

EDMUND RODRIGO

b. 16 January 1889.

C.C.S. 1912-47.

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5 March 1913	attached to Kurunegala Kachcheri.
15 Nov. 1913	P.M., Negombo.
3 May 1915	O.A., Colombo.
1 June 1915	Additional D.J. and Additional P.M. as well.
2 Oct. 1915	Municipal Magistrate and Additional P.M. Colombo.
12 July 1917	P.M., Puttalam.
13 Sept. 1918	O.A., Ratnapura Kachcheri.
8 April 1920	D.J., Batticaloa.
9 Sept. 1921	on leave.
24 May 1922	Acting D.J., Matara.
16 Sept. 1924	Asst. Com'er of Excise, Headquarters.
24 Dec. 1924	Asst. Com'er of Excise, N-Western Division.
16 July 1926	Asst. Com'er of Excise, Central Division.
13 Sept. 1927	Deputy Com'er of Excise & Asst. Com'er of Excise, Southern Division.
26 Nov. 1930	Acting Excise Com'er.
20 June 1931	Additional Asst. Colonial Treasurer.
7 July 1931	Controller of Supplies & Finance (Treasury).
12 Dec. 1931 to	Acting Deputy Financial Sec. as well.
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11 July 1932	A.G.A., Puttalam.
1 July 1933	Acting G.A., Northern Province.
29 June 1935	on leave.
26 Sept. 1935	attached to the Office of the Com'er for Relief of Distress.
10 Oct. 1935	G.A., North-Western Province.
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1947	retired.

Mr. Rodrigo is 77 years old, slightly unsteady on his feet and slightly deaf. He stated that his intellect and memory were on the decline. As a matter of fact, I would hesitate to say that this was so of his intellect, while his memory was fair to middling. He stood up to a two hour interview quite well and was generally quick on the uptake (where he heard the question) and definite in his answers; though not very attentive to grammar or structure.

A Sinhalese goigama from a village area, Mr. Rodrigo was one of the first Ceylonese to make the Civil Service through the Civil Service Examination in England. His initial attitude to the other section, the Local Division of the C.C.S., suggested egoism but I quickly revised this view: indeed, the interview was not marked by any desire to build himself up. The questions raised interested him a great deal and he answered them conscientiously and decisively. He was forthright and candid. Also very fair. This is seen in a sphere which serves as a good touchstone - comments on other individuals. He refused point-blank to say anything about those whom he had been at issue with: e.g. Sir Charles Collins, Sir John Kotelawala. This applied to some extent with regard to D.S. Senanayake too but he clearly had a great deal of respect for D.S. and made some useful comments on him.

Mr. Rodrigo is (and was) clearly a man of considerable character, competence and intelligence. It is said that he was an old-school type who could not stick the political types of the 1930's and forties and thought he knew better than them. It obviously has some truth. But it is an easy charge to make and due attention must be paid to the other side of the coin with special reference to the character of some politicians. What is more Rodrigo had the village background and the intelligence to rebutt them on all fronts, with an ability and independence of character that would not suffer meddlesome political interference gladly. His views on many subjects struck me as very reasonable and balanced. I would also rate his appraisal of individuals highly.

Since he was under Fraser in Colombo in 1915 his information on the riots was very useful. So too were his views on land settlement, the operation of the Waste Lands Ordinance, land speculators, general aspects of British rule, the Land Development Ordinance and agricultural problems and policies. His range of interest was wide and his fairly long stint as Director of Agriculture made him well qualified to comment on many aspects of rural life.

M.W. Roberts

31/10/66

INTERVIEW WITH MR. EDMUND RODRIGO

28 October 1966.

- I. Now, as I was saying, in your time were you taken out on any circuits?
- R. No. At a certain stage I went out with the Office Assistant sometimes. Not with the Government Agents themselves.
- I. And who was the Office Assistant?
- R. Luddington, Dyson.
- I. Did Office Assistants take you out on their own initiative or because the G.A. asked them to?
- R. On their own. It was part of personal relations between the younger men.
- I. You see, it would appear that in the early years the Ceylonese Cadets were not taken out by the European G.A.'s, though later on this changed.
- R. In the earlier years there were not many Ceylonese Cadets. The Ceylonese got into the Civil Service on any scale only after the war. Before that - in fact, I was the only man I think.
- I. Coomaraswamy? V. Coomaraswamy?
- R. Local division. You know, at that time the Civil Service was really two parts. Those who were recruited in England were in what is called the Regular Civil Service.
- I. Oh, I see.
- R. Then there was what was called the Local Division Civil Service, which was recruited to a limited degree - purely(?) Ceylonese(?) - by a local examination here. I was thinking, when I said, 'The Civil Service', of men who were recruited in England. There were a few recruited here. Two Coomaraswamys, C.L. Wickremesinghe, Ernst.
- I. The point was if you were not taken out on circuit by the G.A. the practical training you would receive would be more limited?
- R. Yes, very much so.
- I. I was wondering whether there was a question of social
-

- division here and a sort of European - perhaps even a colour prejudice because they didn't take the Ceylonese Cadets?
- R. I never felt that there was what might be called colour prejudice, but I always felt that naturally like, you know, birds of the same species meeting together, then the English - the British Civil Servant would naturally be attracted to the Britisher; talk to them more freely and that sort of thing. And there was a certain distance between the ...
- I. I know that something on which there was feeling among the Ceylonese and Indians and the West Indians was that later on as they progressed up the Civil Service grades they were kept in non-administrative posts for quite some time.
- R. No.
- I. Did you feel this?
- R. ~~There~~ There was no time for that sort of feeling because ... Now, I myself joined in 1913. The war came the following year. Then conditions changed almost overnight. So that I didn't feel it.
- I. Would it be correct to say that the Cadets who came after the First World War were more liberal in their outlook than those who had come before?
- R. I think that is so. With regard to racial relations and that sort of thing they were more liberal.
- I. Now, who were the G.A's under whom you served, in Kurunegala and in ...?
- R. In Kurunegala there was Kindersley. Then at - in Colombo there was Fraser. At Ratnapura there was Constantine and Alexander.
- I. And did they - did any of these folk impress you in particular, with regard to ability and ...?
- R. Ability. I thought that ... Now I forget, who was the chap I mentioned in Colombo?
- I. Fraser?
- R. Fraser. He was definitely more able than the others.
- I. Than the others.
- R. Came to a decision very quickly and the decision was manly, as we say. And usually the correct decision. They had different qualities. Now, Alexander was a thorough gentleman. When you meet him and you smile, both he and his wife, it was
-

a different world from these other men. Kindersley was an old-world type who tried to patronise the local people. Constantine was (?) (?) (?) (?) felicitious(?).

- I. Would you say that any of these British Civil Servants had a sense of mission or was that unusual?
- R. I think quite a number had but there were others who didn't.
- I. Was there a feeling that they were paternal despots? You know, of being ...
- R. Yes. Oh yes. But with an acute and precise sense of legality and right.
- I. Bound by the rules of ...?
- R. Yes; but different from today. Today one does not feel that action will be taken by Government because it is the right thing. At that time, whether you agreed with them or not, what they did was the right thing, according to their lights and according to the regulations. They never departed from that.
- I. Was there a tendency of British rule - that is, when I say, 'British rule', I say the period before 1931, before the Donoughmore Constitution. Was there a tendency to move in fixed grooves, without real purpose and objective? Without a sense of purpose perhaps?
- R. There was a general sense of contentment. No hankering after change.
- I. Let sleeping dogs ...?
- R. Yes. Its not ... It really(?) looked like idleness. But nothing was needed. The population stood at a certain level and according to the standard of living to which the people were accustomed that population could be catered for with the income within that country so that no one hustled, no one would hurry, no one foresaw the possibility that after so many years of British settlement the population would increase, leap up like this, and at the same time contact with the outside world would raise their requirements, standard of living; and didn't worry. That came only more or less as a sort of surprise.
- I. Was there too much reliance on routine? Did routine dominate?
- R. Looting?
- I. Routine. Routine; precedence and routine.
-

- R. Routine. Yes, I think so.
- I. Too much?
- R. Yes. I think by the time that I came into the Service that was happening. But from what I gather, earlier there was much greater exercise of individuality by the Civil Servants.
- I. In fact, I have come across some evidence that those who showed some sort of individuality were generally a bit discouraged and they were laughed at or ... People like Brayne perhaps?
- R. Yes. Yes. Brayne was regarded a little as a joke by people, although he was one of those men who was genuinely anxious to do what he thought was right. He was almost missionary in fact.
- I. What about Sandys?
- R. Sandys.
- I. Was he also regarded as a - like Brayne?
- R. No. Sandys was good-intentioned but weak, no force of character.
- I. When you were in the field, especially as an A.G.A. or later on as a Director of Agriculture, did you find it possible to establish a rapport with the peasantry? Were you able to understand their frame of mind? With the peasant? You see, your background was an intellectual background. I was wondering how translation was?
- R. I am a special case. I come from that group. I was born in a village amongst that class of people. My relations were that type of people. I was educated in a village school.
- I. Oh, I see. In what ...? Oh, in St. John's?
- R. Yes. And before that I went to my village school, [a] Sinhalese school. Then at St. John's. Then I went to England. So that my contact with the people in my youth was very close.
- I. And so you were able to understand them?
- R. Yes.
- I. What about the British - average British officer?
- R. No, they didn't understand the Sinhalese character. The Sinhalese character is very difficult to understand. As you know, as (?) possibly (?), there are peculiarities of our character which are very much - very un-English.
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- I. But didn't Woolf understand it to some extent, in his books?
- R. Yes, yes; he understood. And others also understood to a certain extent, when they interested themselves in the people generally. Many of them had special interests. Especially a man like Fraser, determined to develop the country. Almost like German methods, in fact. Yes; village roads, introduce electricity, introduce showy buildings, a central square with roads radiating and that sort of thing. All his actions were typical of his attitude of mind. Now, when you have a man like that, he's not very interested in the ordinary man beyond doing justice to him.
- I. Yes. Would it be correct to say of the 1910's and twenties that the Civil Servant represented the needs of the peasantry better than the average politician of that day?
- R. Did you say understand the needs?
- I. No. Well, perhaps ...
- R. Interested in them?
- I. Perhaps represent them?
- R. Yes.
- I. Understand and represent.
- R. Yes. Yes, I think so.
- I. That's very interesting. Because many of the politicians were often of the lawyer class.
- R. Yes, yes.
- I. And I was wondering how far they were in touch with the peasants?
- R. Yes. They were not in touch with the peasants, most of them. And, as I said earlier, there was a general feeling of contentment which did not promote any sort of interest with a view to the betterment of the peasant class. 'There they are. They are perfectly happy'
- I. That's on the Civil Servants' part?
- R. No, no ...
- I. That was the general feeling?
- R. General feeling amongst our own people. The Civil Servant felt it his duty to progressively improve the condition of his people.
- I. What sort of impact did a man like Dharmapala have in his day?
- R. Yes. We had reached the stage when nationalistic feelings
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became strong. You know, the initial course of development when a State like the British invaded backward areas, at first these people who hadn't regular meals to eat or anything like that, who didn't have - even have a money economy, finds that their coming here raises their standard of living. They have no tradition, no feeling that they themselves are a race of people. They accept the situation. They are very happy. Then they had a certain degree of education, even - some of them read John Stuart Mill and that sort of thing. And they get ideas of free government and that sort of thing. And those who reach that standard begin to feel, 'Why should we be like this? Why should these fellows come and rule over us?'. A natural feeling, found almost everywhere. You know, I was in the British Government, but all the time I felt, although I would not be disloyal to them, still, you know, why don't they go away and leave ^{us} to stew in our own juice. That sort of feeling you have at a certain stage. In Dharmapala's time that stage had been reached, specially with regard to religion mostly.

