STRONG

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Answers

Should you place (1) (2) (3) after each other. I don't think so in view of No 4

Weerasuri on Strong 1 1/4 pp

ARTHUR NESBITT STRONG, O.B.E. b. 19 February 1890.
M.A. Edinburgh.
C.C.S. 1913-35, 1942-45.

13 Dec.	1913	apptd. to C.C.S.
14 Jan.	1914	O.A., Central Province.
1 June	1914	also Addnl. P.M., Kandy.
16 Nov.	1914	Acting O.A., Ratnapura.
10 Dec.	1914	Addnl. P.M., Ratnapura as well.
13 Dec.	1916	P.M., Jaffna.
14 April	1917	on leave.
9 July	1917	on war service.
2 Aug.	1919	Acting A.G.A., Mullaittivu.
3 Nov.	1919	P.M., Kurunegala.
8 Nov.	1920	Landing Surveyor, Colombo.
13 July	1921	also Deputy Food Controller.
21 June	1923	on leave.
18 Feb.	1924	D.J., Nuwara Eliya.
17 April	1925	A.G.A., Matara.
1 Nov.	1927	on leave; temporarily attached to Colonial Office for most of the period.
28 May	1928	Deputy Collector of Customs.
29 May	1932	Acting G.A., Eastern Province.
12 Nov.	1932	Addnl. Excise Commissioner.
(?)	1933	Principal Collector of Customs & Chairman, Colombo Port Commission.
	1935 -42	Left C.C.S. to take up job in charge of the Port of Rangoon.
	1942 -45	Chairman, Colombo Port Commission on contract basis.
	NB.	I think he was also Private Secretary to Sir Hugh Clifford (Governor) for a little while; i.e. early 1927(?) or 1926-27.

Comments on Interview with Mr. A.N.Strong, O.B.E. 15. 12. 65

Mr. Strong had received a summarised list of my interests in headline form and had taken the trouble to jot some notes: hence the interview is partially based on these notes. Questions pertaining to colonial rule have been one of Mr. Strong's interests during retirement, as his interviews with Robert Heussler and his copious letters to Mr. Newnham with Ceylon anecdotes etc. testify.

As I expected, therefore, he was very forthcoming and candid. By nature an outspoken man, Mr. Strong took scarcely any notice of the recorder except on some personal issues. I should add that I also found him a very friendly man and intensely interested in our discussion.

On the political issue he was convinced that underdeveloped nations like Ceylon were not the lands for democracy; i.e. wholly against 'one man, one vote.' He was, and is, a man with a high sense of honour and a man who set much store by upright, hohourable behaviour; prone to be rather demanding in the standards of honour demanded from others I should think. No noticeable racial prejudice and quite objective and fair on questions on sensitive issues of this sort. But also showed traces of class consciousness : e.g., his views on Armand de Souza and reference to the way Sir H. Stanley stooped low. Combined with his outspokenness and his undoubted ability (and I suspect, quick temper), I should think these traits and beliefs would not have made him all that easy to get on with. I would conjecture that, he might have made several enemies and that he would, himself, be a good friend but a dangerous adversary. As far as I was concerned however, I did not find him rigid in his views; he was quite receptive to other viewpoints.

A man of ability; an initiator; ready to be insubordinate; ready to defy the Government if the ends were good; ready to be out of pocket to help the villager. Had thought about many of the deeper or ancillary questions which did not strike the eye of the conformists and those content to grapple with day to day tasks.

The interview might possibly give the impression that he is conceited ; perhaps so; but this sort of impression is difficult to avoid when an able man is subject to such an interview : he can only quote from his experiences and , naturally, recalls the more striking ones.

I would tend to rate his assessment of other individuals quite highly, though one must watch for the possibility of bias against some individuals (for example , regards Stanley).

Indeed his opinions on almost all subjects should be given great weight. An extremely valuable interview.

M.W.Roberts

16.12.65 and 1.1.65

INTERVIEW WITH MR. A.N. STRONG
15 DECEMBER 1965.

[I had sent Mr. Strong a list of subjects I was interested in. He had many short notes on some of these and had them with him at the interview.]

I. What is first?

S. What have I got? I can't read my own handwriting. Renaissance. Theosophists.

I. Oh, yes.

S. Well, they were just an esoteric body of about six people, a handful of school-master types.

I. Oh, I see.

S. Their impact was absolutely unnoticeable.

I. Unnoticeable. Did Government take any notice?

S. Not the slightest, no.

I. Not the slightest?

S. Then the Temperance Movement, that was slightly different. Similar types of people interested in - quite unselfishly - but for some reason - I don't think it had the slightest effect on the country's habits. Because people just went on drinking, with coconut palms next door, you know. They didn't stop drinking because people said 'don't'. And when they got local option practically every village went dry because they - the bootleggers paid them a pound a piece for every vote. Because the bootleggers didn't like wet areas, because they made all their money out of the illicit stuff.

I. So ...

S. The trouble was that it was largely compounded of visionaries, rather, among the Temperance people. Rather remote from the facts of life. You know its no good saying, 'Don't drink'. For some reason - I'm sure of this - they came to be suspected of, well, why, what's vaguely called nationalism, which was translated by Government into ...

I. So Government did suspect them?

S. Yes.

I. Well, if I may say so, would you say that the Government view was to consider them political meetings held under the cloak of temperance?

S. Yes. They were semi-subversive in the Government's view. That was shown very much in the riots. Don Stephen Senanayake, Don

Baron Jayatilaka, they both went to jail, partly in their connection with the Temperance.

I. With the Temperance?

S. Yes. Quite wrong of course.

I. Do you feel that Government was unduly sensitive on nationalism and subversive?

S. Oh, they were in a panic. Of course they were sensitive. There was no - they hadn't a clue as to what was going on, you see. And they handed over to the Army. A most fatal thing, you see. There was nothing anti-Government in the riots.

I. There was no - yes. Could you tell - comment further on the riots?

S. Yes, I'll come to that, yes, yes. I will. I mean ...

I. Oh, fine.

S. Politicians - you named some of them. Arunachalam, Jayatilaka, Senanayake, H.L. De Mel, Sir J.P. - who's that? - Sir James Pieries, Ramanathan, W.A. De Silva, E.W. Perera, Corea ... I know practically all of those and my general impression is they were all, without exception, very honest and sincere people, who - and many of them were personal friends of mine, and still are. I'm sure they placed the interests of their country long ahead of any aggrandisement - personal ...

I. Personal?

S. Yes, and they always worked strictly in the constitutional way. No attempt to demagogy, calling up the masses like Gandhi.

I. If I may say so this is your personal view, but - now in the Civil Service you could say that there was the inner circle and the out circle, if I may use the term. The Secretariat circle and the outer circle.

S. Yes.

I. What was the attitude of the Secretariat circle to these people? In so far as you can generalise?

S. Well, the same as mine I suppose. I don't know. I don't think - I think the difference was rather exaggerated and - because a man would only be three years in the Secretariat post. Then he'd go back to - to my job. I'd go into his job. I was offered a job once in the Secretariat and I said I preferred to stay. I was more interested in the job I had. 'Need I come?' And they said, 'Oh, no, you needn't if you don't want to'. I probably lost a bit of promotion that way. The

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possibility, I mean. There was a distinct trend to look to the Secretariat people for promotion outside the colony.

I. Yes, I see.

S. That's nothing to do with - I don't know, you can't have two different views about the complete integrity of Baron Jayatilaka. He was a first-class - a gentleman right from top to bottom. So was D.S. Senanayake and he was very popular with all of us. We served under him. This was after the self-government. You know, when they got ministers there. And I enjoyed working under [D.S.] - he was Lands. When I was G.A. in the Eastern Province, I had a lot to do with Agriculture and he was first-class.

I. And ... You may be interested to know that Mr. Stace has written some of his reminiscences.

S. Yes, I read them.

I. Oh, you've read them, have you? Oh, fine.

S. He sent them to me.

I. What do you think of this point which he's made with regard to the whole British community. He says that one of the failings was arrogance. Would you agree with him?

S. I didn't agree with a lot of it, no. Arrogance on our part?

I. He's taking the whole community. He's including the unofficials.

S. Arrogance towards the native population you mean?

I. Not so much towards the villager because it really didn't arise. But to the educated middle-class, I think.

S. I think its just a personal view of Stace. I never had any - I can't think of - no, I don't agree with that. As far as my own impressions go.

I. Well, weren't - take a man like Clifford.

S. Yes.

I. Why was he unpopular with the politicians?

S. Well, I really don't know. I was his Private Secretary for some time; a man I worshipped.

I. He was very hard working I know.

S. He'd got the ablest brain I'd ever come across, and my respect for him grew into complete affection. I ...

I. When were you Private Secretary?

S. Just before he went to Malaya. '27.

I. Wasn't he suffering from intermittent insanity?

S. Yes, yes. And he shouldn't have been allowed to go to Malaya,

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of course. I was with him all that time and I was the last person to say goodbye to him. He insisted on my going on board with him after he ...

I. Was he an authoritarian type?

S. Author...?

I. Authoritarian?

S. No, I don't think so.

I. If ... Of course the point of - the point is that these politicians wouldn't have come into contact with him the way that you did.

S. Oh, mine was only a short interval. I don't think he was unpopular in the sense that ...

I. He referred to the Coreas as a little core of rot?

S. Well, the Coreas were being very naughty about that time.

I. Oh.

S. Yes, they were very - well, I say naughty. I can't describe it to you. They were asking for trouble really.

I. They were going too ...

S. Is this [the recorder] on all the time?

I. Yes. You want it knocked ...?

S. No, no, I was only wondering really.

I. What about the incidents when planters chucked people out of first-class carriages? That sort of thing.

S. I can only remember one case of that. There must have been others but it wasn't common.

I. It wasn't common?

S. No, not at all. The only one I remember - actually it was not a planter at all. He was a Deputy Inspector General of Police. A chap called Forrest, who died later.

I. Oh, he was involved in the riots.

S. He threw a Buddhist priest out of a first-class carriage which he wanted. And de Sousa who'd already been in jail, he was the editor of the Daily News ...

I. Yes.

S. Criminal libel ...

I. Morning Leader.

S. Morning Leader thing, yes.

I. Armand de Sousa, yes.

S. He got six months or something for libel.

I: Who?

S. The editor.

I. Why? What did he say?

S. He said that this policeman was running about like a berserker spitting about[1] - very, very rude. I think the - he wouldn't have been even fined I don't think had it not been for his past. He'd been in several libel actions.

I. What sort of man was he?

S. I never met him. Rather low-class I should think.

I. Was he demagogic?

S. Yes. Oh, yes. Yes.

I. What about the other paper, the one run by Wijewardena. What did you think of the Daily News?

S. First-class. Hulugalle was a man I liked very much. He was the editor for a long time. You know him?

I. That was later on, yes.

S. Yes. They had a certain anti-Government approach. Well, of course, everybody had. They - I'm quite certain of this impression, that this is correct. That they didn't dislike us. That's to say, the British. What they disliked was the fact that we were the rulers and they weren't.

I. Its a natural ...

S. Perfectly natural. They said things. Well, I mean, friends of mine speaking in the - in Parliament would use the most frightful language, vituperative language against the Civil Service. We'd meet the chap later on in the evening: 'You gave a pretty good pasting(?) didn't you?' They said, 'You(?) know(?), we must please(?) our constituents you see. You'd got to ...'

I. And was this sort of thing resented by the Civil Servants? Did the Civil Servants resent these attacks?

S. No, they knew - they knew what was behind it. And if you - if you were junior you were blanketed and cushioned against all that by the fact that you were a sort of office boy and ...

I. Well, I notice that Mr. Miles didn't like it. And he resigned because of that, you see. Well, its one of the facts ...

S. Oh, I don't - I'm speaking quite generally. One didn't like it of course but, I mean, if you thought about it you realised that it was natural enough, and it wasn't - there was - it wasn't malicious.

I. Apart from these attacks in the Council did you find political interference in, say, the 1920's? Did politicians go above

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1. Clarification: De Sousa, editor of the Morning Leader, stated that Forrest was running about like a berserker spitting ....

your head to the Colonial Secretary?

S. Not in the 20's, no, but ...

I. The 30's?

S. '24 was when it started. I suffered badly from that, when I was District Officer, A.G.A. Matara.

I. Oh, I see. Who was the person?

S. The member there was Forrester Obeyesekere.

I. And he - what did he do?

S. He came down to the district and told me how to work it and what to do. He went round the villages. He could hardly speak Sinhalese. He couldn't address a meeting. He carried an interpreter with him.

I. Oh, I see.

S. He'd been brought up in England.

I. And you couldn't get on with him?

S. I couldn't. How could you? He was - he insulted me right, left and centre. He went round the villages, said, 'Don't take any notice of the A.G.A. I'm now in charge. You want anything, come to me'. Well, of course, he got into a mess through promising things which he couldn't fulfill. And the villager was clever enough to see through that. And there was considerable interference with [sic] him and he - he - on two occasions, I remember particularly, he got the Government to upset an order of mine.

I. Oh, I see. Was this why Sir Murchison Fletcher was unpopular?

S. That's why he was unpopular. He didn't support us. He and Elphinstone, the Attorney-General, were working in harmony. They were both double-crossing ... Fletcher was complete - a completely dishonest rogue.

I. Yes, well, I have found a unanimous opinion on this point.

S. Yes.

I. Why were they doing this? I mean ...

S. Well, we asked - another chap and I met Elphinstone who'd just done us both a dirty trick with Fletcher's aid, or rather the other way about, and we said, 'Well, why did you do this?' He said, 'Oh, well, you see, in Colombo here, we find that by feeding the politician we get ...' Sort of, 'You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours.' Our experience you see. So my friend said - Worsley - he said, 'Oh, yes'. Oh, ... he [Elphinstone] said, 'We find that they will eat out of your hand if you give way on this and that'. So Worsley said,

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'Yes. Have you ever tried - you give a horse a handful of oats, he'll eat it. Have you ever tried giving him a handful of rusty nails?'

