, I was told to go to Kalutara, as Cadet in the Kalutara Kachcheri. I joined the A.G.A. there, who was a man called de Glanville, on circuit straight away. We did about ten days circuit and then I came back to Kalutara. Lived in the resthouse and was put to work in the kachcheri. And overworked kachcheri, as they all were,
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where nobody really had time to tell me anything. I signed letters which I knew nothing about, for some time. When I went out on circuit with the A.G.A. I naturally had first-hand experience of how he did things.

I. I see. This is very much in the empirical British tradition?

M. Completely. There was no preparation in England. There was no idea, in those days, of any preparatory course. One passed the examination. You were offered a post or not as the case may be. And if you took it you were sent out. They gave you a pamphlet on Ceylon, written by somebody, I think, in the Ceylon Secretariat, which was always very puzzling to us. It recommended(?) that(?) one should take out a bicycle I remember. It didn't prove to be very useful. Well, then, after three months in Kalutara I - certainly twice I think it was, or three times a week, I had to spend two hours or three hours on the bench with the magistrate.

I. Straight off or ...?

M. Straight away. I just sat with him. And listened and when he thought that I'd absorbed enough knowledge about procedure he recommended I should be appointed Additional Magistrate and thereafter be given simple cases to try.

I. Mmm. I see. Would you have liked some sort of preparatory course like the Devonshire courses?

M. Well, I think it would certainly have been an advantage. Because all - the trouble was I think in the old pre-1914 days there were probably - everyone had a bit more time and Cadets were - people had more time to spend on teaching Cadets their jobs. But when I got out there every kachcheri was frantically overworked. And really you just had to pick it up yourself. Nobody had time to tell you much. You used to go on circuit with the A.G.A. He was instructed to take you out on circuit at least, I think, a week a month. And that was the best thing about it. And of course you had to get on with learning the languages.

I. And law?

M. And law.

I. Apart from general courses like they had later, one of my hobby-horses has been that they should have had a very short course in Ceylon itself outlining any general aims the Government had at that time. And sketching something about Ceylonese history and also giving a short sketch of peculiar administrative problems like the chena question and tenurial

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complications in Ceylon. I know you picked this up as you went along about if you had an idea of alternatives, for instance, policies followed in India and Indonesia, that would have given you a better general perspective.

- M. I think that would - that's correct. I remember that at one period a committee of Civil Servants was asked by the Chief Secretary to make recommendations about the training the Cadets should get. And they put up a - quite a good programme lasting for nine months, I think. But the difficulty always was ...
- I. Time?
- M. ... that no one had any time to do it. And there was no ...
- I. Money?
- M. ... money available. The Civil - the whole Public Service in Ceylon were underpaid I think. Any question of sending them away to see what was going on in another country, such as India or Java or Malaya, which would have been of immense value, was simply out of the question.
- I. No, I was not thinking in terms of sending a commission out to learn but probably ask for information from those countries. When was this programme put up? Roughly - 20's?
- M. It was certainly after I went to the Secretariat in the beginning of '28, somewhere between '28 and the early 30's. I can't remember when exactly. I think it was a product of the Government Agents Conference, which was held annually. I think it was suggested there. But it - although efforts were made to do something about it, they were - I think political events overtook it. The change of constitution.
- I. The trouble with this empirical training seems to have been that so much depended on the particular A.G.A. or G.A. And some, like Mr. Bond who was under Campbell, received pretty good training I think. And others had next to nothing.
- M. Yes, it cut both ways. The empirical training - you refer to it as that - as such, it gave greater opportunity for individuality. And if you begin with the basis - I think one could - that the people who went into the Civil Service were basically suitable, were of a high standard, on the whole you got good results from letting them find their own feet. They learnt from the bottom. What they learnt they found out for themselves. And I think on the whole the result was good. Or bad. I mean you pretty quickly indicated either that you were going to absorb the information you needed and make use of it, or
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that you - you weren't particularly suitable.

I. Yes, I see. I see that this process of trial by error is very useful but at times couldn't the people suffer?

M. Yes, I should think they could. You mean that if - from an inexperienced decision?

I. Yes.

M. Oh, yes, they could. But you must remember that there was always somebody above you to put things right if you made an inexperienced decision. And in Ceylon the victim is not apt to be backward in sending in a petition if you ...

I. Ha-ha. Didn't you find these petitions rather a nuisance?

M. Oh, a dreadful nuisance. In Galle particularly, which was the worst place I ever struck for petitions. There were about - each morning the wretched Office Assistant received forty petitions at least. All presented by hand. And most of them were - 50% were probably the fifth or sixth petition on the same subject. They would never take no for an answer. And it wasted a lot of time.

I. Yes.

M. On the other hand it was a way of ventilating grievances, and petitions were looked at I mean.

I. What seems futile is the fact that they came and spoke to you and then presented the petition. They might as well have spoken to you and - rather than spent money on getting it written up?

M. Yes, well, there was always this difficulty about access. Peons worked in the background and there was a petition box which - the chap brought his petition along and put it in the box. Nobody could stop him putting it in the box or demand any money for it.

I. Yes, I see that.

M. Theoretically anyway. And the box was opened at, whatever it was, ten o'clock or eleven o'clock and the petitions all opened. From the box were all opened personally by the O.A., and stamped. And by that means we tried to ensure that petitioners at least could reach you without having to pay certain sums on the way.

I. Yes.

M. It didn't always work. But on the - that was the theory of it. And that's why they brought the petitions themselves.

I. Yes, I see. Yes, I think that answers that. And if I may refer to 'Village in the Jungle' the general impression one

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gets is that this ignorant villager was utterly helpless, you know, in his attempts to get redress. Simply because the A.G.A. was on circuit and the peons - well, [simply because] there were so many barriers between the A.G.A. and this villager, who knew very little about the matter anyway.

M. Well, its true that the headman system, after all, was a good system in that there was a chain by which information could, and should, come from the smallest village to the - to headquarters. Its quite true that headmen were very apt to require - to exact - were very apt to exact a fee for advancing the cause of an individual. But the G.A's or the A.G.A's circuits were designed to let the villagers make direct contact with them if he'd felt he'd been prevented from doing so, or hadn't got any money to spare. But its very difficult to avoid - completely avoid a difficult - a complication of that kind when you have, frankly, got a country where the exacting of a fee is traditional.

I. Yes, I see. Yes.

M. It does hamper efforts to reach the poorest villager and do what you can for him if - if the fact that the poorer he is the less able he is to ...

I. To reach you?

M. To reach you.

I. As a Cadet and even as an O.A. did you feel that you were being treated more or less like a dogsbody?

M. Well, I don't know. I think that - I don't think it ever occurred to one. You were very inexperienced. I think that - certainly, no it didn't. I - you mentioned Campbell. The other day ... he only died about a year ago down here [in Hampshire]. I served for eighteen months with him directly after I'd been in Kalutara for three months. Then I - as I've been meaning to say I was suddenly moved up to Puttalam and there had eighteen months - I lived with Campbell. There were no other quarters. And really learnt more of district administration in those eighteen months than I could have hoped to anywhere else. Because he was good - very good at the vernacular too - vernacular languages. And did believe in seeing things for himself. I was a great deal on circuit with him.

I. How - how was your own proficiency in Sinhalese?

M. I passed my exams in - without finding it difficult. Actually I could read and write Sinhalese and talk it fairly well. But then in the beginning of '28 I'd moved down to the Secretariat and I stayed in Colombo, more or less, for the



rest of my career. Which, of course, was absolutely fatal from the point of view of ...

I. Sinhalese?

M. Sinhalese. I did go back for a spell. I had to spend a second spell in Anuradhapura in the ...

I. '36?

M. In '36. And I polished up my Sinhalese there. I even ran the kachcheri once, when I'd lost the interpreter, on my own. But then from there I went to Nuwara Eliya for a brief time and I was moved down to the Secretariat soon as was started. And never left Colombo again. And of course it wasn't - Colombo was not a place where you had any opportunity really. I used to talk Sinhalese to my servants, domestic Sinhalese. But I gradually lost any complete knowledge of it. And I've never - I passed my exams in Tamil but I was never stationed in a Tamil district. So I never had much opportunity of using it.

I. When you were an Office Assistant and a Cadet would you have liked a greater responsibility than you were given?

M. Oh, no. I think that owing to the general state of overwork the Cadet was given probably more responsibility than he was - really his experience entitled him to expect.

I. Yes, I see.

M. I remember holding land sales at a very early time in my career. And I really wasn't very competent to hold them.

I. I know you were not an A.G.A. or G.A. in the 1920's, before your Secretariat Experience, but did you feel that the Secretariat was rather unreceptive to new ideas? And tended to be obstructionist? This is more or less in the pre-Donoughmore Commission period?

M. Well, that's - its a difficult question to answer, that: because I think the quality of people you had in the Secretariat was such that you couldn't accuse them of being unreceptive to new ideas. But everybody was hideously overworked. I mean, work, I've talked about overwork in the kachcheris but work in the Secretariat was much heavier. I seldom - the whole time in the Secretariat I very often used to stay in the office until seven o'clock at night. And never do I remember in the whole of my service ever coming away without bags of papers which I used to do either late at night, or before I got up in the mornings very often. We were all - there was too much work and if you're busy clearing existing - clearing up

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existing problems it doesn't - with the best will in the world you're not in a position to be frightfully enthusiastic about new problems. Or new ideas which may or may not be ...

I. Practical?

M. Practicable. So long as the work seems - the standard of work in Ceylon was very high and certain new ideas and new suggestions about doing a thing a different way had to be pretty good if it, on examination, it was going to be better.

I. You would agree then with the Donoughmore Commission's verdict that the Secretariat was a bottleneck?

M. Oh, it was a bottleneck. Because there were too few people and the whole work of the island came - came through it. And there again the experience I - I'd had six, seven - six, seven years district experience before I came into the Secretariat. Well, from the moment I got in I was submerged in papers dealing with all conceivable subjects. We were all allocated a certain number of subjects and we dealt - the Assistant Secretaries dealt with the - either direct with the Colonial Secretary or with the Principal Assistant Colonial Secretary whichever they thought appropriate.

I. Mmm. Couldn't this bottleneck have been diminished by a greater devolution of responsibility at the top? That is to say either several Colonial Secretaries or several Principal Assistants? I know there were departments below the Principal Assistant but, you know, a bit higher up?

M. Yes, that ... Of course you couldn't use - it started from the top in that stage of colonial administration. You had the Governor, who was the chief executive officer really for the colony at that time. He was responsible for all decisions made. The Colonial Secretary under him took off quite a proportion of the work and decided things for himself, in which the Governor was really responsible.

I. Yes, I see.

M. So there had to be complete confidence between the Governor and the Colonial Secretary. Well, as you go down, whatever was done was still being done in the Governor's name and the Principal Assistant Colonial Secretary, which was the key post in the Secretariat, was really working entirely on behalf of the Colonial Secretary in every - ...

I. Oh, I see.

M. ... all decisions which he made himself. I mean papers came up and were stopped at that level.

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- I. Yes, I see.
- M. And a decision made. Well, that was still committing the ...
- I. Governor?
- M. Governor. And, of course, if you could have had, say, three Principal Assistants each with his group of Assistant Secretaries, it would have been less of a bottleneck at that level. But the things which have to go up higher than - for a decision - higher than the Principal Assistant level still would have to go to the Colonial Secretary. And theoretically you could have had several Colonial Secretaries, because really he was in a position which was later a Minister. And you have a number of ministers. But the - that wasn't the colonial system. The fact was that the old system stood still and the work in modern conditions increased vastly.
- I. Mmm. You see there has been a criticism made that in the Secretariat there were some who were very, very much the Secretariat-wallahs, and tended to be obstructionist. This covers an earlier period really, the 1910's and 1920's.
- M. Well, of course, I wasn't out there then. I would have said - there wasn't so much work I think ... being in the Secretariat so long I saw most of the old files which still came up to the surface at all. And it didn't strike me that - there was much less work before the - and just immediately after the First World War. And I don't think people changed much. You had - chaps who came into the Secretariat were picked because they were - they had suitable qualities. They were good at that - good at paper work naturally. But I don't think - I think anybody who was obstructive - if you traced the history, the careers of the various people who served in the Secretariat you'll find that each period there was a certain number who served a short stint there and didn't come back.
- I. Yes.
- M. Well, they were the people who were square-pegs in round holes.
- I. I see.
- M. But I don't like - it certainly wasn't - it wasn't the atmosphere; not in my time. You see, we had very - an exceptionally good chap in Sir Mark Young who was my first Principal Assistant. And, oh, Southorn was there when I first got there. But by the time - when I first reached Ceylon - by the time I came to the Secretariat Mark Young was the P.A.C.S. and he was far from being in any way obstructionist. And Murphy followed him. He was .... Oh, you'd find it much easier to get a thing
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solved than it was to push it out for it to bounce back again later. I mean if you've got hundreds of files which you've got - oh, on important matters, which have got to be dealt with, you want to get an answer, a decision. You don't want to put off something which means that you'll get it back again in three months time.

I. The impression I had was that Southorn was rather mediocre?

M. Well, I wasn't ...

I. It was partly from Woolf.

M. I wasn't there in the Secretariat when he was there. I think that Mark Young was outstandingly good and Southorn wasn't cast in that mould. Its very difficult to find a fair means of comparing ...