- I. But I was wondering how - what his impact was? Did many people take note of what he did? For instance, in your village before you went to England, was his name well-known?
- R. Yes. But not as an active figure influencing us but as a remote figure whose influence reached us through agents. For instance, I remember still when I was a boy before I went to an English school, a woman came along dressed in a saree - sarees had not yet come in - and had taught herself - had had religious instruction and that sort of thing and could speak ... And she was a representative of the group that Dharmapala created. And that is the sort of contact we had with Dharmapala.
- I. But what was - was there a mass response to him?
- R. No; no.
- I. No. Was this woman a member of a Temperance Society?
- R. No. Temperance Societies had not come into existence at that time.
- I. What sort of influence did the Temperance Societies have? Was there a following?
- R. Umm. Again it was religion more than anything else. Yes.
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- I. But wasn't it in a sense a nationalistic expression in a religious form? Something against - an expression against an alien culture?
- R. No; it wasn't conceived in that spirit. It might have developed later on. You see, at a certain stage, by about 1910, the people who had had Western education in Ceylon had come to - wanted somehow or other to show their resentment, to express their feeling against the Government, and any particular thing that came before them at any time, whatever it was, was good enough to beat the Government with.
- I. In fact, that comes - brings me on to these 1915 riots.
- R. Yes.
- I. And the way the Government suppressed them, you see.
- R. Yes.
- I. And I notice that you were in Colombo then?
- R. Yes.
- I. Did you have to go out on duty?
- R. I went out once, without being told by anybody. But the position was very unfortunate. Fraser, who was the Government Agent there, was very strong, and rabid almost, in his belief that this is an upheaval against the British Government and the(?) Empire(?) at(?) war(?).
- I. Yes. How did he get that idea?
- R. Because there was no reason for these things. It was a most meaningless sort of thing and I also was suspected. Not suspected; they had to be on their guard against ...
- I. They didn't like - they were suspicious of the Ceylonese Civil Servants?
- R. Yes. Anybody like that. I still remember when I said something in a minute, when I minuted something which seemed to indicate the want of belief in this theory of rebellion, Fraser wrote across in red ink: 'A.G.A.' - that's Brayne - 'A red herring;' and put a mark of exclamation. That was the attitude at that time and I considered that a natural attitude. I never had any resentment.
- I. But I think - I know it may have been a surprise to them but why - its a strange thing for a people to rise against the Moors if they were aiming at the British.
- R. Yes. The cause of the trouble - you see, peoples' nerves
-

at that time were highly strung. The European Civil Servants, they felt as if they were bleeding in Europe for their empire. At that time, here, somebody goes and pinches them from behind. Its not a sort of reasoned, calculated belief deduced from facts: that this was a rebellion against the British. But it [the riots] is sort of disregarding the interests of Great Britain in times of their difficulties. It came to be regarded like that.

I. Was there any shred of evidence in support of this?

R. No. It was not so. Nothing at all like that. I am also a Sinhalese man. I know the people. There was absolutely nothing at all.

I. Because I have seen some ... I mean, I don't believe in this but I have seen some of these letters written by Stubbs and some of the A.G.A's and G.A's in the provinces and they put forward all sorts of grounds, you see. They said one reason was that the shops in Colombo had been marked, 'Sinhala'. You see, the Sinhalese shops ...

R. Yes.

I. Then the use of Vesak lanterns; and at certain places they're supposed to have rung temple bells to gather the crowd, you see. These are - I'm not saying that they're correct but these are the things that they put forward.

R. Yes. I mean, those things did take place. But the European Civil Servants, they didn't realise that those things are almost instantaneous. The fight takes place at Kandy. It gets known. 'All the Sinhalese and Moors are fighting'. Immediately feeling rises among the Sinhalese; and overnight things are marked.

I. Yes. I don't believe it was against the British but apart from that was there a con... - was there some sort of pre-meditation against the Moors? Was this planned?¹

R. No. There was - I don't think there ever was any feeling. It was ... I don't know if you remember the Gordon riots as described by Dickens?

I. Yes.

R. Its something like that. No one knew how it began. No one knew how it spread.

I. But there must have been some sort of local incitement in

1. I think he shook his head, meaning 'no'.

each area? You see, what I mean?

R. No.

I. To get the mob up.

R. No, no.

I. I mean, you must have a mob leader?

R. No, there wasn't. If there was any sort of thing ... Of course now they have the feeling against the Tamils. But even regarding that feeling. I could get[sic] a riot, standing in Galle Face Green on a packing case and shouting, 'These damn Tamils, they came and they take our bread off our mouths', and that sort of thing; very easily. Unbalanced people can be agitated into activities of that kind. And that is what happened.

I. Was there any industrial unrest behind it in Colombo? Didn't the railway workmen take a leading part in the looting?

R. No. They - no.

I. The locomotive workshops from - at Maradana?

R. No. You see, there was a difference between the ordinary village man who was inactive and these people. These people were people who frequented Colombo, who knew their way about and when this agitation took place they were the people who took part. It is not that they organised the actual (?) ...

I. They were sort of natural leaders?

R. Yes.

I. And did you find that when - as O.A., Colombo, Fraser and others were reluctant to give you responsibility in handling the riots?

R. Oh yes, oh yes.

I. You felt that was so?

R. Yes.

I. And what were Brayne's and Wait's and - their views on the riots: the other A.G.A's, what did they say? Brayne and the other - Bourdillon and all the other European officers who were in the kachcheri.

R. Yes.

I. What were their views about the riots? Did they agree with Fraser?

R. Did they agree with?

- I. Fraser.
- R. Yes, a large number did. Yes.
- I. Were there any who disagreed, in your recollection?
- R. Not that I contacted[sic].
- I. Did you get the impression that Government and the military were very, very confused and rather panic-stricken?
- R. Yes. There's no question about that. That is - that was the situation. As I said, it was not reasoned out. Sheer ...: 'We are in difficulties; these fellows are ...'
- I. Did you meet Stubbs at all? The Colonial Secretary.
- R. Not during that time.
- I. There seems to be some evidence to show that that military Governor - I mean Brigadier-General Malcolm - was a bit eccentric?
- R. This is the first time that I heard that said. With regard to the activities of the British Government in relation to the riots, I may tell you at once that I'm entirely with them. I think [a] civil commotion of that magnitude and of that nature should not be just repressed by preaching and by prosecuting of the people. They should resort to terrorism. Just as in the case of the Gordon Riots. I feel that in the more recent riots ...
- I. '58?
- R. ... when the Tamils were attacked, the way that they dealt with it was wholly inadequate because when it was over the people were left with a sort of feeling that after all it's not bad to beat up the Tamils. Now it is very bad when there had been such an upheaval to leave that impression.
- I. Yes. This was of a serious nature, was it?
- R. What?
- I. 1915?
- R. 1915? Oh yes. It was very very general. When you go along in the train, along Slave Island, you see crowds of men, perfectly meaningless, with no feeling at all, no resentment, chasing three women along the - because they were Muslim women. Women who never got out without covering themselves. And you begin to boil. You get angry. I had that feeling and I had sympathy for ... And the rioters
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themselves. They were not bitter. They were not wicked. It was really impulse of the moment.

- I. But don't you think that the terrorism went too far? Didn't they deliberately try to ~~bow-tow~~ the - to cow the Sinhalese afterwards?
- R. No. Later they tried to make the people feel that this was a - [this] can't be tolerated.
- I. But what about this exaction of money for compensation? The way they did it?
- R. The eventual recovery by law, I thought, was perfectly justifiable. Perfectly justifiable. What might be questioned is the action in those cases in which they got hold of a man of some wealth and influence and then they released him on his paying ...
- I. That was virtually blackmail?
- R. ... 50,000 rupees or something. Yes.
- I. There were some cases like that?
- R. There were such cases. At that time they thought that these people were behind these riots and that they must be punished.
- I. In fact, weren't the Dias's of Panadura suspect? The Dias family in Panadura?
- R. Yes?
- I. Weren't they suspected to being - of aiding ...?
- R. Yes. All those people who led this Buddhist movement were suspected because the riots became - as appearing as a manifestation of feeling between Buddhist processions and a Muslim mosque.
- I. But then, also, apart from the acts of terrorism there was some unwarranted shooting in Kegalla and other areas, weren't there? And even perhaps in Colombo?
- R. I didn't feel it. I felt that the shooting even was necessary. Now, I'm ...
- I. You were for having martial law?
- R. Yes, yes.
- I. But should they have had martial law for three months? For three months?
- R. Yes?
- I. Should they have kept it for so long?
- R. No, it was not necessary. As a matter of fact, [for]
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safeguarding the country against riots it was not necessary, but it was necessary, I feel, by way of terrorising the people into a sober condition of mind. Not to - [not in] a revengeful spirit. All the time I was feeling that. Its like this. Now, take this, what you call these university rags. If you decide tomorrow to send away a whole lot down and pick a few men in the student body I should think that a very good thing. I believe in that sort of thing, drastic action. Really hard on the individual but it is necessary for the sake of the community at large. That may be a peculiarity of mine. I always felt ...