I. Who was the Principal Assistant to the Col. Sec. then?

S. Oh, I think it was Mark Young, certainly part of the time.

I. He would have been in rather a difficult position?

S. Mark Young was one of the most loyal people I've ever ... If you said a word about Fletcher, he'd jump down your throat. Not that anyone tried it because he wouldn't listen to a word. What his private thoughts were were quite different possibly. I know in one case de Glanville was called in. He was just forming the Electrical Department and Fletcher gave him a line to go on, which he followed and then got into trouble. And Fletcher denied having said what he said. Well, on a later occasion he was called in. He went into Mark Young who said, 'Yes, he wanted to see you. Just go in'. And de Glanville said, 'Will you come in with me?' He said, 'Oh, no. Why?' 'Because I want a witness'. 'How dare you talk like that! A witness!' He [Young] was furious. So de Glanville told me that he wasn't going to be let down a second time. So when he'd finished the interview he went back to his office and he wrote out, 'Col. Sec. as an aide-memoir I'm writing down the result of our conversation. Do you agree? I mean, is this résumé correct?' He got no answer so there was no question then that he would ever go back on it. That was the way that he looked at it. He [Fletcher] did me two very dirty tricks. He got me censured by the Governor ...

I. For what?

S. ... and the Governor had never seen the papers.

I. This is the system of just signing?..?

S. 'I am directed by His Ex ....' Nobody could censure you except a Governor. 'I am directed by His Excellency to inform you that he is very displeased with your practice, and this and that sort of thing'. This was for annoying somebody whose letter of apology was in my other pocket. Fletcher never asked me for any explanation.

I. He just ...

S. He just - on the other letter the - he gave me this censure.

I. And how do you know that the Governor never saw it?

S. Because - well, I'm coming to that. These people then had a

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second thought and said, 'Wait a minute, we're wrong. We're mistaken Mr. Strong'. And they wrote to the Secretariat and said, 'Please cancel our letter'. Sent a copy letter to me with humble apologies: 'We're frightfully sorry. We're a couple of hotheads, you know, and we've withdrawn the letter and we're apologising to you'. I said, 'That's alright. Forget it'. Meantime I'd got the censure. So when a suitable opportunity came I went to Fletcher and said ... He said, 'Yes, of course, you deserved it'. I said, 'I don't want to argue about the merits of the case. Would you please destroy the evidence of this. Its done its job'. Because I've known of cases where somebody's got a copy of a letter and produced it four years later to the detriment of the man, you see. And - well, it happened to Lucette's boss.

I. Campbell?

S. Campbell. It happened to him. They were going to send him to America and somebody got up - five years later - and said, 'Here, five years ago he was censured. Is that the type of man you're going to spend all this money on?' So he advised me not to lie down under it. I asked Fletcher if he would merely destroy the letter, his copy of it. And he said, 'No'. 'Well', I said, 'This is just sheer nonsense. I've got an apology for doing what you're censuring me for doing'. And he said, 'May I see those letters'. I said, 'Certainly not. I've told you I've got them'. I wouldn't demean myself by producing proof of my statement. 'And', I said, 'I'd like to see the Governor'. 'Oh, you can't do that'. The Governor had never refused, in those days, an interview with anybody in the Civil Service, personally.

I. Who was this?

S. Clifford. And so he gave in and he said, 'No, you can ... I'll fix it'. So he sent me the file, Secretariat file, and gave me permission to tear up anything I wanted.

I. This was Clifford?

S. No.

I. Fletcher.

S. If I'd gone to Clifford I think Fletcher would have got the sack. For taking the Governor's name in vain and ...

I. Yes, I see.

S. Fletcher wouldn't even trust me to believe that he'd torn the thing up himself. He sent it to me. Of course his Secretariat -

his officials in the Secretariat were livid with rage. The idea of a Secretariat file going out to be destroyed - ridiculous.

I. Oh, yes. You did mention the fact earlier on in relation - in your preface to Bowes' memoirs that earlier on you had suffered because Government had destroyed some correspondence?

S. No, Newnham may have mentioned that.

I. Oh. Either you or him in one of the prefaces.

S. He got rather mixed up between not destroying papers but going - relying on the absence of papers to ,..

I. Oh, I see.

S. What happened was he ...

I. You can't rely on verbal ...

S. It wasn't Fletcher. It was before his time. When I was in the Customs, Government asked my chief whether he could spare me to do a part-time job in the Food Control. So he said - without my knowledge - he said, 'No, he's fully occupied with my work, with his own work. But if you like - if he likes to take on the job as overtime, Sundays, Saturdays, mornings, evenings, I've no objection provided he's paid overtime'. Or something like that. And the Governor agreed. Then Freddy[1] sent for me, and said, 'There you are. Do you want it?' Well, I was a young married man and the money would come in very handy. I said, 'Yes'. So I worked away for two or three months and my new chief - I went into him and said, 'Well, what about this pay'. He said, 'Well, what do you want?' 'Well', I said, 'I worked it out on the basis of the Customs' overtime, which is a good example, you see. And I think £150 a month'. He said, 'Oh, no, no, make it £300 or so'. You needn't record this ...

I. Yes. Well, no, its alright.

S. And he said, 'No, make it £300, we've plenty of money'. I said, 'Oh, no, I don't want all that'. So he said, 'Well, I'll sign anything you like'. And he signed so many months at £150 a month. I sent it to the Secretariat. It was turned down. 'No, we're not paying any more fees'. I went round with this letter. I said, 'What on earth. I came here on that condition'. If I'd put in this damn thing after my first week, I presume you would have paid! And then they said, 'Have you anything in writing?'

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1. Frederick Bowes, Principal Collector of Customs 1910-1923.

I. Oh, I see.

S. So I stood up and said, 'No, I'm sorry, I thought I was dealing with gentlemen'. On which I was promptly thrown out of the Secretariat. I never got it until my chief came back from leave, sent for me one day and said, 'I hear they've paid you no fees'. I said, 'No, sir'. He said, 'It was agreed. I saw the Governor - I saw the Governor about it'. Agreed. 'Oh', he said, 'Alright, I got you into the mess. The only way I can get out out of it ...' And he wrote me a cheque for 2,000 rupees, out of his own pocket. I just put it back on the table. 'No, I'm sorry, sir, I can't accept that but I shall never forget this gesture'.

I. No, I was wondering whether Government was ever capable of destroying evidence?

S. Oh, yes.

I. Embarrassing correspondence?

S. Yes, capable of any dishonesty. Fletcher particularly.

I. It just depended on who was in charge? But could the Colonial Secretary do that without asking the Governor?

S. Yes. The thing that all Colonial Secretaries wanted to do was never give his Governor any work which he could possibly avoid doing. Anything that required lies(?).

I. Regarding this - in fact Mr. Newnham has made a very relevant point. He said that Ceylon was a senior Crown colony. And the Governor had no - had reached his peak and therefore wanted things quiet.

S. Quite right.

I. And the Colonial Secretary in order to get promotion wanted things quiet.

S. Perfectly correct, yes.

I. So you think this had a very serious bearing on policy?

S. I wouldn't know how far it effected policy.

I. No, I mean, they wouldn't go to a great deal of trouble to try something new for the sake of improving things?

S. No. On the contrary. I put up - many, many cases where I got no help at all. Told to mind my own business.

I. What is this? Certain improvements?

S. Yes.

I. And they just told you to ...?

S. Well, I started this land - land for the landless. By accident.

I. When was this?

S. 1927.

I. Matara?

S. Yes. That - I think this is rather important. I would like to make a point of it.

I. Yes.

S. The - as illustrating my point. You weren't encouraged. On the contrary you were damped down. I sold an encroachment on the roadside. Our survey found this chap who had a hut there miles away in the jungle up in Akuressa Morowak Korale, or somewhere or the other - local. And half an acre, an acre fully planted up with jak fruit and jak tree and God knows what. He'd made a real nice little job of it. Not realising that he was encroaching on the road reservation or something like it. Well, in the normal course of events I settled it on him, five rupees nominal.

I. Yes.

S. While the - there was an interval for the preparation of the conveyance - legal - the man wrote to me and said, 'Would you please make out the title deeds in the name of somebody else, [his] kangany'. I said, 'No, I'll look into this'. So next time I was on circuit I asked him what had happened. His kangany..,He was a P.W.D.coolie. [His kangany] had said, 'I want to buy this ... I want it'.

I. The kangany wanted it?

S. The kangany wanted this land, freehold. 'Well, I don't want to sell'. 'Alright, you're sacked'.

I. Oh, I see.

S. 'And you'll never get another job'. Except by moving bodily into some new town or something like that. I thought:'Well, I'm not going to have this.' You see this, a lot of exploitation by their own people.

I. Yes, I see.

S. Which went on a great deal.

I. The middlemen?

S. Yeah. I thought: 'Now, I'll lease it.' You can't sell a lease. You can sell your crops or mortgage that but you can't mortgage the freehold.[sic].

I. A lease ...

S. You can't sell it. And ... So I wrote to the Controller of

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Revenue - an office that has disappeared-and asked if I could give him a lease for 99 years. 'Oh, no, oh, no. There's no regulation about that', and they wouldn't help.

I. Simply officious?

S. Yeah. So I did it myself. I altered a yearly ticket of occupancy, you see. Altered that in red ink and I got it printed at my own expense, and I went on doing that. And that put me onto - I spent a year or more settling on any bit of Crown land that I could find on these long ...

I. Long leases?

S. Long leases. Well, that came to be a regular scheme - a landless ...

I. Later?

S. Landless villagers, that sort of thing. Then I went even further. The middle-class. Instead of advertising a sale by auction, where any planter could outbid any villager - well, not the villager, say a retired chief clerk. A man who wanted to buy twenty acres or something. Well, they could always knock him out. He'd no chance. This scheme of mine was - the middle-class thing - the acreage sold would be limited and the means of the bidder would be - he'd have to have no other land. And of course if he got found out he could be thrown out.

I. Yes, but how did you find out whether he had no other land? His father might have lots of land.

S. Well, you had to inquire and there was always a threat that if it ever came - and this chap's enemies would soon let one know. And the whole thing would be cancelled. And it was a lease anyhow, a long lease, you see. Well, of course, I got a lot of credit for that from Senanayake years later. But, I mean, that's how it started. All I got was a censure. But in front of the Committee, Land Committee, who asked me by what right I had to commit Government to these long leases.

I. Who was in - who passed the censure?

S. The Committee.

I. Who was the Chairman?

S. Elphinstone, the Attorney-General, presiding. And the people who saved my life were .... Senanayake was one.

I. Later on or then?

S. At the time, at the meeting. Yes, I mean, ... 'How did you

know Government would honour your commitment? You'd no business to do it'. I said, 'Well, I couldn't conceive of any Government which would be so dishonest as to dishonour a commitment of that sort'. You see, and all that. And then suddenly, I think it was the Old Buffalo, as we used to call him, Don Stephen Senanayake, said, 'I think Mr. Strong's done[?] a jolly good bit(?) of(?) work(?). It should have been done long ago'.

I. Yes. This is an excellent scheme. Do you know if any other A.G.A's were trying this out?

S. No.

I. That's the point you see.

S. It was copied later.

I. By Brayne?

S. Yes.[1] But Brayne first just refused to have anything to do with it.

I. Brayne ...

S. Brayne was Controller of Revenue. When ...

I. Oh, I see.

S. ... I went and asked for some means of long lease, he just wouldn't take any interest. Said it wasn't in the regulations or something. Course it wasn't. If it had been I wouldn't have written.

I. Yes, I see. Its very funny that he should refuse it first and later ...

S. Yes. He of all people, because he was a Paddy Bank chap who started a lot of things which turned out to be - some of them - wildcat schemes. But anyhow he got the - he got that urge, you see, and he did a lot of good.

I. Reverting to this earlier point, you feel that the Secretariat was rather obstructionist on these sort of things?

S. Yes, I ... There's another case in point. I was District Judge. Well, I got case after case. 'What's the next case?' 'Crown proctor appearing'. 'Aha. An indictment, from the lower court. Non-summary committal to the District Court, receiving six coconuts.' Well, obviously the man was a re-convicted criminal, otherwise he would have been dealt with in the lower court. But when he had seven or eight previous convictions it became non-summary for a - and I said, 'Well, this is nonsense'. The whole essence of this thing is to keep the knowledge away from a judge. Well, I'm faced with

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1. Actually as G.A., Eastern Province in the early 1920's, C.V. Brayne had started a peasant-proprietor scheme with a similar object as Strong's. The Land Development Ordinance of 1935 was largely the outcome of Brayne's ideas and pioneering experiences.

an immediate knowledge. I should say, 'Oh, we've got a re-convicted criminal, I see here. That helps me to form my views doesn't it'. That sort of thing. I eventually wrote and suggested the adoption of the English method, whereby the lower court finds a man guilty - of(?) the(?) charge(?) - and then you're told, 'Look, before you sentence him, he's had eight previous convictions. Send him to court sessions for sentence only'.

I. Yes, I see.

S. I was then told to mind my own business. 'If the Attorney-General wishes any advice from a layman he'll ask for it.'

I. Oh, I see.

S. 'Until then, you'll keep your mouth shut.' About four years later they introduced it, without acknowledgement to me. Ha-ha.

I. Oh, I see.

S. That was the type of thing you got. It stifled any initiative, or tended to.

I. Yes. That's very interesting. And Mr. Newnham has made the point that many of the Secretariat people, what he called, Secretariat-wallahs, were essay writers.

S. Yes, that's right. Yes, true. Blood, I remember, when he was there as a junior - I think he was Fourth Assistant - he spent months, weeks on writing a complete re-construction of all the regulations regarding the issue of passports. Well, that was a Foreign Office matter, really. It was nothing to do with the local people. So when he turned that up to the Chief Secretary he was told to get on with a bit of work and stop writing essays.

I. Who was the Chief Secretary? It speaks well for him.

S. I think - Fred Bowes I think was Acting at the time.

I. Would you say that, taking overall British policy, in the sense of ultimate ideals, there was no purpose or drive?

S. I never knew of any Government policy on any subject. I never had a circular, barring the ordinary procedural circulars, in what to do in certain cases about this and that, I never saw any - I never knew what Government policy was on land. There didn't seem to be any. Or - or - well, ...

I. On land. That's very important. That's the basic problem.

S. Of course. Well, look at my own experience. I mean, here are these people, land grabbers generally, who might be anything from a rich Colombo firm to an out-of-work proctor. And there

didn't seem to be any drive or policy. I don't know - Newnham's got more information than I have about that. Great experience. But I think he'll agree with me.