I. Comparing people?

M. ... people at different times, different circumstances. I think a chap who reached that point was always probably the best there was available, at that time, in the Service. The Service - the Civil Service had its ups and downs. It had a period when it had a great selection of brilliant people. I remember Sir Henry Moore telling me that when he came out he found that immediately above him there were half a dozen people who he thought he'd never have a hope of passing over. And so he elected to get a small job in another colony with a hope of ...

I. Promotion?

M. Of getting promotion. There were a very good lot at that time. Then there was a period when there were a much poorer lot. Comparatively ... And we weren't awfully strong at the top after the Donoughmore, really, compared with people we'd had in the Service. I don't want to particularly ...

I. Mention names?

M. ... mention names.

I. Yes. No, I was thinking of the pre-Donoughmore period as a whole. I was wondering whether it could be said that British rule, taken by and large, lacked drive and purpose? Or whether there was a tendency to seek efficiency as an - as an end in itself? But of course you're coming very much at the end of this period rather than the whole of it.

M. The Donoughmore?

I. Well, no, I was ...

M. In 30 ...?

I. I was thinking of the period pre-1931. Pre-1929 I would say.

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- M. Oh, from - from so. Well, my period covered from '21 to - onwards. I think one of the difficulties was this one I've referred to already. That everybody was overloaded. After the '14 war, or after the 20's anyway, the world suddenly started expanding in ... And the old days of a quiet colonial life disappeared and everybody was overworked. More activities in all directions. Same staff. We had no increase in staff, you see, ever worth mentioning.
- I. I know that the Legislative Council threw the income tax bill out in the 1920's. But talking from Kenyan analogies I was wondering whether Europeans as a whole too - that is the non-officials included - would have opposed an income tax bill at an earlier date?
- M. Well, of course, nobody welcomes an income tax bill. Income tax was not - I don't think any - any of - any colonies had it, at that time. And nobody - its a thing which nobody wants if they can avoid it. And we lived - Ceylon was solvent. It was well-roaded, good education, good hospitals - magnificent hospital service really for ... I mean no other country could touch Ceylon for its development. And although the budget was kept fairly low and we - our main source of income was the import duties. That is expansion ... As I say the early 20's we were still living, everywhere, living in the old days. And as realisation came that we were - that the world was expanding, we had to spend more. But we - then, of course, the '31 slump came along which hit Ceylon badly in its primary ...
- I. Produce?
- M. ... products, and income tax had to come. But, as I say, you've got to, in considering the outlook in the 20's, you've got to take into consideration that Ceylon was a very well - infinitely better developed, I think, than any other colony. You couldn't put your finger - well, what were you thinking of? You couldn't put your finger on anything in Ceylon which was extremely backward compared with other places at that point. Ceylonisation - you see, we were far in advance of any other part of the Colonial Empire in Ceylonisation.
- I. No, I was wondering whether - especially at the top, the Governor and the Colonial Secretary - the Governor had reached his peak more or less and I was wondering whether it was - there was a tendency of following the path - well, a very natural tendency - to follow the path of least resistance and a policy of quieta non movere?
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- M. Well, are you thinking politically or economically? Politically things by then were ...
- I. Were moving then?
- M. They were moving and they were difficult. It was not - it was not an easy colony to administer then.
- I. No, I was thinking, well, economically. And receptivity to some new ideas. I can quote one or two examples when ideas were turned down. And then again when I asked the question about drive and purpose I was thinking in - there I was thinking more in political terms. In the sense of ultimate end. To what end is all this? A sense of social purpose.
- M. Well, as I say, if you take the political aspect Ceylon was looking forward. It had achieved a great deal. I mean even when I first went out. Take the Medical Department which is a pretty important one. And in Ceylon a very advanced one. I don't think there were more than three or four Europeans in the whole department, which was quite an achievement.
- I. Yes.
- M. In the 1920's. I mean there was no standing still there. After all the fact that Ceylon when it achieved its independence moved - was in a position to move forward without the slightest hitch, was only due to the quite far-sighted people earlier on who'd achieved such a high degree of Ceylonisation from the earlier days. You can't - we all know now - you can't achieve that suddenly. It requires quite - well, several generations of work. The Legal Department - there was a great sort of - I mean the Europeans in the Public Service were comparatively few even when I went out there.
- I. Mmm. Yes, this question of Ceylonisation is interesting and its rather a sort of sensitive issue, if I may say so. Because, while Ceylonisation was proceeding in many departments, it was, one feels, checked in certain departments. I mean there was a brake put on it in certain departments like the Irrigation Department. I think that was for technological reasons perhaps, but the Police Department for - also there was a - there seems to have been a brake. And in the Civil Service proper I know that the non-European Civil Servants felt that they were excluded from G.A.'ships.
- M. That is true, in those early days. Wickremesinghe was the first G.A. ...
- I. Why was this? Was this a tendency or policy?
- M. Don't - I don't think so. It - the entry of Europeans was
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pretty controlled from even - well, from the days after the War, when the ... After all a lot of our - when I joined I was junior to a large number of the Ceylonese even then. And Cadets were appointed in my year above me. Locally in Ceylon. As to their progress afterwards it was - its difficult to say. It was always a legislative - promotions were always from one class to another were - were on - they used to be on merit? I think they were. But it is true that there was a hesitation in appointing Ceylonese to districts and provinces.

I. Mmm. Why?

M. I think, in those days, there was a certain amount of speculation about the difficulties that a - you see, European - one heard a lot about how disinterested we were and free from any prejudice of any kind. Well, of course, really speaking, it was easy for us because we had no ties, no relations and no one was in a position to exert any sort of ...

I. Of influence?

M. ... influence. And we were not allowed to have any local interests. We were strictly forbidden to invest or anything. And I think there was a certain amount of the feeling that the people who were not in that fortunate position were to be given plenty of time to get used to having to step into that sort of post. And cut away from any ...

I. Local ties?

M. ... local ties. It isn't so - I mean you don't get a parallel in this country so much because there's no post which compares with the posts in Ceylon; the power which really a district - head of a district could exercise...

I. Could exercise.

M. Unquestioned locally. And I think it was due to that it - I think it was a pity in some ways, because it did cause a certain amount of bitterness. There's no question.

I. Mmm. In support of this theory, too, would you say that apart from the influence to which Ceylonese G.A's could be subject, also there was a feeling that the people themselves would distrust their impartiality?

M. I think - I think that's - it might be true to say that. Because as you know the Ceylonese villager, if he was involved in a dispute or wasn't getting what he wanted, was very apt to suspect that he wasn't being dealt with fairly, even though he might be, which was the reason for all these petitions

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which used to keep floating in. They weren't all, by any means, based on any substantial ground. But it didn't stop them coming in and making accusations against anybody who'd thwarted them in what they wanted. And I think that - I think the fact - I think it was so. I don't - I hesitate to say so definitely but I think that the Ceylonese who attained these posts later on in the Civil - I do think that at times they were - they found it difficult to convince the people that they were being ...

I. Disinterested?

M. ... disinterested.

I. Mmm. But as against the - this tendency and these reasons I would like to bring three or four points: (a) the general point that both the people and the Civil - and the non-European Civil Servants could only swim if they were thrust into the water. Would you agree with that?

M. In other words that we should have said, 'The devil with that, they must go and try'?

I. Mmm.

M. Yes, yes, I think so. I think that we were unduly - not the people who guided our destinies in those days were rather reluctant to do it. They came to it and before I left it was ...

I. Yes. It was - I know the change came about by the 19 - late 20's and early 30's. Also a separate argument. While in theory these arguments may have some basis and some good when one looked at some of the personnel concerned, C. L. Wickremesinghe for one, somehow one feels that this wouldn't apply.

M. That he - that he was in every way capable of ...?

I. Of being a very good G.A. And ...

M. Well, he was. I mean he - his record in the Service was a very high one. He held very important - I mean he was A.G.A. First A.G.A., Ceylonese A.G.A., the first G.A., Land Commissioner, and so on.

I. And you see apart from the fact that these - there might be these disadvantages Ceylonese G.A.'s had certain other advantages in relation to European officers.

M. You mean a greater knowledge of ...

I. The language, ...

M. Language.

I. In - perhaps in ...

M. But that wasn't always - it - you might say its an advantage

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that it tends to greater efficiency. On the other hand you sometimes - can sometimes be too close to things. Its - there's something on both sides but I would agree that, looking back over time, it would have been better if we'd experimented more boldly earlier. But then things - these things have to start - whenever it was started there would have been some who would have said it should have been started earlier.

- I. And if I may underline the harsher aspect of it these arguments could not be applied to my father and Mr. Rock because they were non-Ceylonese. And so one wonders whether (a) racial prejudice was behind it, and (b) whether there's a question of status, especially in the planting districts. Because the G.A. was really the - the man.
- M. Yes. Its very difficult to have to ...
- I. Its a rather ...
- M. To discuss after this length of time actions for which one had no possible responsibility.
- I. Yes, I know.
- M. And its awfully difficult to attempt to say what one would have done oneself in those circumstances.
- I. If you were in that position?
- M. If I was in that position. I would agree that in general that we were too slow about it. I'm with you there. I've given you the general reasons which I have assumed were those which the people in power at the time applied to the problems. But - and I think, in the light of all we know now we were too slow. But I would like to - to say to that - to add to that that if you take the development of Ceylon politically its been the most successful. Its the only - as far as I know its the only ex-colony which has attained independence and since independence had a number of free elections, and on no less than three occasions the party in power has been thrown out by the electorate. And I think that's unique. I don't think that that's been allowed to happen anywhere else in the Empire. It certainly hasn't happened in Africa. I don't think - its a great - its not been given sufficient ...
- I. Emphasis?
- M. Ceylon hasn't been given sufficient credit for that. Its a tremendous thing. It is the triumph of democracy as applied to an emergent country. And in giving Ceylon credit for that you must give credit to the people who built the thing up, with
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their faults and failings. And one musn't necessarily condemn the things that they did in the progress towards independence. One might feel if it had been done differently the present results - I mean one can't help Ceylon having had a difficult time. That's another matter. But its - the progress of parliamentary government and general democracy has managed to keep the flag flying in Ceylon. Which is more than its done in a good many places. And you must give a great deal of credit [for] that to all the administrators who have worked in Ceylon for very many years past. And as I say you can criticise things that they've done fairly and with reason. But taking the thing as a whole.

- I. Yes. No, I know. I was - I'm not fashioning these questions merely for sort of critical raw material. And I think it is generally acknowledged that the Civil Service has done a great deal for Ceylon. But I was - as, you know, as part of my job I was looking for - [looking at] particular policies.
- M. Oh, yes. Oh, I appreciate that. And I would desire - as I say my own view, looking back over it - I think it always was - that we were - could have done more over giving higher posts on the revenue side to Ceylonese. Or, as you point out, to others who were there. I think it was probably a pity. I mean you've got - I don't - I'm at a disadvantage in discussing it with you because, as you've mentioned yourself, your father was one of the aggrieved ones. And I just don't know. He'd be much senior to me. And I have no experience, very little contact with him. I've always heard kindly of him. But I don't know what - how these things were judged. What jobs he'd had and how he'd done them. Or Mr. Rock, or any, I mean ...
- I. Yes, I see. Yes.
- M. Its an aspect which I just don't know. If you ask me about somebody I've had worked under me I'd be able to tell you ... I hope you won't, but I'd be able to tell you quite plainly whether I thought that the fact that he didn't get a revenue job was due to ...
- I. His calibre?
- M. His calibre.
- I. Or lack of calibre?
- M. Lack of calibre. I just - I mean those things all come into consideration. And there it is. But its - I would say in
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general we - it could have been done earlier. But against that I would say that the end results were satisfactory.

- I. Mmm. If I could turn to a different sphere, the political, in the 20's and then come on to the Donoughmore. I do not know whether you took any interest in these - in what are known as the Manning Constitutions, especially the 1924 one? But presumably while you were in the Secretariat later you had some experience of it? What struck me about this Constitution was that it was, well, so bad in the sense that it was based on bad principles. The one pre-Donoughmore.
- M. Well, I think I'm right in saying that it did seek to expand the means of progression, political progress. It did seek to expand self - er, local government. Which was an advance which hadn't been visualised before. And to develop it on non-official lines. As far as the - it - if we're thinking about the same Constitution, it increased the number of Ceylonese - proportion of Ceylonese but still left a small official majority?
- I. No, the one I'm thinking about is the one under Clifford and Stanley in which there was an unofficial majority who therefore controlled the Finance Committee.
- M. Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes.
- I. And a lack of co-ordination between the Executive and the Legislative.
- M. Yes, that was an unhappy - an unhappy constitution. The Finance Committee was - as so often you get it. It had ...
- I. Control?
- M. Control without responsibility. And it didn't work frightfully well. And they were very apt to take it out on heads of departments. And heads of departments used to have to appear before them with their estimates. And heads of departments were not politically-minded. That was a mistake which I always thought the Donoughmore Committee made. It retained the direct dealings between ministers and heads of departments. Well, heads of departments in the colonial administration are not really political people at all. They're technical officers who have a technical job to do. And the later provisions - provisions of later constitutions where they were, as you might say, shielded from politics by the introduction of a Permanent Secretary, is a much - its much sounder.
- I. Mmm. Oh, yes, I see your point. I would like to take that up later. But if - what I - coming back to this Manning
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I'm surprised that it was ever instituted. I know that the similar model has been worked in other colonies later on but in the atmosphere of the time it seemed - it seems manifestly unworkable?