- I. Well, I would like to leave the riots and go onto another subject. A question of agrarian matters, land policy.
- R. Yes.
- I. In the 1910's and early twenties. That was before Brayne. Was there a land policy?
- R. No. None whatever. Except that in the past a few tanks were repaired but no active effort was made to make use of them, except in one instance when they got a group of Indians to come and (?) (?) (?) (?) (?) and after about nine months they were (?) (?) .
- I. But at the same time wasn't there a desire to encourage the peasant smallholders? You see, they were thinking in terms of yeoman farmers, weren't they?
- R. No, there wasn't any conceived plan.
- I. No.
- R. You carried on as you were doing - as everybody else was doing in that area.
- I. Didn't they want to sell land to the planters, to develop plantations?
- R. Yes - at the beginning. Before, the idea was to open up the country; really (?) (?) (?) this Scotsman(?) comes along, walks all the way from Nuwara Eliya, with a pack on his back, to Nawalapitiya or something like that, picks out a piece of land and hands his application to the Government Agent. The Government Agent and the Central Government were only too pleased that there was anybody who was going to open that land.
- I. Yes. But in some cases, especially in the lower lying districts, wasn't the growth of plantations at the expense of some of the village land?
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- R. That is of much more recent history than the other. The other aged back to the nineteen - 1840's. This other thing began largely with the extension of the rubber plantations. And it was not any policy of government. At least the people did not attach the importance to the land which they attach to it now. And the land itself was hardly ever any particular individual's. It was on a mixed family property. And a planter: 'Tell somebody I want to buy some land'. Then the local agent, a Sinhalese man usually, goes round these people, gets a deed from some of these co-owners, then the others find that the remaining land is useless and give out the title to it. Like that the village land was ...
- I. So there were lots of private sales like that?
- R. Oh yes.
- I. But when it was for Crown land, did the Government, before selling the land, did they examine the land and see whether it was necessary for the village or not? Was it reported on by the ...?
- R. No, the ...
- I. ... village headman?
- R. Generally no. It was assumed that the villagers had enough land. And the land that was sold for exploitation by the Europeans was largely land which in the conditions that existed at that time the village people couldn't cultivate. It was land that ... It was virgin forest.
- I. What about - but wasn't some of this forest land used for chena?
- R. Yes.
- I. So wasn't it necessary in that sense?
- R. Yes, that's true. That was (?) (?).
- I. And wouldn't you say that in some areas chenaing was necessary for the subsistence of the village?
- R. Mmm. Particularly in the Dry Zone.
- I. Now, for instance, in Ratnapura?
- R. Yes?
- I. Did the villagers suffer, I mean, because of - in this way? Because of the expansion of plantations?
- R. If you mean that the area of land available for them to work in and to live was reduced that is right. But if you mean that the condition of the people worsened owing to these
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things that is not correct.

I. Why?

R. Because for that - for the time being anyhow, their financial difficulties and access to the good things of life which were much more liberal than before.

I. How?

R. Well, ...

I. They worked on the plantations?

R. They earned wages. It is true that Tamil labour, Indian labour, was brought - especially for the tea estates, not so much for the rubber. But when there was land to be opened, it was always - the opening up of the land, laying out the roads, erecting the buildings, transport, was always Sinhalese.

I. And part-time labour on rubber estates?

R. Pardon?

I. And on rubber estates, part-time labour?

R. Yes, that's right. It was - if the population remained stationary I think it would have been a very good thing but the population won't remain stationary.

I. And I suppose the villagers got a market for some of their produce too?

R. Yes. Oh yes. The people don't understand but when a road is built, it may be to take the rubber away but villagers benefit. When the rubber is transported the cart[sic] take the rubber, stop somewhere for a chew of betel, for their morning tea - prosperity there. Why is that? The general activity which brought money and the necessities of life to the people became easier with these plantations. I - my own view is if these plantations are now removed there won't be anybody - they won't be doing anything with that land. Most of them.

I. Was there a class of Ceylonese who specialised in buying up land and selling it to planters?

R. Oh yes, there always ...

I. Did proctors specialise in it? Proctors and lawyers?

R. Its not too like that. But these village people to a certain extent. Occasionally a headman but not necessarily these lawyers and things ...

I. Mudalalis?

- R. Yes - mudalalis - yes. It used to - yes, its a mudalali type of man.
- I. But sometimes when they buy up dubious claims?
- R. Did they buy up?
- I. Dubious claims, like ...
- R. Yes.
- I. Get a deed from a diga - married woman and sell it to a planter?
- R. Yes? Well, that sort of thing has happened. There is no question about it. Because the Sinhalese intermediary is a very shrewd sort of fellow - immoral. He has no moral sense of right and wrong. (?) (?) (?) (?) (?) (?).
- I. Was there any politicians who could be classed as land-grabbers too?
- R. No, not more than (?).
- I. No, but, for instance, people like A.A. Wickremesinghe in Kegalla and Meedeniya Adigar, didn't they do this sort of thing?
- R. The reputation is that Meedeniya Adigar did. A.A. Wickremesinghe - I don't - I can't speak.
- I. What about the Wijeratne's in Ratnapura?
- R. I couldn't say really.
- I. And there was a European - did you know Thornhill and Ruxton? In Ratnapura. He was called Thornhill. Thornhill and Ruxton.
- R. I seem to remember the names but I don't ...
- I. No, because I think they also had built up a reputation.
- R. Yes.
- I. I was wondering whether you had heard about this? You haven't?
- R. But the European who wanted to invest money was ready to buy up any title this way. Most Europeans. I mean, it was not regarded as wrong or immoral, anything like that. Say, a village man comes along and says: 'Shall I buy you land, sir?' 'Well, yes'. How the land is bought and from whom and in what condition, they are not concerned with. They get the land. They paid - they agreed upon terms. And they think they have done their duty.
- I. In the 1920's many of the leading politicians attacked the Waste Lands Ordinance and said that the British Government were using this to grab land from the peasants and to sell
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- it to the planters?
- R. Yes. That - I don't think that was ever a definite policy. It happened that the ownership title to land had to be, sometime or other, clarified. And the Waste Lands Ordinance did that. Then the disposal of the land which came to the Crown under that arrangement, its quite a different matter. That was not part of the policy in passing the Waste Lands Ordinance. But when the lands did come, anybody who was prepared to buy that land and develop it, was given all the security. It did happen that, except a few people in Panadura and that sort of thing, many people who were prepared to develop the land, developed it.
- I. When they sold this sort of land, when the Government sold this land, before selling it did they consider whether this land was needed for the village, perhaps ...
- R. No, that didn't come into the picture till very much later. In fact, till the new Ceylonese politicians took the matter up.
- I. For instance, if some village garden was being sold privately - say, it was owned by an individual - or nindagama owners were selling some of their land, which included tenants ...
- R. Yes.
- I. If the G.A. or A.G.A. heard of this would he try and discourage it?
- R. No, he wouldn't think it his business. Its not that he encouraged it or anything like that. It was not his business.
- I. Not his business? It was sort of laissez-faire?
- R. Yes, private deals.
- I. That is very, very interesting. And now to jump to a different sphere and the time when you were Additional Assistant Colonial Treasurer.
- R. Yes.
- I. You were working under Woods were you?
- R. Yes, yes.
- I. I want to know what sort of man Woods was?
- R. Really a very fine man, a thorough gentleman. Understood his work and ... You see, other than taxation, there was not much of policy attached to people from the Treasury. It was merely collecting money and that sort of thing. And
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that he was quite good.

I. Bickmore was there? Bickmore?

R. Yes.

I. What sort of chap was he?

R. He was not human, a machine. Quite efficient but more a machine than anything else. Thoroughly unsuitable to be a Government Agent, for instance, in modern times.

I. Then I suppose he would have been more suited to this sort of work?

R. Yes, yes, that's right. Treasury, he was quite good.

I. And I'm interested in this spell of yours because this was the time when the new Constitution had come. And there is the question of the relations between the Officers-of-State and the Ministers.

R. Yes. Yes.

I. Have you any idea how Woods got on with the Ministers?

R. Woods got on better than any other body. He tried to humour them, to get round them. I remember, for instance, Woods, in passing, coming to my room, sitting on the table and saying that he had to make a speech the next day about something and asking me what I thought: whether it should be an aggressive speech in which he would condemn all these people and assert his point of view or whether it should be a conciliatory speech in which he'd get - try to make friends with them. That either he could do quite well he said. [Chuckle] I mean, that's what he told me; and then he asked me what I thought about it.

I. And what did he do in the end?

R. Now, I forget. I only remember his asking.

I. The point was that as Financial Secretary, though he had no vote, he could effectively stop certain measures, couldn't he?

R. In the Council, the State Council, and that sort of thing. But when it came to his office he was governed, as I said, by strict rules. There was no desire to thwart the people.

I. But did he make it a point to clarify matters and to make sure - you know, to define the position of the Financial Secretary and to make sure that in the future there wouldn't be any encroachments?

R. Yes, yes. There was a certain degree of antagonism, not only

- to him, but to all the three Officers-of-State as a nuisance. 'They are not people who ought to be there; our own men ought to be there'. Those three posts were there. Resentment that there were three posts, big posts, preserved from them.
- I. Did this lead to some friction?
- R. What?
- I. Did it lead to some friction?
- R. No, no active conflicts. But there was always an undercurrent of resentment. Any - if you could in any way hurt the feelings of the State-Officers, you did that.
- I. The Officers-of-State?
- R. Yes, political fight more than anything else.
- I. Don't you think that Tyrrell was rather a bad choice as Chief Secretary?
- R. A very difficult character Tyrrell was.
- I. Unpredictable?
- R. No. He was a very mild man. He was always willing to work with these people. Many people regarded him as a sort of forceful character. He was not. Yielded at all points.
- I. But was he rather old-fashioned in his views?
- R. Yes. He was one of the older Civil Servants.
- I. In fact, coming back to the earlier period, just before the Donoughmore you get a Constitution in which the unofficials were in a majority.
- R. Yes.
- I. And in the Finance Committee of this Council they used to call up various Civil Servants and criticise them severely.
- R. Yes.
- I. Was this resented?
- R. By the Civil Servants? Oh yes. I myself was one of those Civil Servants who was criticised very badly by that Council and I resented it very strongly.
- I. Oh. On what was this?
- R. Beg pardon?
- I. On excise matters?
- R. Yes.¹ Personal matters; somehow or other. They don't seem to be relevant even. They get a dislike for a man for some reason, then they attack him in Council.
- I. And was there a feeling on the part of the Civil Servants that Fletcher and Elphinstone, and then later Stanley too,

1. I don't think he heard the previous questions. Since we were on the subject of the Legislative Council of the 1920's I thought this incident occurred when he was in the Excise Department. However, it is quite possible that he is referring to the days of the State Council.