I. Oh, yes, he definitely .... Its he who made the point himself.

S. Did he? Yes.

I. Yes. And he says it was just drift, drift, drift.

S. Yes. That's right. If you put a thing up, unless it was sticking out a mile that something had to be done or else, they wouldn't touch it. It meant more work, you see. They were a hard-working lot.

I. Yes, agreed. And, oh, they had certain good qualities: integrity, responsibility.

S. Yes.

I. But one has the feeling that they sought efficiency as an end in itself. You know, as an object in itself. You think so? One has a feeling that they sought efficiency, running along the fixed lines efficiently, as an end in itself?

S. Yes, yes, that's right.

I. That's right.

S. Of course, there was a type of person in the Secretariat who had been in the districts. I mean, a senior person.

I. Yes.

S. Who knowing that ten years ago he was in your job, he would tell you how to do it.

I. How to do it.

S. Well, I just wouldn't take that; and these chaps were not very popular. 'In the old days' - you'd hear the old seniors talking - in the good old days when you'd write up some quite big sort of scheme. And the Chief Secretary would write back and say, 'Yes, go ahead. I think this is fine. Paragraph 2: You will, of course, have formed your views and considered the following points: a, b, c, d, e, f.

I. That is consideration isn't it?

S. Yes. Of course the chap hadn't, perhaps, on all cases. But he would be ... 'You have, of course, considered this'. All you have to do is to write back and say, 'Yes'. After you've done so, but you hadn't thought of that perhaps. That was advice really. During the war I had a man who was suddenly taken sick. He'd had seven years without any leave. He was an engineer in the army. And he was condemned to death. This

chap was going to die in about a month, with something which required a serious operation. So I put in for his leave, got a passage for him within a fortnight and ... no answer. So I happened to go into the Secretariat one day and saw Collins. I said, 'What about this chap's leave?' 'Well, we don't think that you can spare him'. I said, 'My God, what are you talking about? Don't think I ...' I said, 'His duties can be arranged for. Why are you telling me that I can't spare him. Who knows whether I can spare him or not, better than I. In fact, I've got to spare him because if he doesn't go home he's got to go to hospital, tomorrow. And whether he comes out alive is anybody's guess. And I'm not going to be spoken to like that. You come and do my bloody job and let me have yours. If you know how ...'

I. Was Collins an officious type?

S. He was a curious fellow ... He'd got a bad streak of vindictiveness, in spite of the fact that he was a pillar of the Baptist Church or something like that. He could be very, very spiteful.

S. Well, you are the second person who has mentioned it. Mr. Davidson mentioned it - Mr. Davidson mentioned it with regard to his attitude to E.H. Davies.

S. That's one of the cases I was thinking of. I rescued Davies from that by accident because he was working under me at the time, and he was passed over for promotion. And the man who was promoted was Sudbury who for 25 years had been a constant source of trouble to the Government physically because of war wounds in the head. And he sometimes had sort of black-outs.

I. Sudbury?

S. Mmm. It all happened over this. Davies had had a complete breakdown, sent home on leave, recovered. On his way out he was torpedoed. And when he came back [he was] worse than when he started. So they sent him to a fairly nice job, soft - softish job in Nuwara Eliya; A.G.A. Well, he was there for nearly a year. Well, a half year or so and improved immensely, out of the doctor's hands. Then they suddenly told him he'd got to go to Matara. So he went to Collins and asked if he could stay, say, another six months in Kandy. He was getting on so well. And Collins said, 'No'. So Davies appealed to the Governor. The Governor had never approved Collins' move, which was wrong of course. Because the Governor had always ...

I. And, mind you, Collins was only Deputy Chief Sec. Was he? Or he was Chief Secretary by then?

S. He was Deputy.

I. Deputy?

S. Yes. He had taken two ...

I. Two? Two jumps?

S. Yes. The Governor let him stay. Well, then the time came for promotion to Grade 1 and Collins turned him down on the ground that he was not fit to serve in any part of the island. No medical board, just that he'd refused to go to Matara, more or less, you know. And then Davies brought the whole thing to me. Well, then, I was going on sick leave. I'd been out six and a half years. Just at the very end of the war, end of March. And I recommended that Davies should act for me. My six months leave, he was my deputy then. The new Governor, Moore, an old friend of mine from the early days, sent for me. I said, 'Good morning, sir'. He said, 'No. No 'sir-ing' me, John. Sit down. You've put the Government in the hell of a hole'. I said, 'How?' He said, 'We've just told the Secretary of State that this man's unfit to go to Grade 1. And you with the most important job in the island at the moment, the harbour, have recommended that he should take over. You wouldn't change your view?' I said, 'Not a bloody hope, I wouldn't'. So he said, 'Well, I quite agree with you. I couldn't - I couldn't turn down your recommendation. You acted responsibly. You wouldn't have recommended a man in whom you hadn't the greatest confidence'. I said, 'Quite so. I've had lots to do with Davies. He's fully competent. More so than myself. I'm quite certain'. 'Right', he said, 'I know what to do'. I then went home, went to see the Secretariat - went to see the Col. Sec.[for the Colonies] and they mentioned this, and they didn't understand what it was all about: I told them frankly what the facts were, about Collins. They were terrified.

I. Who was this? The Secretary?

S. Ghent(?), I think; Permanent Under Secretary or Deputy, some such thing. And Davies got promoted.

I. Yes. I read Collins' book and it strikes me as very pedestrian. Just on public administration.

S. I didn't know he'd written one.

I. Fairly early. And ...

S. He got a bit megalomaniac, later. He'd override any consideration which didn't fit in with his views.

I. He was dogmatic, was he? Rigid?

S. No. He was too much affected by his personal ... Well, for instance, Davies. That was purely personal. Because Davies had appealed over his head and the Governor supported Davies. Then Davies was out.

I. Yes. What's the next on the list?

S. Oh, 'constitutional', I have. I'm not - look here, I'm not qualified to speak on constitutional matters.

I. No, I was interested in your views that's all.

S. Just my own personal views?

I. Yes.

S. First of all I think the - its shown up very much in Rhodesia. This sociological war-cry, 'One man, one vote', is not fitted for any country that I've ever been - know anything about. You see, everywhere you go you'll find that the tradition has been either monarchial or tribal, loyalty to the chief, Monarch, or the tribe. In Africa, of course, the - Ceylon's always been monarchial and this 'One man, one vote' business is just sheer nonsense. When this last government - Kotelawala's government was thrown out by Bandaranaike I got a letter from an old comrade of mine, a peon in the Customs: 'Honoured Sir .... Now at last we've got rid of this tyrannical government for the new government is going to reduce the price of rice and sugar'. That was their idea of .... There was nothing in that, on the party political platforms about nationalisation. I never knew the Sinhalese word for 'nationalisation'.

I. Pardon?

S. I didn't know the Sinhalese word for 'nationalisation'. I am talking to these chaps, people and friends, in the villages and ... 'What's that mean?'[1] 'Well, you see, we're not going to have any more Europeans in the services'. 'Oh, as long as we keep the Governor and the Secretary and the A.G.A's and the G.A's we'll be alright.' 'Oh, no, no, no', I said, 'You ....' My own driver said to me, 'We don't want a black government'. Of course, as you know, 'black's' the last word in - the ultimate word in insult.

I. Yes.

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1. I think he means that he asked them about independence.

S. They ... Nationalisation of land. 'Well, all the land's going to belong to the people'. 'Well, doesn't it already?' You didn't - it meant nothing to them at all. What they wanted was a quiet life.

I. Yes. That was most of the people. But wouldn't you say that the historical progress of various countries has invariably been the work of a small minority?

S. Maybe. Yes. That's true. But what I'm trying to get at at the moment is the one man, one vote where - Wilson, Harold Wilson at home here, he says that there are going to be very strict qualifications before a man can vote. For instance, he's got to learn his own name. He's got to be able to know the name of the candidate and he's got to have an annual income of at least £10 a year. These 'very strict' qualifications [ironic here]. People who're semi-barbarous in many cases, quite uneducated. My own idea, to be constructive, is a sort of electoral college.

I. Pakistani system?

S. I don't know about Pakistan. It does exist of course.

I. Well, in 1910 - I think this would have been before your time but there was this famous - there was this start of the constitutional process when the educated middle-class, including Sir James Peiris, asked for wider representation and wider powers.

S. Yes.

I. They didn't ask for universal franchise.

S. No, no.

I. But Clifford wrote this despatch - well, MacCallum was Governor but Clifford wrote it as Colonial Secretary - and they argued that the middle-class didn't represent the people, which was - has considerable truth in it, and that the people were very content with British rule, which is debatable. I mean, its difficult .... Would you say that people were very content with British rule?

S. Yes, I think so.

I. Wasn't it a question of sheer ...?

S. You mean the villager?

I. The villager.

S. Oh, yes, quite.

I. Wasn't it apathy rather than content?

S. Contentment might have bred apathy. Well, what they would

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call ...

I. It could be the other way round?

S. Well, I think not, personally. I saw no sign of it. They all came to me - to us - to help them out of their troubles. And they(?) (?) ...

I. Would you say that the headmen and the G.A's and the A.G.A's represented the villager better than the middle-class?

S. Oh, yes. Undoubtedly. I think you suggested, or I suggested myself, what was I doing in Ceylon? Did I realise that I was training my successors?

I. Yes. Did you?

S. No, not at all. That sort of thing, no. Heussler asked me that and I .... Oh, half my time was taken up with protecting the villager from the exploitation, not of an alien government, but of his own people. Land grabbing proctors, you know. The misuse of the Partition Ordinance where the man lost his land through the fact that he had to sell it in order to pay his legal costs.

I. Legal costs?

S. Yes. Well, you got the man coming in from outside. He wants some. He buys a little patch, 160th part of some - then he encroaches on his neighbour's land, the original owner. And he forces him to sell otherwise they get the sack or not be employed or something of that sort and so on. Or he takes advantage of the Partition Ordinance. By the time he's got about 360 co-defendents it'll take about two years. Some of them have died and some die in the meantime. The legal costs go on and the man is - lost his land. He's now working as a coolie on what was his grandfather's land. That happened daily. In fact, I felt responsible for a murder. A man came into the Matara District from Panadura. Well, the first thing I noticed was that in my weekly - monthly returns from a village presidence - the gansabhawas - there was a tremendous outbreak of coconut theft. Twenty times a day or a week, you know. Everybody had gone mad here, everybody was stealing coconuts. So I inquired on circuit and, oh, this newcomer who was running all the villagers round about his little piece of land - an acre or two - and they were, in fact, stealing their own coconuts. But his method was to accuse them of stealing his. It was really a civil land dispute in a way. And so I

sent for this fellow. In the meantime made some inquiries about him from the police and ... So I spoke to him. Fortunately nobody was listening. I said, 'Look here, let me give you a word of advice. Your brother died in unfortunate circumstances'. He said, 'Yes. He had an accident'. 'Yes', I said, 'The accident was forty knife wounds'. 'How do you know? No, no'. I said, 'Oh, yes, yes, its happened in ...' And I mentioned the name of the place. 'Oh, well, ...' 'Yes', I said, 'Now, you're heading in the same direction. These villagers, I know them quite well. They'll take the lot and there's a limit. I know what you're doing. Either you stop it or else one day you won't wake up'. And he said, 'No'. Wasn't interested. About a fortnight later Keuneman, the Crown proctor, who had a bit of land in the neighbourhood, said to me - just been up for a weekend - he said, 'Did you hear about that murder?' Well, they happen once a day you know. 'Which one?' 'Oh', he said, 'That man'. They had done that. They'd got - fortunately I hadn't said that in anybody's presence, practically suggesting that's what they should do. He'd got about forty wounds. Nobody heard anything about it. No villager ...

I. You'd have been charged with inciting the villagers to murder. I mean, after all, 'The Agent Hamaduruwo says he should be murdered'.

S. Oh, that was the sort of thing one was trying to protect these people against.

I. I would like to revert to that when I'm dealing with land but to return to the constitutional issue. You see, Clifford's despatch, in 19 ...

S. '26?

I. No, this is the earlier one. The 1909, 1910.

S. Yes.

I. In effect denied that Ceylon was ripe for the self-governing process to begin. And I think one could quarrel with him there because after all things like the Magna Carta were the work of a selfish minority. And the middle-class were not asking for a great deal. But - they were asking for very limited increase and he refused to give this and implied that Ceylon was not ready for the self-governing process, when I think ...

S. Well, its all a question of ...

I. Of timing?

S. Of comparison really. Is anybody ever really ready for it? Are we ready in this country for self-government? I don't ... But I think you've got to put yourself back. You've got to go back 55 years, and judge this, I think, by the general attitude. Who would ever have thought in 1910 that any of the colonies - I mean, the political view at home was, of course, another hundred or two hundred years ...

I. 'Not in our time'?

S. Of course. And it was quite a new idea, I think, self-government. And, in fact, if any - looking back now, if anybody was fit it was Ceylon. They were miles ahead of course of any - and still are.

I. Even of India?

S. Well, I don't know enough about the Indians to express an opinion. I ...

I. Of course its such a vast place.

S. Yes. Its difficult to compare India, which is twenty countries really wrapped into one. There's 360 languages and that sort of thing. But in Ceylon the level of education - lawyers, doctors, barristers, who could hold their own in any country in the world.

I. Yes. I have - in regard to the earlier point I made about arrogance, and bearing on this, I sometimes notice a touch of arrogance in Bowes' writing. And also I saw - I find a very strange argument in his - in some of his views.

S. Heussler?

I. No, in Bowes. Freddy Bowes.

S. Oh, the - 'Bows and Arrows'?[1] Yes, yes.

I. Yes. For one thing he expects Ceylonese, who had come to England and been educated and gone back to Ceylon - he uses this phrase - 'to show their gratitude to Government by working smoothly with them', and not being ultra-critical.

S. Mmm? I don't remember that.

I. This is not in his 'Bows and Arrows' but in another memorandum.

S. Yes.

I. But what would you say about this sort of view?

S. No, I don't - I wouldn't agree with that.

I. He's going a bit far there?

S. Yes.

I. And, of course, the thing that got some of the Ceylonese down

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1. Freddy Bowes, C.C.S. 1891-1923. Typescript autobiography in two volumes entitled "Bows and Arrows" in Rhodes House Library, Oxford.

was - some of the higher class Ceylonese - was the question of Ceylonisation, at the early part of the century. They had a feeling that the Ceylonese Civil Servants were shunted into the judicial line and not given administrative posts. You know, revenue administrative posts. G.A'ships.

