

TILNEY

Career	1 p.	
Comments on	1 p	300 words
Interview	27 ¹ / ₃ pp	
Unrecorded	1 ¹ / ₃ pp	550 words
Answers 1.	4 ¹ / ₂ pp	
Answers 2.	5 ¹ / ₃ pp	1500 words

CHARLES EDWARD TILNEY, C.M.G.

b. 13 April 1909.

M.A., Oxon.

C.C.S. 1923 - 1947

8 Jan. 1932	apptd. to C.C.S.
1 Feb. 1932	attached to office of Dir. of Medical and Sanitary Services.
8 Aug. 1932	Acting O.A., Hambantota.
2 Sept. 1932	Acting O.A., Galle Kachcheri.
15 June 1933	O.A., Ratnapura Kachcheri.
5 March 1934	Admin. Sec. Dept. of Medical and Sanitary Services.
21 Oct. 1936	O.A., Kegalla Kachcheri.
17 Feb. 1937	Additional Asst. Com'er of Lands.
1 March 1937	Asst. Com'er of Lands.
30 July 1938	Additional A.G.A., Colombo.
4 Dec. 1939	Additional Controller of Establishments.
13 Jan. 1942	Controller of Establishments.
21 May 1945	on leave.
1 July 1945	Controller of Establishments.
1947	transferred to Tanganyika.

Mr. Tilney went out to Ceylon in 1932 and is one of the younger Civil Servants, therefore his memory was quite fresh, though no doubt marred by the subsequent and more recent memories of Tanganyikan service. I am not certain how far the tape-recorder created inhibitions. By nature reticent and a man who chose his words with care, he struck me as having the strength of character to speak decisively and candidly. I myself took the opportunity of playing with his dog, a very genial sort, and this might have provided a homely touch and put him at ease.

Mr. Tilney struck me as being reserved and humble by temperament, not a careerist or a pusher, certainly not the garrulous sort and a quiet and industrious worker. Both from his correspondence, the manner in which he helped me with the train time-tables and the interview, I have little doubt of his ability and thoroughness. Despite a slight stammer he was decisive and firm. He was also very balanced and fair in his judgment. His answers were always carefully weighed and qualified. An analytical mind. Certainly not prone to sweeping views, tolerant and possessed of much common sense, A man of decided calibre whose opinions deserve great weight.

As he reached Ceylon after the Donoughmore Constitution was commenced he did not have the problem of adapting himself to political changes. Since he saw colonial service in the 1950's it is not surprising that he was keenly interested in political subjects. His range of interest was wide and deep. Many of my queries were not new to him in that he had obviously weighed the matter previously.

I had a shorter span for the interview than I would have liked and the questions I put in the last ten minutes were quite hurried. Of greater consequence was the fact that this was my second attempt at interviewing. In the overall result I failed to cover many topics. To some extent this has been made good through subsequent correspondence.

M.W. Roberts

16/11/65 and 9/10/66.

INTERVIEW WITH MR. C.E. TILNEY

16 NOVEMBER 1965.

- I. I think I should begin at the beginning and ask you why you chose the Civil Service and Government Service, as such, as a vocation?
- T. Well, I don't know. A sort of mixture of things. I was interested in the development of the overseas territories.
- I. This was from Oxford days was it or ...?
- T. From Oxford days, yes.
- I. Did you - did you know that you were going out to Ceylon, or did you sit for the unified administrative exams?
- T. I sat for the - for the Home and Eastern Cadetships.
- I. I see. And you asked for Ceylon?
- T. I had a choice of Ceylon or Malaya, and I chose Ceylon. Not knowing anything about either but because my grandfather had once been in Ceylon.
- I. Oh, I see. With what sort of feelings did you set out? I mean when you first left - you were going to a strange place. As you said you didn't know much about Ceylon.
- T. Well, it was - I think the first thing that - that, as I say, astonished me was that I was going - actually going to be paid for something.
- I. Oh, I see. Well, yes, I suppose this would happen in any service?
- T. Yes.
- I. You didn't feel that you were going into a sort of social desert?
- T. No.
- I. Because, well, culturally there's much less doing in Ceylon than there is over here.
- T. Well, I lived for part of my life in the country in Scotland which was culturally not a very, very great deal.
- I. Yes, I see.
- T. Of course there was a lot of culture in Oxford. But I didn't see why there shouldn't be some culture in Ceylon.
- I. And how - were you - of course you were educated in Scotland, weren't you?
- T. No, I was - I was at school for a few years in Scotland and
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then I went to Rugby.

- I. Rugby.
- T. And then to Oxford.
- I. Do you think that public school life fitted you out for this sort of - for the Colonial Service?
- T. Well, I think it - it gives one a certain amount of assurance and a certain number - a certain amount of ability to mix with different people.
- I. Well, does public school life have any bearing on the pragmatic approach which is so characteristic of British Colonial rule?
- T. Well, I - yes, I think it - it - it gives you the idea of doing things for yourself if there isn't anyone else to do it. And also seeing how something can be done jointly.
- I. Oh, I see. Its a question of initiative? Does this training ...?
- T. Yes.
- I. How about - how about university life in Oxford? Did you - did that help?
- T. Well, I think very much so, yes.
- I. In what way?
- T. In the sense that you have far more choices in what you can do there, and it gives you practice in making right choices. And of course you learnt to study on your own there. I mean in school you - you studied because you're made to study. At university in those days - I don't know whether its quite so true now - you either could or couldn't study, as you chose.
- I. Oh, I think its so now too. And in British political terms what would you say was the prevailing shade of thought in the C.C.S.? Tory or Labour?
- T. Oh, I don't know. I should think probably more Conservative.
- I. More Conservative?
- T. On balance I should say.
- I. Would that really have any bearing on day-to-day problems?
- T. No, I shouldn't think so.
- I. What about at the policy level? Wouldn't the - those who were more conservative be less inclined - well, be more likely to adopt a different attitude to such questions as, well, constitutional growth, trade-unions and so forth?
- T. Probably. Of course I wasn't very much concerned with policy levels.
- I. Yes. What about this pragmatic approach which is so characteristic of British rule? Was it so in the 1930's in Ceylon too?
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Rather different conditions.

- T. Yes, because after all we were largely pioneering. I mean there was no other colony that had tried working anything like the Donoughmore Constitution.
- I. Yes. I was going to come up with the Constitution of course. Well, you arrived ...
- T. I mean, I arrived when it had just started and there was no experience - there was no experience to guide anyone in working anything of that sort.
- I. How did the - do you know - you may not know of course but - how the old Civil Servants took to this Constitution?
- T. Well, most of those who were there before I don't think liked it very much.
- I. Oh, I see.
- T. It was rather different for me because I'd never known anything else.
- I. Well, even the politicians disliked it. But I was wondering whether the Civil Servants ...?
- T. Well, everyone always dislikes every constitution, up to a point. I mean if you were a dictator you could - you could always - always think out, or imagine you could think out, something better. And you probably very likely could but - but you've got to compromise.
- I. I was wondering whether the Civil Servants resented the, well, the switch in power, especially the higher Civil Servants? They had ...
- T. Well, I think - I think its always much more difficult for the higher people than the lower people. Any change in - in - obviously of course.
- I. Yes, obviously some adaptation was called for. But - what - what in particular did they dislike about the Constitution?
- T. Well, I think that its very difficult for people who have been used to making their own decisions or arguing only with one person, who has got very much the same sort of background as you have, to change to discussing things with a committee of people who have quite different backgrounds and very often are profoundly ignorant on the subject being discussed.
- I. Yes, did you - did you have any experience of the Executive Committees?
- T. Yes, I was clerk to one.
- I. When was this?
- T. I was actually clerk to one from - when was it? - '34 to '36?
- I. This was the medical services?
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T. Medical - medical, yes.

I. Oh, yes, that is very interesting. What did you think of this working of this Committee?

T. Well, it worked in places. In places it didn't work so well. I mean from the point of view of sheer efficiency one could obviously have worked much better without it.