- didn't protect them sufficiently in Council?
- R. Yes, there was.
- I. Did you get the impression that Fletcher was trying to curry favour from - among the politicians?
- R. No. They - he was - he and the others was trying to fulfil his function of coordinating the activities of these people in a friendly way so as to guide them, according to his lights. There was a ...
- I. But wasn't he rather unpopular in the Service?
- R. I didn't feel that way at all. There was always a feeling that the Government of the time yielded too willingly to political pressure, to the, not actual financial detriment, at least to the discomfiture of the Public Servant.
- I. Did Fletcher sometimes tend to act above the heads of officials? Listen to a complaint from a politician and take action on that complaint without a report?
- R. No, no, he never tried that.
- I. And Stanley - what sort of man was Stanley?
- R. Who?
- I. Stanley. Governor Herbert Stanley.
- R. I had very little to do with him. In what way do you mean?
- I. No, I was wondering whether he was a man of force and whether he - or whether he also was like Fletcher trying to conciliate and ...?
- R. During all that period, except possibly for Stubbs, everybody's policy was conciliation. The spirit had got abroad that we must work with the people and the Governor, the Officers-of-State, they all quite loyally stood by that decision.
- I. Why, what did Stubbs do?
- R. Stubbs, he didn't consider it right to conciliate people. Temperamentally he was a very weird sort of individual, who had his views. Somewhat arrogant in manner.
- I. Cynic? A bit of a cynic?
- R. Yes. Oh yes, yes. [Chuckle] Enjoyed a little discomfiture of the Ministers, [chuckle] the politicians - that type of man. Not viciously but he enjoyed a situation.
- I. Regarding agrarian policy at this time - in fact D.S's policy - ...
- R. Yes.
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- I. Did you feel that in the 1930's their target and their hopes were far too optimistic?
- R. No. You see, the position of a politician of that kind who were[sic] trying to improve the condition of the people, were[sic] trying to provide for a growing population, is to have unlimited ambition but to try to effect what is practicable (?) (?) (?) (?).
- I. Now, for instance, towards the end of the war, when they were having a crash programme of food production - their target for newly cleared land was something like - oh, I don't know - something like ten acres a day or something like that. But they never reached any ... They only got about twenty-five per cent of the target.
- R. Yes, that was not normal daily activity. There the threat of starvation. Somehow produce food; open land. They opened land which should never have been opened. They put onto that men who should never have been there. Then they tried to work land when they had no people to do it. Because it was necessary to try - just beating about with a ... Because you had to rescue yourself. That was the idea at that time. That was not a regular land policy, or agricultural policy. The agricultural policy was that which determined the activities of Senanayake in colonising Minneriya, in restoring other tanks, and that sort of thing. That was set policy.
- I. What did you think of the whole policy of colonisation schemes? Economically? and in the long run?
- R. It was a necessity.
- I. It was?
- R. It was necessary to try. The only thing is that: its the quality of the people of the country; when you give anything you get spoilt; you want more, you want everything free. Now if you could have opened the colonies and told them, 'Now, here's the land. We've built a house for you. We've cleared the land. Now you carry on'. Then, the people were such that they remained(?) idle(?). It was very good policy. But the people were - had been so accustomed to depend upon other people that their whole idea was to get something more from Government. Surely, the failure of the colonisation schemes to go forward much more rapidly was due to the quality of the people more than anything else.
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- I. Another possible criticism - I'm just probing - was that D.S. ... For his programmes he needed a good Irrigation Department.
- R. Yes?
- I. But he seems to have virtually forced some of the more experienced irrigation engineers out of the island? Kennedy and Wilson and a few others.
- R. Kennedy was a very good man. I think Senanayake liked him.
- I. Yes, but, of course, he was a bit alcoholic and not easy to get on with?
- R. Yes.
- I. But Wilson later, and a few others, he seems to have virtually forced them out?
- R. Yes, I think Senanayake's manner was not good always, I think. It was not a policy against Government Service or against the Europeans or anything like that but his manner antagonised these people, especially when they had been used to look down upon the Ceylonese. The situation changed and that made it intolerable to work with[sic].
- I. Was he prone to want 'yes men'? Did he - was he inclined to have 'yes men' as ...
- R. Who?
- I. ... departmental heads? Senanayake. I mean, even later as Prime Minister. I wonder whether he tried to force things down his Permanent Secretaries?
- R. Its not the sort of thing on which I ought to express opinions. It is sad the quality of the politicians of this country: that is to say, a tendency to be flattered by those people who come round you and kow-tow to you and that sort of thing. His method was that.
- I. Without meaning anything detrimental, I notice that he had a group of advisors - Ceylonese - ...
- R. Yes.
- I. Which was a good thing I suppose because he was in touch with the Civil Servants. And would it be correct to say that in his inner circle, in the 1930's, O.E. Goonetilleke and C.L. Wickremesinghe were his sort of inner group of advisors?
- R. Yes, they were always there.
- I. And did he have another sort of wider circle of advisors?
- R. No.
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- I. Like - I mean special people - people who he favoured like A.G. Ranasinghe, Richard Aluwihare, L.J. de S. Seneviratne?
- R. No.
- I. Not that he helped them. I mean he relied on them for advice.
- R. No.
- I. No?
- R. No. Senanayake also had the fault of the politicians of the time. That's the feeling that they knew better than special advisors.
- I. But of course his method was to work by conversation. He never wrote anything. He always got others to write for him. He never wrote much?
- R. Yes, he ...
- I. I mean, when you conversed with him it was in conversation rather than through letters?
- R. Yes, yes.
- I. Or minutes, or despatches?
- R. Yes, but he did not shirk letter writing. I don't know who wrote; maybe his Secretary wrote, whatever it is, but he expressed his own views quite freely in writing.
- I. One aspect I'm interested in is this Land Development Ordinance of 1935. That's Brayne's scheme.
- R. Whose?
- I. Brayne's scheme.
- R. Yes?
- I. Can you remember they had an Ordinance whereby when they gave land, Crown grant, you could only pass it on to one person?
- R. Yes, yes.
- I. And you couldn't sub-divide it and things like that.
- R. Yes. Yes.
- I. And you couldn't alienate it.
- R. Yes.
- I. Did you have any experience of its working?
- R. Only at the beginning and before any complications could arise I had left.
- I. But what did you think of the scheme as a whole?
- R. The chief difficulty [was] the local social sentiment, habits of family sentiment. You see, the desire that every child should benefit equally from the parents' activities, is so
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strong that this creates antagonism. They will try to evade it.

I. And do you think it has contributed to family disputes in recent years?

R. To what disputes?

I. Family disputes among the colonists?

R. I couldn't say that. I am not [au fait] with that.

I. So in that sense, if this creates antagonism among the people it gets more difficult to work it?

R. Yes.

I. Therefore it might be impracticable?

R. Yes. You have to actually practice to see how it works. In some cases it'll work, in some cases there will be difficulties; there'll be evasions. For instance, we have this law against gifts. Now the Sinhalese people and the Tamils also are so used to giving a dowry to their children that its unworkable. Things like that, you see.

I. Someone told me that some of the older G.A's, the European G.A's, didn't like Brayne and his ideas. Therefore, when this was brought into operation they didn't put their best foot forward?

R. They didn't ...?

I. Put their - try to work it efficiently? I mean, they were not very keen on it.

R. No. There was no such thing.

I. There was no such thing?

R. No. By that time the Government Agents, the Civil Servants had come to realise that the times had changed; that you must move with the Ministers.

I. In fact, what strikes me about this Ordinance was that it needed a lot of staff officers, that is, A.G.A's, to implement it.

R. Yes.

I. Did you feel so?

R. Yes. But it was not a widespread application of policy. It was only in certain restricted areas at the beginning under these tanks and new colonies and that sort of thing. Only a very few Government Agents were involved in it and I think that, somehow or other, Senanayake managed to get into these

places the Government Agents who he required for that.

I. I see, yes. Of course, you see, in one of these - the successful working of this Ordinance depended on A.G.A's being willing to ...

INTERRUPTION Change of spool.

I. You say that it was impossible, even in your time, to be strong?

R. At that time when this law was passed.

I. Yes.

R. That's the middle thirties. It was impossible.

I. Why?

R. The Government Servant had become to be afraid of the politician and the politician was - this is criticising the politicians generally but I think it is correct criticism. They were not concerned in what is maybe called the general welfare of the community in such matters. Say, a man who was dissatisfied - who was very unsatisfactory in this colonisation work is evicted under the laws of government(?), immediately there will be a number of politicians who will try to exploit the situation for personal popularity and personal prestige. And they found it impossible to evict it[sic].

I. Also I think there was a feeling on the part of some A.G.A's that eviction was too severe a form of punishment.

R. What's that?

I. Eviction from the land was too severe a form of punishment for certain small misdemeanours.

R. Oh yes, that's human nature. All of us felt: 'How can we send that man away from that [land]'.

I. I'm interested in the agricultural policy when you took over as Director, 1936. What were the main lines of policy?

What were your main aims?

R. Ha-ha, that was never defined till the end.

I. Pardon?

R. That was never defined till the very end when I left. They were - there was no definite policy. There was a general difference between myself, if I may say so, ...

I. Yes?

R. ... and the administrative machinery, the political machinery.

You see, I held the view, and I still hold the view, that this going and trying to induce the people to grow a few more brinjals and that sort of thing, is not a part of the duties of the Department of Agriculture. The Department of Agriculture, I always felt, had to pursue agricultural science, get new principles, new scientific data within their knowledge and then spread that. They must be farmers prepared to accept that. This idea that to beat the man into accepting some of these things is something which is foreign to my nature.

- I. Yes. But in effect you're trying to get him to grow more brinjals by using scientific principles?
- R. Ah, yes. That is right. But really ...
- I. Forcing him?
- R. ... forcing him to do that, or even trying to teach him generally to grow a brinjal, was not a part of our duties in my view.
- I. But then how do you get your ideas across without ...?
- R. Ah, that you have to have the men who will go to these people. You ought to have demonstrations of that thing and the people must be interested. Actual growing of the potato, the Department trying to teach the people is very foolish. Because some other body is much more capable of growing a good brinjal than the best agricultural instruction in the world. Agriculture is an art, its not a science. Its an art which you derive by observation, by participation in your parents' and your neighbours' work. But art becomes stationary unless changes are introduced from the scientific point of view. The Agriculture Department's job, I thought, was only to find that and bring that to the notice of the people. But politically that was not enough. It was necessary for you to appoint agricultural instructors to go round and tell people, 'Plant some coffee plants here. Do this, do that, do that, etc., etc.'
- I. But that sort of thing doesn't go down?
- R. No, it doesn't. It'll never go down. Its a useless policy.
- I. One of the problems about this Agriculture Department and this scientific work is that sometimes scientific officers try to force people to adopt scientific techniques, when really you must try and also adapt your scientific techniques to the prejudices of the people.
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- R. Um?
- I. You must adapt your scientific techniques, at times, to the prejudices of the people.
- R. Yes. I don't know whether its the prejudice of the people.
- I. I mean to the practices and ...
- R. Yes, it goes against the established customs and traditions. That is true. And that is the whole idea of the Agriculture Department. It ought to be that. Break down prejudice, destroy practices - not violently, but by example, by tuition, by demonstration and that sort of thing. That ought to be the function of the Department.
- I. And hasn't it been the case that, sometimes, something which has been advocated by the Department has been a total failure. Say, they say that A is good but they'll go and demonstrate it and A prove a failure and then the whole Department is discredited? Thereafter?
- R. Yes, that happens. The fact is this: the scientific investigation as it is carried out in Ceylon or in America requires precisely the same amount of application and the same amount of effort. Now, we haven't got the means ...
- I. Pardon?
- R. We haven't got the means. We appoint one chemist or somebody like that, or one plant pathologist. He has to do - his work is not coordinated with anybody else's work and its wasted. He just carries on. And it is useless work. And the basic inquiries cannot be carried out like that. It requires large areas of scientific application.
- I. Did several ... I mean different farms in different regions?
- R. Yes, that's right. There must be the farmers, there must be the scientists and on a large scale. That sort of thing can be done in rich countries. In this country they never appoint more than one botanist. Now one botanist or geneticist trying to handle all the crops and to produce results within a year or two is absurd. And so much so that people don't seem to realise here scientific investigation very often ends in failure. You here, the other man there, the other man there, the other man there, try the same thing. You fail, this man fails, this man fails, that man succeeds. Or he goes near success. What he does is carried out here and he
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tries to imitate and exchange things. That sort of investigation, coordination, activities in different centres are necessary for agricultural science to be effective. We can't afford that. Therefore all basic investigation has to be(?) (?) (?). Application of any basic fact which is discovered anywhere in the world to our conditions is a very valuable thing.