S. I think that's true up to a point but Ceylon was far ahead of any country in the Ceylonisation.

I. Agreed.

S. Well, in my first year, I think, or thereabouts, I was superseded by at least eight people. There was the local class, you know the local division and they were ...

I. Merged?

S. Merged. Well, I lost eight places. But people below me may have lost as many as twenty - the junior. No...none of us ever - it just happened. Stubbs was Chief Secretary at the time and Manning, I think, was the Governor. Well, we worked side by side with these chaps. I mean, we were all doing the same job and - but they had their own grades and scales. Well, they got pushed into ours. Well, nobody said a word about it.

I. Agreed. Frankly I haven't found - the Civil Servants I have met certainly have had no trace of this feeling but I was thinking of the higher policy level. When it came to choosing G.A's, the racial thing seems to come in because ...

S. The fact of the matter is that the local division were at the time ...

I. Very young?

S. Largely in judicial posts. As it happened. Oh, Beven and Redlich and all sorts of people were actually magistrates or judges. And I think it was more or less an accident that ... - here -

I. Well, strange to say, my father has - I mean he says he was treated very fairly but he himself felt that on this question of G.A'ships, the top posts, it was reserved for Europeans.

S. Only by accident I think. Because the senior men, at the time I'm talking about, were practically too senior. You know they ... Well, two or three - well, I might be one of them if I'd been there at the time - who hadn't got the - they wouldn't have been given a G.A. job even if - regardless of whether they were in the local division or not. Another thing is that certain men were picked out as being ideally suited - the

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outstanding example is your own father; he had a tremendous reputation as a judge. Not only in the Government but to the people who knew best, to the Bar. Many a man in the Bar, I mean senior Q.C's, mentioned people like your father.

I. Yes. I know another chap who chose the ...

S. After all there were lots of Europeans who were not suited to ...

I. To G.A'ships?

S. To G.A'ships. Because of their temperament or general views, qualifications. I don't know how to describe it.

I. Yes. My views on this were influenced by a memorandum written by Freddy Bowes as late as 1923.

S. When he retired?

I. Yes. Arguing against the high employment of Ceylonese.

S. Freddy Bowes was a funny character. He said lots of things I simply couldn't agree with.

I. Yes, I know. He was, as you said, he was a cynic in his own way.

S. He was. Yes. Or he posed as such. He wasn't really. But he'd say the most dreadful things. I would go in and suggest that we should fine somebody something for doing something. Breach of the customs laws or something of that sort. 'Who was the firm concerned?' I said, 'That has nothing to do with it.'

I. His principle argument was that the people themselves would never accept the integrity and the impartiality of a local person.

S. I wouldn't agree with that at all.

I. You wouldn't agree?

S. No. Well, this is a case in point: he said, 'Who are the offenders?' I said, 'That has nothing to do with it. The point is how much should the fine be?' Oh, it depended entirely on who it was. In other words always remember this: 'When a man's got no friends, then you can kick him'. Well, I mean, quite wrong, absolutely immoral, unethical. One shouldn't carry personalities into it. I don't believe he acted on that.

I. Who?

S. Freddy.

I. No. He strikes me as being - well, I don't know. He strikes me as being a very able and resourceful man ...

S. He was.

I. But a bit of the old school I would say?

S. Oh, certainly very much so.

I. Very much so?

S. Yes. Well, he used to come out with these cynical remarks and I don't think he really acted on them. He was a bit of a - I wouldn't say he was an actor but he'd ...

I. A bit frivolous?

S. Yes.

INTERRUPTION

I. Did you ever feel that some of the politicians suffered from an inferiority complex which led to aggressiveness?

S. Well, I really had nothing whatsoever to do with politicians as such.

I. I mean what about Obeyesekere? Did you feel he had a chip on his shoulder?

S./No I don't think so. On the contrary he was frightfully conceited and regarded himself as pretty good.

I. Oh. Yes, I have read a couple of books by some of our politicians and the thing that hits you in the eye is their sense of self-importance.

S. Yes, yes.

I. Did you feel so?

S. I did. Oh, yes. Its difficult really to separate or distinguish between your liking personally for a man or your hatred of, not the man himself, but his attitude.

I. His attitude?

S. Politicians generally, you can't generalise ... because I mean ...

I. Could we get on to the 1915 riots?

S. Yes. First of all, they simply weren't anti-Government. Now, Jeffries,[1] I notice, when I was re-reading him, he contradicted himself in the same paragraph. I've got it marked somewhere. He said that this was partly religious and partly economical; quite true. Then he spoke of the Government having taken the view that it was anti-Government and said, of course it was difficult to - I'll find you the passage later - it was easy enough to make that mistake, sort of thing. In other words he ...

I. There was ground for it?

S. You see, he ...[2]

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1. Sir Charles Jeffries, Ceylon - The Path to Independence, (Pall Mall Press, London, 1962)

2. I think he paused to collect Jeffries' book and referred to p. 36 to illustrate the contradiction referred to.

I. Government did think it was anti-Government, did they?

S. They acted as though they did.

I. Pardon?

S. They seemed to act as though they did.

I. You see, in his first despatch Chalmers said it was non-political.

S. Yes.

I. And also a bit - in another despatch immediately afterwards said there was no question of German intrigue.

S. True.

I. But later on there was this definite feeling, amongst at least some of the European community, that it was anti-Government and anti-European.

S. Yes. True. That is quite unjustifiable, I'm saying. There's no evidence to that effect whatsoever. It was an afterthought.

I. It was an afterthought?

S. Yes. I think to explain some of the excesses which were committed.

I. But then if it was an afterthought it wouldn't have any bearing on the present action.

S. No. None at all.

I. Oh, I see, it was used as a rationale!

S. Mmm?

I. Was it used as an excuse?

S. As an excuse for the excesses which had been ...

I. But on the other hand I have seen a letter from a Captain - I think its Captain - or Colonel Northcote, who was at Military Headquarters ...

S. Yes, I remember him.

I. He wrote to the Government, an official letter, and said that they thought it was pre-conceived. This was somewhere in the middle of the riots, maybe one month afterwards, anyway fairly recent. And certainly I know, as you said, there was this feeling. And Bowes himself, in his 'Bows and Arrows', says it was an organised rebellion.

S. Well, I don't agree at all. It was purely religious to start with.

I. I wholeheartedly agree with you. I have come to that conclusion myself. But the question is: were some of the officers of that time, and the planters and these volunteers, were they acting under this impression?

S. Under the impression it was anti-Government?

I. And anti-European?

S. No. I don't think any of them were. What they were acting against was people who were raping and looting and murdering and arson and that sort of thing.

I. But didn't some of the planters and others fear that they might be attacked?

S. Never.

I. Never?

S. Well, I was in the middle of a planting district.

I. Yes, you were in Ratnapura, weren't you?

S. Yes. And I was by chance put in the position, at the age of fifteen or eighteen months or something in the Service, put me in the position of the Government Agent who was absent at the time.

I. Oh, I see. So you were in complete charge?

S. Yes.

I. And how serious was the rioting there?

S. Not at all. Well, I think we killed eight people altogether. But all in the act. All caught in the act. And shot into a crowd.

I. Who was doing the shooting here in Ratnapura?

S. Well, we got all the planters we could find who had a firearm, and we got a lot of local special policemen we swore in. The policemen were armed(?) and we had about twenty constables with carbine. And we blocked all entrances into the - we realised it would come in from the outside if - there was nothing - we didn't know anything about what was happening elsewhere, you see. Keep the - if there were gangs going down the line from Kandy to Galle - to Colombo, burning and looting it would keep them out. So we blocked every entrance and I remember the first night I posted a very senior planter with another chap and my O.A., and a few priests and that sort of thing and I said, 'Your orders are not to have any ...' No martial law had been declared of course.

I. Oh, I see. When was this? Early June? It broke out ...

S. May 29th or June 1. Something like that.

I. Oh. At the same time as the Colombo stuff?

S. Next day. Yes. Oh, we knew what was happening elsewhere.[1] And we were determined not to let anybody in to raise the local flag, you see. We knew why ...

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1. The contradiction with his previous statement on this point is more apparent than real. What he meant was that: they knew that the Moors were being attacked elsewhere but did not have details as to the nature and composition of the rioting.

I. This was taken on your own initiative?

S. Yes. I gave them orders to shoot if they saw murder, looting, arson, rape, etc., etc., etc., without question. So this old man, very much older, if need be my father, said, 'Would you mind repeating those instructions in front of a witness'. I said, 'Yes, of course'.

I. It was a very wise thing to do.

S. Well, he shot ... Next day he shot into a crowd, who were actually looting, and he killed one man. Another man climbed a coconut tree and he was shot and dropped into the river and came out of the sea at Kalutara.

I. Oh, I see. This was the man who was running away?

S. Yes. And another time we shot into a crowd who were actually, with dynamite, blowing up a mosque. At night.

I. Were there many Moslems killed by the Sinhalese?

S. Plenty. Oh, yes. Not a European's head was - not a hair of any European's head was touched. I mean ... In fact, I had the greatest trouble in catching any of these people because as soon as I appeared - I was usually on a horse - 'Agent enava! Agent enava!', you see: - 'Agent coming'. And they ran.

I. You see ... Would you say that - I mean at least in other places, judging from your experience there - that some of the trouble was that you were extremely frustrated - you arrived at the scene too late? I mean the patrols arrived at the scene too late? I mean some other trouble broke out somewhere else?

S. Yes, yes.

I. Because reading, 'Bows and Arrows': he said quite often patrols came back, reported nothing, you see. They'd come too late. And they were gingered up and sent with orders, 'For God's sake, do something'?

S. Well, not so ... Not in my experience anyhow. It did happen in the Kelani Valley. And of course they had quite illegal trials, post ...

I. Drumhead court-martials?

S. Ex post facto after three days, you know, quiet. The combination of not giving orders in writing.... But of course the Secretariat was quite overwhelmed. I mean they'd got telegrams .... and that sort of thing. For instance, the first thing I did was to close all the taverns, toddy and arrack taverns, as a matter of precaution. Well, about five days later I realised I had no right to do that at all. They'd been auctioned, you

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see, and I was probably running Government in for claims, for claims of millions of rupees for loss of trade.

I. So what did you do?

S. I wired to the Secretariat, 'Please declare martial law with effect from last Friday'.[1] I think they wired back, said, 'Its been done. It will appear in tomorrow's Gazette'. I was told afterwards that out of the thousands of telegrams they got that was the only one which gave them any chance of doing anything.

I. Oh, I see. Well, what were the others like?

S. The others: 'Wild mobs burning and looting. Please wire instructions', that sort of thing.

I. You see, I think a lot of the trouble when you - the incidents occurred because of these instructions. A lot boils down to the direct - to the nature of the instructions given to the patrols, you see. And what were your instructions from the military once they took over? From the military people? Once martial law - once they got ...

S. I've no idea. They took no part in the actual suppression of the riots.

I. In Ratnapura? None?

S. No.

I. No. Oh, I see.

S. Or anywhere for that matter, I don't think. The ...

I. Why, what about the Punjabhis? They were used in several places.

S. Were they?

I. Yes.

S. Well, I noticed after a couple of days that a lot of our people weren't armed. You know, ordinary small rifles. Apart from sporting rifles - guns - rifles, you know. So I wired to Military Headquarters and said, 'Please send forty rifles'. Got a reply back at once, 'They're arriving tomorrow. Please meet'. So I went down with a lorry which I'd commandeered and out of the train stepped forty riflemen, with a British sub-lieutenant in charge. 'Forty rifles', you see. So I said, 'Well, we'd better send them back. I don't want any Punjabhis. We can manage. Its a civil matter. Its not a war'.

I. Don't you think that much of the trouble was also due to the fact that they were using Punjabhis who didn't understand English.

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1. I am pretty certain this cable was meant to be with reference to Sabaragamuwa.

I mean, whom they couldn't communicate with?

S. I wouldn't know. I found no difficulty. They withdrew this subaltern within a day or two. He was not wanted you see. 'I should take these people back'. Well, they didn't go back for about a fortnight. And I had the greatest difficulty with them because they wanted to do some shooting, you see?

I. Yes, I see.

S. 'What have we come for?' These women with long hair. It was the Konde.[1] I kept them away from the villager.

I. That's very good. You see, I heard the story from my father who had heard it first-hand from an officer who was in command of Punjabhis, who led them into a village - an Englishman he led them there. And they must have been making enquiries round the well, as far as I could gather, when - this European knew Sinhalese, you see, - and he heard another Sinhalese remark to another in Sinhalese, 'Lets poison the well'. You know, this may just have been bravado so he collared this guy. But once the Punjabhi cottoned on to what happened, he shot the fellow.

S. Yes, well ...

I. Before this fellow ... You know, that sort of thing.

S. This Northcote chap, he couldn't know a damn thing about what he was talking about. The army of all people knew less about the country or the people than my foot.

I. Well, that's the point. What did - did you know Brigadier-General Malcolm?

S. Yes. Well, he was a - the main culprit. He was not fit to be in charge of a tea-party.

I. He was a what?

S. He was no more fit to be in that position than at a child's tea-party.

I. Didn't the Governor realise this?

S. I think the Government generally just panicked.

I. You think they panicked?

S. And handed over to the army, you see.

I. Did you think that initial firmness on the part of the authorities in Kandy ...

S. I do, yes.

I. ... and in Colombo, would have stopped the riots?

S. I do. But then Stace, of course, who was the Magistrate in Kandy at the time ... You've seen his ...?[2]

I. I've seen it. But his account strikes me as rather lame.

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1. Sinhalese men have long hair which they knot into a konde.

2. Stace's autobiography in typescript. Available at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London.

S. Yes.

I. Of course he was very new then. He was there for two - had just got there.

S. Just got there. Yes. And I'd just left. I was in Kandy up to a few ...

I. What sort of man was Vaughan?

S. Oh, just a weak old woman.

I. I think that had a lot to do with it because it fired the thing off.

S. Well, there's one thing I would like to impress on you, or at least suggest. The - a lot of the damage was done after the whole thing had died down. They then declared martial law, and they sent round these court-martials. Well, the laws of evidence just went by the board and the proctor who appeared was practically not listened to very often. I've had(?) two cases sometimes.