- M. Yes. Well, I doubt if - and I'm really speaking before my time so to speak. I doubt if at the time it was visualised, the rapid political developments which were taking place after the First War had been adequately appreciated. I think it was a Constitution which could probably have worked if there had been less - what shall I say? - antagonistic political feelings at the time.
- I. Yes, I see.
- M. At that time Ceylon - the Ceylon politician, I think, felt that he was entitled to very much more than that.
- I. Mmm. Did you feel that the politicians were sometimes, or were often, very unreasonable in their attitudes?
- M. I always found with the Ceylon politicians - this goes the whole way through - that they were generally unreasonable when they were speaking politically. And extremely nice and helpful people if you met them individually. I mean I've had - when I was A.G.A., Nuwara Eliya - some land sale I remember to take place[sic]. There was one piece in it which greatly affected some - one of the local members which I knew nothing about. Well, he wanted to have it postponed. There was no reason to; so I didn't agree to the postponement. So he got on to Colombo and got it postponed by the Minister. And I felt a bit hurt about that. Then we met and nothing could have been pleasanter or easier. It was just a question of that while I was just an official post to him he was suspicious and unwilling to risk accepting my decision. And once we'd met and discussed the thing and we remained - I mean, he always went out of his way to be pleasant to me afterwards. That - I think that's pretty well every politician who I ever came across. Well, they'd get up in the House and say the most dreadful things; even about - not about one personally but about what was going on and things you were doing. And then you'd meet them and you'd discover that they hadn't appreciated this or something and all was well. Then it would happen again. They were two people. They had a political - a political face and a private one.
- I. Private face. Did you ever feel that some of them suffered from a sense of inferiority complex which bred aggressiveness?
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- M. Yes. Oh, yes. I think that immediately they met you and realised that you had no desire to be anything but courteous to them and expected them to be the same to you the thing adjusted itself. But - if - I think they'd had rough ... Occasionally they came across somebody - you do - I mean we all have our bad days - and were treated brusquely or ... And it had a very deep effect. It was always a great tragedy when it happened.
- I. You're referring to arrogance I suppose on the part of some? Because if I may say so W.T. Stace makes this criticism against British rule in general, and against the British community as a whole. You know taken as a whole.
- M. Yes, I don't think - I don't think arrogance was a very pronounced failing of our - of ours. I think there were individuals who were difficult and who - well, I mean, you take the chap you've mentioned. I mean I don't think there's any harm in referring to it. Campbell, who everybody had a great respect for and who really did a tremendous lot for the country, all the time he was there. But he could be a most difficult man and, I mean, I know a good many Ceylonese in his district who've had the rough side of his tongue, in a way which we wouldn't have thought of some years later.
- I. I was not thinking so much of Civil Servants. And Stace was not only referring - not referring merely to them but he was including unofficials too. And these sort of slights tend to be spoken about and embellished and ...
- M. I know. Its always a problem. Of course in any big community where you've got Europeans and so on you get quite a lot of people who are not - well, [who] have come from all grades of their own life, as you realise, as you've lived at home [Britain]. And often didn't behave well at times. Just because - in any(?) (?) And it - it ... That touches on another question which is always a difficult one where you have a British community, an English community abroad: the desire to have your own clubs.
- I. Club. Mmm.
- M. Well, that caused more trouble and its caused more trouble round the Empire than anything else. And yet there's nothing in it. Its just the desire of when you've finished work to be able to go away and ...
- I. Meet your own people?
- M. Meet your own people. And say what you want to say without
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some fear that its going to appear in the Daily News next day. That's all it was mostly. I mean there again you've got - you've got Europeans who made more of it than that. That's the general - its one I've always - mind you I never agreed with, at any time, having a rule that you couldn't bring into the club anybody who - any friend of yours. And of course you couldn't in a lot of clubs. And at the clubs which I liked best, the golf clubs ...

I. Oh, I see.

M. ... the Colombo Golf Club and the Nuwara Eliya Golf Club, Ceylonese were freely admitted and always have been. And when I used to play tennis in Badulla, way back in 1923, the Gymkhana Club was open to ... There was a very nice excise chap used to play a very good game of tennis there. I've forgotten his name for the moment.

I. As part of this point, a sort of less sharper point, would it be correct to say that at this stage the Civil Service was rather too aloof from the people? From the middle-class? Maybe as a result of thoughtlessness, you know, but these clubs and so on and so forth.

M. Well, are you going to - are you talking about us in Colombo or in an outstation? Because in an outstation ...

I. No, I was thinking of Colombo where, after all, policy came from.

M. Well, we were only a drop in the ocean in Colombo. You think we should have mixed in one anothers' houses more than we did? That's fair enough a criticism I think. But it was more the way of life that went on than anything intended. Because in the outstations we all mixed freely. Dined in one anothers' houses, all mixed, met at the club every night.

I. Oh, I see.

M. Tennis club. Very happy days they were. I loved the outstation life. There was no segregation of any kind.

I. Yes, I know.

M. And after all that was - there were more of us in outstations, in talking of the Civil Service, than in Colombo. In Colombo we were only a drop in the ocean and we didn't cut much ice really. The ways of Colombo social life weren't - certainly weren't settled by Civil Servants, who were so badly paid it was as much as they could do to keep their heads above water anyway. It was the merchant princes and people who settled things there. But I had some very good Ceylonese friends I've

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always ... But admittedly in Colombo you didn't run across - and of course we were, as I said, we were all pretty heavily worked. When I came home in the evening - I fell into the easy routine I suppose. Go to - have a game of bridge at the club or come back home and settle down over papers. It wasn't - there was nothing - no intentional policy about it. And of course you've got this question of aloofness. It does tie in with what I was saying earlier about the great advantage we had in impartial administration in Ceylon, that you were not subject to - you didn't hear the things discussed. In a way, you can't have it both ways. If you're going to have a form of administration, personal administration which has got to be completely impartial its that much easier if you're not about where these things are discussed, in your off-time. But there again as I say that didn't ... In an outstation we managed to do it both ways. We all met together. But then we were all officials. We were never ... I do agree looking - now you mention the point - that one didn't mix much with - and of course its curious enough in an outstation there aren't many unofficials.

I. Yes.

M. When you think of the small outstations in my day. A place like Galle was different. But ...

I. No, I think even - it was Sir Charles Hartwell also who brought it up. He said - I mean it was not consciously done, it was unconscious. But in effect you were not quite in touch with the trend of thought. You see what I mean?

M. Mmm.

I. And from the policy point of view it might have been good to know, you know ...?

M. Yes, I think - I think there's quite a bit in that. Quite a bit. Because your working day ...

I. Yes, I see that.

M. ... covers a lot. You did an awful lot of discussions and things and met people. Particularly in the sort of - more senior posts in Colombo during the daytime. You seem to come into ... Of course I must confess if there had been one large mixed club in Colombo where you'd have gone along and met - still we met at the golf club. I used to - the Ceylonese used to come there. And people who were in touch with things, chaps like Noel Gratiaen. Do you - you know him I suppose, do you?

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- I. I don't know him personally.
- M. No.
- I. What about these political attacks in the Council in the late 20's? Did the heads of departments resent these criticisms?
- M. You mean when they appeared people got up in the Council and said that Mr. So-and-So, Director of Public Works ...
- I. Yes.
- M. ... this and that? Well, as I say, heads of departments are not, or weren't in those days, political animals. And anything like that - I mean the basis for that sort of thing, as I say, was a certain amount of frustration on the part of the politicians. Because he couldn't influence them in any other way. Therefore he must get up and tend to vilify them in the House. Well, the head of department was not the sort of chap who'd understand that. I mean it was difficult for any of us too. And I don't suppose - and then he'd go to the Finance Committee meeting and they'd all turn on him. And he'd get very angry because the Chief Secretary, Colonial Secretary was there with the Treasurer; weren't able to protect him. Something like that. It was the system, the political system, at that time which led to it. And I don't think heads of departments ... I mean the more mature ones would probably appreciate ... But the ordinary Director of Education, Irrigation or somebody like that would come down from Trincomalee, thinking of nothing but tanks and things and then get attacked because he hadn't got a bungalow for an Assistant Irrigation Engineer.
- I. Yes.
- M. Or he hadn't - he wasn't - he hadn't appointed him to some other post. It was - it wasn't ... As I say it was a sign of - sign of the political time more than anything else.
- I. Would you agree with Clifford's view that the Constitution was unworkable, or with Stanley's view that cooperation outweighed respon - umm, criticism? And that it was a qualified success?
- M. Well, I wouldn't - depending on the kind - Clifford was an extremely intelligent man. I mean he had his lucid times even at the end in Ceylon. He was probably thinking of it in another way. Unworkable in - he was looking at - in - as a step in the ordinary progress. A bad step.
- I. Yes.
- M. Whereas Stanley was probably thinking; well its - anything - anything which tides us along is - does represent a certain
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amount of political progress. I think you could say both about it. I mean the whole history, political history, of the development of Ceylon between the 20's and the beginning of the War was one of trying to make things work. With the desire on one hand to keep progress slow ...

I. But steady?

M. But steady. And a desire on the other hand to get away. With a great deal to be said on both sides. But Ceylon of course was a - from the point of view of the Ceylonese - was a developed country with a good - to them not much reason why they shouldn't take over long before they did. To us considering that nobody else had taken over, it was a bit too big a step to take at once. And I - I would guess, I would say that history looking back would have probably agreed that anything quicker would have probably led to more trouble than has taken place now, which is a thing that one can only speculate about.

I. What sort of Governor was Stanley?

M. I think a much under-rated one. He was a very - he wasn't spectacular in any way. He was a very kind - he was a very nice man, Stanley. He was deeply hurt by attacks on him at different times, I know.

I. Attacks by whom?

M. By - in the House and ... But he was very shrewd and had a very difficult time. Things were getting difficult politically then.

I. It would seem that he deliberately set out to placate the politicians and also to win the affection of the people. You know, attending odd little meetings and openings and things like that. Did you feel so?

M. Yes, I think he was searching desperately to create a better atmosphere in Ceylon. It was difficult time because the - it was a transition between - as far as the officials went. All the senior people were - had their roots way back in the pre-War period and were naturally conservative. You can't - you don't change all that rapidly. And, you see, the War - as far as I could judge the First World War had not touched Ceylon greatly. And so the impact of the outside world on Ceylon after the War, politically chiefly, was a bit sudden and hardly to be anticipated by those who'd been in Ceylon from before the War.

I. Yes, I see. I was wondering whether in this process Stanley

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lost touch with the Civil Service?

M. The Governor in those days was not terribly in touch with the - I mean when I say in touch, in individual touch. We all - to us the Governor was a very important person whose wish was law. But in the old days everybody's - every G.A. and A.G.A. wrote a diary, you know, a daily diary. And the Governor saw every diary. And in the old days used to take an interest in them and write comments on them. Well, that sort of paternalism, there wasn't time for it. And he was caught up much more politically than the old Governors. But speaking for myself we didn't expect it. We all had a job to do. We got on with our job. We didn't get a great deal of guidance under the system by which we - which existed. But one - we were not very demanding in expecting a paternalistic approach as long as we got on with our jobs and got reasonable backing. Of course, it did happen that - that one got turned down on things, rows with local politicians and that kind of thing, yes, more often, but that's to be expected. As I say the older people, particularly those who weren't - if you were in and out of Colombo you sensed the atmosphere more. But the old type of G.A. who was ...

I. Mmm. Yes, how did the A.G.A's and G.A's take to these criticisms in newspaper and in Council?

M. Oh, they didn't like them. Didn't like them. You see, they weren't politicians in any way and for a chap who's doing a job he's paid to do the best he can, its very disheartening to be pilloried in the press because you make a decision which you thought was right.

I. Yes. What were the Ceylonese newspapers like as a whole?

M. Oh, pretty - pretty poor in that they were - possibly, as I say, there was a slight frustration at political level. They were very vehement. And if you did something which wasn't popular you'd see a flaring headline next day in the paper which you - the least thing you were expecting if you were some slightly retiring A.G.A. when all you'd done was to come down on one side or the other. And a politician had to be involved on the wrong side. Well ...

I. Yes. Did you feel that the standard of the writing and the tone of the press was very much like the Daily Express, Evening Standard level, or worse?

M. Well, I - its difficult to say because they were - the Daily News of course developed into a very good paper. I don't know

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when Wijewardena first took it over, do you?

I. Oh, pretty early. In the - 1918 he started it.

M. As soon as that? Well, he mellowed of course. But ...

I. The Morning Leader?

M. The Morning Leader. That was - is that Marcus Fernando's paper?

I. No. Well, that was Armand de Souza.

M. Oh, de Souza. I've forgotten them all now. There was the Morning Leader, the Daily News and there was another ...

I. Observer?

M. Observer. Look, I think that Marcus Fernando ...

I. He had a paper for a while.

M. Yes. I've forgotten which one. But they were all much the same. They were doing their best according to their lights and there it was. They didn't help things from the official point of view.