I. Now, for instance, one of the difficulties was that perhaps the education of the peasant; in the sense that - did he have the education to understand that manures have to be applied in a certain specific way?

R. Yes?

I. Did he have the patience and the education to follow these - follow either instructions or even examples?

R. I don't agree with you that any kind of education is necessary for that sort of thing. Our own people had been applying manures of different kinds for ages. When a new thing was introduced they were to try it in the ordinary course.

I. No, but some of these new phosphates and things, don't they involve some sort of complicated procedure?

R. No. They ... That has to be applied. This - put into one form, into a mixture and the application - they're told how to apply it. There's no - one of the difficulties is [that] farming in this country - agriculture - is still very largely subsistence agriculture not commercial agriculture. [In] subsistence agriculture unless you start with family capital or something like that, you can't afford to spend the money that is necessary for buying these things. So that whenever you get into application, that is one of the principal difficulties in this country in the absence of farmers.¹ The ordinary subsistence agriculture people are there and in very recent years - in the last forty or fifty years - a certain amount of intensive vegetable cultivation has grown to supply population centres and that is all. For instance, staple produce like grain: you haven't yet got a man who starts out to farm twenty-five acres with the object of selling paddy.

I. With?

R. With the object of selling paddy. We've never had, and we

1. Capitalist farmers.

never will have, in this country.

- I. I was wondering whether the effort and the money put into colonisation schemes couldn't have been better directed somewhere else? To agricultural light industry or something like that?
- R. Well - no. You see, the reason is that you had to find food for these people. Men who were intelligent enough saw - Senanayake was one of those who saw - the difficulties that will arise next year, ten years hence, twenty-five years hence, fifty years hence. Now, we never imported rice, we lived somehow on what we could produce, various crops and lands and a little rice grown. After the tanks went out of action in the small valleys in the Wet Zone, which you dam with something and develop, with that sort of paddy. This paddy - rice imports started with the European planter who wanted to feed these ...
- I. Estate?
- R. Estate labourers. And that paddy - they looked round. They found that in Burma there was deltaic land which was - which would produce the rice. It was not producing as much as was necessary but the demand created the supply. The Indian Tamil went there and bought up the land and cultivated it with rice. Well, Senanayake saw/^{all}that. Senanayake also saw that that deltaic land also is limited and that the population there is growing as fast as ours; that next year they will send the rice with some difficulty, charging us a little more than they did last year. Ten years hence there won't be any. You take my word. In ten years time we won't get any rice from Burma. And Senanayake saw that. Then, what could you do. Rice cultivation under the conditions that are[sic] available at that time was the only remedy. And under the conditions available at that time these colonisation schemes, setting a man down there with his family and saying, 'Grow paddy. Here's five acres of land', was the only remedy. I think Senanayake was right.
- I. Isn't rice cultivation rather an uneconomic - unprofitable shall I say - form of cultivation? From the surplus point of view?
- R. Yes, it is. The fact is you have to start with the basic
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fact that the wet tropics, or tropics of any kind, are unsuitable for the cultivation of staple crops. You plant paddy in the best soil in the tropics - that's Java - you can get about thirty bushels, thirty-five bushels at the most. You plant the same paddy in a country in which there are four hours of mild sunshine a day with not too much rain and that sort of thing, you get one hundred and forty bushels, one hundred and fifty bushels. Its an economic factor. I remember once my asking Senanayake when he was comparing different countries ...

- I. Where do they get one hundred and forty bushels? Are there any countries where they get that many bushels?
- R. Oh yes. (?) Japan. In - I think in Formosa, that area. In Italy, in America, all those places. You can get. As I was going to say, once I happened to - went to see - discuss - I happened to tell Senanayake: 'You go to Marawila; you take a coconut tree, just plant it. About eighty nuts per year. In Nawalapitiya you plant the same tree with manure and all that sort of thing - if you get twenty nuts a year you're lucky! There must be the limiting factors caused by climate and conditions, and rice cultivation is like that. This idea that you can on a substantial scale get sixty bushels of paddy per acre is utter nonsense. And when they show they are doing it they are lying.
- I. Hasn't one of the great difficulties in your time and even now - one of the great obstacles to government policy has been the lack of adequate statistics, on agriculture?
- R. Adequate?
- I. Statistics. On the size of farms, the yields, the acreages?
- R. Yes, if there are ... There are two sides to consider. That's those who determine policy and those who do the actual cultivation. For the matter - the people who cultivate - who direct policy possibly that would have been useful.
- I. Yes, that's what I meant.
- R. Yes, but for the paddy cultivator here its utterly useless.
- I. No, not for him. But for the policy makers its useful to know the size of the problem...
- R. Yes.
- I. ... and other factors that determine the problem before
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tackling it.

- R. Yes, yes, oh yes. Its very necessary. And the tendency to deceive themselves is so great here. Deceive themselves and deceive others. They still say that they can make Ceylon self-supporting in rice and that sort of thing. Its utter damn nonsense.
- I. For instance, don't you think that the means of collecting agriculture statistics - you see, the extent of land which is sub-divided and which is under tattamaru, and things like that, the means of collecting that information are not available? The headmen are not good at this sort of thing?
- R. I don't know whether that is much use to begin with. In the second place, it requires actual education on the part of the people who collect the data and actual - land surveys and that sort of thing. And knowledge on the part of the land owners of exactly what he owns, of the boundaries of his land. All that is missing.
- I. Oh, they don't have that?
- R. No.
- I. Turning to a different aspect in the earlier years - in the 1910's and 1920's - the British Civil Servants and the Government as a whole were very much against chena cultivation in the Dry Zone, or anywhere. Do ...?
- R. Yes. That's true.
- I. Pardon?
- R. They thought that it destroyed the land. Yes.
- I. Mmm. But don't you think that was wrong?
- R. That was wrong. You must start with the human: 'that man must live. And the only way he can live is chena cultivation.' You mustn't start with the land. They started with the land: 'the land must be preserved; the man must not(?) (?)'. That was definitely wrong.
- I. Don't you think that this illustrates an application of foreign ideas to Ceylon? Because they were thinking of - in terms - in, shall I say, European terms ...
- R. Yes.
- I. ... and to them this was wasteful?
- R. Yes, that's right, quite right. They believed in the economic use of land. This is uneconomic.
- I. Yes, but did they go so far as to ban it altogether? They
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- allowed it, didn't they, to some extent?
- R. Oh yes. You can't see the population die out, you allow within controlled limits.
- I. But were you even for this control? Were you against this control? Was the control taken too far?
- R. Yes[hesitant yes]. I had no definite ideas at the time. I moved with the Government of the time.
- I. Of course you didn't serve in the Dry Zone, except as a judge?
- R. Yes. Yes.
- I. Now, for instance, did you come into contact with Freeman at all?
- R. Freeman, yes.
- I. Because he was against this policy.
- R. Oh yes. He started from the human angle. Then he was regarded as a queer, quaint sort of individual.
- I. Did the Secretariat dislike him because of ...?
- R. No, they tolerated him. They didn't dislike him. Just as you'd tolerate any crank.
- I. But was he all that crankish in his ideas?
- R. No, he was perfectly alright. As he grew older, his mind began to be weak like all of us, but apart from that he was not cranky.
- I. Who were the people you served with in Ratnapura and Puttalam and Batticaloa? Who were the other Civil Servants?
- R. In Batticaloa there was Brayne and a fellow called Seneviratne, who died young. At Kurunegala there was Kindersley and there was Dyson for some time and Luddington. At Ratnapura there was the Government Agent, Constantine and afterwards Alexander. And there was M.D. Pierie, District Judge. That's all. That was the time when the Service was a little short [of staff] ...
- I. Puttalam?
- R. Puttalam. Wait was the Government Agent. I mean, Assistant Government Agent. I was a - we had an old clerk who had been promoted - sort of not actually into the Civil Service but made to do work as an Office Assistant; and myself as Magistrate.
- I. What sort of man was Wait?
- R. Wait. He was a very good man, devoted to his work and no outside delaying interest, like these people who want to play
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games and that sort of thing. He used to have his hobby in bird-watching and devoted to his work.

I. Luddington?

R. He was a very intelligent man.

I. He was a Maths man, wasn't he?

R. Yes. A very intelligent man.

I. Because he - afterwards I think he left the Civil Service and became a planter, didn't he?

R. No.

I. Oh.

R. He married a woman who herself was a planter.

I. Oh, I see.

R. I don't know what he did after that.

I. I was wondering whether he was rather an unorthodox type? Luddington?

R. He never functioned as Government Agent or anything like that. He was Office Assistant and after that I think he was in Land Settlement Department or something like that. I forget what.

I. What were your impressions of the Land Settlement Department? Do you think that they were working in a liberal manner or ... too strict?

R. It depended very largely I think upon the individual. Whether you declare this land private land or Crown land depended very largely on the - not only on the evidence but on your outlook on that evidence. On the way that you look at it. Therefore it is personal. But the object of government, as I understood, was merely to define the status of the land. Whether that belonged to the people ...

I. Or whether it was ...

R. ... or had to be preserved as Crown land. The idea that they wanted to take it as Crown land in order to give it to European planters is utter nonsense. They wanted to make the best use of the land. It may be that at a particular time the European planter[sic] is the best use. At another time it may be allocation to tenants. Whatever it is they wanted to make the best use of the land. That was the idea. Of course, with this airy(?) land ownership of: 'This belonged to my family. That area is mine' - when that is challenged, when the Government declared, 'This is not your land', then,

there was resentment. And they, when given(?) to(?) others(?), they tried to attribute motives to the other fellow.

I. What did you think of the headman system as a whole?

R. With a population like ours who had to be treated paternally a system of local men like that other than the police-work but actually communication work was necessary. And I think at that time those people who were appointed headmen were very good for that purpose. And during the recent floods I began to regret the change. Now, I was rescued from that place in a paddle boat, in an improvised boat by the old headman. The grama sevaka we didn't hear of. No one heard of till the floods were over and he came to ask the people what damage has occurred. But when it was necessary to go round in some sort of improvised boat and see what, how the people are, it was (?) (?)