I. In Ratnapura itself?

S. Mmm?

I. In Ratnapura?

S. Yes.

I. General court-martial? These were those general court ...?

S. Yes, general court-martial.

I. And you think the law of evidence was not followed?

S. Course it wasn't followed.

I. Then you ...

S. I think some of them were convicted on very ...

I. Flimsy evidence?

S. Flimsy evidence. What they didn't understand was that when - Here's burning. This is on fire practically. Men, women and children into the jungle. Middle of the monsoon if you please. Mohammedans.

I. Brought false evidence?

S. How could they possibly recognise one man out of a crowd of two hundred, all screaming and shouting and(?) And then came in the [court martials] - 'Who did this?' 'My enemy of course'.

I. Yes. So the Mohammedans brought false evidence, or at least flimsy evidence?

S. Well, guesswork. I mean getting back on an enemy of theirs. They'd got to pick out somebody. 'Was that the man?' 'Yes, that's the chap'. 'Who was it you saw with a burning firebrand?' 'That was Sinni Appu or whoever it was'.

I. Well, ...

S. A good deal of that and ...

I. When you read 'Remembered Yesterdays' by S.W.R.D's father, he's very sympathetic to Government action during the riots, too sympathetic. But among other things he says that his overseer was charged as being in a certain place when he was, in fact, in Kandy. And this fellow managed to prove it. But that sort of thing happened you see.

S. Yes, indeed.

I. So you would entirely disagree with Freddy Bowes when he says that - he says in his 'Bows and Arrows' that all the court-martials were fair?

S. Well, I don't know what his reference was, but ...

I. He had no reference.

S. I attended several. And, of course, its now recognised that they were very often like that and ...

I. That is to say ...

S. Totally unnecessary, I think.

I. When you are referring to these court-martials, you are referring to these general court-martials rather than these drum-head ones which were of course ...

S. Oh, yes, I know. I'm distinguishing from those. No, these were officially appointed, proper court-martials, three officers.

I. They didn't follow the law of evidence?

S. Well, they got different ... The army's a bit different in their - they can - they do admit hearsay and that sort of thing.

I. Oh, I see.

S. That sort of thing.

I. Did you feel that these things should have been handed over to the civil courts?

S. Certainly.

I. Certainly?

S. There was no reason why they shouldn't. I was holding courts during the riots. I mean I put in an hour here and there in order to relieve the pressure on the cells, in the prison. To get them out of the way. Well, if they were not ring-leaders, so to speak, they were just ... I don't think I gave any more - anybody any more than a fortnight or something like that. And he was undoubtedly in the crowd. He was arrested by planters, whoever they were and brought in. He wasn't shot on the spot.

The only man who took that risk was when they came across a village and a young girl about twelve had been raped by seven men successively in the course of ...

I. Muslim girl? Muslim?

S. Yes. And they caught one of them and they put him up against a wall and the senior planter - I forget his name - he said - yes, Stork - said, 'Lets take him to court'.

I. And he was taken to court?

S. Yes. And then he was released under a general amnesty which was a damn silly thing. He said ...

I. That was Anderson?

S. Yes. No, before him.

I. Oh, I see.

S. No, before him. The prisons were so overloaded they said, 'Release all but the major offenders', you see. Well, this chap hadn't committed a crime under what we were talking about, about the ...

I. He was - I mean, well, a serious ...

S. It was a civil offence, it was nothing to do with the riots, particularly. No, the girl was a Sinhalese girl.

I. Oh, a Sinhalese girl! What was the response of the villagers to this call to attack Moors? I think it - wasn't it pretty general?

S. No. Well, ... Yes, the initial antipathy was anti-Moor. Largely because of the crisis created by the Gampola judgment. - (?) -. Righto. Then it - the economic element entered into it because everywhere you went you'd get the thambi [Moor]: 'marrakkalaya kakka nathi thanak naa [There is no place where the Muslim crow isn't found.]' And they were the moneylenders. They were the creditors. Everybody owed them money. And the - well, this is a good opportunity for wiping out of debts, that sort of thing.

I. Yes, I see.

S. No, that was part of it.

I. What did you think of the Gampola judgment itself?

S. A purely legal matter, I should say. I think the crux of it all was whether the Buddhists were going out of their way to annoy the Mohammedans by taking their processions ...

I. Past the mosques?

S. (?) ... Actually no longer Fridays ... And they needn't have gone that way. There's no doubt about that. But then the

question - of course it went back to the 1815 ...

I. Convention?[1]

S. ... Preservation of Religious Rites. Religious views and all that sort of thing.

I. But as far as I ...

S. I think it only broke out in one little street, Castle Street, in Kandy?

I. That's right.

S. Prompt action ... I think they killed two men and wounded five men.

I. I have read a rather biased account of it and from this account it would seem that the procession had always followed this route and the Moors were creating the trouble by protesting against it. But its a biased account.

S. Oh, that's a matter of opinion. I wouldn't have any opinion about that. But whatever it was it caused a bit of a sensation. I don't think - I never heard that the trouble in that street in Kandy arose out of that, particularly.

I. And regarding this view that it was anti-Government, I know how it arose. Bowes himself and others they take the fact that the riots broke out within the same week as proof of an organised preconceived rebellion.

S. I absolutely - most of us in the provinces were shocked to hear about it. I mean, there was no suggestion of anything like that before.

I. Well, look at 1958. The answer to that was the work of rumour and a few instigators. Some chaps went .... There must have been some instigation but there was no preconceived cooperation.

S. The only trace of the - no, no preconceived thing. Very often, to my knowledge, it broke out by somebody coming in and saying, 'I heard a rumour'.

I. Yes. And of course this was an embellished one?

S. It would be, 'The Sinhalese people are raping our women', or something like that. Or the other way about.

I. Did the Moors attack the Sinhalese at all?

S. Oh, no, they were terrified of them. Well, outnumbered of course. I mean five or six Mohammedans in one little village to two hundred Sinhalese.

I. But this is where Bowes shows himself to be rather diehard. For one thing he says there was only one person shot accidentally, and he says that was in your district?

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1. The Kandyan Convention of 1815 and the promises made therein re the protection of Buddhism.

S. That's right. The man up a coconut tree. Oh, no, - no, it was a woman. I remember that well enough. There was a posse of planters, half a dozen of them I think, who were doing an ordinary patrol.

I. Posse in cars or horseback?

S. Cars. Or a car. They heard sounds of noise, you know, arson or something, you see. They dismounted or got out, approached the village, and fired from a distance of several hundred yards into the crowd, which they were quite entitled to do even under the common law, apart from any martial law. Well, one silly ass forgot to reduce his sights. He was thinking of two hundred and he was opening fire at eight hundred. And his bullet went over the village, of course, you see, about another one hundred yards, or twenty hundred yards, something like that, and hit in the backside an old lady about eighty bending over doing some weeding. And she died of it. So all these cases I had I put before the senior member of the Bar to conduct the inquest. An impartial chap, not a European at any cost.

I. Not a European?

S. I wouldn't let any European have anything to do with an inquest, even the unofficial magistrates. Well, it was just an accident. Nobody ever suggested it was anything else.

I. Yes, agreed.

S. So I reported this to Government. Suggested that, well, obviously compensation. So the Government said, 'Right. We'll fix it'. More or less carte blanche, only too anxious to - well, ...

I. Yes, naturally.

S. Naturally. So in the course of the next few weeks ... I then discovered when it was known - I think I used eight hundred rupees, or something like that - that on this old lady of eighty-three no less than forty people were solely dependent on her earnings.

I. Ha-ha-ha.

S. Five grown sons, all over the age of fifty, and about fourteen grandchildren. All solely dependent on this good lady, probably out of her two rupees a month I should think that she could ... She could hardly stand, let alone ... I handed it over to the chief headman to deal with.

I. You see, my point is ... Now, this sort of statement by Bowes is ridiculous because there were lots of other accidental

killings.

S. No doubt.

I. My father reports one. A constable fell down and his rifle went off and shot someone. And I noticed in his 'Bows and Arrows' some question marks in ink on - at some points. I was wondering whether it was yours?

S. I don't normally comment on books or papers like that.

I. You see, among other things, Bowes says that Freudenberg's agents in Dumbara ...

S. Freudenberg?

I. Freudenberg's agents in Dumbara had something to do with the riots in Kandy, which is a far-fetched ...

S. I think it is far-fetched. I wouldn't take any notice of that.

I. What sort of man was Sir Herbert Dowbiggin?

S. First-class chap.

I. Was he a bit immature at that stage? He was rather young.

S. Oh, no. No, he was senior, very senior. He'd been Inspector-General since about 1912. Apart from his previous service. He'd had at least three years in the ranks(?) of the Force. And he'd been commissioned, or whatever you call it, since the age of eighteen.

I. Oh, I see. And Chalmers, I mean, was he out of control of the situation? Was he dependent on Malcolm?

S. I think he just handed over to Malcolm. Fighting, shooting, that sort of thing - well, who else? Civil Service or ...

I. I can quite agree that martial law was absolutely necessary but if the Governor knew something about Malcolm he could have had second thoughts about it?

S. Well, I suppose he thought, 'This is ... If there's any shooting to be done, we're not an armed Government. The Army are here to help the Police to preserve law and order. Well, its got out of the control of the Police, we'll call in the Army. It seems a reasonable thing'. The only person was the Brigadier. He was the senior officer. Who else?

I. Yes, I know, who else. But then ...

S. I mean it was just unfortunate that we hadn't got somebody like ... Oh, plenty of officers who were much more capable of dealing with the situation.

I. Yes.

S. And they didn't know anything about the country at all. I remember once a man came down from Colombo, a junior captain,

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who'd been in the country about a month. He was learning a bit of batta I think. He wanted to know whether my plans for - locked up in the safe - anti-riots, you know, the sort of things you do next time. Guarding wells, guarding railway stations, railway heads and petrol depots and all that sort of thing. And I said, 'Yes, [everything's] alright. Otherwise I'll report it'. 'Well', he said, 'Are you satisfied?' And I said, 'Yes'. He said, 'You seem to take it very lightly'. I said, 'Yes'. Well, there(?) (?) (?) (?) Kandy. He said, 'You don't seem to realise the amount of communism that's going about in India'. I said, 'No. I quite agree'. I said, 'And what's more, I don't care'. He said, 'Well, supposing something happened here. What would you do?' 'I presume I'd go to the spot. Have a look and see what's happening'. 'Well, what about your wife and children?' I said, 'Oh, I'd put them in charge of the arachchi'. 'Who's that?' I said, 'The local headman. I'd say to him - I know him well - "Look here, So-and-So, I've got to go. Just see that everything's alright"! 'Are you very happy about that?' I said, 'Yes, perfectly'. 'No ...'

I. Never convinced him?

S. 'No Sinhalese would ever touch a hair of the head of my children, or my wife or anybody. I'd be perfectly happy'. So he said, - he could see his journey finishing. He could only spend three days on ...

I. Where was this? Later on?

S. Well, it was in Matara. Yes, later on.

I. Matara. Oh, I see.

S. Oh! Must tell you about that. He wrote to me and said he'd like to see me on a certain day about ten o'clock in the kachcheri[district headquarters]. He arrived about half-past nine it seems and the - I hadn't got there by then - and he walked into the office and my Cadet, O.A. was sitting there doing the books. D.C.R. Gunewardena, you know him of course?

I. No; I've heard of him.

S. Nice little chap. Oh, this chap walked in, 'Mr. Strong about?', he said. 'No, he's - he's not here yet. He didn't expect you till ten'. He said, 'He'll be here before ten I can assure you of that'. He said, 'Look here, get up. You're sitting down, talking to me'. He said, 'Yes'.

I. Oh, this is the military chap?

S. Yes.

I. Arrogance there.

S. 'You stand' - oh, they were like that - 'How dare you?'

I. And what did Mr. Gunewardena do?

S. He was very upset. I think this officer must have used the word 'native' or something. Anyhow when I ... This man went away to come back later. In the meantime I arrived and Gunewardena was in tears, more or less.

I. Who?

S. Gunewardena. Came and told me what had happened. I said, 'No. Don't worry. Just go back'.

I. You see, the point is that sort of thing rankled.

S. Oh, rankled, yes. I was furious with him. So when this chap arrived - he was in uniform by this time. I said, 'Good morning'. I didn't offer him a chair. (?) (?) I said, 'Now, before we go on ...' Oh, turn this off will you, just for the moment.

I. Yes.

INTERRUPTION

I. I mean if you look at the basic facts, you were a ruling race and arrogance in some of them was not a wise thing because it ...

S. You know, it never occurred to me that I was one of the ruling race. I went out to do my job and I did it.

I. No, I agree. You didn't, agreed, you didn't think of that.

S. No.

I. But the fact remains that it was so.

S. If you - yes. Well, it was ... In fact, yes. In all the course of my thirty odd years I'd never struck anybody, bar once: when a chap suggested that he knew somebody who would pay me money for some appointment. I just instinctively slogged him. Well, I ran him in for ...

I. Attempting ...?

S. No, aiding and abetting in the event of accepting. Ha-ha-ha.

I. Ha-ha-ha.

S. A good old Ceylon law. And he was eventually found, six weeks later, sheltering in the house of a - of a police sergeant in Colombo. And I attended the trial. He pleaded guilty immediately and the magistrate, De Pinto the name was, ... I stood up at the Bar table and I said, 'Excuse me, sir, may I say something?' I said, 'Will you please let this man off? He's a catspaw. And I know all about it now. He'd no conception of what he was

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saying. He was just a simple ... He was a go-between in fact. I know who sent him. I want this man let off, if you please'. So he said to this chap, 'Well, you may thank your lucky stars that you got such a sympathetic prosecutor. He's asking me to let you off. I think you ought to be very grateful for that. I'm going to let you off with a purely nominal fine of 75 rupees'. Upon which, this chap fainted. He'd never seen more than about 75 cents in a heap at once. And he gave me all sorts of ... He used to borrow money in order to pay his instalments. 'If you lend me five rupees I'll pay you two rupees out of what I owe you', you see.