I. Apart from this criticism of course there was this other aspect. Of politicians going above the heads of A.G.A's and G.A's to the Secretariat or to the Governor ...

M. Yes.

I. ... and getting things done.

M. Oh, yes, that happened. Inevitably I suppose. The - it depends to what extent. Some - some - oh, sometimes it was quite reasonable. Other times in order to placate a politician certain of our higher officials would rather smack down on the ...

I. On the A.G.A.?

M. On the A.G.A. Just depends on the quality of the high official who was dealing with the politician.

I. In a - would some of these high officials smack down on the A.G.A. without listening to his side of the case?

M. Well, he'd call - probably call for the papers. He wouldn't hear him. He'd just - he wouldn't tell ... You see, he'd [the A.G.A.] be out in the district and this would be discussed in the State Council. And the chap [the high official] would say, 'I'll go back and get the papers out and see what I can do'. He'd call for the papers and then decide. And one of the - one of the factors influencing him - which would influence him would be the need, the desire to placate this chap in order to get something more important through. I mean ...

I. Yes.

M. ... its a political job and ...

I. Since I've got some material on this point already would it be correct to say that Sir Murchison Fletcher tended to do this often?



M. I was thinking of a later period really. He was still a Colonial Secretary and there wasn't all that need - I never struck it with him. I know he wasn't popular with the Civil Service. Or with the heads of departments. Quite a lot of that came from the raging fury among officials at the way the Finance Committee was conducted. He - I think his trouble was he came to Ceylon with not a lot of experience. He'd served in a small - in Hong Kong I think it was. And he was supposed to be a brilliant man. And I rather think that Ceylon was a bit too tough a nut for him ...

I. For him.

M. ... to crack.

I. He was out of his depth was he?

M. Well, I think that he - it was too difficult for him. He was too facile. And I think that he definitely didn't get the confidence of the Civil Service. But he did a lot. I remember he was very hurt about it and before he went he wrote a note showing what he had done for the Civil Service in return. And he had done quite a bit in getting certain conditions of service improved. He was very, very hurt about it all. But it was - he tried - I think he'd tried to play politics a bit. A bit more than a Colonial Secretary of those days was expected by the Service to do.

I. Mmm. Of course another intriguing personality is Sir Cecil Clementi. What sort of man was he?

M. Well, he was in my junior days. I only - I met him more on his tours round the countryside. He was a very impressive man. And from what I saw of Secretariat files of his time I think he was quite - he was quite - well, he was certainly respected by the Service. Curiously enough, you know, I don't feel that I'm in a position to express much of an opinion about him. He certainly didn't seem to be controversial because one never - he didn't inspire the emotions which Fletcher seemed to inspire. He may have been rather lucky in the quietish - he was what, '23 and '24, something like that.

I. Yes, I see, yes.

M. I think he was probably lucky in that he was at the time when things weren't ...

I? Well, Bowes calls him "a freak" and says that he was very impractical.

M. Who did?

I. Freddy Bowes.

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- M. Oh. I wouldn't know. I don't ...
- I. Did you feel he was impractical? That's a point I was wondering whether Bowes was correct or whether he was being too harsh?
- M. I'd say he went on to be quite a good Governor in Malaya. Lady Clementi was a very intriguing person. She roused Noel Coward's fury of course at ...
- I. Noel Coward?
- M. Yes.
- I. Oh, I see.
- M. Oh, he - in one of his musical plays, the one with the song 'Mad Dogs and Englishmen' she's featured in it as Lady Dementi.
- I. Oh, I see.
- M. She was rather intense. A very well meaning woman. And I liked what little I had to do with him. But I'm in no position to judge his ... I always thought that he was - after all, 'Happy is the country which has no history' and he didn't leave any trail behind him of indignation or anything. His time passed fairly quietly I would have thought.
- I. Turning to another aspect in the 1920's would it be correct to say that trade union activity was considered seditious?
- M. Not seditious, no. No. It was an entirely new idea as far as Ceylon was concerned. It didn't fit in with any form of traditional employment. I don't - it wasn't encouraged certainly. It was simply something which hadn't happened and ...
- I. But, if I may say so, this seems rather slow adaptation because - I know it was not traditional but it had come about in England fifty years ago and one would have thought that they were expecting this sort of thing. However different the conditions in Ceylon.
- M. Gimson would have been the chap to talk about that more. My impression was that there wasn't a - there wasn't a great deal of pressure about it, at any responsible level. It came in more by the back-door of left-wing politics, I would have thought.
- I. What about Goonesinha? Wasn't he looked at askance?
- M. I think he was regarded as doing it for his own political ends more than a genuine - any particular genuine - but I mean that may be a bit hard on him. He was using it politically. Mostly wasn't he?
- I. While he may have been having an eye to the main chance, I was wondering whether he had some regard for the workers and was representing a genuine grievance at the same time? If you see
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what I mean?

- M. Yes. Well, in those days labour was plentiful. It was paid at a pretty - admittedly a pretty low level but there wasn't much hope of getting anything higher then. Because it would just have reduced the amount of employment. There wasn't - I don't remember any unrest.
- I. Wasn't there a big strike in 1929?
- M. Ah, yes, that's getting later. Yes, that was - what?
- I. And in 1923 there had been one. You would have been away [on leave].
- M. I was away then. It grew slowly. And - but I don't think there was ever any idea that it was - it was seditious.
- I. Mmm. Well, I just asked that because certainly Bowes seems to consider it so. And he calls Goonesinha an agitator.
- M. Who did that? Bowes. Ah well, after all, he goes back, not only had his roots in pre-14. He must have had his roots in Queen Victoria. Freddy Bowes, he was quite a character. But he was very much of the older generation. And I wouldn't have said that speaking on - and he left - he left in the 20's.
- I. '23.
- M. Yes. I wouldn't have thought that he was ...
- I. Did you ever know if the other nationalist leaders, the other Sinhalese leaders, disliked Goonesinha and opposed him? In the late 20's?
- M. I - what - outside the more or less ordinary political manoeuvrings, I wouldn't have ...
- I. Mmm.
- M. Well, he wasn't - he was a - an - quite a character, Goonesinha. I don't think he was a very - very lovable, politically anyway. He was determined to get his own ...
- I. Own way?
- M. Own way.
- I. Mmm. I was wondering whether official policy towards Goonesinha changed after his recognition by the British Labour Party? This is a rather detailed question.
- M. When the - the Labour Party came into power?
- I. Not - it was just before they came into power but they recognised him officially in 1928 or '29.
- M. I don't think at that time, to tell you the truth, that we took much notice in Ceylon of what the British Labour Party did or didn't do. I think it would have been entirely on -
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and even when they came into power and started showering us with Labour Party stuff Ceylon was pretty set in its own ways by then and wasn't greatly influenced by the Colonial Office.

I. Yes.

M. And I think it - whatever happened more or less developed in its own way in Ceylon.

I. If I may say so he's - I know that he [Goonesinha] was looked on as a Red by Dowbiggin and that his mail was watched and publications intercepted and all that which, well, was perhaps quite natural. But in 1929 someone in the Secretariat - it may have been you for all I know - on some question with regards the strike said - wrote, 'I don't think Goonesinha is as black as he's painted out to be'.

M. Do you know that remark rings a bell in my memory. It wasn't I who wrote it because I don't think I was dealing with - let me see now - that was in 1929 was it? Probably - probably Murphy, who was P.A.C.S. at the time. He was more in - he'd been Mayor of Colombo I think. It would have been Murphy. I would guess it was Murphy, who - he was more in touch with Colombo Municipality and that kind of thing, than the rest of us. But it certainly took a long time for the trade - the idea of trade unions and strikes and things to establish themselves in Ceylon thinking.

I. Mmm. Would you be able to say anything about the 1929 strike?

M. No. No, it wasn't my ...

I. It was a fairly big one wasn't it? And was it the occasion when they had Europeans driving the trams? Or that may have been earlier.

M. I think that was earlier. To tell you the truth I don't remember much about the 1929 strike. '29. What was it? Mostly harbour?

I. I think so.

M. Yes.

I. There were several. I get mixed up.

M. Leigh-Clare would probably remember. He was - he was probably Customs about then. I'm not quite sure. But it didn't leave much of a mark on my memory. I can't think why. I must have been deeply ... Of course it was just after the Donoughmore. About the time it arrived in Ceylon.

I. Yes, that's right. Just after they arrived.

M. And we were all pretty occupied. It was a great time of

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activity in the Secretariat because people had to be taken off their jobs, put on to that, and the rest - the rest of us had the other work to do. Who was Controller of Labour in those days?

I. Luddington?

M. Luddington. Would it have been Luddington?

I. It may have been before him.

M. It may have been. Yes, Luddington I remember was one of the first under the new Constitution. Followed by Gimson. Under the Donoughmore. Am I right? Gimmy, Gimmy - yes, because he went off in 30 ... Yes, he was in - Gimson was Controller of Labour in the middle to late 30's before he went off.

I. I was wondering whether in 1929 you had a hand in this trade union law which was passed at that time? Something to do with trade unions?

M. No, no. Labour - we were all in our little - in our little boxes in the old Secretariat and you had a number of subjects, six or eight subjects each, and at that time I didn't deal with Labour.

I. Yes, I see. But, you see, Stanley, or whoever wrote the despatch, argued in the despatch that he wished to protect the uneducated labourer from exploitation, whether by the employer or by fraudulent persons, by means of pseudo trade unions. And so on and so on, in explanation of this legislation which was promptly turned down flat by the then Labour Government. And the argument seems rather disingenuous.

M. Well, I think there was the fact that - remarked before. It was going to be very difficult to get labour much of a boost up in the conditions [existing] because there was - the labour market was very much a buyer's market. I mean you had lots of labour and there was that danger that all the trade unions would probably do was collect dues from them which would go into someone's pocket and there wouldn't be much negotiating for better terms because ....

END OF FIRST SIDE OF TAPE [I'm afraid that the last part of the conversation was lost.]

I. Coming to the Donoughmore Constitution, did the Commission consult you at all? I mean did you give evidence?

M. Yes, well, they came round. I was stationed at Anuradhapura at the time and the Commission came and spent a long - three or four days in Anuradhapura. And talked to us - I think they heard evidence but they talked to the small number of officials

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there privately. Or not particularly privately but ...

I. You know, socially.

M. Informally. And I was only a very junior chap then. They didn't - I didn't have much to say anyway.

I. Who was the G.A.?

M. The G.A. then was Wedderburn.

I. Do you know what his views were? What he suggested?

M. No, I don't. No. He, then, I don't think, was very politically-minded either. He'd never been in <sup>Colombo</sup> Court. He'd always been Land Settlement most of his time. And then G.A., Colombo - G.A., Anuradhapura at that time.

I. How did you find him as a G.A.?

M. Oh, he was - with his vast experience of Land Settlement he was very much an out-of-door travelling G.A. I think he always thought that he was - that was his best line.

I. Yes. I'm rather surprised that he was made a Chief Secretary.

M. Well, we were very short of senior people at that time. And although he was an extremely nice chap and genuinely devoted to Ceylon it was asking a great deal of his career and experience to expect him to do that job otherwise than within the range of his experience which ...

I. Which was limited?

M. Which was limited. But he was greatly liked and respected by everybody which was a great deal. I mean it was ...

I. Mmm. Would you say that he had - didn't have the metal to stand up to the politicians?

M. Yes, he wasn't - he wasn't politically-minded at all. He was - when he got involved in that kind of thing he became rather prolix and wasn't, I don't think, at his best. It wasn't his line. But his integrity and his genuine devotion to interests - Ceylon interests I think carried a great deal of weight. They all - I think all the politicians liked him individually. Tremendously.

I. And I presume he was pretty sensitive to criticism?

M. Oh, very. Yes. A very nice man who was doing his best. If you come into the political world you'll find yourself in something which ...

I. Yes. What about the Donoughmore Commissioners themselves? How did they strike you?

M. Oh, I thought they were a very - an extraordinary good collection. Matthew Nathan had unique colonial experience. Butler was a brilliant man in any way, a brilliant family.

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Drummond Shiels, for Labour of those days was enlightened and proved himself to be a first-class man. And the - Lord Donoughmore a likeable, intelligent and agreeable chairman, who ... Oh, it was a good Commission that and they went to infinite trouble.