I. The old headman?

R. The old headman who had lost his job. He was the man who did this work. He took food from his own house to the various people who couldn't cook and that sort of thing. The grama sevaka didn't. For that sort of social work, that headman system was very good. And that sort of social work was what was required at that time. Two things: so far as the people are concerned, that's social work. So far as the Government was concerned, some contact with the people and ...

I. A personal factor? A personal factor?

R. Yes, yes. And that headman would - a very good thing. Of course, these things can't last for ever.

I. What about all these accusations of bribery and corruption and cliques?

R. Its very difficult to say anything because in our country a charge is brought very easily.

I. Brought?

R. A charge is brought very easily. There's a job advertised: you and I apply. You get the job. My tendency is to say that you bribed that man or that man appointed you because he happened to know your father's cousin or something like that. That it is a sort of natural selection, which may be erroneous but still that it is honourable, you disregard.

- I. In fact, the British used this argument as an argument against the employment of Ceylonese in administrative posts. They said that, say Silva was a Civil Servant, they said that Silva couldn't be made a G.A. because he - whatever he said or did the people would distrust him.
- R. Ha-ha, that's true to a certain extent.
- I. But then in that case you'd never get self-government.
- R. In that case?
- I. You'd never get self-government.
- R. Yes: 'We agree that our government is not too good but we want self-government because we want our government, good or bad'. If you wait till the ideal conditions are reached, the foreign race goes and administers justice in a place where they have no interest. If you wait for that, you will never get self-government.
- I. But you felt it that - didn't you, that they didn't want Ceylonese as G.A.'s and A.G.A.'s, in the early years?
- R. There was no time really because the first - apart from these men, what is called the Local Division, that came recently, Arunachalam got into [the] Civil Service. Paul Pieris got in and then I got in.
- I. But then Paul Pieris was never made an A.G.A.?
- R. No, that's right. And Arunachalam was never made an A.G.A. Those were the only two who were appointed to the C.A.S. And hardly a European who has not been so appointed [i.e. to a G.A. or A.G.A.'ship]. It is true. There was a sort of racial bias.
- I. There was a distrust of the discretion of the Ceylonese?
- R. Yes. They were not convinced of the Ceylonese man's ability or even his honesty.
- I. Did you come across any arrogance on the part of European Civil Servants, or particularly of planters?
- R. Really there was arrogance, always. Planters, a very great deal.
- I. Officials?
- R. Officials? They had to recognise their duty and therefore their arrogance if at all was modified. But they were extremely reserved. Their social circle was their own. And quite naturally.
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- I. But did you feel that this aloofness or this separation was bad because they were not in touch with the educated opinion - educated Ceylonese opinion?
- R. Yes, it was unfortunate. It didn't produce the best possible results.
- I. Were many of them - many officials patronising? Rather too patronising in their ...?
- R. Yes.¹
- I. On the other hand, looking at it the other way, because of - because they were foreign ways and because they were patronising, etc. did you feel that some of the Ceylonese politicians had a rather, what I say, pronounced inferiority complex?
- R. Oh yes, there's no question about it. Even with reference to the Ceylonese Civil Servants, the politicians had an inferiority complex.
- I. Even - oh, I see, - even ...
- R. Yes, much more than the racial, than the - racial - the actual recognition of racial superiority of the white man was there. All the world over the white man was the conqueror of the black man.
- I. Pardon?
- R. Whenever the white man went and conquered the black man he had the belief that he was God and we were dirt. Of course, not to that extent but still there is that feeling of difference. But there was no resentment.
- I. Resentment on whose part? Among the ...?
- R. Among the Ceylonese. That came very much later.
- I. Did you have much contact with the gansabhas?
- R. No.
- I. Not even the village tribunals as ...?
- R. Village tribunals, when I was Government Agent I had.
- I. Were they useful or ...?
- R. Y-e-s. They took away some of the work from the Police Courts and that sort of thing.
- II But you see one of the ideas behind the village tribunals was to avoid having proctors and lawyers?
- R. That - it happened that way but that was not the object. It was merely survival of what they considered the past
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1. After reflection, a positive yes.

arrangements.

- I. But the point was even though proctors and lawyers were banned, didn't the witnesses see a proctor before and get coached up?
- R. No. The gansabhawa work was such that the peoples' financial resources - of the people who took part in them - did not reach that level of consultation with lawyers. But there was a great deal of tricky law-mind in the people themselves. They consulted each other and decided what they should say.
- I. Would you say that the people were prone to commit perjury?
- R. What?
- I. Rather inclined to commit perjury?
- R. Oh, very readily. Very readily. That is one of the misfortunes of the country. Now, I have my servant. When he says something ... 'Did you buy something?' He hesitates to say ... [he] decides what he should say. He doesn't speak the truth. He says what he thinks he should say. And that is at all levels whether found or not. Untruthfulness is almost universal. That is really the worst feature in the country - in this country.
- I. Regarding the whole British system of justice - you know ...
- R. Yes.
- I. Did you feel that they brought law rather than justice? Their formal, slow system?
- R. Umm ... yes. Its law that is administered. I think the Civil Servant, up to a point, when he was the judicial officer, wasn't so much of a slave to the law as ...
- I. As the legal men?
- R. Yes, as the legal men. But everybody regards the law as settled and finished in relation to the requirements of justice, than trying to administer the law.
- I. No, the point being that it was rather a slow process.
- R. Oh very.
- I. And very cumbersome and villagers had to travel sometimes for miles to come and ...
- R. Ah yes. That's something on which I have very strong feeling. As a judge I had very strong feeling on these postponements. A villager comes into Batticaloa from a long distance; three ferries, walking in the morning - [no] they can't come in the morning, they come the previous night, sleep somewhere, in
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some verandah or something like that. If the case is not heard the next day, well, they have to sleep the night, go back and come again. And they have no money to ...

I. Now, how could this sort of thing have been avoided? Was there a practical method?

R. No, none at all.

I. But couldn't you have more itinerating courts?

R. Its a very good thing but the country couldn't afford it. People don't realise that when the British came here there was no money economy in the country, no income, nothing at all. They had to create the income. That is the secret of what many resented: the construction of roads and hospitals in the planting areas. To construct roads and hospitals in other areas you had to make the money in the planting areas first. The whole trouble was that there was no money income.

I. And also did you, when you were on the Bench, and when some of these complicated land cases came up, did you feel that your decisions were a bit of a shot in the dark? I mean, what I'm trying to get at is: could a chap in a town on a bench really see the ins and outs of the village problem and - without seeing the land, without knowing the rivalries in the village and ...

R. I don't think all that is necessary. What is necessary is to know what the truth was of what these people were saying. And that is judging the evidence. And you know both sides are equally ready to lie. Therefore this decision of cases in this country on evidence is a most unsatisfactory thing. It'll remain unsatisfactory always. It has been unsatisfactory. You can't avoid it. A poor man ... You know, one of the brightest features of our public life today is the judiciary. The way that the judiciary has stood up to these changes and that sort of thing. You get hold of a young lawyer and appoint him a judge, his general strictness of conduct, his probity, his application to work and that sort of thing, its grand. That's one of the things that the British left here before they left. But with all that, what could they do, if they can't say whether this man can be believed or not. This man comes and says something, that man comes and says the opposite. And you don't know which to believe. And neither

- of them loses caste in the village by this fact. Everybody knows that this man lied but ...
- I. That's what is good about justice under the coconut tree, the village gansabha.
- R. Yes.
- I. Isn't it more difficult for a person to lie?
- R. Yes. There, the difficulty is the enforcement. If you decide something, you can't enforce it.
- I. Why?
- R. How are you going to enforce it?
- I. If you give that authority, whoever is deciding, the power to enforce it?
- R. You want a large organisation to enforce that - your decisions. And under each coconut tree, as it were. And you can't afford it.
- I. Turning to a different sphere, the Donoughmore Commission. When they came out were the Ceylonese Civil Servants consulted? The senior Civil Servants?
- R. I was not quite senior at the time. Yes, they were.
- I. Now, for instance, a body of Civil Servants under Newnham, met the Commission in secret - in camera.
- R. Yes.
- I. And I was wondering whether you were consulted before this body went in? You see, ...
- R. No. Unfortunately I had - I wasn't consulted. The Committee of the Civil Service Association, I think.
- I. Yes.
- R. I wasn't in the Committee.
- I. What was your own reaction to the Constitution? The new Constitution?
- R. The present Constitution, or ...?
- I. No, the Donoughmore.
- R. Donoughmore. I accepted it as an advance on the Constitution that existed and, as a Sinhalese man, any sort of advance in this direction leading towards eventual dominance of the race itself was good.
- I. But the politicians didn't like it. They didn't like - I mean, as such. They criticised it.
- R. Their not liking it means ... You know, you always ask for more. You get something, you ask for more. They would
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have liked if everybody went and they were the bosses. But the belief of the framers of the Constitution was that first they must be experienced and they'd get training. And they think that they have all the training.

- I. What about the grant of universal franchise? What was your attitude?
- R. I liked it. Even now I like it. I think it is better than a few people.
- I. If it had been limited do you think that it would have led to the creation of an oligarchy?
- R. What?
- I. Of an oligarchy? Of, you know, ...
- R. Politicians? or ...?
- I. Yes. Of a few Ceylonese - leading Ceylonese politicians.
- R. You mean, the Constitution?
- I. You see, if it had been - if the franchise had been limited ...
- R. Oh yes, there would have been a few people [in control]. I shouldn't have liked that. Universal franchise is something that I liked.
- I. Before the Donoughmore Commission you got the unofficials in a majority.
- R. Yes, for a little while.
- I. And Clifford looked at this Constitution and said that it was altogether unworkable. But Stanley called it 'a qualified success'. And now this is a conflict of views. What was your opinion?
- R. Depends on the working - the attitude of the men actually doing the work at the time. You could have obstructed him but sensible people begin to wonder where is that obstruction going to lead to. And I think our politicians were at that time sensible enough to feel that mere obstruction, simply because they were in the majority, wouldn't lead to anything - any good results. So they worked in a spirit of compromise, which was very good I think.¹
- I. Then after the Donoughmore Commission came and this new Constitution was established, you had this Executive Committee system. Did you have any close contact with any Executive Committees?
- R. Any Committees? Oh yes. I worked under different Committees.