I. Yes, I see.

T. From the point of view of giving political experience to the politicians I think it served a very useful thing - useful purpose. Its great defect I think - this was recognised afterwards in Ceylon - was that it detracted from the responsibility of ministers, particularly their corporate responsibility as ministers - as a board of ministers.

I. Yes, I see.

T. There was always - always a clash, and bound to be a clash. I mean that's not so far as I saw it to begin with when I was clerk to an Executive Committee. I saw it much more later when I was in - working in the Treasury. There was always a clash between the joint action of the ministers and the various Executive Committees who didn't always see eye to eye.

I. Yes, I see. Taking the Executive Committee itself at lower level, in 1934 for instance, did you find that the committee members tended to concentrate on trivial matters and on ...?

T. Oh, very much, yes. Just as there's such a tendency with say local government in this country to this day.

I. There's been a point made I think by, well, political scientists I should call them, that many of these committee members tended to interest themselves in appointments especially. Trying to get friends ...

T. Yes, that was so. I mean I don't think that - that you could necessarily blame them for that. I think that is a stage that happens in every young country beginning its - umm - beginning its political development.

I. Yes.

T. But of course the Executive Committee system did lend itself to that.

I. It did?

T. Oh, I think so, yes.

I. Who was the minister?

T. Panabokke was my minister.

I. Oh, Panabokke. Do you think that - did he find it difficult

to control the Committee?

- T. Yes, he wasn't - he wasn't a very strong chap.
- I. He wasn't very strong. Yes, that's what - well, one of the criticisms made is that some ministers did manage to control their Committees and others just had absolutely no control.
- T. Yes. Well, its - it wasn't an easy - an easy role for a minister.
- I. Yes. Well, there was no party system to bring them into line as such.
- T. No.
- I. Was he - apart from not being strong, was he a - was he not very able as such?
- T. Well, I think he had a great deal of common sense for which he - I think this is a great deal of - of ability. I mean I don't think that he was - that he had a very great intellect.
- I. Yes, I see.
- T. But he - he had a lot of common sense. And he knew his people in his part of the world very well.
- I. Would you like to say something about the medical services in Ceylon as such? Do you think there were, well, any shortcomings?
- T. Well, of course, there were. There were shortcomings.
- I. Yes.
- T. Obviously shortcomings. On the other hand it was - it was a surprisingly well developed medical service from the Ceylonisation point of view.
- I. Oh, I see, yes.
- T. I mean when I went there were - there were only, I think, about four or five people in the Medical Department who weren't Ceylonese.
- I. I see. What specific shortcomings?
- T. Well, I think that there was a - a - too much of a - of a tendency to administer things rather than cure things.
- I. Yes.
- T. I mean I - I remember when we had a statistician come in during the - I think it was the malarial epidemic.
- I. 1935, '36?
- T. Yes. I think she came then. She was from the Home Civil Service. And she was surprised to find how much of the actual expenditure of the Medical Department was on - on administering the doctors and nurses and so on. And how little comparatively on the ...
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- I. Medicines.
- T. On the actual medicines, health prevention, and ...
- I. Too much red-tape and bureaucracy?
- T. Well, it wasn't only red-tape. There was of course a certain amount of red-tape. For instance - I think it was stopped latterly - but we used to collect quantities of lists of everyone who'd been vaccinated. And if you asked what happened to the list - they were filed. Ha-ha-ha.
- I. Ha-ha-ha. I see, yes. Coming back to the Donoughmore Constitution what was your personal opinion of the Constitution as a whole?
- T. I think it was a very useful educational constitution, at that stage. Its not been adopted for any other country since because of its shortcomings in - in ...
- I. Practical ...?
- T. In not giving the ministers, as ministers, sufficient joint responsibility.
- I. Yes. What about - what is your opinion of the grant of universal franchise? This was a bold step wasn't it?
- T. Its a bold step but ...
- I. I tend to favour it myself.
- T. Well, I'm in two minds about it. I think that you get some - some bad results from people voting without - well, without knowing what they're voting for. On the other hand when other countries have universal franchise you won't get along - get on for very long telling other people that - that they oughtn't to have it. And very often although uneducated people don't know the ins and outs of complicated questions they often adopt a lot of horse sense on political policies.
- I. Yes, I tend to think ...
- T. And where you can avoid racial issues - and that's not easily avoided in Ceylon as in other countries - you do by and large I think - but only by and large - get a choice of reliable people I think which, I think, you're just as likely to as on universal franchise as you are on a - on a restricted franchise.
- I. Of course the great argument for that was that it would prevent the growth of an oligarchy. Wasn't it?
- T. What? Of having universal franchise?
- I. Yes.
- T. Yes, well, it may or may not.
- I. Yes?
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- T. I think oligarchy ...
- I. Can still arise?
- T. It can still arise but I don't think its likely to last very long.
- I. Well, I think Ceylon proves that point. You said bad results - bad results of universal franchise. Such as?
- T. The main thing is when you get a voting on - on racial or ...
- I. Caste?
- T. Or some such lines.
- I. Yes, but I don't think any means of franchise could have been adopted which would have obviated voting on caste lines for instance.
- T. Well, no-one's succeeded in doing so yet.
- I. And, of course, another objection, another criticism of the Constitution was that these Executive Committees - well, its aligned to collective responsibility - these Committees never - that they worked in watertight compartments. Would you say that was true?
- T. Yes, well, that's - that's inevitable with that - that type of constitution.
- I. Do you think it bred an unsuitable type of politician?
- T. No, I wouldn't say so. Not - not in itself.
- I. You say, for instance, that the Constitution gave - well, was very useful as a means of political education.
- T. Yes.
- I. But wasn't there also some sort of bad political education, if I may use the term?
- T. Well, there was this bad education in the sense that it gave opportunities to politicians to interest themselves in personalities.
- I. Do you think the politicians could easily mislead the people? Were they able to? What is your impression?
- T. Well, I think they - they sometimes could and sometimes couldn't. But I think that applies to any political system.
- I. Yes. Have you any comments to make on the elections and the electioneering methods?
- T. I had very little to do with elections. The first elections were held ...
- I. Before your time?
- T. Before my time. I was - I really had only to do with one election, which was in the Ratnapura District in - was it? - '33 or '34. And ...
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- I. Yes. '34 or '35 I should think. Yes?
- T. No, it must have been - in '34 I went to the Medical Department. It must have been I think in - sometime in '34. I think it was - no, I think, it was a by-election.
- I. Oh, it was a by-election was it? Oh, this was in June 1933 after you were O.A., Ratnapura?
- T. Yes. There - there the - a good deal of the campaign was on racial lines.
- I. Racial?
- T. Yes, because one of the - one of the candidates was a Tamil.
- I. Oh, I see. And the Sinhalese won?
- T. Yes.
- I. Another criticism that has been made against it is that it prevented the growth of a party system. Do you think that was so?
- T. It - slightly I think. I don't think really very much.
- I. As against that someone else made the point that the social situation as such contributed more to the - more to deny the growth of a party system in that, well, caste prejudices were so important that local fixers, if I may use the term, ...
- T. Yes.
- I. ... were more important than - than really a party.
- T. Well, I think that was so. That - I think at that stage the parties might well have developed on racial and caste lines rather than policy lines. So that I don't really think it did any harm that way. And I think it did a good deal of good in widening the number of people who had experience of - of how departments actually worked. Or some experience.
- I. Yes, it - in other words it gave the legislators some executive experience?
- T. Yes. A thing which we tried to do in Tanganyika, where I went afterwards, by appointing deputy ministers.
- I. With what success? In Tanganyika?
- T. Well, it was only a very partial success. Again it depends rather on the people you've got.
- I. It has been said that Sir Graeme Thomson and Sir R.E. Stubbs were not the right men for this sort of constitution. What would you say to that?
- T. Well, I - its hardly - hardly for me to say because I wasn't sort of close enough to them in those days. I was much too junior.
- I. Well, what ...?
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- T. But I would have thought that Sir Graeme Thomson was quite the right man for introducing it.
- I. Why?
- T. Well, I think he had - he had a very wide experience of other constitutions. A knowledge of the Home Civil Service and how that worked. A knowledge of - of conditions in Ceylon, conditions in Africa. And I think that he was quite a suitable man to - to start the thing. Unfortunately, of course, he was a sick man.
- I. Oh, yes. What sort of man was he as - well, as far as you know from others?
- T. I think he was a very able man. But, as I say, unfortunately at that time he became a sick man.
- I. And how did - what - what was the Civil Service's opinion of Sir R.E. Stubbs?
- T. Well, again, I wouldn't like to say, how - what the Civil Service as such - liked him. He had unfortunately a sort of bitter tongue. But he was a very able - he was a very able man. And I think probably he worked the thing pretty wisely. As I say everyone was feeling their way with it.
- I. Yes.
- T. Because there was no precedent.
- I. And do you know - well, would you guess - hazard a guess why the politicians as such disliked the Constitution?
- T. Well, because it was a compromise Constitution. It didn't give them as much power as they had hoped they were going to get.
- I. Do you think they had a - well, this was an attempt to get away from the Westminster model. But being bred in this British thought, as such, do you think they had a hankering after the - after a British model?
- T. I think so, yes. I mean, I think that always had been the way of the colonial territories; that is the British had been successful with this model, well, why - what reason was there to suggest that they wouldn't be equally successful.
- I. Mmm. But of course they - I think they failed to realise that in the 1920's there - in Britain there was a lot of criticism of this very system.
- T. Well, there is today.
- I. Yes.
- T. On the whole I think Ceylon has worked the Westminster type of constitution better than most countries.
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- I. Yes. So you think the politicians had a feeling that they had been fobbed off with something else?
- T. I think that - yes, I think they had the feeling. I mean that it wasn't the best that could have been provided. They felt that they should have had a full-blown Westminster model with parties and so on. Regardless of the fact that the parties weren't there.
- I. Yes, I see. Coming back to this Ceylonisation issue - was it an issue at that time? Ceylonisation.
- T. The policy wasn't an issue. There were always of course issues about particular appointments.
- I. Oh, I see. By that stage it was - well, the process had been - it had been set in process? Had it?
- T. Oh, very much so, yes.
- I. I think it was an issue in the - more an issue in the 1920's than ...
- T. Yes, yes, earlier than the 20's.
- I. Earlier than the 20's, yes. If I may switch to another sphere? I do not know whether you had any real experience of it but what - how - did you have any experience of the local councils and gansabhas and things?
- T. Not very much. I had a certain amount of experience of them.
- I. Where was this?
- T. Well, in the Ratnapura District, the Kegalla District, and in the half of the Colombo District where I was A.G.A. immediately before the war.
- I. Mmm. Were they useful bodies?
- T. Yes. They administered a lot of necessary local - local things at village level.
- I. Wasn't there a ...?
- T. I think there was a - there was a difficulty that their size was unsuitable.
- I. In what way? Too ...?
- T. They - well, they represented an area, generally speaking, which was too large for detailed knowledge of the - of what actually went on in the village. And yet too small to make them really responsible self-supporting governing bodies. Local bodies.
- I. Wasn't there much corruption and incompetence?
- T. I think there was. Quite a lot.
- I. A lot?
- T. But you've got to put up with a certain amount of that to
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start with. After all we all learn by - as someone told me long ago - we all learn by experience and mostly bitter experience. And that applies to political bodies just as much as individuals.