- I. Did you feel that any one of these four tended to be - take a leading part?
- M. I think Donoughmore himself regarded his job as that of Chairman, to coordinate. And of course they had a very good secretary who went to very high levels in the Dominions Office later.
- I. I'm hoping to meet him.
- M. You're hoping to meet him? Are you? Oh, will you remind - tell him you've seen me and ...
- I. Yes, I will.
- M. ... that I'd like to remind him of the day in Anuradhapura when we prised him away from the rest of the Commission, and he came to a party in my bungalow.
- I. I will.
- M. He'll remember that. We used to exchange Christmas cards. We never met again which was one of the penalties of being in Ceylon. You got home so seldom. Anyway...
- I. Well, coming to the recommendations themselves what was your reaction then?
- M. Well, of course, we all wondered about the - the Executive Committee system. It was something entirely new in colonial administration. Looking back I think it did a good job in making a large number of politicians aware of what the administration of a country means. Although it put a pretty effective brake on progress in most of the Ministries.
- I. You think it was very cumbersome?
- M. Oh, very cumbersome. And made decisions - [made] the making of decisions extremely difficult. And, of course, the pity was that the Donoughmore Commission, they had seen all the heads of departments who were breathing fire and murder over their treatment in the Finance Committee, and they succeeded in impressing the Donoughmore Commission with the fact that they must have access to the Ministries. They didn't want a Civil Servant intervening, which - the Donoughmore listened to that and laid down ...
- I. And you think that Ministers should have had a Permanent Secretary to ...?
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M. I'm sure of it, from later experience.

I. Why?

M. Well, because heads of departments are quite - are very ill equipped to deal with ministers. Except(?) when(?) - first of all they were - they either became bitterly offended by them and got at loggerheads with them or they were too anxious to please and were led into undertaking - making undertakings which they shouldn't have done. And they were put under pressure over things which were really outside the ministers' scope, over promotions and that kind of thing. You see, very difficult. Whereas if they'd had a Permanent Secretary in between them, as practised here - and I think its generally recognised everywhere now - who is the sole channel of communication ...

INTERRRUPTION

I. I think we stopped at the Donoughmore Constitution. Regarding these political criticisms in the late 20's would you agree with the Donoughmore view that the Public Services were demoralised as a result?

M. I think there was a great deal of uncertainty. And there was the point that there had been a great change in the 20's from the old settled ways. There was a political - atmosphere of political progress which hit Ceylon from outside. Ceylon hadn't been greatly affected by it because of the War. And it did lead to a certain - I don't think they were demoralised. I think heads of departments were worried because they - their position was changing. And they were more subject to political criticism.

I. Yes, I see. One of the aims of the Donoughmore Commissioners in setting up this State Council with Executive Committees was that the State Council as a whole would also undertake executive duties. But in the practice it would seem that the State Council hardly did so?

M. Yes, that's fair enough. It was very difficult for it to do so. A body which meets only for certain periods of the year. And it was a very unwieldy body. And being essentially an extremely political body, it was not a very suitable one for executive action. Whereas the Executive Committees did work in the ministries - with their ministers and were made aware of what was going on. And even that was pretty cumbersome. Very difficult for ministers very often to come to a clear-cut decision because although they knew it was what they

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wanted it was perhaps politically difficult to put through their committees.

I. Mmm. What about the grant of universal franchise? What were your reactions then?

M. Well the Donoughmore Commission, if I remember rightly, recommended it because they felt that it was the only way of preventing a largely illiterate or uneducated majority being exploited by a thin top layer of educated politicians.

I. In effect to prevent the growth of an oligarchy?

M. Yes. But whether - and the Donoughmore Commission having enunciated the principle, as you might say, that one man one vote should apply to emergent - basically emergent colonies, - that has since been followed as an essential ...

I. Essential feature elsewhere?

M. Feature elsewhere. And I'm very doubtful myself whether it is the best answer.

I. Do you think it fulfilled their intentions of preventing the growth of an oligarchy?

M. I don't - I don't think it does. Because the exercise of the vote by people who are remote and far away from the realities of politics and administration is almost bound to be exploited. Whereas if there was some system by which they were represented - they elected someone within their knowledge to represent them and such nominees themselves voted, or something of that kind, it might be feasible to provide - to produce a system which is less open to objection.

I. But while meeting one objection wouldn't an electoral college be open to bribery?

M. Well, its - there it is. Its a question of a choice of evils. I think that - I'm not at all sure that experience, since the original Donoughmore, throughout the colonial empire, hasn't convinced me that one man one vote is the best answer.

I. Out of several evils?

M. Yes. You see, its proved that its almost impossible for instance to protect minorities in such a system. Minorities are submerged whatever their standing, whatever they - the weight of their - of what they deserve in the country.

I. But is there any system which can really protect the minorities?

M. That is, you might say, the 60,000 dollar question. We haven't found one yet. But then we haven't tried. I mean, having taken it for granted that one man one vote is the only answer, we've lapsed back into accepting that and letting it work out.

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As it will over centuries, but its going to take a very long time.

- I. What do you think of the Donoughmore Commission's criticism of the principle of communal representation? Did you think that having communal representation tended to widen an existing gulf?
- M. There again its difficult. You can't judge these things absolutely - its a question of comparative merits compared with any - some other system. There's no complete answer. And I don't think any one answer is either completely right or completely free from objections.
- I. What did you think of the Tamil demand in later years for a fifty-fifty system?
- M. Again open to objection. One can see their point that anything less than that means that they would be submerged and swamped. And yet you - the majority community is unlikely to accept that a fifty-fifty representation is reasonable. But it is a problem. You've got the thing which has ravaged Cyprus. That same problem. How to protect a substantial ...
- I. Minority?
- M. Minority.
- I. Well, and ...
- M. Where there's no - where there's unlikely to be a great deal of goodwill.
- I. Mmm. That's the problem.
- M. Its the same thing I suppose which is responsible for the Rhodesian situation.
- I. And British Guiana?
- M. Yes. It occurs everywhere unfortunately where we've had colonies. It nearly always - and of course that was one of the benefits that did flow from British colonial rule that communities were able to live ...
- I. Peaceably ...
- M. Peaceably together.
- I. Turning back to universal franchise and the constitution as a whole what would you say was the general reaction of the Civil Servants? You know, to this constitution - to this new change?
- M. To universal franchise?
- I. In particular and to the constitution as a whole?
- M. I think anybody who worked as closely with the people as the Civil Service did realised the drawbacks that one found at the time. I mean you'd plunge into a North-Central Province



village where they probably hadn't seen anybody for two or three years from outside - and those people had the same vote, the same say as highly educated members of the University Council. You see the objections. You don't necessarily see an alternative answer which hasn't got objections. You can see the alternatives which have objections. But you do - they did realise that it was far from perfect and that it was likely to be open to the very, well, the objections which did in fact - the difficulties which did in fact arise.

- I. Would you say that the general reaction was against the constitution, and even rather strongly against it?
- M. Among the Civil Service?
- I. Yes. Or at least those you knew.
- M. I think that... No, I think that the average Civil Servant, depending on the age group I think a bit - I think those of us who came after the War certainly realised that it - progress was inevitable.
- I. Yes.
- M. I think the older ones looked at it more from the point of view of - is the country, the people that we know of in the country, are they going to be able to ...
- I. Manage?
- M. ... make a job of it, and were more doubtful. Their experience was more in the past and they were judging it more on what they saw of the merits at the time. But the younger people, I think, were ...
- I. Took it more in their stride?
- M. Took it more in their stride. Which is always the case in any place.
- I. Any place. You see, Sir John Kotelawela quotes a minister - not a minister, a governor, and in effect he was saying - he called the Constitution a madness. This governor. He doesn't give his name. Probably Stubbs, because it was a rather clever phrase. 'Born in a delirium', etc. I was wondering how far he reflected the opinion of the Civil Servants?
- M. No, Stubbs would never - could never be regarded as reflecting opinions of people - certainly people who worked below him. If it were Stubbs, and I should think it probably was, it was a clever phrase which he was very fond of. I mean he probably paid more attention to the phrase than to its ...
- I. Content.
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- M. Content. But I don't - I think a lot of people who thought that it was going to be a very difficult time... People who were going to have - to be entrusted with responsibility, for lack of experience and in some cases for lack of ability, were not going to be able to cope with it as well as ... The administration would suffer, the efficiency of it. But I think the younger people probably felt that, well, whatever happens it must - its an inevitable step. And the drop in efficiency may come - would come probably, but it would have to be worked out by the people themselves.
- I. Did you have to attend any of the Executive Committee's meetings?
- M. No, I never did. I was in the Chief Secretary's Office then. And the only people who attended - I was never called before one in any capacity. The Deputy Chief Secretary, I think, was always entitled to. He or the Chief Secretary were entitled to attend.
- I. Did they do so, generally?
- M. I think in the very early days they did because they thought - they thought they might help. But then I think unless they were - had some specific interest, a reason for going, they felt that they'd be looked upon slightly as spies. And it was wisest for them not to.
- I. Oh, I see. So gradually they stopped going?
- M. Gradually, in my recollection. I could easily be wrong but that's what I recollect. That earlier on Bourdillon and perhaps - who was his first successor? - Tyrrell, Sir Graeme Tyrrell, may have gone. But Bourdillon certainly did in the early days. And Sir Wilfred Woods probably. Or - no, not the Treasurer, the Deputy Chief Secretary, Wait.
- I. I am coming to a rather touchy issue. There seems to have been considerable friction between the three Officers-of-State and the Ministers and the State Council in the early days in particular. And I realise that much of this was inevitable in a new system. And would you agree with that?
- M. I think that one of the difficulties was the rather indefinite boundary lines between the functions. And it was particularly difficult for the Chief Secretary, who in the past had controlled everything to a large degree under the Governor, and it was difficult in any case for him to accept this shrinkage of his area. And also subject I think [to] public service administration or rather the Donoughmore schedules, which
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were accepted, were rather vague. And we had to go to - I remember we had to invoke the help of the Attorney-General on several occasions, to give his opinion, which was really all it could be, on what the ...

I. Position?

M. ... divisions were. And he in fact, at one period, I think under - went to the other extreme, for what reason I don't know, and gave the impression that the Chief Secretary's boundaries of his responsibilities were even smaller than Donoughmore had ever intended. I know that didn't make for - that didn't make for easy relationship on things which touched ...

I. Who was the Legal Secretary? Jackson? That - this one?

M. Jackson was the Legal Secretary at that time.

I. He's the one who said so? I mean ...

M. He was the man who said so. He was, I mean, a very talented man and a very nice chap. But he did at that time take the view that, as the Chief Secretary at the time pointed out, that the subject, 'Administration of the Public Service', meant nothing more than giving people leave and posting them to jobs.

I. Oh, I see.

M. Which, of course, was not really - not what Donoughmore intended really. And the Treasury on the other hand, smarting under the subordination which they always had to the Colonial Secretary in the old days, had rather taken more care I think - Sir Wilfred Woods took more care than Sir Bernard Bourdillon did over getting limits of his area more precisely defined, where he wanted them.

I. Mmm. That's Woods?

M. Woods, yes.

I. Did you ever - did you feel that the politicians were rather unreasonable in their demands? On the Officers-of-State? Or in their attitude, general attitude?

M. There again they had - in their personal relationship, they were ... No. But I think as members of the State Council and they had to get up, had to commit themselves. There was strong political feeling against the Officers[-of-State], 'three policemen' as they were always known as. And they were - the Ministers were - they weren't in a position to give anything away. They were expected by their political circles to insist on a full pound of flesh, as you might say. Personal relationship was always very good. But there were difficulties.

I. I was wondering whether there was anything in the personalities

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- of the first few Officers-of-State which made this rather difficult adaptation more difficult? If you see what I mean?
- M. Oh, I think so. Yes, I would agree there. I think that the Chief Secretary particularly, Sir Bernard Bourdillon, who was a very able man, was a man in a hurry after the Constitution.
- I. He wanted to get promotion?
- M. He wanted to get on. Out and on. And I don't think ...
- I. And wasn't he lazy?
- M. He was said to be. But he - I think he liked other people to do the donkey work. But he was very - he was a very able chap. He got through his papers very quickly. But he certainly didn't - didn't to my - in my own personal estimation - he let things go by default over the - what the duties of the Chief Secretary, as distinct from the Colonial Secretary, were going to be under the Constitution. And that did cause a lot of trouble.
- I. Mmm. Mr. Miles said he rather disliked Ceylon. I ...
- M. Who? Bourdillon?
- I. Yes. Seems to be one of the few who did so. If that's correct?
- M. I never heard him say so. I think, as I say, he was a man in a hurry as far as his career was concerned. And he regarded Ceylon as a stepping-stone. Ambitious. And he was followed by Sir Graeme Tyrrell, who was - had his roots very much in the past. And was not very elastic. And although the politicians all I think admired him very much as a man, they had little patience with his ...
- I. Methods?
- M. Ideas and methods, in terms of the new Constitution.
- I. Did he tend to stand on his dignity?
- M. He was very autocratic by nature. Or, I mean, as a Civil Servant.
- I. Oh, I see. That would have tended to cause friction I think.
- M. Yes. He was very autocratic indeed. A nice chap, very kind to me, but he could be infuriating in his decisions on papers and things. But he made decisions sometimes by emotion rather than by reason.
- I. What strikes me about the state of affairs is that - I know that the Civil Servants - some Civil Servants felt that these Officers-of-State were letting them down. That is to say that they gave way to political pressure. But on the other hand there's - as we've been discussing now - there's some evidence to show that they tended to be rather firm and uncompromising
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with the politicians. And I wonder - these two - on the face of it these two points seem rather inconsistent. But I wonder whether they are really so?