1. I think he is referring to the working of the Donoughmore Constitution rather than the 1920's in this paragraph.

- I. What Committees did you have to go to?
R. Home Committees.
I. And Agriculture?
R. And Industries.
I. Who - and - for instance, did Baron Jayatilaka have control over his Committee?
R. Yes. Not to the same extent as Senanayake.
I. Oh. And what about Industries? Who was it? Periya Sundaram?
R. Corea.
I. Corea. And did he have command?
R. He ... In my mind, Corea was the greatest gentleman of all the Ministers. A very nice man. Not a very strong minded man. Very, very good man and I think the people liked him.
I. What did you think of this structure as a whole - this Committee system?
R. I think it went quite alright. You have to judge it, not from first principles, but from the manner in which it worked. And it worked quite satisfactorily. Men like Senanayake who could command the confidence of the people came to the top. Now, Kannangara, universal education.¹ Under those conditions that existed at that time, that was right. You'll find all round that the Committee system did work.
I. But wasn't it rather cumbersome and slow and uncoordinated?
R. That depended upon the man at the top. The President of the Committee.
I. But, for instance, couldn't one Committee work against another Committee without realising it, or ...?
R. Not any more than one Minister would work against another Minister. They wouldn't work against them. There never was that intention at any time I think. I never came across that. But there was the desire to be the top person always. To do something first, to do something ...
I. To gain prestige?
R. ... before the others did it. For instance, take a very simple illustration. They wanted this sugar industry established. The question - the factory also had to be built. Oh, they were - desire on the part of the Agriculture Ministry and this Ministry to get hold of that. That sort of rivalry there was. But never opposition.
I. But isn't it also correct to say that Ceylonese are not very

1. C.W.W. Kannangara was Minister of Education and is popularly credited with the decision to provide universal education.

good Committee Members? Too many people speak at the same time and ...

- R. Yes, that is so. That is so. And before everything else, they don't study a question. They come there and ask an irrelevant question; if they have anybody to attack, they attack him. They don't study the problem and consider all its implications. They come there ready to - prepared to make their contribution.¹ One man who did that was Senanayake; always studied his case.
- I. Don't you think the Constitution was bad in that it brought the directors of technical departments into direct contact with their Ministers? And this was liable to lead to friction, because the technical officers are not used to dealing with politicians. Whereas ...
- R. Well, technical officers had to take directions from some sort of administrator. The whole administration... Even if you appoint one of these technical men as the head, he becomes an administrator. He's no longer a technical man. He's an administrator. And the administrator is always necessary. The Committee took on that job.
- I. Yes, but the point was, wasn't it better to have a sort of Permanent Secretary between the Minister and the technical man, as it is now, than - in the Donoughmore Constitution it was direct, you see. Now the Irrigation Department man was directly under Senanayake.
- R. Yes, it was very curious that the Committee itself never did function as a whole with the - in cooperation with the heads of depart... - with the technical officers. It was the Minister at the time who dealt direct[sic] with him and the Ministers often ignored the Committee.
- I. And didn't the Ministers quite often present their Committees with fait accomplis?
- R. Oh yes, yes. And the Committee didn't mind because they never studied the problems.
- I. Wasn't Sir John Kotawela a type of man who liked to take big decisions without studying problems? Without doing the necessary spadework?
- R. I shouldn't like to speak on those ...
- I. What sort of Governor was Caldecott - Caldecott?

1. He means: they came unprepared and ill-versed but have some special bees in their bonnet to advocate.

- R. Quite good intentioned; and able also.
- I. Because he seems to have got on better with the politicians than the previous type.
- R. Yes. You see, this is a sort of progressive change. When the first elected member came he was a great nuisance. Then more people came, the people began - the Public Service, the Government, from the Governor downwards, began to be a little more reconciled. By the time it came to the 1940's, they accepted this change as a sort of necessary thing, that is coming.
- I. What sort of man was Wedderburn? Was he a good Chief Secretary?
- R. He was a very good Civil Servant, that's all. He was ...
- I. But then he wouldn't have been good as Chief Secretary, would he?
- R. Not bad, but there was nothing very original about him. He was a very good gentleman.
- I. Drayton. Wodeman and then Drayton.
- R. Wodeman? Wodeman - I'm particularly fond of Wodeman because it was he who - it was under him that I first got a good insight into routine work. He was a very good man at routine.
- I. Oh. Under him where?
- R. He was the Excise Commissioner. I was a Deputy.
- I. Oh, I see, yes.
- R. For about two or three years. And I am fond of him for that and also I think he recognised merit in me, which I don't know whether it was there or not but he acknowledged it.
- I. Was he a perfectionist?
- R. Yes.
- I. Orthodox?
- R. Yes. Very.
- I. Of course, he didn't get on with Layton?
- R. No. He'd - I think he was very badly treated in that. You see, ...
- I. What happened?
- R. This Japanese push came. It was the duty of the Central Government, and through Layton, who was East-India Command to warn these people, 'Now this situation is coming. You'll be ready'. Nothing. We knew nothing till the Japanese
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actually dropped bombs and after that it was very easy for Oliver Goonetilleke and people like that, to find fault with the past and to spend money and prepare things. But before all that it was the duty of the central authority, the British Government, through Layton, to tell the Ceylon Government, 'The Japanese are pushing on and its unlikely that the Eastern Command will hold them. You must be prepared for any eventuality'. They were never told that. And so we were not prepared.

I. What sort of Chief Secretary was Drayton?

R. Drayton?

I. Robert Drayton.

R. That is the lawyer who ... Oh yes. He was good in his way, but nothing very exciting.

I. He doesn't - he seems to have been a bit unpopular with the Civil Servants?

R. He was very unpopular with me because [chuckle] he ... I actually wrote to him about it: that its his duty to defend the Civil Servant when he was formally(?) attacked. But his attitude was that he had a function... Which is true when you look at it, you know, although I felt these things. Their business at that time under the conditions created by the home government were to see that this Constitution ran. Merely to oppose somebody, to criticise the politician, when that will create chain reactions which are unfavourable to the running of the Constitution, they can't undertake. They ought not to. And we as public servants ought to realise their position. Their business was to make this go.

I. I heard Drayton and Nihill seem to have been very friendly with Senanayake and Jennings and ...?

R. Yes, at that time everybody was friendly. Except that, you see, the - there was a very great deal of misunderstanding also between the politician and the permanent officers. They had preconceived ideas of a man's character and that sort of thing, and the politician ...

I. Who had a preconceived idea?

R. The politicians. Now, Senanayake himself, for instance, talked: 'This man was an unreliable man', 'This man was a lazy man', 'This man was this', which was (?) (?). And those

things he couldn't shake off.

- I. How was Collins?
- R. I had better not talk.
- I. After you were Director of Agriculture, did you - and then you became Controller of Textiles.
- R. Yes.
- I. For how long?
- R. Two years.
- I. And then?
- R. Retired.
- I. That's in 194.?
- R. Seven.
- I. '47 you retired? Oh, I thought it was '48. '47. In fact, Controller of Textiles[sic] is quite interesting since they're trying to control it now.
- R. [Chuckle] Its a very difficult thing.
- I. But there was rationing in that period. '45 to '47?
- R. Yes, yes. Rationing was necessary.
- I. Was it difficult to implement, then?
- R. It was difficult to implement in the sense that all would get round these things. And the traders and people, they were all ready to undermine these things. Personal gain.
- I. Can you remember the Bracegirdle case? Bracegirdle.
- R. Very faintly. Yes, that was the one in which Jayatilaka ...
- I. Jayatilaka ...
- R. Jayatilaka, Bancroft(?) and those people.
- I. Yes. No, I was wondering whether ... I mean, that really killed Jayatilaka politically, didn't it?
- R. Yes, yes.
- I. And that helped D.S. to come out on top?
- R. Yes.
- I. But was Jayatilaka going downhill at this stage?
- R. Yes. Jayatilaka was not a good politician I think. He was a good religious man. Could get up and make a speech.
- I. And D.S. was a bit too sharp for him. You know, much sharper than him?
- R. Oh yes. Senanayake's great thing was getting a policy. He had ideas.
- I. And would you say that he had a sense of timing?
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- R. Yes. Oh yes.
- I. But still I feel that his performance in the period '48 to '51 - '48 to '51 - his performance seems to have been poor. I was wondering whether he was on the decline?
- R. I didn't get that impression. You see, its like this. When a man makes great efforts and expends all his energy on a certain - on various things when they are maturing and maturing badly usually he appears to be - have fallen during that time when it was not a fall during that time but a failure of earlier projects.
- I. I want to jump back. I have just two more topics. I'm interested in that short spell when you helped Newnham to fight the malaria epidemic. What were your impressions of the steps taken by Government at that stage? 1935. Malaria.
- R. I think they took all the steps that were possible at the time.
- I. What sort of man was Newnham?
- R. Very clever; very cynical. [Chuckle]
- I. But he has achieved some sort of reputation for the work he did in '35, on this ...
- R. Yes. Oh yes. And more than that. He did extremely well I think as Chairman of the Municipal Council, Colombo.
- I. Yes?
- R. He did quite well.
- I. Oh, I see.
- R. But he was not very popular with the Government. He ...
- I. Yes. In fact, what is surprising is that they chose Wodeman over Newnham. And I think really in ability Newnham was better, wasn't he?
- R. Newnham was definitely cleverer. But they found him difficult to hold on to. He ...
- I. No. But the point was he - I don't think he sought favour, and of course - perhaps they didn't like his love affairs.
- R. Yes. Yes.
- I. Possibly that. But also he was a man who was prone to criticise the Government, wasn't he?
- R. Yes. Oh yes, and write minutes which are - which hurt people.
- I. Oh, I see.
- R. That sort of thing. He was a very clever man. And I liked him.
- I. And I was thinking of the elections under the Donoughmore
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- Commission. Now, when you were G.A., North-Western Province you would have had to hold some elections?
- R. Yes.
- I. What did you think of the elections under this system? What did you think of the elections, universal franchise? How politically-minded were the people at this stage?
- R. They don't understand political questions at all. Its loyalty to a group and that loyalty is created in all manner of ways.
- I. What are the most important? Caste?
- R. Caste has ceased to be a very important[factor] unless it is built upon and pushed up by an interested politician in a particular case.
- I. No, I was thinking of 1935 and 1931.
- R. No, caste didn't come in. '35, caste didn't come in.
- I. What about the religious and communal factor? Religious, and the communal factor?
- R. Communal. That was something very recent.
- I. Mmm. But didn't Bandaranaike employ it then [meaning the 1930's]?
- R. Oh yes, Bandaranaike created that.
- I. Even then?
- R. Yes. Again I don't think that Bandaranaike was a bad man who wanted to create dissension, but his policy - this language policy - was very bad.
- I. Would you call it opportunistic?
- R. Uh?
- I. Was it opportunistic?
- R. No. It was emotional. I think he had broken away from his family traditions and there were two directions in which he had moved. One was certain liberalisation of ideas. The - you know, under that man - who was that man in the London School of Economics?
- I. Laski.
- R. Yes. And that - that influence not only in London University but throughout the country amongst that younger generation of people. And Bandaranaike inherited some of that. And the other thing was: he became nationalistic when his own family - his own family was quite unnationalistic - to a degree which
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- was inconvenient socially and politically at that time.
- I. I wonder whether - especially in recent years - whether he had a bit of megalomania; power ...?
- R. I don't think it was power for power's sake, although that became a natural thing; when anybody has been in power for some time, the desire to stick to it the whole time is there. He was determined on this language question, and that involved racial questions.
- I. Was he a man of ideas who was not a good administrator?
- R. No. No ... er ...
- I. You think he was practical?
- R. Well, his ideas, he did not see the practical limits of it. Not in the actual application. Not that he tried to apply these but he didn't - when he conceived the idea, he did not relate it to the actual conditions that existed at that time. 'Is this practical at this time?' 'What are the reactions of the - this group, that group?' He was thinking for the future. He grabbed the idea, said, 'This must be a good thing'.
- I. For instance, as a Minister of Local Government how was he? Was he a good Minister - I mean a Minister from the administrative point of view?
- R. I think he was quite alright, quite good.
- I. Coming back to the elections in '31 and in '36, would it be correct to say that there - since there were no parties ...
- R. Yes.
- I. ... did each election depend on the local influence and the number of V.I.P's in each - mudalalis and others in each district you could get on your side?
- R. Yes, entirely that. Yes. No definition of policy at all.
- I. How far could headmen help a candidate? Couldn't they help a candidate a lot?
- R. No. This idea that the headmen had great influence is all wrong. They had ceased to have this very great influence some years ago. Even the Ratemahatmayas and the ... They didn't have very much influence by the 1930's.
- I. Then, for instance, the registration of voters depended on the headmen. Couldn't they favour one candidate?
- R. They were too afraid, too frightened to do that. They wouldn't
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do that. I don't think they did that sort of thing. I think a headman might speak to other people in the village, his own political loyalties might be communicated in the ordinary course by [sic] quite honourable ways like any other man would. But much more than that they never had I think.