I. Any government by clique?

T. What?

I. By cliques?

T. Oh, I should think so, yes. One thing, of course, which I think was very bad was the system of elections that they had to start with. I think they altered it before I left but they used to - you see, you used to have it with a long list of people. And you voted for A list or B list and you sort of went into a thing - they went into a thing like a cattle pound to show how many went for this one and how many for that list.

I. Oh, I see. It was a sort of joint stock...

T. Yes.

I. ... body.

T. Yes. And so you - you - you couldn't say, 'Well, I'd like A from this list and B from this list'. You had to have one or the other.

I. Did this - did they have irrigation functions too? The ones ...?

T. No, I don't - I think the irrigation things were always run by the vel vidanes and little committees that they had.

I. You haven't ...?

T. No, I don't.

I. You haven't any experience of them?

T. I had a little, yes. When I was in the Colombo District there was a new scheme being put on. I can't remember the name of the river. The one that went down by Gampaha?

I. Kelaniya?

T. No, no, it goes - it was north of the Kelani river. It goes down through Gampaha and then it came out into that great gulf south of Negombo.

I. Well, I should know this, but I'm afraid I can't ...

T. And we had a very able Indian engineer, irrigation engineer called Chablani, whom I met afterwards on the Fruit - Fruit and Agriculture Organisation. And he was in charge of this scheme and I had to hold a number of cultivators' meetings while he put this project to them. Which meant that they had to alter their scheme of - alter their scheme of cultivation.

And the whole thing was it had to be agreed right down from the top to the bottom. So that you'd got a coordinated scheme. Because the river was deteriorating under their old system of dams. And he wanted to get a new system going. Whereby instead of the water being dammed-up and flooding the field and then removing your dam and scouring it out, he had a system of permanent dams with sluices so that the water could come round through the fields and back into the river below and then go to the next lot and so on.

- I. I see. Do you think these vel vidanes were capable, as far as their duties went, in maintaining these little ...?
- T. They varied a great deal. It all depended on whether you had a man who had the confidence of the local cultivators. And so in some places you - you had a man who got their confidence and could get them to do things. Other places you had an incompetent one.
- I. Didn't the availability of money have - have any bearing on these - on their work? Or didn't it matter?
- T. They used to have - they used to make a contribution as far as I remember towards the work. Done either in kind or sometimes in money.
- I. Oh, I see, yes.
- T. For these big schemes they had to do it in money. They'd have an irrigation - they had to have a rate. Because that had to be done professionally.
- I. Was there any - any shortcoming or difficulty in liaison between these specialist officers and the A.G.A's, [i.e.] the administrative officers?
- T. Well, I've only experience of one. That is to say this one; and I hope he felt - he had no difficulties as far as I was concerned. I always found him most helpful.
- I. Oh, that's good. I think that this was more so in the late nineteenth century and turn of the century when, well, they were simply not used to these specialist [officers], and I think some G.A's used to say, 'What's this man doing in my forest?' What about these local councils, gansabhas, and their judicial work? Do you know anything?
- T. Well, the - the gansabha - you had what's called the gansabha court but it had nothing whatever to do with the gansabha at all. It had a president of the village tribunal who was a - who was a Government appointed officer. And he was not administered by the gansabha...
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I. Yes.

T. ..in any way.

I. Did these gansabha courts¹ - do you think they were helpful?

T. Oh, I think they undoubtedly were. They dealt with all - innumerable little cases without the expense of - not only the expense of the lawyer magistrate, or whoever it was, but without people having to go so far to the ...

I. Mmm. Of course in - 1930's was a late stage.

T. Yes, the - there had been an earlier stage when, I think, they had worked under the - or in some cases have worked under the - the proper gansabha.

I. You think they reduced litigation?

T. I don't say they reduced litigation. They enabled a number of decisions to be taken locally and settled quickly.

I. Mmm. Speedy?

T. Speedy - reasonably speedily. Which prevented the other courts being more clogged up than they were. And probably - I'll only say probably - reduced very, very slightly the number - the reported number of murders that there were over trivial matters.

I. Yes. Again the 1930's were late. But don't you think that, well, in contrast to the good points of the gansabha, don't you think the British judicial system, as a whole, - the procedures and so on and so forth, were too sophisticated and too formalised and too intangible for the peasantry?

T. I agree, yes.

I. Well, this should have been corrected I think long - at an early stage rather than later on when the people got used to them?

T. Well, its/^{very}difficult to correct them. I mean you will get a lot of bad justice if you - if you - if you don't have the checks that you have in the British judicial system. On the other hand, as you say, it is too ...