- M. Well, they must be linked with terms of who was in the Office at the time. And ...
- I. No, I mean, I was thinking of this period - Tyrrell, Bourdillon, Woods period. ~~Civil Servants and others~~
- M. Well, it was a very drastic change. And a lot of - a lot of public officers, Civil Servants and others, who weren't in at the centre, didn't appreciate the stresses which Officers-of-State - or the responsibilities on them to make the thing work.
- I. Yes.
- M. You see, you couldn't try to almost wreck the Constitution to save the dignity of a G.A. who had put a foot wrong.
- I. Yes, I see.
- M. I mean take - I don't know that it ever happened, but that was the situation. The chap felt that he wasn't being backed from Headquarters, whereas the situation in the lobbies of the State Council were that a politician, a member of the Council, seemed to have a fairly reasonable complaint that he hadn't been treated properly by a high official outside. And it was no good just saying, 'Well, I won't have anything to do with that'. You had to - the members of the Council were important people and an Officer-of-State had to take the thing up.
- I. Yes, I - of course the grievance of the Civil Servants may be that on occasions they were pulled up or brought to task when they hadn't put a foot wrong. But simply because of political pressure.
- M. Well, ideas of when you put a foot wrong ...
- I. Are different?
- M. ... are different. I should - I - there would be a bit of reason on both sides. But the change in the Constitution in a colony of the size of - of the intricacy of Ceylon is a matter in which people were bound to have awkward times. Everybody did from the top downwards. You can't avoid it.
- I. How did Woods get on?
- M. Well, he was on very safe ground. He was a treasurer. Finance was his subject. And he was always - I mean a very charming man - he was always liked by the - by everybody, I think. And I don't think he was subject to the same stresses that the Chief Secretary was. Chief Secretary, you see, to the politicians was the emblem of British imperialism, as you might say.
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I'm not sure if the word would be ...

- I. Did you feel that politicians regarded these three policemen as an affront and automatically took up a position of opposition?
- M. I think they wanted to get on with the next step forward. And the next step forward was obviously the removal of the three policemen. So it wasn't really so much with regard to their actual presence, because I think, on the whole - they didn't vote, they were there to help and they did their best to help. But it wasn't that which was objected to. It was the mere fact of their presence there.
- I. Would you go so far as to describe the state of affairs in the first State Council - in the first few years as the politicians being permanently in opposition to the financial - to the three Officers-of-State?
- M. Well, as I say, you had that basic situation that they - they didn't want them because they felt that they were well qualified to have the State Council without them. On that you had the fact that the relationship - the personal relationship with them was good on the whole. And that they went to them quite a lot for help over things which were still within the Officers-of-State's subjects. I think it rested there. There was no fierce antagonism. They disliked them as symbols. And they got up against them now and then if they - if an Officer-of-State dug his toes in and said, 'I can't do that. I can't transfer Mr. So-and-So ... - to take a very petty case - ...
- I. Yes.
- M. ... to some other job although his mother's aunt is ill or something. They came up with - the sort of thing that was asked of the Chief Secretary quite often. And he'd refer it down to the office and there it was. But I mean bigger things too. But on the - it was the small things which caused the irritation more often than the big things.
- I. I was wondering whether the situation was such that no sooner than the Chief Secretary or Financial Secretary - that is in these early years - no sooner than they opposed a thing that it was passed? You know, opposed - gave advice in opposition ...?
- M. Oh, it could be so. The reaction would be that - 'lets smack him down if we can'. If he was reasonable he'd - some of them would listen. But a lot of the rank and file in the State Council didn't pay much regard to reason. They were concerned with getting rid of the Officers-of-State or ...
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- I. Why didn't the politicians themselves like this Constitution? The first few years there were lots of complaints against it.
- M. Well, I think that they always wanted more.
- I. Yes.
- M. To start with. They wanted more to start with. I think they - the Ministers found the Executive Committee system a millstone round their necks. So that they didn't like that. The members of the Executive Committee gradually found that they weren't having much influence.
- I. Oh, you don't think they had much influence?
- M. Well, that depends on the Minister. Determinant(?) - I don't think, for instance, that the members on the Executive Committee of Lands probably had a great deal of influence with D.S. Senanayake when he wanted to do something. Really, in the port I don't suppose that [the Executive Committee on] Communications greatly influenced Kotelawala if he'd made up his mind about something. But - and the only thing they could do - they could vote on the thing. But there was always some way round. It tied up - it did tie things up both there and in the State Council.
- I. I was wondering whether the Ceylonese politicians also had this Westminster model as a sort of talisman and ...
- M. You mean the House of Commons itself?
- I. Yes - no - yes, and wanted - didn't like this deviation from the Westminster system?
- M. Yes, I think that they probably resented any idea that they were in a transition period when they were learning how to do things and they thought, well, an old and historically cultivated country, surely to goodness we're fit to have the whole thing. I mean that's - that was really the ...
- I. Basic?
- M. Basic thing the whole time I - the whole thirty years I was out there. Before they had it they were always expecting or earnestly desiring to get on much more quickly than they did.
- I. Thomson. Did Sir Graeme Thomson have the imagination to work this sort of Constitution?
- M. He was a very good Governor. A very competent one. Quiet. He didn't - I don't think he put a foot wrong. He had some big decisions. I think while he was there, this question of certification came up.
- I. Did the Civil Service resent this refusal to grant passage allowances to Europeans?
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M. Passage allowances?

I. Yes.

M. Oh, deeply. I think because it was so validly unfair. They were there. They'd been there for years working, doing their job. And to have this thing hung over them, and to have to have it certified every year, was unnecessary and petty. They felt that it diminished their respect for the politicians in that way. As if-well, if they're as petty as this over a thing which is vital to us, and of no importance to them, for the sake of...

I. Politics?

M. Politics, where are we? It was a bad move that. An ill-thought out move. A pity.

I. Wasn't Thomson in some difficulty over this - something to do with the Public Service. I think they were attacking the Public Service on something. Salaries, I think, perhaps. Maybe it was the recommendations of the Retrenchment Commission. But Bourdillon made some speech which angered the politicians and the Ministers came to Thomson and said, 'Either we have Bourdillon out, or you give us this other thing'.

M. I remember something of the kind. Bourdillon made a fighting speech in the House supporting, I think, the vote of passages or something which the Public Service - or a Salaries Commission. You see, part of the Donoughmore Commission [Report] was that the introduction of the new Constitution should be accompanied by, or preceded by - I can't remember which - a revision of salaries which hadn't been revised for ten years. And that was shelved.

I. Oh, I see. But he - Bourdillon ...

M. Bourdillon ...

I. ... opposed it?

M. No, he supported it one day. And then had to get up the next day and withdraw it. I forget - I forget why. How it all happened. But I know that he was instructed, I suppose by the Governor, that it couldn't be supported. And having made this speech one day, the next meeting he had more or less to get up and - but that's the thing you're thinking of? I'm rather vague about it but I think something like that. It didn't - and there never was a Salaries Commission. I don't know whether you're aware of the fact but that - our salaries were fixed in 1922 and were never changed again. The thing ...

I. Till '45?

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- M. Uh?
- I. Till '45 or '46.
- M. They weren't - they weren't altered then. The rupee salaries of the junior staff were altered then. Our salaries were never altered. A thing which the Colonial Office refused to believe the other day. I mean people were - who retired in the 50's were still serving on salaries fixed in 1922. They weren't - generosity towards the Public Service wasn't a characteristic of the State Council Ministers.
- I. How was - what sort of man was Stubbs?
- M. Well, they always said that his father Bishop Stubbs married his cook and Stubbs was the result. A brilliant man but with certain characteristic failings. He was brilliantly clever but [would] very often offend people deeply in the process.
- I. Oh, I see.
- M. He was a very clever man.
- I. Stace refers to Chalmers calling him 'a perfect clerk', which would imply that he was bureaucratic and thought in terms of details rather than in general politics?
- M. I think he was bureaucratic. He wasn't a man who took a great deal of interest in the outside workings of the Constitution and the country. I don't want to be unfair to him. He was a talented enough man.
- I. Mmm. I know he was pretty witty. Was he a cynic? Cynical in his outlook?
- M. Think what - think of his outlook?
- I. Was he cynical? A cynic?
- M. I don't quite ...
- I. Cynical?
- M. Oh, cynical. Yes, yes, yes, Oh, very.
- I. Oh, very?
- M. Oh, he was definitely cynical. There's no question about that. I beg your pardon. He was a man with long experience of different kinds and I suppose he'd - its very difficult to avoid being cynical if your experiences have tended to be that way.
- I. I was just wondering whether he - I can't understand his choice. I think it was a very bad choice, to send him back to Ceylon.
- M. Well, if Graeme Thomson had lived when he went home as the Permanent Under Secretary or Colonial, I don't think he would have been. I think Graeme Thomson who'd followed him previously as Colonial Secretary was very opposed to his being the next
-



Governor. And its quite likely if Graeme Thomson had lived that he probably wouldn't.

I. Oh, I didn't know that he was opposed. He knew that Stubbs was coming out?

M. Well, no. He didn't - he was going home and he would have had a word - as he was going to be the deputy or head of the Colonial Office he would have had a big say in who was to have come. And I don't think that he would have - I think he would have endeavoured to have got somebody else appointed. I heard that. I mean I'm not sure if it was true or not. But I wouldn't be surprised.

I. I know that Woods was quite a tough and sort of hard personality, and he would have survived the Donoughmore Constitution period, but what about Wedderburn? He was very much a provincial man.

M. I never thought - I worked under him and I was very fond of him. But I never thought it was really his line of business.

I. Mmm. Why?

M. Well, I think, if you hadn't had a lot of Secretariat experience, you wasted - you lost an awful lot of time on the files and things because you hadn't got that way of thinking. You hadn't got the background knowledge. And he was by nature discursive. He loved to talk or write around a subject for a long time.

I. Prolix?

M. And you just hadn't got the time to do that in those days as Chief Secretary.

I. Was he also too sensitive for this sort of job?

M. Oh, I think he was. He was an - he wasn't a frightfully robust - he'd had all these years in the Land Settlement and one thing and another. And he wasn't a frightfully robust type of man. And - a very charming chap. I - and of course it was a great honour to - besides being a financially desirable post and naturally when he was offered it, he took it. But that was a time at which we were pretty short of people. There had been a lot of departures at the time of the Donoughmore and it had not been a very - those few - the years which supplied the people who were near the top, they hadn't been particularly good years I don't think. Though its presumptuous of me to say so, I suppose.

I. I was wondering whether you knew anything about the Bracegirdle affair, when - which was one occasion when he came up against the Ministers?

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- M. Yes, I was there at the time. It was a fantastic thing and he was thoroughly let in. He was completely honest. Wedderburn was a completely direct and honest man. And he was just let in by not having taken enough trouble to get everything in writing, I think, as far as I know. He was completely without blame although he did get into deep water over it.
- I. Apart from Wedderburn's sort of role in it, why - what was Bracegirdle up to that made him - made it necessary to deport him?
- M. Oh, I think the whole thing was totally unnecessary. He'd come out - he'd come out to learn to plant. And he'd turned out to be quite unsuitable for planting. Not a very desirable chap. And it was always the - one thing about Ceylon in those days: any overseas chap who came and failed was always got out again and not left to litter up the place; which was a very good thing. You didn't want people, not belonging to the country, becoming sort of beachcombers or anything of that kind. And so he was - arrangements were made to ship him home, and then he just bolted into the blue. And then started, as far as I remember, behaving foolishly and - and got in touch with - at a time when connection - societies and things connected with Soviet Russia were all - everybody was scared stiff of them. And I think he got in tow with, or alleged to, with communists. I don't - I don't bel - he ...
- I. Was he causing any serious unrest among the estate labour force - forces?
- M. I don't know. I don't remember enough about it. I think - I think he was - he was - he'd behaved very badly on the estate on which he was. I knew the people quite well who brought him out, brought him out from Australia. And you didn't get thrown out very easily from planting if you were brought out to learn the job. And he made it impossible for him to be kept on. There's no question about that. But to what extent he would have been a danger if he'd been left there I don't know, except that we just didn't like penniless Europeans becoming beachcombers. That was the basis of the thing.
- I. Why? Is there a feeling of letting the side down here? I mean, I was thinking of the planters, because he was a former planter.
- M. I don't think that had much to do with it. It would have been just the same if he'd been in a firm or whatever he was. It was the practice. You - Ceylon is a country where you can
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live - you realise you've got expensive standards, European standards, and if you haven't got a job you go from bad to worse, and you don't do anybody any good, least of all yourself. And a lot of people at odd times, who'd come croppers, were always shoved home at the expense of the European community; which I don't think was reprehensible in any way. I always thought - regarded it - well, Ceylon ought to be grateful that we wouldn't leave behind a legacy of neer-do-wells and beachcombers. It was the practice in Ceylon. It was a nice tidy country and we liked to keep it so.

I. Yes. Of course on the issue, I mean the Commission found that Jayatilaka and perhaps Batuwantudawe had lied in that they didn't face up to - well, they knew about the affair.

M. Didn't what?

I. That D.B. Jayatilaka had lied.

M. I remember that. And Banks was the policeman?

I. Yes.

M. It was a question of trying to pass the buck I think. Nobody'd put any anything in writing, and for some reason or another it was made a political issue. The whole thing was of no importance at all. It was one of these silly things which was blown up politically because - just a way of getting their own back on the Officers-of-State again I think.