I. But, now, for instance, its noticeable that in the twenties some politicians criticised the headman system.

R. Yes.

I. But in the thirties a few of them didn't because they were using the headmen - not as influence - I mean, not using it, but they allied themselves to the headmen and in a sense used whatever influence there was to win a seat.

R. Yes. Oh yes. They depended on them. And the headman is only human. He had the same loyalty as I or that man, or that man towards either this party, or this policy or this man. Naturally he would try to exercise that influence.

I. There were allegations that sometimes headmen destroyed one of a - you know a culvert or a bridge, a tree-bridge, to prevent people coming to vote and things like that?

R. The headmen never did that. In some cases I think, Kegalle District and that sort of thing, the thugs ... the actual (?) attached to any particular group of them. But the headmen would never do that.

END OF INTERVIEW

Comments on Interview with Professor J.L.C. Rodrigo, 15 August 1966.

Professor Rodrigo provided me with pad and pencil and was not very keen on a recorded interview, stressing that what he knew was not worth recording and was more of a casual nature; his knowledge pertaining to the lighter side of things. This was indeed so. A well-known after-dinner speaker it was not surprising that he remembered anecdotes and casual incidents. I would say that his memory was fair.

The interview concentrated largely on the period 1921-26 when he was editor of the Morning Leader. As a journalist, naturally, he had only a limited knowledge of the official world - largely limited to the Colombo circus and the Legislative Council. But as a man of culture and intelligence his appraisal of individuals was interesting. As he was in Trinity in Fraser's time I also devoted some attention to that controversial figure.

In retrospect I think I have omitted several avenues of inquiry which he might have commented usefully on: Goonesinha and his activities in the 1920's, various Ceylonese politicians of the time, land speculation in the 1920's and educational matters of the 1930's and 1940's. I should add that enquiries re the split among the Tamil and Sinhalese leaders in the early 1920's brought little to light.

Somewhat self-congratulatory at times Prof. Rodrigo was very much a Classics man and proud to be one.

M.W. Roberts

16/8/66

N.B. The refined version of the interview below is not in the order in which it was discussed or jotted down.

16 August 1966.

I asked him what led him to take up journalism. It had appealed to him and after Oxford and his bar exams, he had taken a diploma in journalism at London University, probably being the first Ceylonese to do so. While in England, he had been offered a job as Assistant Editor of the Daily News and accepted it. But then Armand de Souza had died, and as the proprietor of the Morning Leader, Charles Pieris, was in London the others concerned had asked Pieris to approach J.L.C. Rodrigo to become editor. J.L.C. had agreed providing Wijewardena released him. Wijewardena had. J.L.C. rather regretted this now. It would have been better for him to have learnt the newspaper business from a lower level rather than going straight to the top, where he took considerable time to learn the tricks of the trade in the lower rungs. The Morning Leader, he found, was run on "an unbusinesslike manner". Charles Pieris was very decent. He interfered little. The free hand he gave Rodrigo was seen during the election of the Anglican bishop. Rodrigo backed Fraser, a Low Church man. Charles Pieris was High Church. Those supporting the High Church candidate went to Pieris and asked him to influence J.L.C. but Pieris wouldn't. W.A. De Silva, another proprietor, was prone on occasions to accept what others said of the newspaper articles and to criticise J.L.C. without checking on the facts.

Manning was a "bluff soldier". Was named the "Top Hat Governor" because he had wanted top hats worn on a certain occasion. On one occasion an official named Horsborough had belittled C.E. Corea's pronunciation of the word "creme de menthe", rather to Manning's annoyance. (This was in the Legislative Council.) The trouble with Corea and others was that they spoke in a bookish manner. W.W. Woods impressed him. He was "very able, very hardworking brilliant and clear". On my query regarding personalities in the Civil Service and men who stood out, he reflected awhile and said that there were not many. (Sir) Henry Gollan and (Sir) Thomas Garvin impressed him as able speakers and men of ability but they were in the judicial line and not strictly C.C.S. He agreed with my comment that Sir Cecil Clementi was impractical. He added that Tom Southorn and his wife (Bella Woolf, sister of Leonard) were definitely trying to be friendly with the Ceylonese. He had been to one of their tea parties but felt ill-at-ease; thought that they were trying to patronise him. He agreed with my comment that Southorn was mediocre in ability. Alexander, he said, was "a bit of mediocrity" but he was a good cricketer and was "pleasant, friendly and genuine". [Much of what was said above, it should be added,

pertained to men in the Secretariat and in the Legislative Council. He was not bringing the various provincial officers into his purview. I should think that ordinarily he did not meet many of them]. He did say that Codrington and Turner were able provincial officers. He also classed Newnham, Reid and Luddington as able - of Reid he said "very able" - when their names cropped up. Bernard Senior was "a mediocrity", Collins "conscientious, dull, ponderous and a pillar of the Y.M.C.A." Collins did a lot of hard work and had no attitude of superiority. Newnham was somewhat more able than the others. Tyrrell was good-natured. Lady Tyrrell really "ran the show" and pushed him. She had been a missionary at Hill-wood. Apparently knew J.L.C. for when seated next to him on some occasion she had criticised him for publishing J.R. Weinman's articles. The Morning Leader had a series written by Weinman entitled "Letters from Tom" which were severely critical of Europeans and European society in Ceylon. Weinman was a "waspy" writer and a bad enemy to have.

I asked him about the personal criticisms of Civil Servants in the Legislative Council and newspapers in the 1920's and whether they did not go too far. He merely said that criticising Civil Servants was "fair game" as far as politicians were concerned.

I inquired whether there were any Civil Servants who were arrogant. He did not reply. I commented that Bowes seemed to be so. He agreed. He then referred to Hodson. At a dinner in Panadure it would seem that Hodson buttonholed him and criticised him for the way his newspaper attacked European Civil Servants; and asked him why he did not pick on Ceylonese, commenting among things that Poulter did not know the difference between an elk and a sambhur. I did not gather from Professor Rodrigo whether Hodson had been belligerent in tone or had spoken in jocular vein. Later on when I brought up the subject of arrogance once again, he said that the C.C.S. were far too aloof. The planters were "very arrogant". The officials, however, were usually polite. Thus on one occasion when he went to a land kachcheri (where some of his land was involved) conducted by S.H. Wadia, an Indian, he found him pretty rude to both J.L.C. and the villagers; upon which a Ceylonese planter and friend of Rodrigo's had remarked (to Rodrigo) that the European officials were not like that.

In his view the Europeans were superior in attitude and were apart from the Ceylonese. But Ceylonese encouraged this superiority complex by fawning on them. Regarding their bias in administrative or judicial cases where Europeans were in conflict with Ceylonese, he commented that an European (judge) was prone to accept the word

of a European. He had seen this in pronounced form in Professor Marrs (head of University College). He added that there were "graduations in European society" as well. There were "E.U's"; i.e. European Untouchables.

In talking of the planters he commented that Colonel T.Y. Wright was "very nice" and "very pleasant". Having read a report about two Veddahs who had been fined Rs. 25 for cultivating chenas, in Badulla(?) district, Wright sent the money to J.L.C. Rodrigo to cover the fine simply because he had hunted with the Veddahs and liked them. J.L.C. had sent the money on but the two Veddahs could not be located, and it had to be returned. J.L.C. thought it a very nice gesture. Wright was very friendly with Ceylonese.

I questioned him a great deal about Alex Fraser, head of his school Trinity: Fraser was a Britisher first and for Ceylon afterwards but liked the Ceylonese, especially the Kandyans. One was always at home in his house. He agreed with my comment that Fraser was domineering and inclined to want things his way. He was also a man who would help you in real need and sorrow. It was "all rot" regarding his role during the 1915 riots. He had tried to help Ceylonese, including Boralagoda Ralahamy (father of Philip Gunewardena) whom he had spoken up for. Regarding his role in the riots, the general story was that in his annual report on Trinity College which was meant for private circulation he described the riots, alleging various things - including disloyalty - against the Ceylonese. E.W. Perera in particular spread this story. Fraser actually challenged E.W. by letter to produce proof. E.W. asked Fraser to quote this and that extract from the Report. These extracts pertained to those sections where Fraser had spoken grandiloquently and sweepingly on the role of the Trinity boys in suppressing the riots.

J.L.C. knows that Hartley (head of Royal College) also (like Fraser) believed that the riots were organised in some form. J.L.C. himself did not express his opinion.

There were brutalities committed. He can recall how the Trinity cadets spoke with glee about banging heads together.

O.E. Goonetilleke was the go-between between Jennings and D.S. Senanayake. On one occasion a friend, whom he did not wish to name, had gone to see O.E.G. and found Jennings there. D.S. had arrived a little later; it took this friend a little while to realise that he was not wanted but he left as soon as he discovered that some confabulation was in the offing.

Jennings wrote the speech which D.S. made in Parliament with the purpose of winning the Tamils over [presumably around 1948 or perhaps 1945-46].

Jennings knew which side his bread was buttered on; a "simple" man; a "perfect Committee man". As Chairman would accept anything; even decisions which went against his convictions.

M.W. Roberts

16 and 22/8/66