I. Cumbersome?

T. Especially too cumbersome. I remember long before I ever went out to Ceylon my father, who was in the army and was in India, was talking to an Indian up near the North-West frontier, and he asked him how he'd like to be governed by the Russians. And his answer was that on the whole he'd prefer to be. My father asked why. He said, 'Well, with the Russians you'd get justice. It would be jolly rough justice but it would be justice. Whereas with the British you get law'.

1. Village tribunals; they were judicial bodies which tried petty cases.

- I. Yes, I see the point.
- T. That's the point. Whether though in fact he would have liked it if he'd had it is another matter. In the same way as when I was in Tanganyika people were always hankering after the days, or some of them said they hankered after the days, when the Germans were in charge. When they said that a thief had his hands cut off.
- I. Yes, I see. Very effective.
- T. Very, very effective but provided he was the real thief and not, you know, someone else, who went on thieving.
- I. Oh, of course. In Ratnapura your headmen were Kandyan headmen weren't they?
- T. Yes.
- I. Would you say there was a distinction between the Kandyan headmen and the Lowcountrymen?
- T. Yes, I think there was.
- I. In what way?
- T. Well, I think they had much more sort of traditional influence.
- I. Yes, that would count for a lot, would it not?
- T. I think it did, yes.
- I. Now, did you - did you have to rely on these headmen a lot?
- T. Oh, tremendously, yes.
- I. Tremendously. Did you trust them?
- T. Sometimes, sometimes not
- I. On land matters?
- T. It made things very difficult when you couldn't trust them.
- I. Mmm. What - in your case did you have a command of the vernacular? Sinhalese?
- T. Well, I wouldn't say a command. I knew a certain amount of - of - of Sinhalese. And I remember at Ratnapura the land clerk was always very surprised that I apparently read the Sinhalese petitions.
- I. I see.
- T. Which I had - which I had been - which I was always very careful to do.
- I. Did you find this plethora of petitions rather a nuisance?
- T. Oh, they were.
- I. Too many of them were there?
- T. Far too many of them. And - and what was very, very stupid was you sometimes got a man come in to see you and presented the petition.
- I. And explaining the case[at the same time]?

1. Village tribunals with judicial powers.

- T. Explaining the case and then you found that - that he'd spent more than the substance of what the petition was about on getting the petition written.
- I. Yes. And do you think that half of these - or more than half of these petitions were pointless? They should never have been written as such?
- T. A lot of them needn't have been written. They could always come in and see you and say what they'd got to say. And they could have said that just as well without the petition. And, of course, a lot of them were things that you couldn't help them with. I mean things that had to go to the court and all you could do was - was to tell them that.
- I. Yes. Well, my father said that 9/10ths of them were what he called "stark futility".
- T. Yes. I wouldn't have said it was as high a proportion as that. No.
- I. Yes, well, he was If I may ask when did you go on leave?
- T. I went on leave at the beginning of '36.
- I. Mmm. Till '37 was it?
- T. Till - till September or October '36. And then I went on leave again in the beginning of '45.
- I. Oh, I see. Were you there when - do you remember anything of - about the Bracegirdle affair?
- T. Yes. I can't remember the details now, but I was there at the time.
- I. Do you happen to know why he was deported?
- T. Well, I think, he was considered an undesirable person to be there.
- I. But surely he was saying something which, well, many other local people - some of them, the more extreme people - had also been saying?
- T. Yes. But - but he was probably giving them, or sort of giving an authority, to them.
- I. Why?
- T. To those things. Because he wasn't a local person.
- I. Oh, just the fact that he was a European tended to ...
- T. Yes.
- I. ... give him greater influence?
- T. Yes.
- I. Yes. Would you say that it was, I mean, Government policy, the British Government's policy to consider foreign agitators of whatever nationality a greater menace than local counterparts?
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- T. Yes, I think that generally speaking they are. But in any case, I mean, the foreigner hasn't, so to speak, a right to come into a country that's not his own and agitate against the Government, which is giving him his protection. Whereas the local person has a right to say what he likes in his own country. If you see - understand what I mean?
- I. Yes.
- T. And I think there's a distinction. If you're a guest in someone else's country you must be, so to speak, more polite than - than if you - than if its your own country.
- I. Was he - was he a crank?
- T. I think he must - I never met him but I should think he must have been a bit of a crank.
- I. Do you - do you think the planter - do you know if planters brought any agitation to bear on the Government?
- T. I don't know. I shouldn't - I should think some of them probably did.
- I. Because I was wondering - this is from the debates of course and what the Ceylonese said - I was wondering whether the fact that he was a former white planter and, well, Britisher challenging British rule, whether that influenced the Government decision? Rather, the Colonial Secretary's decision.
- T. Well, I think that if a person is likely to cause trouble and he comes from outside you don't want him there.
- I. Yes, but ...
- T. I mean, most countries either prohibit people who they think are going to cause trouble from coming in or else deport them if they do come in and do things that are unwelcome.
- I. Yes. I was wondering whether in some cases - I'm not making it a general point - but this also was hinted at in the Council. I don't know how far its true. In some cases there was a feeling that he was letting the side down, so to speak.
- T. Well, I think, that perhaps that was so.
- I. Yes. Of course that was one of the big constitutional issues of the time. Well in a sense - the sense that he had been deported - the order had been passed without the Minister's approval.
- T. Yes.
- I. And another, of course, was this ...
- T. Was the failure to carry it out which is a singularly stupid thing. I mean, if you do make an order of that sort you jolly well must see that its carried out. Or else its a - you're
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bound to be in trouble.

- I. Well, I thought when the court did - when it was taken to court, it was declared ultra vires. I'm not certain.
- T. It was, yes. But - but I mean if it had been properly carried out he would never have got - he would never have gone to court. You see, he would have been out of the country before anything ever happened.
- I. You think there was some incompetence there then?
- T. Oh, there was. Undoubtedly.
- I. Yes. What was your personal view and, well, I would say, British officialdom's view, of the L.S.S.P. Party? The Sama Samajist Party?
- T. Well, I think - I mean, my personal view is that - I think they were misguided in some of their aims. I mean I don't - I don't agree with ...
- I. Marxism?
- T. ... communism because I don't think it works. I think they were very well organised. And I have a great personal admiration for Dr. N.M. Perera.
- I. Did you know him?
- T. Yes. I - he was one of our local M.L.C's when I was in the - or M.S.C's they were called there, weren't they? - when I was in the Kegalla District.
- I. Oh, I see. I didn't know he was from that area.
- T. His first appearance in politics was in - what was it? - I forget what they call that area but anyway he knocked out Molamure in the ...
- I. Oh, I see. Molamure, that's right.
- T. ... - in his constituency and he came in ...
- I. Feudal ...
- T. Ruanwella, wasn't it?
- I. Ruanwella, that's right. Did these Marxists - did they use extreme language as such, or what you consider extreme?
- T. I don't think - I don't think this lot usually did.
- I. Because I think its Governor Stubbs who called them, 'A small local party run by young men with more money than brains'. And then again, 'These men were generally regarded as half-wits and degenerates'.
- T. Well, that may be of some of them but, I mean, certainly I would never - wouldn't call Dr. N.M. Perera that at all.
- I. Yes.
- T. I mean he's a very able man, a very charming person to meet. And he's - as far as I know then and ever since - has run his

party extremely efficiently. I don't agree with his policy as I've already said.