I. Yes.

M. It was of no importance and I don't think he would have - he was no deep secret service or business about anything of that kind. He was just a chap who they decided ought to be shipped home because he'd made a mess of things in Ceylon. And he thought otherwise and bolted when he was - when passage had been provided for him. And from then on it was just a question - that's roughly, I mean ... Bits and pieces about it. But there was no - nothing more behind it than that.

I. Mmm. Turning to another subject, did you have any experience of the elections under the Donoughmore Constitution?

M. No, only ... No, I was in the Secretariat all those elections.

I. Anuradhapura? That was after the elections?

M. No, the only place ... There were elections when I was O.A. in Galle in [19]23. But even then I wasn't - I was just at the kachcheri collecting the ballot boxes and seeing that they were shipped off to M.T. Archibald, I think, who was the election officer then.

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- I. What - what about the war years? And Caldecott? How would you appraise Caldecott as a Governor?
- M. I think he was a good - a good Governor. He arrived with the bee in his bonnet that everything in Malaya was much better than anything in Ceylon. And took a long time - it took the fall of Singapore to disabuse his mind of that. But apart - really speaking he was a very well-meaning chap and he was doing his utmost to find an acceptable, political solution towards the next step forward.
- I. Far-seeing? Was he far-seeing?
- M. Its difficult to say. The War came along. And I think that he - his main line was one of the essential features for another advance in the Constitution was a better understanding between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. And he was trying - he was working to that end. I remember he talked a lot about bridge building.
- I. Oh, I see. I was wondering - in accordance with what Sir Charles Hartwell has said - whether he has not been given the credit he deserves. And that Moore has got most of the credit for keeping the balance between the politicians and Layton?<sup>1</sup>
- M. Well, I don't think that one can say that Moore got it particularly because it was virtually over when he came.
- I. No, I know. In general?
- M. In general. I think - I think he effaced himself very nobly when Layton came. I mean he could have cut up rough. He conceived that it was his duty to support Layton, which he did. And I think people realised that. Layton wasn't an easy man to work under.
- I. What sort of brain did he have?
- M. Caldecott?
- I. No, Layton?
- M. I think he had a good direct naval type of brain. He fixed on essentials and he believed in getting things done. He wasn't an easy man in many ways.
- I. I was wondering whether Layton would have hit it off with the politicians if Caldecott was not there? A hypothetical question.
- M. I think that there might have been ructions. I don't know, its hypothetical ... He went right through - he got on quite well with Kotelawala in the port - who he had a lot to do with. He got on very well with Goonetilleka. Or perhaps its fairer to say that they got on well with him. I wouldn't like to say.

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1. I was murky in my language here. I meant that Moore had made a greater name for himself in Ceylon as an understanding Governor, but that Caldecott deserves greater standing because of the way in which he kept the balance.



I wouldn't underestimate Layton. He did a lot for Ceylon during the war. One didn't always like the things he did but he - no doubt he did a lot.

I. Did you feel that - how did Drayton get on?

M. Drayton?

I. Yes. With the politicians?

M. He got on very well. He brought a new mind. I was a great admirer of Drayton's brain. He was a very clear thinking man. And he certainly taught me a lot when I worked under - he had been suddenly made Chief Secretary out of the blue. I was - worked under him, and we got on rather well together. I learnt a lot from him over clear thinking. And also he insisted on the status of the politician, as the representative of a constituency, being given more importance than I think perhaps we'd done, over questions and things. He insisted that if a question came in it should - the answer should be a first priority. Where in the old days we were rather inclined to chuck it to the bottom of the heap and say, 'Well, that's a waste of time anyway. It'll have to wait'.

I. Oh, that's very interesting. Yes.

M. He was very clear thinking, and he did - he certainly believed in - he understood the political system well, being a lawyer, and he - I think he got on very well with the politicians.

I. I was wondering whether in doing so he alienated the Civil Servants, because he seems to have been fairly unpopular?

M. Well, he was - he was not an easy man. He was never a very fit man. He died prematurely, you know. Eventually - he never entertained at all.

I. Oh, I see.

M. His wife, who was also not frightfully robust, was very anti any form of entertainment. And although I knew him as well as most people did, over the three or four years that we worked together, I think I was only entertained by him a couple of times in that period. But then that's not the be-all and end-all of things and ... But that was responsible for quite a bit of criticism of him.

I. Yes, but as Chief Secretary wouldn't it have been necessary, as part of policy and as part of his job, to entertain?

M. Yes, he should have done. I quite agree. He ought to have done. And - but it was wartime and there it was. Its not an admirable trait to fail to entertain. But [when] one's talking in terms of political and administrative achievements, its not

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a - in wartime anyway - its not a frightfully important one. But that was one of the causes of his being unpopular.

I. How was Huxham in comparison, as a man?

M. Oh, well, I - Huxham - I met Huxham on the ship when he first arrived, with files on income tax. I knew him fairly well. He was not - he wasn't used to colonial life and he was an income tax officer from England. Very capable income tax man.

I. Was he weak when it came to political issues?

M. No, I wouldn't say he was weak. I think he was quite a determined chap. Obstinate. I wouldn't have said he was weak. I mean its difficult to generalise, particularly in the Treasury where he was, and I didn't have a lot to do with.

I. Well, you see, I haven't got much of a picture of Woods but I had heard - somehow I got the idea he was a bit irritable because he doesn't seem to have got on with Turner and wouldn't have Turner anywhere near him.

M. Yes, that was - that was wicked. I agree. You mean over office reorganisation?

I. Yes.

M. Oh, yes, very autocratic. And entirely unjustified because the Treasury files were in as big a mess as any in the country. No, he was a very capable man. It was a great mistake, whoever it was, to my mind, ever to make an auditor into a Colonial Treasurer. And there it was, they did. And the consequence was he was - he looked at everything from the point of - from the point - over the smaller issues anyway - from the point of view of an auditor, which was why we public services were so badly treated over pay, and one of the financial regulations treated us all as if we were criminals. It was audit minded. But on the bigger issues, he was a big man and probably one of the best - easily the best financial brain, I suppose, we had out there. But his training was - again I suppose its not for me to say but I've never agreed with the idea of a man who'd been an auditor most of his life should go on to the other side.

I. Jumping to the post Second World War years, can you comment on this series of strikes in '46 and '47?

M. Oh, politically-inspired emergence of the left-wing parties struggling among themselves, trying to attain a ...

I. It was also part of an internal struggle was it?

M. I think so. It never struck me that economics were really the prime factor. I mean everybody was poorly - I mean in Ceylon

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as a whole people were poorly paid [but] they all managed to live. And there wasn't much prospect of getting very much more, as I say, because there was so many of them. If more people - if pay went up I'm sure people would have ... I think it was more political. There was the fuel there for the match to be applied and the flames to be fanned and there were plenty of left-wing politicians who would take a hand at it. Prices were kept down. Of course prices went up during the war.

I. It was - yes, I was wondering whether because of this inflation there were some genuine grievances?

M. That - that may have been. Nothing caught up with inflation. But the general standard of pay was still in proportion. There weren't some people getting extremely - except for a few profiteers I suppose - but the salaries and wage earners were - their position was more or less unchanged.

I. Did you feel that Ceylon was ready for independence? Post-war - '45, '46?

M. Well, I always felt that it was impossible to deny it. It was a country with a long history of civilisation. Its services were Ceylonised to a very large degree. And one knew there was going to be difficulties. And the communal problem hadn't been settled, the position of Indians in Ceylon hadn't been settled but they were - relationship with India ... But - you couldn't deny it. It had to have it. If Ceylon couldn't have had it then, goodness me, there's no colony which deserves it yet. Indeed there are few. Of course the pace is changed greatly since Ceylon.

I. I was wondering, you see in '45, '46, just after the Soulbury Report, Senanayake flew to London and asked for full independence. It was not given. And 1½ to 2 years later he did the same and he got it. The same arguments applied then. I mean they knew that Burma would be given independence, that independence was coming in India, by the time Senanayake asked it. As far as I can see, they knew. And one wonders why. Have you any idea?

M. Well, I was largely responsible for persuading Henry Moore that it was useless to persevere with the '47 Constitution. We might just as well take a willing step forward then rather than be forced into doing it ...

I. Later on?

M. ... later on.

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- I. Yes.
- M. And he was very receptive. And then we - we flew home - he wrote to London on that. And then we flew home in July '47.
- I. Did he consult anyone else apart from you, who advised him on the same lines?
- M. Oh, I think he must have done. Mine was purely - I was his secretary ...
- I. Oh, I see.
- M. ... and a personal friend of his. And I persuaded him - turned his mind that way. And then he would have had really a step - almost a constitutional obligation to discuss it with his Chief Secretary and the Legal ...
- I. Who was that? Collins?
- M. No, Drayton was still there.
- I. Oh, I see.
- M. Drayton.
- I. What sort of man was Henry Moore, if I may ask. I know its a bit personal, but he's a ...
- M. Oh, he was originally a Ceylon Civil Servant. And - a very - the most experienced Governor that we had I think. He'd had years of being Governor here and there. And a personal friend of mine. He was - he'd been used to governing.
- I. Did he have the political touch? I mean was he a sort of simple, homely man who could get on with the politicians?
- M. I think he was a public servant at heart. Who did a job he knew he had to do. And I wouldn't say that perhaps he was frightfully - I don't know that Senanayake frightfully got on - liked - they got on quite well together. I don't think Senanayake - I think he was a bit suspicious of him, even though he got him his independence.
- I. Yes, I see.
- M. It didn't seem to work ... Senanayake never really showed any signs of being really attached to Henry Moore. I mean I think they just ...
- I. I know that Drayton got on, for instance, fairly well with the politicians for a time. But can you remember the Barnes' case? Well, there was some small case which suddenly created a row between Drayton and D.S. Senanayake and the rest.
- M. Yes, they had - they had a - poor Drayton, he had a serious row. Now I can't remember ... Barnes - which Barnes? What part?
- I. Barnes' lands in Nuwara Eliya?
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- M. Oh, it couldn't have been that. That was an old thing which nearly created ... In Tyrrell's and Wedderburn's time.
- I. Or may have been earlier.
- M. Tyrrell and Wedderburn's time.
- I. Oh, I see. That was earlier?
- M. Oh, yes. I always remember - Frank Leach was responsible for that by ...
- I. Just handing ...
- M. By handing a wrong file to Senanayake.
- I. No, it was the correct file.
- M. It was the correct file, but it wasn't a file that Senanayake should have had. Because on it was a discussion whether the whole matter should not be handed over to the Ministry of Lands. Which I'd said I couldn't see any reason, any possible reason for not sending it.
- I. Oh, you had also put a minute there?
- M. I minuted on it. I said - my exact words because - I said, 'I can see no possible reason for not sending it to the Minister'. A land matter. But Tyrrell overruled me. And ...
- I. Oh, Tyrrell was it?
- M. Yes. At that time. Then it didn't crop up again.<sup>1</sup> But Senanayake read my minute and quoted it in a memorandum as meaning precisely the opposite. And I said, 'I can see no reason why it should not be sent to the Minister'.
- I. You meant that it should be sent?
- M. Yes.
- I. Yes.
- M. 'I see no reason for withholding it'. Senanayake read my minute as being part of a conspiracy to keep it from him.
- I. No, but whereas it was really only Tyrrell who didn't want to give it?
- M. Oh, it was only Tyrrell who said, 'No, this is a matter of Archives', which was a subject of mine and I was going to go on dealing with it. And then, curiously enough, nothing happened until I was A.G.A., Nuwara Eliya in 1938. And the A.G.A. always had to plant a tree on the land in conjunction with the Forest Officer.
- I. Yes.
- M. And the particular Forest Officer, who came to do it on this occasion, felt some need to assert his own personality and he reported the matter to his Minister.
- I. And that's how he caught up?

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1. Slip of tongue. It cropped up again.



M. And that's how it caught up.

I. Oh, I see. That's very interesting.

M. But that was all over - that was Caldecott and Wedderburn, when the row took place. And ...

I. Oh, yes, what was the row between Drayton and ...?

M. I don't remember. I remember there was one. I remember how disillusioned Drayton was. But I can't for the life of me - its a long time ago now and he ...

I. He felt he had been let down?

M. Yes, he felt that he'd worked in every way with him and he was very bitter - it was about that time - was it over the European police?

I. Maybe. I have no idea.

M. There was a row over that.

INTERRUPTION

I. I haven't got much [left to tackle]. But there was - I'm sorry - I've forgotten to ask you about the Public Service Commissions in these other countries.

M. Yes.

I. And there's one or two matters on land.

INTERRUPTION

I. Your experience in ... Ghana, was it?

M. Yes.

I. And Cyprus?

M. Yes.

I. In the Public Service Commission. What were the problems like there, in comparison with those in Ceylon?

M. Well, Ghana, the place I was mainly concerned with, there was - from our - from the point of view of comparison with Ceylon was no - virtually almost no Africanisation in the higher grades. Percentage of educated population was very small. And independence round the corner so one hadn't - the Public Service Commission had to be set up to take over - to administer on the lines of the - well, that's how I worked it out - on the lines of the Civil Service Commission at home. Take over appointment of all posts to the Public Service, to keep them away from political interference, which was rife in Ghana. And Government would look after promotions, take promotions also .... in fact every aspect of a Public Officer's career, which should be divorced from politics.