I. Yes. Ha-ha-ha.

S. And so in the afternoon I took my cheque book back to the office. In due course the sergeant comes in, 'This man wants to know whether you'll bail him out'. I said, 'I expected so.' And I paid the fine. I must say he came back the next morning full of gratitude and said he'd pay back every penny of this 75 rupees, at the rate of one rupee a month. I said, 'Righto'. And after about six months [I] cancelled the balance and .... That was the only time I struck anybody. Why should I? Sometimes I've been accused of what you might call arrogance. Invariably it was for some offence or somebody had offended me. But I - but it wasn't because he was black.

I. It was because ...?

S. Because he was offensive. I mean, I would have done the same thing ...

I. To anybody else?

S. ... with any European who came in wearing his bowler hat and spitting on my floor. I mean ...

I. Yes. Did you feel that sometimes some of the Ceylonese were ultra-sensitive on this point?

S. Yes.

I. It was quite likely so. I mean one finds it even now.

S. Another thing which annoyed me - don't have the recorder on for the moment.

INTERRUPTION. END OF FIRST SIDE OF TAPE. Small portion unrecorded

S. .... respect which wasn't given to them. Merely in the form of address.

I. Planters didn't like the officials because they got more respect?

S. Well, it was a feeling I often had. I just quoted a case.

I. This is an impression you had?

S. Yes. Because I was perhaps ten or fifteen years younger than the planter, who was equally respected. But I mean ... Well, you know ...

I. The terms of address were different?

S. ... twelve of them at least were told to come and answer ... And it was just the way they talked that's all. There was no law about it.

INTERRUPTION

I. Well, you could get onto the 1920's constitutional ... or whatever you have got on the list.

S. Well, here we are then. Well, as I say, I know nothing about constitutional law. I can only go by impressions that I had to work - conditions I had to work under. The 1920 - 1910 - '20, which was the partial displacement of officials by un-officials. Especially by giving the legislator the power of the purse?

I. Yes, that's right. '24 wasn't that?

S. Yes. But no - '20.

I. '20, yes.

S. Yes. I was really cushioned against direct effects by the fact that I was junior. But the '24 changes coincided with my appointment as - that was the ...

I. D.J., Nuwara Eliya?

S. No. D.O., District Officer in Matara.

I. Oh, I see.

S. All the rest is about Obeyesekere.

I. Obeyesekere.

S. I told you about that, didn't I?

I. Yes, you told me about that.

S. There was a good deal of wasting money. The State Council would suddenly vote large sums for such things as additional pillar-boxes, upkeep of village roads and sort of electioneering stunt which members vied with each other for getting more - 'I've got more post-offices than you did and more done to the road', and all that sort of thing.

I. Yes, I see.

S. And ...

I. Would you say that they had power without responsibility?

S. Yes.

I. I'm surprised that they established this sort of thing. This is exactly what they'd established in America in the eighteenth century and which had failed.

S. Yes.

I. It shows a lack of thought.

S. Yes. For instance, I was given something like a lakh of rupees, all in one, - quarter of a million rupees - you see, for village roads. So I wrote back and said, 'I can't be responsible for this. I've got no staff to spend all that money. I can't look after it'. Also in one monsoon most of it would have ... You gravel a road - well, the gravel's down the ditch in no time, you see. And this is going to be - say I get a lakh a year, okay. I could get - I would employ a P.W.D. type of engineer and so on - do something about it. And they said, 'You spend it in one year, that's all'. That was a sheer - nearly a sheer waste of money. I spent it practically wholly on paving the roads so that you didn't have to walk in the road. You had .... and supplying a lot of culverts which - permanent, permanent culverts, which would last for centuries, you see.

I. Yes, I see.

S. And then I had to beg people to accept a post-office, or a pillar-box at least. The villagers who wrote one letter a year, possibly, they didn't want them. I just had to put them in. A sheer waste of money. This - that type of thing. The 1924 experiment was roundly condemned in the island.

I. Well, that's why I asked about Stanley's view. He said - well, in effect he modified Clifford's view, and said it was - 'That cooperation outweighed res ...

S. Exactly what I'm saying here, now.[1] The Donoughmore Commission described it as un unqualified failure from the start. Naturally with the Executive still unanswerable to the Legislature. So that the unofficial tended to become a permanent opposition. And the Governors reserve powers were literally a dead letter. Even Sir Hugh Clifford, the ablest Governor by far, according to the Colonial Office, couldn't make it work. And so represented [matters]. And so they sent the Donoughmore Commissioners. Stanley, intellectually ill-equipped to express any opinion on anything, was inevitably wrong. He alone stuck out against the opinions of those far better qualified to judge. He said the '24 Constitution was not an unqualified failure but

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1. I think Mr. Strong had jotted down some notes on the subject and was reading them out here.

rather a qualified success. It was just trying to invent a slogan which would attach to his name as one of the finest ...

I. This is a sort of paper-wallah, more or less?

S. Yes.

I. Was he trying to win the popularity of the politicians?

S. Well, its in his despatch to the Secretary of State. Wasn't published at the time.

I. No, I was wondering whether he was trying to mollify the politicians? Its difficult when you see it at a distance.

S. I don't really know what he - affected them. I know he tried to mollify, you might say, the general populace. He tried to - he degraded himself by being common. I mean, he would open a bazaar belonging to Don Pedris Appu in the Pettah, a new shop. He'd go and turn out in all his regalia and open a new shop, but he would never ask a Civil Servant to dine. He ignored the Service, and like Caldecott who chewed betel in public to show that he was a demagogue. Well, I mean, it ...

I. But was Stanley, like Caldecott, a demagogue?

S. No. He was just a panderer to the .... A demagogue is a sort of leader of a thing. [He was trying] to be one of them, to identify himself with the lower classes, rather to show his ...

I. Maybe he was - I mean, to try and lean back the other way, maybe he was genuinely sympathetic?

S. He probably was but he didn't ... This device was seen through by the people, who were really the first people to judge insincerity. He didn't like going to open Pettah shops any more than anybody else would, Well, I don't suppose Caldecott enjoyed chewing betel in Jaffna.

I. Yes. Would you say that Caldecott was out of his political depth in Ceylon?

S. Mmm. The trouble was with him he was a sick man, he shouldn't have been there. He was constantly ill and he suffered immense agonies from an arthritic hip or something. He was never a fit man. And he only stayed out there from, I think was, a mistaken sense of duty in the war.

I. Was he a sort of 'By jove, George' hearty type?

S. No. No. He was very mulish. He wouldn't concede anything once he'd made up his mind. For instance, when I first came to Colombo just after the bombing about three quarters of the harbour population had bolted. Practically every Indian had gone back to South India. And hundreds of Sinhalese people had

gone to visit sick aunts and, you know, ... naturally getting out of the bombed area. Perfectly right. Well, they didn't come back, yet. And he spoke over the radio and said that anybody who didn't return to duty would be sacked. Well, how do radio - one [speech of] ten minutes [duration] on the radio affect people in Anuradhapura or wherever - Galle or anywhere else. Well, they didn't come back.

I. This is a bit impractical, wasn't it? Was he impractical?

S. Yes. So when I found this out I wrote to him - I wrote to the Government - and asked that ... I said that it was quite impossible for this message to have reached them all and would he relax on it. No, he wouldn't. Well, then I suggested: Well, will you relax [the order] to this extent. We'll now issue a notice in the press, in writing, on paper. Put it in every newspaper on every page of every paper for the next fortnight and take every possible step and go further than that and say, "If you run away again, then you'll be sacked for good". I mean, you come back with your previous .... They were all sacked without them losing all their previous service, pensions - if there were any.[1] If they come back now and they run away again, then they've had it. They won't get a second chance. That's out. He wouldn't buy it. [i.e. Strong's proposal to give them a second chance on defined conditions.] So I went to Kotelawala.[2] I said, 'Well, this is the position. I have done all I can'. And he said, 'Well, I quite agree with you. I don't see what more you can do. I can't do anything but I'll promise you this that when we get our self-government, the first thing we will do is restore all these lost privileges, ex post facto'. You know, retrospectively. So I had to be content with that. They trickled back. And, well, I must say I took no trouble to find out whether the man was a new man or not. I mean I took him on and they just got back. I was not supposed to re-employ these people.

I. Yes, I see. Returning to the constitutional issue. Well, I think that's all that can be said of the 1924 Constitution. Did you feel that the Government were leaning over backwards to please the politicians? I mean they were not taking a firm stand on certain things?

S. Oh, yes. Fletcher was at the back of that, of course. Everybody took their turn from him, you see. 'You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours', you know.

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1. He means: Caldecott's threat meant that they would be dismissed and lose the benefits of their previous service.

2. He was the Minister of Communications and Works.

I. Yes, I see.

S. (?) What was a poor man like myself to do? You never know ... Government was not protecting us. I mean I took up a thing ... Somebody offered me half a million rupees to build a cottage hospital, provided it was called after his name. He was a very rich, un-English speaking - non-English speaking.., He'd made a lot of money out of rubber. Delightful old man. I was at his daughter's wedding. We were great friends. And he came to me and asked me if I would accept this. So I wrote a lovely letter of thanks. You know, 'I'd put it up to Government'. Government turned it down, on the advice of the Attorney-General who said that this gift ought to be rejected because its obviously motivated by the ...

I. Personal?

S. No, by a desire for a mudaliyarship, or something like this.

I. Oh, I see.

S. So I wrote back and said I've heard of - in my youth I'd heard some sort of story about not looking a gift-horse in the mouth. And I was rather sorry that Government hadn't given me authority to write on their behalf to thank him. And fortunately I'd taken that precaution sometime ago. What can you do with people like that?

I. Mmm. What sort of - well, actually, I should come to that later. What have you got next on your list?

S. Personalities. My first Governor was Chalmers.

I. Yes. He came at rather an unfortunate time.

S. Yes. Manning. His 1924 Constitution was messed about by the Secretary of State. He commanded the greatest respect and was very able and strong and lots of us thought that his 1924 Constitution might have worked. If the Secretary of State hadn't tampered with his recommendations. Of course we go back now to [the question of] communal or territorial [representation].

I. Yes. Do you happen to know how this communal split was accentuated? The communal split among the educated Ceylonese?

S. No, I don't really know much about that.

I. For instance, I think - did you know Ramanathan?

S. Yes, of course. I'd met him and admired him.

I. I have a feeling he tended to work against the Sinhalese pretty early on, but I don't know for what reasons.

S. Well, I don't suppose one thought about it. I was only

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interested in the effects on me, you see. I wasn't interested in constitutional law or anything like that. I wasn't interested in the metaphysics of the whole thing, only [in the] direct effects of the working of the ...

I. Constitution?

S. It wanted improvements. Certain things happened that shouldn't happen in my experience. For instance, judging by, it seems, on the ground of politics. Political interference, you might say. You know?

I. Yes, I see.

S. It shouldn't have any part in the ...

I. Administration.

S. Stubbs.

I. Oh, yes. Stubbs.

S. Cold brain, lacking in manners. Could be vindictive, generally unpopular.

I. Would you agree that he was an intellectual snob?

S. Yes. And he didn't make himself very popular when he first arrived, by saying that the Civil Service was underbrained and overpaid.

I. You felt you were overpaid, were you?

S. Well, we didn't think so.

I. Oh, he felt so?

S. He said so. Underbrained and overpaid. Of course he was a great example of the folly of appointing to a Governorship or a Colonial Secretaryship a clerk from the Colonial Office. Same thing happened with Garratt(?) in Malaya after this last war. They'd never been used to take responsibility, or a quick decision. It was all on this side, on that side, on this side, on that side, putting a case up for the decision of the top man. They never had to say suddenly, 'Here's a riot going on, here's the police being attacked. Ring up for instructions'.

I. Bowes makes this point very clearly.

S. Who?

I. Bowes. 'Bows and Arrows'. But what surprised me about Bowes was: he's a resourceful man but when it came to a point during the 1915 riots, and he was the senior man in Colombo when no one was there, he had refused to take responsibility. I know it was a big task but it was an opportunity for him to do something.

S. Yes.

I. And he was the senior member, you see.

S. Quite. Well, Caldecott was like that. When I came back from Rangoon he asked me to stay with him for a couple of nights. And when I first arrived I had an interview with him, and I said, 'I can't quite ...' - I'd been out of action, you see. I hadn't even seen a newspaper for a month. 'What is the exact position between you and the Commander in Chief? Well, I mean, to whom am I responsible? As Chairman of the Port Commission'. He said, 'Well, you have a sort of double responsibility. I'm still in charge of the Civil Government and the Commander in Chief is only connected with defence'. I said, 'But surely there's very little that could happen in civil administration which hadn't some indirect bearing at least on defence. You might say that even the issue of petrol coupons is a defence matter, you see. The Services have claims, etc., etc.' He said, 'Well, just good old British way. Nothing's written down. But I'm happy, very happy, to accept it as it relieves me of so much responsibility'. Phew.

I. From a Governor?

S. The Governor. I said, 'Alright' and I left. Of course, Layton, the Commander-in-Chief, he was a goldmine. I mean you could depend on him. He supported me through thick and thin. I couldn't have got on without him. I was constantly being torn between the Army and the Navy, the people ... And I would be overruled. Somebody would attempt to overrule me on the ground that there was a war on. I used to get so sick of that. As if I didn't know there was a war on.

I. What sort of man was Layton?

S. First-class. I mean, absolutely spontaneous. He didn't ... his language was - he didn't mind what he said. He was a typical bluff sailor you might say and ... But he ...

I. What about his intellect? I mean ...

S. Oh, he was - he got the right end of the stick every time. He was very spontaneous. You know what I mean. He'd suddenly ring me up and would say, 'I want this done'. 'Very good, sir', you see. Now then I'd write a long letter explaining - 'Alright. Yes, I'll - your instructions will be carried out, but I'd like to put the following points'. He'd ring back and say, 'I've read your letter. I quite agree with you. Cancel my - cancel my instructions'. But if you said no at the start you'd had it. I mean there was no good arguing but if you waited a bit and just put it ...

I. Quietly?

S. ..; at a later point he'd immediately see the fallacy, if there was one.

I. Yes. Reverting to Stubbs, would you say that he had the clerk's approach to problems?

S. Yes.

I. And looked at details, not at general questions? At least a tendency?

S. Well, ... I should say so, yes, in a way.

I. I think Bowes makes that - roughly that point.

S. Yes. Well, he knew more about it. Stubbs was Chief Secretary, you see. I didn't know much about it in my junior position.