- I. Yes. Have you any inkling of what - in what way the other politicians treated them? Well, Molamure and such people.
- T. Well, of course, they were - they were definitely opposed to him. I mean, his idea would have been fragmentation of the big estates and Molamure represented the ...
- I. The land-owning ...
- T. The land-owning community.
- I. Was there some sort of contempt for these Marxists?
- T. Well, I - I suppose contempt. Certainly fear of them.
- I. Certainly fear. And if I may go on to the other contretemps of the time, the Mooloya incident. Do you recall that at all?
- T. No, I don't. What - when was it?
- I. 1941 that was, I think.
- T. Well, I must have been there at the time. I've forgotten what that was.
- I. This was in Governor Caldecott's time and that was when the ministers resigned in a body.
- T. I remember the ministers resigning but I can't recall what it was about.
- I. This was about trade-unions on the estates. I think the Governor had - well, the I.G.P. or someone issued a certain order.
- T. Oh, yes, now it comes back, now.
- I. And the Governor backed him initially. Yes, the ministers had wanted the cases - the prosecutions delayed till the commission reported. But, I think, the departmental head ignored that order, or issued an order against that. I mean went ahead with the prosecutions saying that - yes, his argument was that the minister had no power to give him such an order.
- T. To - to defer a prosecution?
- I. Defer, yes.
- T. Yes. Well, that - that would certainly be the normal British system that you do not interfere with a prosecution.
- I. Mind you, I'm not quite certain of this. But - though even under the Donoughmore Constitution I think in letter the minister hadn't such power but by convention they had usurped or gained this sort of power.
- T. I shouldn't have thought so. No, I mean - I mean certainly my experience elsewhere is that the Government, as such, have no discretion at all to interfere with the Attorney-General if he thinks a prosecution should be entered into. In England
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I don't think they would. I mean I think it would be considered very incorrect for the Government to interfere with the - with the prosecution which the law people thought ought to be taken.

- I. Well, I think, apart from that incident Governor Sir Andrew Caldecott got on quite well with the ministers?
- T. I think he did.
- I. What sort of man was he?
- T. Very - a very able man indeed. Very - very charming man and, I think, very far-sighted.
- I. I mean, it was those characteristics which helped him to get on with the ministers?
- T. Yes.
- I. Any other sort of particular characteristics which helped him?
- T. Well, I think that he was able to - to meet people of all sorts without difficulty. He wasn't a shy man like Stubbs, for instance.
- I. Stubbs was shy, was he?
- T. Shy - terribly shy. I don't think people realised that, but he was terribly shy.
- I. That is rather funny in a Governor. I mean a man who has risen.
- T. Yes, it is. But ...
- I. He was married, was he? Was he not? Oh, yes.
- T. Oh, yes. Who was? Stubbs or ...?
- I. Well, both of them[Stubbs and Caldecott].
- T. ... both of them. Yes, that's right, both of them.
- I. And what sort of man was Sir Maxwell Wedderburn?
- T. I liked him very much indeed because he was - he was a person who'd been in Ceylon for many years but - and he knew the country thoroughly. He knew the people very well. He was always courteous to everyone of any sort. And of course he had, I don't think, any great imagination for the changes that were going to come in this century. And particularly the changes that would be necessitated as a result of the war.
- I. Oh, I see. He was able though? I mean, what sort of intellect did he have?
- T. Well, I mean, I think he was a good administrator. I wouldn't - I wouldn't say that he was a ...
- I. Had a very sharp mind?
- T. Well, I wouldn't say that he had a political mind for what the future ...
- I. That is very interesting because this confirms what has been
-

said about - well, about the Donoughmore Constitution. For it is said that some of the early Officers-of-State didn't quite get on with the ministers. And, well, this sort of characteristic on his part would have made it rather difficult for him to get on, would it not?

T. No, I don't think so. Because, I mean, I think that he - that he was a man who would always treat anyone with the greatest courtesy.

I. Courtesy.

T. He wouldn't always see their point of view. Generally speaking I think he would. But occasionally not.

I. Because I think it was - it is Sir Ivor Jennings, in an article somewhere, [who] said that Sir Robert Drayton got on much better with the ministers. And by implication this would mean that it - well, Sir Maxwell Wedderburn and others did not get on as well.

T. Well, Sir Robert Drayton got on very well at one time and then he didn't finally.

I. When was that? 1946?

T. When was it? Yes, about that time, when he left.

I. That was over the declaration I suppose? 194... - the ministers sent up a proposal and then the Colonial Office, well, sent the Soulbury Commission?

T. No, I don't think it was over anything big at all. I think I forget what it was.

I. Something small?

T. Something quite small, I think. He didn't ...

I. What sort of man was he?

T. A very shrewd lawyer.

I. Oh, I see. Yes, of course, he came in as Legal Secretary.

T. Yes.

I. Did that have any bearing on his administrative work?

T. Yes, I think he always looked at things rather from the legal point of view.

I. I would class that as a rather bad feature.

T. Well, I think generally speaking it is. I mean in an administrator. On the other hand you want to have some sort of idea of what would sort of - what would be within the law and what wouldn't.

I. Of course, being a lawyer, many of these - many of the politicians were lawyers. I wonder ...

T. Yes.

- I. ... I suppose that might have helped him to get on with them. If I may switch to another sphere, do you know much about immigration matters at all? In planting.
- T. No.
- I. No. I didn't think you would but ... What about trade union policy?
- T. That, of course, I didn't come across much. Except latterly when I was in the Treasury. As Controller of Establishments I had sort of to do with things on the fringe of trade unions - things like (?) (?)
- I. Oh, yes.
- T. ... policy with regard to pay.
- I. When you were Assistant Commissioner of Lands in 1937, '38 ...
- T. Yes.
- I. ... what were your duties?
- T. Oh, I had very - checking innumerable - I'm not quite sure what I did do actually. There seemed to be very little that one did. Apart from signing leases and things of that sort, on behalf of the Governor. Ha-ha-ha.
- I. Oh, I see. Who were you under then?
- T. C.L. Wickremesinghe.
- I. Oh, I see. And your minister? Oh, of course, D.S.
- T. Senanayake.
- I. Yes, Senanayake. Did you have much personal contact with him?
- T. With C.L. Wickremesinghe?
- I. No, with ...
- T. No, no. The minister? No.
- I. Hardly?
- T. Hardly at all.
- I. What sort of man do you think he was?
- T. What - Senanayake?
- I. Yes.
- T. I think he was a very sound, very shrewd politician. And I think he had a very statesmanlike attitude to things.
- I. What about Sir Baron Jayatilaka?
- T. I think he was too. But of course he was ageing a bit in my time.
- I. Was he - was he a bit mad?
- T. I wouldn't have said so. Neither of them were. And I was A.G.A. in both their constituencies. And I must say never once I don't - oh, I'm not sure that Jayatilaka didn't once write to me and ask - ask a favour for someone or - but in this(?) case(?) it couldn't be granted. But Senanayake never once intervened in anything at all.
-

- I. And that was - well, I suppose - was that exceptional among politicians of the time?
- T. I think it tended to be, yes.
- I. Oh, there was a lot of interference was there?
- T. Well, in some places there was, yes. There was constant clash with the - with the political - this fellow wanting this, that and the other done in his constituency.
- I. Were there a lot of personal attacks?
- T. Some places there were.
- I. In what way? In - at meetings or in the newspapers or in Council?
- T. Sometimes in Council.
- I. Was this sort of thing resented by the Civil Servants?
- T. Well, there were unfair attacks, yes. They weren't so very common I don't think. But a lot of cases of course - a member of the State Council would try and get - get something for one of his supporters or something of that sort. But Jayatilaka and Senanayake, never. .
- I. And this sort of criticism, I mean, did Civil Servants take it in their stride? Were they sort of resigned to it?
- T. Oh, they got resigned to it, yes.
- I. I expect at the start it was rather difficult. Reverting to the land matters, as such, have you any inkling of what British land policy, well, in the 1920's, was?
- T. In the 20's, well, it was largely developing the rubber lands and so on, wasn't it?
- I. Yes.
- T. Of course, I wasn't concerned with it then. What we were concerned with in the 30's was trying to establish this new tenure for the peasants.
- I. Leasehold, was it?
- T. Well, it was - no, we always maintained it wasn't leasehold. It was a Crown permit, and then a grant.
- I. Had this anything to do with C.Q.P's of an earlier age?
- T. No. No, it was under a Land Development Ordinance which was - you remember, you've heard of C.V. Brayne?
- I. Yes.
- T. Well, it was his idea very largely. The idea was to give the peasant a plot of land, of five acres or thereabouts, which was what he could - he and his family could cultivate. With cultivation clauses, which required him to develop it over his first five years. And then when he'd developed it in accordance
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with those - with those clauses he could have it for ever, under a grant.