I. In this sense it was very much like the Public Service Commission set up in Ceylon in '48?

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M. Yes.

I. Mmm. Would it - going back to the Donoughmore don't you think it might have been a good idea to have had an independent P.S.C. then?

M. Oh, yes. It was a great mistake.

I. To have the Officers-of-State?

M. Yes. Fatal; almost a fatal mistake. Because it tarred the Commission with the same brush as the ...

I. As the ...?

M. As the Officers-of-State.

I. Or it could be the other way. It tarred the Officers-of-State?

M. And even our papers. It was determined that the - there should be no separate P.S.C. files. They were all in the Chief Secretary's Office files. So that when the Public Service proper was set up, they had no cut and dried papers. They had to begin from scratch.

I. When you went back to Ceylon ... '54 was it?

M. '54.

I. To look at the Public Service Commission?

M. Yes. I got the Ghana Government to agree that on my leave I should go to Ceylon for a few weeks and see how it had survived independence. And how it was getting on with a view to preparing ours for the same pressures.

I. And what were your impressions?

M. My impressions were that it was doing very well. I thought they were - the main difference of view I had was that I didn't think - I think there was a tendency in Ceylon to regard the Permanent Secretaries as identified with their Ministers and as part of the political machine and to short - rather to exclude them from Public Service Commission matters. Whereas in the Gold Coast I arranged that Public - that Permanent Secretaries should be the people who dealt directly with the Commission on all matters in their groups of departments. Heads of departments reported to us through their Permanent Secretaries, and that the Permanent Secretaries could then keep the Minister in touch with what was going on. And yet be able to say, 'Its outside my power. I have no - I'm prevented from showing you my papers - Public Service Commission papers but they want me to know that this is doing'. And that if the Minister wanted to interfere he had to come up against the Permanent Secretary. Where in Ceylon I rather gather the Public Service Commission thought that the Permanent Secretary

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by that time was so ...

I. Subservient?

M. Yes, well, you see, they brought that wicked provision into the Ceylon Constitution, or added it to the Constitution, that Permanent Secretaries could be removed at any time on the advice of the Prime Minister and reappointed to any post in the Public Service. At one time which I ultimately - it was one of the reasons I left.

I. Why? Because it ...?

M. Well, how can you have any political independence if you know that if you give advice which your Minister doesn't like, you may find yourself back as a second class clerk in ... Theoretically, I mean, they could certainly return you to whatever you were before you became [Permanent Secretary]; they did in the case of one officer - one European officer. [I did not object] particularly because he was European. But he didn't get on with his Minister. And without any reason assigned to him he was just informed that he was no longer Permanent Secretary. Well, the situation's insupportable from - the way I see it. And I imagine for that sort of reason the Ceylon Public Service Commission decided that the Permanent Secretary should be regarded as part and parcel of his ministry. It didn't say so in just those words but they dealt directly with heads of departments.

I. What were your impressions in '48 to '50 and '54, about the performance of D.S. Senanayake's administration? Didn't he rather fall off from his earlier days?

M. Well, he was alright up to the time I left in '50. I thought he was - he was magnificent. After all he took over the duties of a Prime Minister - the first of them - without hesitation, and was greatly respected by everybody. By the time I'd gone back he was dead of course. And so I couldn't really say what happened after '50. But up to '50 I had the greatest respect for him. I wasn't very pleased when he wanted to make me a Permanent Secretary under those conditions I've just mentioned but that - he certainly said he couldn't see any prospect of it happening to me but that was the point - a matter of principle. And I don't think he should have done it. But I think his Ministers were so determined that the Permanent Secretaries should not be independent... They forced him to.

I. Was Bandaranaike one of those?

M. Well, he was in the cabinet then. I don't know which, I mean ...

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And they were advised I suppose by Ernie Goonetilleke who was really mostly their adviser - I don't know to what extent Jennings may have done it. Anyway I thought it was - it was not a good provision and it didn't make for a strong Civil Service, without which ...

- I. Jumping back to the 20's and 30's, what were your impressions of the Land Settlement Department?
- M. Well, I was never in it. They did a very good job of work. I mean they covered the most inaccessible places, and they lived pretty hard. And I think they dealt with things very fairly.
- I. I know that. I've read some diaries. But, you see, there's this political criticism of land policy and of the L.S.D. And there is some evidence to show that some of these politicians, some, were themselves speculators and planters who had been blocked by the Department. Would you say that that's correct?
- M. I don't - I didn't have much to do with their activities you know. The only land experience I had, after my early days, was when in my second tour of Anuradhapura, when I was A.G.A. Lands and did nothing but lands.
- I. Oh, that is under Brayne's indivisible leaseholds scheme?
- M. Under the Land Act of ...
- I. '34<sup>1</sup>.
- M. '34. Land kachcheris and mapping-out. We mapped-out the villages. And all that sort of thing, I thought, was first-class. It was bringing some order and basis for the future into - into these jungle districts anyway.
- I. Were these lands given out on this system of indivisible leasehold?
- M. Yes. They stopped any sale.
- I. What did you think of the idea?
- M. It seemed - certainly in the jungle it seemed quite suitable. But I was at the beginning of course, I didn't see how it worked out eventually. And I was rather pitchforked into it. I'd - I'd had five, '28 to '35, seven years in the Secretariat doing vastly different things. And, as is the way in the Civil Service, I suddenly found myself an A.G.A., Lands. And I thoroughly enjoyed it. I had ...
- I. I was wondering whether this idea was impracticable from the administrative point of view. A lot to keep after, and check on these people.
- M. I should think it would be very difficult. I spent a good twenty days a month on the move, doing this job, and that was

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1. 1935 not 1934.



only setting the thing. And then they had the big colonies to deal with as well. These vast areas we opened up at Polannaruwa and Minneriya and there. And ten years later I tremble to think of the amount that would have been done if we'd kept going at that rate. But then of course I was only starting the thing. The pace would have slowed down.<sup>1</sup>

END OF INTERVIEW

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1. On the contrary. It increased in the 1950's and even accelerated beyond its drivers' control. The situation remains much the same now (1966); few of the allottees have been given the grants envisaged, their status remaining in the initial permit stage. De facto they are probably less supervised than originally envisaged under the Land Development Ordinance of 1935.



N.B. Mr. Mulhall except where it is stated to be Mrs. Mulhall.

He felt that the standard of efficiency in the C.C.S. was much higher than in the African countries and in Malaya.

In response to the question whether Ceylonese - in his early days - showed a tendency to shelve responsibility and tended to fight shy of positions of authority, he said that it was a 'difficult question.' It was certainly so 'in some.' Mrs. Mulhall felt that this was very true of Ceylonese women but had doubts whether it was so with the men. Women were quite willing to be helpful in committees etc. but fought shy of being chairwomen or taking any organisational leadership.

Mulhall felt that it was 'infuriating' that so 'trivial' a matter as the Bracegirdle affair could have got blown up to the proportions which it did. As far as he recollected, Wedderburn and the others had not bothered to get anything written, and when the matter was raised in Council, Wedderburn had said one thing in Council and later changed his statement or hedged.

He obviously thought very poorly of Banks, the I.G.P. In response to my statement that he was in debt, he said, 'Oh, yes. he was always, always, in debt.' He felt that this had not affected his integrity, but that it was a pity; Banks had promised that he would clear his debts immediately when the chance of being I.G.P. arose but he had not kept his word. Mulhall implied that he (Banks) had to leave when this was discovered.

Mr. Mulhall was quite definite in his opinion that S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake was not a good Minister and was 'bone lazy.' He often turned up very late at ministerial meetings and insisted on having his subjects dealt with; he always wanted his own way and caused a lot of trouble. Mr. Mulhall felt that D.S. 'pampered' him too much. In reply to my query, 'Did he have a touch of megalomania?' he nodded, 'Yes' quite definitely. In response to the, 'Did you feel he had a chip on his shoulder against Europeans?', he said, 'Yes.' Mrs. Mulhall added that Mrs. Bandaranayake also seemed to have a chip on her shoulder and then, amending her statement, said that it was either that or shyness because at parties she was always most difficult to entertain; she simply sat in a corner looking glum and hardly responded to efforts to make her feel at home.

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



Mr. J.A. Mulhall's Answers to Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts,  
15 February, 1966.

1. There seems to have been considerable internal rivalry in the Irrigation Department during the 1920's and even some obstructionism. Did you find that this was so? What were the causes? Was there any improvement by the early 1930's? When were their H.Q. moved down to Colombo?

Answer:

The Irrigation dept. was very good in the field in the 1920's. I did not have much to do with their head office - it was rather isolated in Trincomalee. I think it moved to Colombo during the 1939-45 war.

2. Did Frank Stockdale have anything to do in originating the co-operative credit movement or was it solely Campbell's conception? What sort of man was Stockdale?

Answer:

Campbell was selected to reorganize and reanimate the cooperative movement - he did not originate it. But of course his was the credit for its development in its modern form.

I imagine that Stockdale must have been responsible at least partly for the events which led up to Campbell's appointment.

Stockdale was a first class Director of Agriculture.

3. What are your impressions of the Land Settlement Department and the work it was doing?

Answer:

No direct knowledge - except that its officers did a very vital job in obscure and often unhealthy conditions.

4. Did you get the impression that one of its aims was to protect the villager from outsiders, i.e. planters and speculators?

Answer:

Certainly.

5. Did you feel, or know, that some of the politicians behind the political attack on the L.S.D. and Government were themselves landholders and speculators who were being hindered by the L.S.O's?

Answer:

I do not know but it is feasible.



7. Was there anything which could be called a land policy in the 1920's? Where did the balance lie between the aim of fostering cash-crops through the sale of land to planters and that of helping the peasantry? What happened in cases of conflict between plantation land and peasant land? What was your experience in such matters when you were O.A., Badulla?

Answer:

Land administration was always one of the chief preoccupations of G.A's and A.G.A's - under the direction (in the 1920's) of the Controller of Revenue. In my experience the needs of the village cultivators were never neglected. In Badulla (1923-5) the planters mostly wanted to open up patane lands. These were not used for village cultivation but for grazing and <sup>the</sup> chief problem as I remember it was to see that sufficient grazing land was reserved. Land suitable for paddy was never sold for tea.

10. How would you appraise R.H. Bassett?

Answer:

R.H. Bassett - the best type of European officer. Intensely interested in Ceylon and its people and gave of his best.

11. What did you personally think of Brayne's scheme of tenure? As A.G.A., Anuradhapura and Nuwara Eliya did you feel that it was difficult, if not impossible, to administer? i.e. how could an A.G.A. keep an eye on all the lots given out to see that the conditions were fulfilled? Was there any stipulation prohibiting the allottee from share-cropping the land to one or more tenants?

Answer:

It was too early (1938-39) to form an opinion. The intention was to ensure a higher degree of cultivation and to prevent neglect. With adequate staff an A.G.A. (Lands) could probably maintain reasonable supervision but it meant continual travel. (I wore out one car in the 18 months I was A.G.A. lands A'pura.)

12. Did you feel that the Agricultural Department failed to get its methods across to the people? Were they too far removed from the thoughts and prejudices of the people? Did they realise that leisure was an essential commodity for the peasant? How would you appraise Stockdale, Young and other heads of department?

Answer:

The Agr. Dept. was never adequately staffed for direct village to village preaching of the gospel. It was adequate as a small professional, scientific dept. Stockdale was a good officer.



Young was not so impressive but I had little contact with either.

13. Do you know what the Ministerial line on the position of Indian Immigrants was in the 1930's and 1940's? Did the Officers-of-State and Governor agree with their policy? If not, were they able to modify the policy in any way? What was the Indian Government's standpoint?

Answer:

Gimson is infinitely better qualified than I am to answer this.

14. You were of the opinion that it was ill-advised to have the same personalities as Officers-of-State and members of the P.S.C. under the Donoughmore Commission, but who else could have constituted the P.S.C.?

Answer:

Modern practice is all in favour of a separate, independent body - responsible direct to the Governor in the early stage. Retired officers of the right calibre are usually available. You would find more on this subject in a book on P.S.C. matters which I wrote for the Colonial Office. (I think P.S.C., Ceylon have a copy.)

15. If I could ask a hypothetical question, do you think the war hastened the achievement of independence or delayed it? Why?

Answer:

I would guess that Ceylon would have had independence by or before 1948 if there had been no war. Provided agreement could have been reached earlier between the communities there was no <sup>sound</sup> reason for delaying it.

16. What did you personally think of the scheme of Free Education?

Answer:

I thought at the time that it was throwing a heavy financial burden on the country and that it had been pushed for political reasons rather than on its merits. But I may have been quite wrong. How has it turned out in fact?

17. How would you appraise the following: R.M.M. Worsley, H.P.Kaufman, E.F. Marshall, Sir L. Elphinstone, Sudbury, Sir W.L. Murphy, C.V. Brayne, Egan, Archibald, Hunter?

Answer:

All these contributed much to Ceylon. Some were better known than others but Ceylon was fortunate in its civil service and they were all worthy members of it (Elphinstone was of course a distinguished Legal Officer).