I. Well, he was - oh, yes, he was Governor a bit later. Thomson?

S. Sick man. Very nice, charming man but not up to it.[1] He died on the way home. He was a sick man. Stanley, formerly Samuel. Came down from Balliol with a Fourth, in the absence of a Fifth Class. A Jew who'd got a series of Private Secretaryships under men like Goschen, etc. And finally got a job in the High Commission in South Africa. Married a young, rich and beautiful South African wife. I had an interview with him some three months after he arrived and he told me that it was his intention to see as much as possible of his Civil Service. He never put this into practice. He used to save most of his entertainment allowance. He discontinued entertaining, by which a Colonial Governor can keep in touch with general trends by personal conversation. And his entertaining went on pretty, nubile young girls, who were friends of his A.D.C. That sort of thing. One senior officer who was absent from an official celebration, which he was supposed to attend, was asked to explain why he'd been absent. He said, 'It was so long since he was ever in Government House - Queen's House before, that he'd lost his way and couldn't find it'. As it was true that he hadn't been invited in two years there wasn't much that could be said about it. No intelligence. He once asked me, dealing with the Customs tariff, the name "non-ferreous metals" was raised. He asked me, 'I suppose that means non-portable?' I got a good mark for that from the Chief Secretary, for worming my way out of it. 'Yes, some of these non-iron metals were rather heavy to carry', or something like that. Yes, I had a big row with him. He started talking about the riots. He ...

I. Who?

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1. i.e. when Governor in the period 1931-34. He was also Colonial Secretary in Ceylon from 1919-21.

S. Stanley, He was talking about the victims. And after a bit I thought, 'We're not thinking about the same thing'. So I said to him, 'Victims. Why, I thought you were talking about the women and children, the Mohammedans that were massacred'. No, the victims were the unfortunate people who were sent to jail.

I. That was what he was referring to?

S. He was talking about Jayatilaka or Senanayake or some of these chaps who got put in jail. There was no excuse for that, I agree, but word 'victims' meant something different.

I. Yes.

S. Well, then he blamed Dowbiggin for the whole thing. I said, 'I can't sit and listen to this. Dowbiggin acted very well, after all, considering the handicaps. Trying to issue orders, definite orders, which he ommitted to do because of the severe pressure of time. There were twenty people speaking at the same time and so on.' And he then called the A.D.C. and said, 'Remove this man. Take him away and bring me some other fellow to talk to'. Anyhow Dowbiggin got a C.M.G. shortly after that so I mean .... Clifford. One of my most treasured recollections. Caldecott came from Malaya with a great reputation as an administrator. I only suppose he failed in Ceylon through ill-health. In constant pain and suffered physically, great suffering, a very sick man. He was self-opinionated and stubborn. Well, twice he put me on the mat badly, and twice I had to explain that he was wrong. I mean, as a fact. He hadn't rung me up to say, 'Look here, I want to see you. What happened?'

I. He had already made his decision?

S. Yes. On some false information or misunderstanding. And gave me a complete dressing-down, told me I was incapable of running myself and when I got the breath to say anything at all, got the chance, I said, 'I'm sorry, sir, you're mixing me up with somebody else. I did the entire opposite of what you're accusing me of doing'. Well, from that moment he hated me. He had to - he didn't know what to say. He'd spread himself hysterically. Another time he told me that I had done something which had the effect of raising the cost of living by ten per cent. Of course nothing could be more remote from the truth. Took me about three pages to write a long explanation as to how he'd arrived at this mistake. Instead of asking me, 'Don't you - do you agree that the effect of this order in this case

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would be ...?' And I'd say, 'No, sir, of course not'. Which I did eventually. But he wouldn't withdraw it. He didn't say sorry or anything. He just ... He made it clear that he hated me even more on the principle one hates those one's hurt, I suppose.

I. Yes, I suppose so. Rather petty?

S. Yes. Oh, yes, this creation of what he called a Pan-Sinhalese Government. That was a phrase he invented. He prided himself on that, as I know. 'Pan-Sinhalese', you see. Well, because of the seven Sinhalese Ministers, under the Donoughmore.

I. Mmm. Yes, I know.

S. Well, how's that going to help the Tamil-Sinhalese business? When the whole idea was multi-racial. It should have been. Of course it alienated the minority group a good deal. I mean, it called for one or two Tamils on the basis of top-men, and a Mohammeddan possibly and a Burgher, or something like that.

I. There's one personality I hadn't mentioned there, Sir John Anderson. He was a sick man, wasn't he?

S. He was indeed and I - I think a little unbalanced from his physical - from the physical point of view, you see. He was a sick man.

I. But what about his judgment on these 1915 riots? He dealt with specific cases. What did you think of that?

S. I thought he was - he just about hit the nail on the head. He discovered that Stubbs had lied.

I. Yes.

S. Look here, I don't ...

I. Well, Bowes has written the same thing so its on print. Its in print.

S. No, look here, before we go any further, I don't want to be quoted. No. Yes, Stubbs - Newnham must have told you this, I think, because he's often mentioned it to me. Stubbs had made a written report on what E.W. Perera had taken home to the Secretary of State. Said to have carried it in his shoes so that it wouldn't be pinched.[1]

I. Is that true?

S. A sort of way of talking, I think.

I. Yes.

S. And braving submarines and all this sort of thing. E.W. Perera was a very fine man I think. I liked him very much. I forget who he was talking to. Anyhow he[2] made a statement in a despatch

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1. E.W. Perera carried a memorandum from the Sinhalese addressed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in his shoes when he travelled by ship to England, braving submarines and all that.
2. Stubbs.

to the Secretary of State and this was questioned by my friend, whoever it was[a], and he [Stubbs] said, 'Oh, not to worry, I told them there that - a pack of lies. And of course they take anything from me. The Secretary of State, they believe everything I say' .... and of course, ... Well, its ...

I. He told E.W?

S. Mmm.[b]

I. And Sir John[c] discovered this?

S. He ... No - what? I'm sorry I've got two things mixed up. This statement of Stubbs that, 'I can write anything I like, because the Secretary will believe me, having been in the Office there. And they'll discard anything I discard'. Anderson discovered a lie in Stubb's report on the riots.

I. And after that he never trusted him?

S. That's right, I think. Yes. Well, that's all on the Constitution till we come to the Donoughmore.

I. Yes, the Donoughmore. The height of it.

S. Well, of course, that never worked either, really.

I. Pardon?

S. I don't think that ever worked properly either.

I. No, it didn't.

S. The idea was taken from the London County Council, what we call the Legislature and Executive section.

I. Who was the moving force in the Commission?

S. Donoughmore.

I. Donoughmore?

S. Mmm.[1]

I. Not Shiels or Butler?

S. No, I don't think so.

S. Rees, the labour man, ...

I. Shiels is Labour.

S. Oh, yes. (?) An after-thought.

I. What do you think of the grant of universal franchise? You thought it was premature?

S. Well, I think its wrong. I was saying just now ...

I. Yes, you made the point earlier, so ...

S. About the electoral colleges?

I. Mmm. But didn't you feel that it made the Government a bit more responsive to the needs of a wider group?

S. No, I don't think so in the least. I don't think the man in the street - the villager - had the slightest say in the matter.

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1. I think he has got the Donoughmore and Soulbury Commissions mixed up here.

a. Another British Civil Servant, probably in the Secretariat.

b. Error: he told the Civil Servant concerned.

c. Sir John Anderson was the Secretary of State in 1915 and subsequently came to Ceylon as Governor.

His - he voted on promises.

I. Agreed. He voted on promises but the Government tried to woo the public.

S. I don't see how they could have done so. They wooed the politician. It never got down to the villager. I don't think the villager had any conception who the Governor was, ...

I. Agreed. But ...

S. Or the Government.

I. ... now the politicians were in power, or more or less in power,

S. Yes.

I. And they tried to woo the masses by having more social legislation.

S. Yes. (?) bribery, in fact, in some form or other, which every Government does. In this country too, of course. Perhaps even more so. I mean, take spending £50 million on taking away a small charge of a couple of bob on prescriptions. I mean, its absurd.

I. Did you have ... Reverting to another aspect, did you have any experience of the Executive Committees?

S. Yes, indeed.

I. You attended some?

S. That's where it broke down, you see. From the point of view of getting on with the job. Well, I was in - I was P.C.C.[Principal Collector of Customs] most of the time, taking Customs and the Excise and the Harbour. Well, meetings took place once a month. Well, damn it, I wanted a decision every other day.

I. Yes, I see.

S. On something or other. I mean, within my powers I didn't worry. But with certain things, very often demanding money of course - but, I mean, certain things I had to apply for approval, as I would in the old days, to the Secretariat. Well, the Secretariat ... I'd often ring up if it was urgent and say, 'Is it alright if I do so and so?' They'd say, 'Well, we'll give you a ring back'. And I'd got to wait a month for an order.

I. But couldn't the Minister sometimes take the decision on his own?

S. Theoretically, yes. But, you see, it was not practical, It happened in a particular case, where one of our people broke down. They'd forgotten to do something. And that put me in a quandary. I had at stake literally millions of rupees. I mean to say if collision between two major vessels happened, God knows what Government would have had to pay, in compensation

for our neglect. How it arose is another matter. As soon as I found this out I thought, 'Well, I'll deal with whoever is responsible later, I must get a cable off at once'. Well, I put it up to the Council.[1] Fortunately they were sitting - the Executive Council [was] sitting in a couple of days time, and they turned it down on the ground that it was in the middle of the ... They said it must wait for the next budget. Another seven months. Well, I was in the position of not wanting to wait another seven days. So I kept back after the meeting, went to the Minister, Macan Markar, a very decent chap, a business-man, a millionaire - and I said, 'Really, this is very serious, sir. I must have it by ...' He said, 'I quite agree. What are we to do? Wait until next month?' I said, 'No. Under Section something or other, sir, you have the right to - in the case of an emergency like this, to approve, subject to confirmation at the next meeting'. 'Oh, yes', he said, 'Yes. Oh, yes. Well, supposing they don't confirm it'. I said, 'Well, then, you're responsible personally. But', I said, 'Its only two and a quarter lakhs. I'll go half with you if you'll turn the other half ...',ha-ha-ha. He said, 'Alright. Get on with it'. I went back and telegraphed that morning. We were saved. They did pass it at the next meeting. But, you see, I think he's probably the only man on that Committee who could have afforded to pay two and a quarter million rupees if he had been let down.

I. Yes, I see.

S. And not one of them would have taken responsibility, I don't think, even if it was a matter which ...

I. What sort of man was he as a Minister?

S. First-class. He was a business man. I put up a scheme for a second dry-dock and it cost twenty - going to cost twenty million and he said, 'Good'. I said, 'I can promise you at least 12½% return'. Really I should have said twenty-five but I was conservative. 'Oh, but of course. Get on with it. Give me one sheet of paper explaining the whole thing. Leave it to me'.

I. Did he control his Committee?

S. He didn't try to. I mean, he did. He did certainly.

I. Because ...

S. Well, in this case he controlled them in this way. He didn't tell them what he was doing. He didn't tell Government, didn't

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1. Read Committee for Council.

tell anybody. He told me to put up this scheme on paper. I never heard anymore about it. I saw no reference to it in the budget meeting. And then I asked him what had happened. 'Oh', he said, 'I got it through alright. Oh', he said, 'Its under the head of Relief of Unemployment. I put in 20,000 rupees for Relief of Unemployment in North Colombo. When they asked me I said I was going to dig a hole in the harbour, in order to fill in the Bloemendhal Swamp'. This was a twenty million job. He said what he wanted his 20,000 for was starting to dig of course - it took two or three years, you see, - and this would be-the immediate effect would be to relieve unemployment. Now if any European Minister had taken [that course] he would have got sacked for that sort of deceit, you see. And the next thing that happened was the following year he put in a vote for ten million. When they asked, 'What do you mean?' 'Oh', he said, 'You passed it last year'. 'What do you mean, passed it last year? Never heard of it'. He said, 'I told you we were going to dig a hole. We've dug a hole. We are still dealing with it'. And it went through. And, of course, it paid for itself about three times over during the war. Now, I could never have got that out of the old Secretariat.

I. Apart from the slowness of decisions, did Ministries tend to work at cross purposes?

S. Well, very largely personal. I mean one man always opposed everything I did or said on the ground that I was inefficient, incompetent and knew nothing about my job, and depended on the false advice of the juniors.

I. This was one man in the Executive Committee?

S. Yes.

I. No, I was thinking as between Executive Committees, they ...

S. They worked in watertight departments. Another thing which - it wasn't - there was no central coordination, you see. No central body, no central Committee. There was ... Seven of them, some impinging on each other, on others, you see.

I. On the other hand, didn't you think that it gave these theoretical politicians some experience in administration?

S. Oh, yes, it must have done, of course. Yes. But it wasn't a very good method and so on.

I. What did you think of Sir Andrew Calde... Oh, of course ... His reforms despatch? Have you read his - Caldecott's reforms

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despatch? I don't know whether you've heard of it. Its not in your time.

S. No.

I. No. Well, ...

S. It was in my time, but I never saw it.

I. Another aspect ...

S. Its probably mentioned by Jeffries. I don't ....

I. Another aspect of the Donoughmore Constitution was relations between the Ministers and these Officers-of-State. Do you know what they were like, at the start?

S. Hadn't the Officers-of-State disappeared under the Donoughmore?

I. No. Three of them. Chief Secretary, Legal ...

S. Oh, yes, I'd forgotten.

I. Legal Secretary and Financial Secretary.

S. Well, I only came in contact with them on the Public Service Commission. That was another failure. You see, the Public Service Commission was supposed to be a completely impartial body, outside politics altogether. They were dealing with appointments. And promotions and so on. In point of fact, the big mistake the Donoughmore people made was to provide that any appointment, or at least describing lists of appointments, should be sent to the Executive Committee concerned for their comments.

I. Oh, yes, there was a lot of ...

S. Oh, terrible things. E.W. Perera, I remember saying, time after time, 'Why send the damn thing to us. I mean, if we disagree, they still do it. If we agree, well, why worry? Why take the trouble to waste time asking us for our ... And then not accepting our thing. Its all silly. Give us the job of appointments or take it away I'm not asking for the - that we should have control of appointments. In fact, there should be an impartial body to appoint people, you see'.