I. Oh, I see.

T. It could be cancelled up till that time, when it was under a permit, and then he could have it under - as a grant. He had to pay a small annual payment every year so that he - so that ...

I. For how long?

T. For ever.

I. For ever.

T. So that he never - he never got the freehold. It was a way of getting round this business whereby the freehold on his death would devolve amongst - [would be] shared amongst a dozen children and be in undivided shares.

I. Oh, so what happened when he died?

T. When he died he had on it the persons whom he nominated to be his successor.

I. Just one?

T. One.

I. Oh, I see.

T. Or I think you would have two nominated successors in case the first one died and then it came to the second. And so that it couldn't be divided.

I. Oh, I see. Apart from this annual payment did he have to pay an initial sum for the land?

T. I don't think so, as far as I remember.

I. And this scheme was meant to be applied throughout Ceylon? I mean it was ...

T. It was gradually - it was done in these colonisation areas. When new land was given out it was all given out on this system.

I. On this system. But what about the old areas?

T. Well, you couldn't do anything about them.

I. Couldn't do anything about them. But what if there was a land which had - someone wanted to asweddumize?

T. If it - if it fell in and came into Crown possession again then it would be given out again on that system. If it was a small amount. If it was a big estate of course then it was - the leasehold was sold and for(?) various(?) improvements(?).

I. When was this introduced?

T. This Land Development Ordinance?

I. Yes.

- T. I should think about 1933, something like that.
- I. '33. And Brayne, you say, what ...
- T. Brayne - Brayne ...
- I. When was he ...?
- T. He was the first Land Commissioner.
- I. It was his idea?
- T. It was his idea, yes. It was based, I think, very largely on his brother's experience in the Punjab.
- I. Oh, I see. Its very interesting.
- T. What surprises me is that you don't know of it.
- I. Well, I know of Senanayake's land colonisation scheme.
- T. Yes.
- I. But I didn't - I don't know the details.
- T. Well, it was all done under this - under this new ordinance, got out about this time. And we were - we were trying to develop that and giving out the[lands].
- I. I know something - well, I've done some reading for this project, but my research has been largely in the nineteenth century.
- T. Yes, of course, what I would be very interested to know - what I would love to do is go round some of these ...
- I. Colonisation ...
- T. ... schemes - no, colonisation schemes now and see how they've developed.
- I. Of course, you know that Farmer has written a book on colonisation in Ceylon?
- T. No, I didn't.
- I. He's a Cambridge - its called Pioneer Peasant Colonization in Ceylon.
- T. Yes.
- I. With what success in your time, was the scheme applied?
- T. Well, it was really too early days to say. It was not very popular because it wasn't understood, as one could expect.
- I. Politically popular or at the mass level?
- T. Not very popular at the level of the peasants.
- I. Oh, I see.
- T. They would have liked to have had it freehold.
- I. What was I going to ask? Do you think in this agricultural sphere these new ministries - that is the 1930's ministries - do you think they rushed into land and irrigation development with rather sanguine expectations?
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- T. Well, perhaps sanguine expectations, but it was definitely necessary.
- I. Well, why hadn't it been done before then?
- T. Because I think it had been assumed always that - that the best course for Ceylon was to import its food, cheap rice from Burma and Siam, and export high value products which more than paid for them.
- I. Well, of course, I've come across incidents... And even in the 1920's, under E.B. Denham for instance, there were attempts to improve rice cultivation.
- T. Oh, yes, there were - there were attempts but ...
- I. Not on such a ...?
- T. But not such a big scale.
- I. You think this was done on a big scale?
- T. Well, it was done on an increasing scale. I mean the Galoya scheme was - was being developed by the time I left. It hadn't yet been opened. All these things, they take time.
- I. But don't you think that - yes, even in the long run given population growth - that you could never hope to obviate importation of rice?
- T. I don't think you would ever obviate importation of rice altogether with - certainly not with Ceylon's rate of population growth as it's been in recent years. On the other hand the amount that has to be imported is excessive.
- I. What would you say were the objectives of land policy in your time? I mean (a) sale of land to capitalists for development purposes (b) conservation of lands and native peasantry.
- T. The main purpose was to develop previously undeveloped land with the aid of irrigation. Or otherwise if it was possible. And provide for landless peasants.
- I. Was there a great degree of landlessness?
- T. In some areas, yes.
- I. What areas?
- T. Well, I think, you could say most - well, most of the south and west. Because of this - large families.
- I. What do you mean by landlessness? I mean there's a distinction between access to land and non-ownership of land.
- T. Well, there were large numbers of people who had a theoretical hundredth share in this paddy field and a fiftieth share in this paddy field and so on. But to all intents and purposes they had no land.
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- I. What about sharecroppers? Under what category would you class them?
- T. They were mostly people that hadn't got land.
- I. Yes, they were landless. But they had access to land.
- T. They had access to land but it was a very precarious access.
- I. Yes, I see. Would you be able to give a percentage of - well, a rough percentage of the extent of sharecropping?
- T. I wouldn't I'm afraid, no.
- I. Or landlessness?
- T. No.
- I. It was mostly in the south and west?
- T. I think so. I mean that was where it was - where the population growth was most acute.
- I. Simply because of population growth, was it? Because I was wondering whether land speculation in the 1920's, and sale of land to planters by both government and the peasants themselves, had any bearing on this?
- T. It had to the extent that it reduced the land that was - on which they might have extended. But I think the land that was given out was undeveloped land; mainly. Very little land that had previously been owned by peasants was given over to planters.
- I. Do you think the depression hit the peasantry at all?
- T. Yes, very much.
- I. Very much so. Were there - in what way?
- T. Well, it meant that there was a very severe underemployment. For instance in the coconut areas to the north of the Colombo District, people were very, very poor. You would - you probably couldn't say that many of the people had no work at all, were completely unemployed, but they had very little work. And they got very little pay and not really enough to feed them and their families.
- I. I see. Did foreclosures increase in that period?
- T. I wouldn't - I wouldn't know that.
- I. And taking land policy as a whole what would you say were the shortcomings in land policy? And agricultural policy?
- T. Well, I would say that the main shortcoming, I think, was the - was that we did all these things too late. You see ...
- I. You mean they should have been done ...?
- T. ... its the usual thing that, I mean, one is always wise with hindsight.
- I. And just to ask you about the 1946-47 period. Did you find,
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well, the changing conditions rather - well, did they make it rather difficult for you? Working conditions?

T. Not for me personally. I found the constitutional development in Ceylon extremely interesting.

I. Why wasn't full dominion status given in 1945 when Mr. D.S. Senanayake came here? While it was given in 1947?

T. What - why?

I. Why wasn't full dominion status given in 1945? Well, the same arguments applied really, basically.

T. It was given in '48, wasn't it? Independence?

I. Yes, well, '47, '48.

T. Well, because a very large amount of work had to be - had to be done in preparation. There was a tremendous change in the administrative system between - between the Donoughmore Constitution and what came later. And I think Ceylon had a very great advantage in - over some of the other terri - other countries that have received independence later. In getting all that preliminary work done unhurriedly and well.

I. These strikes in 1946, '47, do you think there was a real economic difficulty behind them?

T. Oh, I think there was some, yes. Because of the wartime inflation.

I. But of course the left made political ...

T. They made full use of them.

I. Full use.

T. Yes.

I. I was wondering whether - well, I don't know how far its true - whether D.S. and Sir O.E. Goonetilake - in 1947 when they did win dominion status - whether they suggested they should be left to deal with the left - left-wing. And so that in this way they used it as an argument - the strikes and the left-wing influence - as an argument for independence?

T. I don't think so. No, by '47, I mean there was - it was '45 wasn't it the Donoughmore Commission came out?

I. Soulbury Commission.

T. The Soulbury Commission. Sorry, Soulbury Commission. And the timetable that was proposed was kept to.

I. I thought it wasn't. I mean they didn't give full - it was short, just short, of dominion status.

T. Well, that was the stage that was recommended then. And dominion status came in, I think, probably '48 ...

I. '48, yes.

T. ... or very shortly afterwards.

I. Yes. Quicker than Soulbury anticipated?

T. Yes.

I. I was wondering whether the strikes at that stage had been used by D.S. and Sir O.E. to ...?

T. Not - not to my knowledge. But, I mean, I wouldn't have known. Actually, in '47, I was out of Ceylon practically the whole time.

I. Oh, I see.

T. I went over to Malaya on a Salaries Commission.

END OF INTERVIEW

I asked him whether he agreed with Sir Andrew Caldecott's view, expressed in his Reforms Dispatch of 1938, that politically things were overpainted in Ceylon and that the language of politicians, and political issues were invariably in superlatives. Mr. Tilney's answer was, 'A lot of them, yes'. It is also of some interest that Mr. Tilney was in the Kegalla area from where Dudley Senanayake - like N.M. Perera - first entered the State Council. And he seemed to think Dudley rather a colourless individual. But he also believed that this was explained by the fact that his father overshadowed him. Another interesting point made by him was that in 1939, in conversation with him, an uncle of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike had told him - told Tilney - that S.W.R.D. would rise to power somehow; that he would eventually gain complete power. And that he would ruin the country. By implication Mr. Tilney clearly believed that this forecast had in fact come true. He also certainly believed S.W.R.D. was playing up the racial issue even at that stage.

In connection with Caldecott's point I asked him whether this - the superlativeness in language and tone adopted by politicians in Ceylon in the 1930's - was common to Tanganyika too, in his time in the 1950's. And I asked him to compare conditions in Ceylon and Tanganyika. He made the obvious point that there is a great contrast between Tanganyika and Ceylon in the tribal nature of Tanganyika. There were a hundred odd tribes. He emphasised the fact that in German times Tanganyika had been ridden with slavery and the Germans had done much in this sphere in reducing it. Also done much by way of improvements in road and railway communications. And also done a great thing in making Swahili the lingua franca; in effect a unifying force. He also stressed the fact that Tanganyika was badly hit by the depression just as it was emerging and improving itself. This was in British times. And then between the depression and the war there was hardly any money sunk into it simply because capital shied away from Tanganyika in the belief that it would be used as a pawn to pacify Hitler. Then of course there was the war and it was only in the post-war period that it developed. And he believes that in 1945 or so the people were not thinking in national terms. It was within the decade covered by the 1950's that they began to think of themselves as a nation. He said that this was a remarkable change. For instance, in the late 1940's, he thought that power would fall into the hands of the Asian elements. But thereafter there had been a shift in the balance of power; the Africans had come out on top. And he also made the point that in these ten years Tanganyika crowded into a history what had taken a much

longer time in Ceylon. He pointed out the fact that they had lacked an administrative cadre of the type that existed in Ceylon. And that whereas in Ceylon most of the medical staff were Ceylonese in Tanganyika most of them were foreigners.

It is also of some interest that Mrs. Tilney was private secretary to Sir Henry Moore in 1945, men being in rather short supply then. Apparently Lady Moore helped her to get this job. She felt that Sir Henry was a rather old-worldly strict disciplinarian. But considered him able and a man of some imagination and avidly interested in the constitutional development and progress of Ceylon.

M.W. Roberts
16/11/65

Mr. C.E. Tilney's Answers(1) to Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts,
17 December 1965. *

1. With what Ceylonese ministers did you have dealings while you were in the Treasury and how would you rate their competence?

Answer:

In the Treasury I had no dealings with Ministers directly. If a matter was raised to ministerial level, it was dealt with by the Financial Secretary, as Officer of State, who could either press for the adoption of the Treasury view, or could agree to compromise. The Treasury dealt with Heads of Departments.

2. Did you find Huxham very Treasury-minded?

Answer:

While understanding Treasury points of view, Huxham had a somewhat original mind. While insisting on sound finance, he did not take a particularly narrow view of finance.

3. How did Huxham get on with the leading officials (as far as you know)?

Answer:

Most people who had much to do with Huxham respected him, though they did not like him.

4. As Financial Advisor, did he ever have occasion to oppose measures suggested by the Ministers? Could the Officers of State, and the Financial Advisor, successfully resist Ministers who were set on something which they deemed unwise?

Answer:

Frequently. Sometimes Officers of State - in fact quite often - were supported by the Board of Ministers against individual ministers. Sometimes they were not. (It should be noted that my period in the Treasury the Board of Ministers to a large extent functioned as a Cabinet although it had no constitutional right to do so, except as regards the Budget. But as most Governmental policy has financial

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

implications, that exception gave the Board very wide powers.)

5. Can you remember Caldecott's reforms despatch of 1938? What did you think of his analysis of the political situation?

Answer:

I cannot now remember this despatch sufficiently well to comment.

6. Was the State Council's refusal to pass the money for passage allowances for European officers taken seriously by Civil Servants? Did they resent this policy?

Answer:

I think it was taken seriously, and indeed a feeling of a lack of security in respect of future political advance. For that reason O.E. Goonetilleke was most anxious that the passage allowance provision should be passed in the budget without certification before the next constitution was introduced.

7. Would you say that the grant of universal franchise made Government more responsive to the needs of a wider public? If so, does this not reflect badly on the previous Administration?

Answer:

To a limited extent. It can be said that it tended to make the Government too responsive to the 'desires' rather than the 'real needs.' That was certainly the case in the sphere of public health.

8. Did the Suriya Mal Campaign occur in your time? If so, how seriously was it taken by officials? Was it resented?

Answer:

Did not occur in my time.

9. Would you say that the gansabha were very limited in the scope of their functions and powers?

Answer:

Fairly limited.

10. In any event, could the tasks and the powers of the gansabha have done with some widening?

Answer:

Not, I think, without some better trained staff.

11. Did the British system of law multiply litigation?

Answer:

Yes.

12. How would you appraise C.L. Wickremesinghe? Did you find him an easy man to work under (and with)?

Answer:

I find him very difficult to appraise, as I could never discover to what extent he influenced D.S. Senanayake and to what extent D.S. Senanayake influenced him. He was pleasant to work with but one never felt that one was taken into his confidence, largely I think, because he was hesitant of expressing his views until he had consulted the Minister.

13. Could you comment on the working of the co-operative credit movement? What were the difficulties?

14. What sort of success did this movement have? What was the peasant response in Ratnapura and Colombo Districts?

Answer:

I am not competent to comment on this. By and large I think that it was fairly successful.

15. Did it succeed in reducing peasant usury and indebtedness?

Answer:

In reducing, yes; in eliminating, no.

16. What were the aims of the Rural Marketing Dept.? What were the obstacles and what success did this department have in those districts which you were stationed?

Answer:

The aims of the Marketing Department were I think mainly two - (1) To improve the markets available for rural produce, and (2) to improve the quality of the produce offered for sale by providing better prices for graded

produce. It was virtually only operating after I had ceased working in a district.

17. Did the peasants and other buyers of Crown land under the system devised by Brayne devise methods of getting round it? Could they not rent portions of the land on a share-cropping basis?

Answer:

I am not aware of any large scale evasion of terms on which land alienated under the Land Development Ordinance was held. There were of course some contraventions of conditions and a certain number of permits were cancelled for failure to develop the land.

18. As A.G.A. Ratnapura did you find the villagers dispossessing themselves of their land under the lure of ready cash offered by European planters or Ceylonese speculators/planters?

Answer:

This had been done before my time. During my time the peasants had realised the value of their land and usually held on to it tenaciously. The great difficulty in my time was the fragmentation of holdings by the laws of inheritance.

19. Did revenue officers have any means of stopping this sort of thing?

Answer:

So far as I know, none - except advice.

20. If I may raise a hypothetical question, do you think independence would have come quicker if there had been no war; or did the war hasten it?

Answer:

I do not think that independence would have come quicker if there had been no war. Though the war may have slightly slowed down some of the administration arrangements which were necessary for independence, I do not think that if there had been no war there would have been the same pressure for change; nor would Ministers have had to take on, and show themselves capable of, such large responsibilities, thereby showing that the country was ready for independence.

Answers provided by Mr. C.E. Tilney to Questions forwarded by
M.W. Roberts, 1 November 1966.

[Mr. Tilney's answers were jotted on the typed questionnaire.]

1. Recently I have come across some conflicting opinions as to whether British Civil Servants in the colonies were influenced by a sense of mission (akin, say, to the white man's burden of old or the V.S.O. of today). I personally would wager that the majority sought to do their job responsibly and conscientiously without fanciful idealistic notions. I wonder whether you can recall what your attitude was in the 1930's and whether you can make general comments on the subject.

Answer:

Attitudes varied; but I think that the majority (a) thought that it was ^a job worth doing and (b) had to earn a living and considered the job reasonably (but not highly) paid.

2. How far could headmen influence elections in the 1930's? Were Civil Servants able to check on the way they prepared electoral lists and to prevent them favouring a particular candidate? How far did their general influence count? Could a politician bribe them through favour and interest and thereby win a seat?

Answer:

Very difficult to say. I should doubt if, as a rule, they prepared faulty election lists deliberately. There were close checks to that. They probably did in some cases influence votes. A politician could undoubtedly bribe a headman to use his influence in his favour. To what extent he got his money's worth it is hard to say.

3. In your time in the 1930's, and the 1940's, did Government find it difficult to collect the irrigation rates? Was there constant and pronounced default? Were the sums collected worth the trouble entailed in collecting them?

Answer:

I don't remember any particular difficulty. There were of course some arrears as one usually gets when collecting large numbers of amounts. But I think that what was collected was worth while.

4. While in Kegalla and Ratnapura did you ever come across any

of the following as land speculators, and land grabbers: Vanderpooten, Charles Batuwantudawe, E.A.P. Wijeyratne, A.A. Wickremasinghe, B.K.(?) Thornhill, Ruxton, Berry,¹ Meedeniya Adigar, (?) Wijeyratne (in Sabaragamuwa)?

Answer:

I came across all the people underlined; but not as land-grabbers. Any land grabbing would have been done before my time.

5. While D.S. Senanayake achieved a great deal, was he unreasonable in his attitudes to some of the heads of department, particularly those in the Irrigation Department? Was he not undermining his own aims in driving the more experienced European personnel away? On the other hand, did he have reason to do so in that they were being needlessly obstructionist?

Answer:

D.S. Senanayake did not get on with various officers both in the Forest Dept. and in the Irrigation Dept. The trouble was, I think, mainly the usual one that politicians and technical people (scientists) don't speak the same language. Scientists (particularly the more brilliant ones) usually have no patience with people who don't understand them; and politicians (particularly in a new country) are apt to suspect objections to their plans to be just obstruction. It was particularly tragic with Kennedy who was a brilliant irrigation engineer but had no use for politicians.

6. Have you any idea why D.S. and Edmund Rodrigo did not hit it off? There is some suspicion that D.S. wanted 'yes'men.

Answer:

I could only make a guess; but won't, as I hardly knew Rodrigo.

7. With regard to the targets which D.S. and the Secretariat set themselves, e.g. the amount of land they could bring under cultivation per year, were they not far too rosy and unrealistic and very much the work of backroom boys far removed from actual conditions? Wasn't the crash food production programme of the War years a failure?

Answer:

The targets may have been unrealistic, because it was a time

1. Mr. Tilney had written the words Douglas and Willie beside Berry.

when people were more optimistic about changing human habits of thought than many of us are to-day. But it would be quite wrong to call D.S. a backroom boy. He did extensive touring and really knew his land and the people who worked on it.

8. D.S. seems to have built up a team of trusted advisors, mainly Ceylonese; I was wondering whether you can recall who belonged to this group (a) in the 1930's (b) in the 1940's. The names that come to mind as possibilities are Brayne, C.L. Wickremesinghe, V. Coomaraswamy, P. Saravanamuttu, L.L. Hunter, A.E.Jansz, R.S.V. Poulter, Richard Aluwihare, A.G. Ranasinha, L.J. de S. Seneviratne; apart from O.E.G. of course and, later, Jennings on political matters.

Answer:

D.S. used all the men you have mentioned, plus R.H. Bassett, as reliable men to carry out his policies. On political matters I would think that he only consulted those underlined.

9. Have you any idea how Jennings and D.S. first got to know each other? How would you appraise the former?

Answer:

No. I never really came across Jennings.

10. Sir Andrew Caldecott does not seem to have been popular with the planting sector. Is this so? Is it true that both he and Lady Caldecott were subject to a social boycott? If so, why?

Answer:

I do not know. I was stationed in Colombo during the whole of Caldecott's time.

11. As Controller of Labour, was Gimson also subject to the hostility of the planters and merchants?

Answer:

Any efficient Controller of Labour would be bound to incur the hostility of many employers at this time when labour relations were being changed very rapidly - partly as the result of international pressure.

12. Have you any idea how the planting and mercantile sector regarded the close relations established by Caldecott, Drayton

and Nihill with D.S. and the leading politicians? Did they accuse the former of conspiring against Britain and her interests?

Answer:

I am not aware of this.

13. Can you recall the case of the Barnes' land? How did the matter arise? Did it lead to a minor contretemps between D.S. and, I think, Wedderburn?

Answer:

I do not know.

14. Who, in particular, was responsible for drawing up the Land Manual (or Land Orders) which were finalised by August 14, 1937? Did you have a hand in it?

Answer:

A. Arulpragasam drafted the forms under the direct supervision of C.L. Wickremesinghe. Much of the manual had, I think, been drafted by G.L. Davidson, under the direction of Brayne.

15. According to this Manual, allottees were supposed to be classified as (a) landless (b) not entirely landless but having inadequate land for their support (c) those with sufficient land. It is then stated 'the idea that only landless villagers are to be provided for is quite unsound. Further, it does not follow that (a) are to be preferred to (b) Where land is scarce, applicants of class (c) cannot, of course, be considered'. Have you any idea how far this was followed? Would officers have the time or inclination to go through a Manual of 79 pages?

Answer:

The manual was a book of reference, and an officer would only have to study in detail those parts which were relevant to the actual job on which he was engaged. I think that it was usually followed pretty closely.

16. I have discovered that another consideration governing the selection of allottees in the early 1950's was the number of children a man had, a man with a greater number being preferred to another landless chap with fewer children where it came to a choice. Did this consideration prevail in the late 1930's and 1940's? If so, was it officially supported at central

headquarters (the Land Commissioner's Office)?

Answer:

I don't remember it.

17. What was the term 'landless' held to connote? Would tenants with stable access to land on a share-cropping basis be considered landless?

Answer:

I think that they would.

18. If an allottee under the L.D.O. gave out a portion of his allotment to another on an ande basis, either because he was lazy or because five acres was too much for him to handle, would this be considered a violation of the conditions and would he have been evicted?

Answer:

I think he would.

19. How could one perceive tacit leasehold agreements and tacit (i.e. verbal) sharecropping of the lots? Could one rely on petitions to bring this to light?

Answer:

In my time the amount of land given out was not so great that it could not to a large extent be covered by the A.G.A's personal inspection.

20. Wasn't this new form of tenure very foreign to the people? Prior to this, freehold rights existed within the web of reciprocal obligations which existed in each village but the concept of individual units which the 1935 Ordinance brought into being would appear to go against traditional notions? Did the unpopularity of this form of tenure stem, in part at least, from the fact that it had no roots in custom?

Answer:

Yes. [Answer to first question.]

The main objection to the form of title was that you could not raise money on it by mortgaging it.

21. Would you say that this form of tenure, however good intentioned, was impracticable (a) in that it was not fully understood by

the allottees nor popular (b) in that it required a greater vigilance than an A.G.A. or G.A. could normally give (c) in that it required more staff officers than Government could afford (d) and, consequently, in that it was very difficult to prevent default of conditions?

Answer:

No. But in the light of experience - not only in Ceylon, but in other schemes since backed by the F.A.O. and other organizations - I should say that it might have been wiser to have concentrated on a few pilot schemes first.

On the other hand the need for giving out land to the landless was urgent; so was the need to protect the persons to whom land was given from having their land taken by their creditors.