I. That was a very sensible view but I have my doubts whether many of the politicians would have agreed with that, because they liked interfering.

S. Well, let them. But I'd much sooner have gone to my Executive Committee and say, 'I want a new harbour engineer'. And I had to go to the Public Service Commission. Well, there were only two applicants. One was a qualified Englishman and the other was an unqualified Sinhalese. Unqualified in the sense

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that he hadn't got his degrees or his experience. And I wouldn't take the responsibility of overruling my chief engineer by taking over a man who was, admittedly, without qualifications. Well, I say admittedly - who hadn't in fact. And there was a lot of underwater work concerned. You can't check that. I mean, either its done properly or its not. And, oh, anyhow, without going into detail it took me twenty-six weeks to get that post filled.

I. By whom?

S. Before the Executive Committee would withdraw their objections or the Public Services Commission would withdraw theirs. And I/was actually approached by Tyrrell, the Chief Secretary, who said, 'Will you please alter your recommendation?' I said, 'Certainly not'.

I. He wanted to employ the Ceylonese?

S. Yes, against his own wishes. Of course, he agreed with me entirely. 'I won't take the responsibility of having a man who's not qualified'. I'm not talking about colour.

I. Yes, I agree. I quite see your point.

S. As a matter of actual fact, in my time - about the same time I appointed a junior to him who I particularly chose - a Ceylonese - as against any other outsider. Because he was Ceylonese. And other things being equal. He had the qualifications.

I. You see, the impression I get from reading some of Ivor Jenning's articles and other books is that there was a lot of friction in the early 1930's between these three Officers-of-State ...

S. Oh, there was, in Parliament.

I. Yes, and the Ministers.

S. These, what they used to call snoopers or watchers-on or - put in to guide us and see we don't make mistakes. It offended their sense of responsibility and I can quite see the point. It just - a sort of attempt, it seemed to me, to continue the Colonial system; in that particular aspect. Taking the place of the old Executive Council, whom the Governor was never supposed to give way to, if he didn't agree. He wasn't bound by the Executive Council in any way.

I. Did you feel that high officers were rather in a nebulous position?

S. They were, yes.

I. These three men there; yet supposed to be the British Government's men, and yet these Ministers with power?

S. Yes. Quite anomalous. Yes. I don't wonder the resent of these people.[1] And the one thing they[2] didn't do was ever to stand up for us. These three people would sit listening to gross abuse, and often undeserved, of Public Officers who couldn't answer themselves. I could never write to the newspapers and that sort of thing. And they might - one of them might have stood up and said, 'No names, please. The Service is surely acting under its general instructions and should not be abused. They can't answer back'. It disgusted us too in that way.

I. I was wondering if there was anything in the personalities of the existing Officers-of-State which furthered this friction. Was Tyrrell rather of the old school?

S. Tyrrell? Tyrrell was the most unpredictable man I ever came across. You never knew what he was thinking, and he'd do the opposite to what he'd said he was doing, or thought he was doing. I'll come back to him. He would - I should say he was weak.

I. Weak?

S. Yes. He'd sort of give way when it was quite unnecessary. I mean, sacrifice a principle for the sake of harmony. And on the other hand he'd go all out for something which wasn't even a principle. It didn't much matter if it was.

INTERRUPTION [The subject with which the next section commences is that of Ceylonisation of the C.C.S. and Government's reluctance to appoint Ceylonese as revenue officers.]

S. He[3] was more of that generation. I've got their names in the book upstairs but I can't pick one out who was so ... And, after all, I don't think many of them, more than a small handful, were qualified by seniority.

I. Probably.

S. That's another point.

I. That's true.

S. Well, there were only eight above me and I was then only two years service.

I. Yes, I see your point.

S. None of them could be very old probably. Oh, 'indebtedness'. It so happens its next on my list.

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1. i.e. The politicians resented the presence of the Officers-of-State.
2. The Officers-of-State.
3. Sorry, identity unknown; possibly Paul Pieris or Arunachalam.

I. Yes. Just before we come to that, I was wondering whether Tyrrell, for instance, was a type who would stand on his dignity?

S. Tyrrell? No, I don't think so.

I. Bourdillon?

S. Bourdillon? Just bone idle.

I. Pardon?

S. He was bone lazy. He didn't do anything at all, except wait for his next leave.

I. Well, I know he disliked Ceylon.

S. Oh, yes. I didn't know that.

I. So Mr. Miles told me.

S. I think he was anxious to get away and get promotion. Get a Governorship.

I. Yes. Well, 'indebtedness' is it?

S. Yes, the next thing I have on your list.

I. Yes?

S. Universal, quite incurable. In general I'm not inclined to put personal extravagance very high in the list of causes. This sounds rather like an essay one writes (?) (?) .... On the whole I think the causes were either economical or socially inevitable. Under the first head you may have crop failures and the like. A man's forced to borrow to feed his family, when the grain can't last out till next harvest. So he's got to borrow. Well, he borrows from his owner, at 50% interest. 50% per season, not per annum even. And he buys when - at a time of shortage, before the crops are planted, at the top price. He sells when the harvest is reaped and the price is - there's a glut on the market. He's cut both ways.

I. He's cut, but doesn't the man who lends him - when he's[the lender is] repaid the man[the lender] gets this money at the wrong time and the price is lower?

S. Yes, exactly.[1] Then, of course, there's the terrible system of land tenure, which Government(?) never(?) faced(?) - and I'll tell you something about that later. He had to pay for his ploughing, his bulls, his buffalo, his seed, his cultivation, his gardening tools, all out of his half-share.

I. Yes, I see.

S. And then it was a - the landlord got a full share. So I

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1. I think he has misunderstood me here; quite understandably given the phrasing of my query.

suppose the tenant got about a third, the landlord half and the rest went in the cost of running, that sort of thing. And then there's the second point, the complication of family ties, and accepted canons of expense which can't - which mean if you don't, you're an outcast, if you don't ... Being left out of an invitation to a marriage. Well, it just isn't done. When - a man can't afford to lose all his friends by not inviting everybody, to the third generation. The family ramifications - cousin-brothers and God knows what ... Far beyond what ... Well, perhaps, then, the root cause may be the ties of family affection, which in itself is highly praiseworthy, but in its ill-effects is impossible[to correct] without a social revolution, which is equally practically impossible. I once conducted - and this I'm coming to - a confidential inquiry among my clerical staff of some two hundred, decent, hard-working middle-class men. I found about 98% of them were in debt. Some to a modest extent, but many so far gone as to be almost beyond redress. Most living in a constant state of anxiety. Inevitably they drifted to the moneylender, which often landed them with having to pay interest on interest arrears.

I. Yes, I see. Do you think in their case, as distinct from the villagers, status concepts had a lot to do with this?

S. Status?

I. Status concepts. Trying to maintain a certain status?

S. No, I didn't come across that. A man wanted to live, that's all. And when he had bad crops or something like that or ...

I. No, this is the clerical staff.

S. Oh, clerical staff?

I. Yes. Do you think in their case it was ...?

S. Sometimes, yes. An expensive wife, or daughters, or something like that. Living above his means. But then they were all doing it. I mean, the same as in this country. Lots of people are in debt because they must have a washing-machine which they can't afford. Because everybody else has got one. Next door.

I. Yes, I see. What did you say about land tenure? Did you feel that Government should do something there?

S. It was impossible. You see, all - it all originated from this monstrous system - which seems to me monstrous - of ...

I. Fragmentation?

S. Fragmentation. And law of inheritance, generally.

I. What did you think of Brayne's scheme? Later on?

S. I've forgotten what it was.

I. Indivisible leaseholds. Well, not quite. They didn't call it leaseholds but they couldn't divide it. They could only pass it on to one person.

S. Oh, yes, that's fine. Oh, yes. Many people thought of that long before Brayne was born.

I. Yes, obviously.

S. But how are you going to alter that?

I. Well, that's what - that's the point. It was very good on paper ...

S. Well, an absolute revolution.

I. But Mr. Naish said it was very difficult to work administratively.

S. Impossible. How could you, except by ...?

I. Well, they gave - in the terms of the grant, if you did such and such a thing you lost it, you see.

S. Yes, but that only refers to future conveyance surely. It can't alter the present system?

I. No. It meant that this bit of land was given to a person and he could - when he dies he could name an heir, one heir. He couldn't pass it on to several people, he could just pass it on to one.

S. Well, now, what about the present position? You and I. You own 1/80th part of eighty acres ...

I. Oh, that they didn't try to modify.

S. Well, it can't be. You've got to have about four or five generations, dying out before any effect is felt from the new thing. So what - you can't just introduce a law which says, 'As from tomorrow there shall be no inheritance, undivided inheritance'.

I. No, they didn't try that. That's impossible.

S. Well, what - how did they introduce this then?

I. Oh, this was only with regard to 'As from this date, all Crown grants, all grants, new grants ....'

S. Crown grants?

I. Yes.

S. You mean grants for Crown land?

I. Yes.

S. Well, there's no damn Crown land left to give away, that's cultivable. In Matara my map showed wholly white, except for

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about three blue patches this size of Crown land.

I. Yes, I was coming to that. First, just to clear up matters, what were the districts with which you were most familiar? Matara, Ratnapura?

S. Oh, definitely Matara, because I was over(?) there. I was in charge of the district, you see.

I. Kurunegala? Were you familiar ...?

S. Batticaloa, Eastern Province.

I. I see.

S. I was mostly - I was longest in Matara, and I had the most power.

I. Then reverting to this question of indebtedness, as part of the attempt to reduce this they started this Cooperative Credit movement.

S. Yes.

I. Did you have any experience of its working?

S. No. Lucette. Lucette was the man, the only man who's left, I think.

I. Campbell?

S. Campbell's dead.

I. Yes, I know. What did you think of the idea on paper?

S. First-class.

I. Have you any idea how it worked?

S. Oh, except just - not more than you know.

I. Oh, I see.

S. Cooperation - buying in quantity and, well, financing each other. And the whole lot being liable for the debts of everybody else, so to speak.

I. Then regarding the question of landlessness, in its very strict sense, without - how many villagers were there without any access to land, without any plot of land, as sharecroppers or anything?

S. How many?

I. Many.

S. Well, it varies exactly from district to district.

I. Yes, in Matara?

S. In Matara there was practically little Crown land left.

I. I'm not referring to Crown land. I was referring to private land. Were there ...?

S. How many villagers were landless?

I. Yes.

S. Well, frankly, I don't know.

I. Was it - I mean roughly fifty - a big number?

S. I've never thought of that. I've no conception without a census.

I. Yes, I see. But you certainly felt that there wasn't enough land for the population there?

S. Oh, not nearly enough. I could have done with ten times that amount.

I. Yes, I see.

S. Oh, yes, there were far more landless people than owners.

I. Did you feel that there was a difference between, say, Kandy District ... Were you in Kandy at all?

S. Not latterly. Only in my early years when I didn't know anything about it then.

I. You didn't know much about it then. Would you say that some of these people were not so much landless - I mean though they didn't have land of their own, they still had access to land as ande tenants?

S. No, I don't think so.

I. There weren't .... Sharecropping?

S. Not - no.

I. Not much?

S. Not generally, no. Ande, half shares, you see. All(?) there(?). I came across that in the - in connection with transplantation. You see, everything is hand-served. In Burma everything is transplanted from a nursery and they produce - what? - four times the yield. And the only thing the Agriculture Department did was to offer a prize of five rupees for the best transplanted field. Well, that was ... To oblige me the village headman either did it himself or got somebody to do it. And I remember once I conducted a very extensive investigation of the whole thing because I'd been inspecting one of these fields and walking along with the headman I said, 'Why don't you do this regularly?' 'Oh, well, you see, its a backbreaking job'. 'Here, women and children'.[1] 'Well, don't(?) have(?) any women and children. You're going to get four times the yield'. 'Oh, they get more money working for the estates'. I said, 'What estates?' 'Rubber, tea'. I said, 'Well, how far from here is the nearest tea-estate?' 'Eighty miles'. 'How far is the nearest rubber-estate?' 'Forty miles'. 'What are you talking about? Your women and children don't go and work there! Well, one excuse after

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1. Women and children usually did the transplanting and Strong had obviously referred to this fact to contradict the headman's first excuse.

the other. So in the course of half an hour I got to the bottom of it, I thought. He said, 'Why should I work to put money in the hands of the landlords?'

I. Yes, I see.

S. 'Who gets half, after I've paid all the costs, and I get about a third left. And I work double-time in order to fill his granaries with more rice'. I said, 'You're biting your nose, to spite off the face - cutting off your nose to spite your face'. 'Oh, ...' He didn't quite see that. He wasn't going to do ... I wondered whether that was the real reason? Anyway, I wrote a long - quite a long treatise on the matter. The general infection - the system how it effected the villager. And what his actual costs were, in pounds, shillings and pence, the rupees and cents. And I sent this up to Government, just as an exercise. Nothing happened. About six months later I met the Director of Agriculture, on circuit. He said, 'By the way, I read that thing of yours with great interest. I'd no conception of the ...' Director of Agriculture! He'd no idea of how land was developed or undeveloped. And he said, 'Of course, we've destroyed it. Locked it up in the safe. Government wouldn't look at it'. 'Why?' He said, 'If that were mentioned, so much as mentioned in the State Council, there would be a riot; because every member in the State Council was a potential - is an existing or a potential landowner. They wouldn't like this one little bit'.

I. Yes, I was coming to that.

S. Politics again, you see.

I. I was coming to that. That's very interesting. Earlier you mentioned the fact that these proctors and all were dealing in land?

S. Yes.

I. Was this so in other districts apart from Matara?

S. Oh, yes.

I. Were they unscrupulous in the way they got the land from the villagers?

S. Oh, yes.

I. In this connection, have you had any experience of the work of the Land Settlement Department?

S. No.

I. That is to say, I mean, was Matara, for instance, settled before your time or during your time?

S. They were never near my district.

I. Never?

S. Must have been settled before.

I. Before?

S. Yes. What brought the thing to my notice about this land - in connection with land tenure was that I came across an old map. Old in the sense that it hadn't been used. It was up in the wild parts.[1] And I noticed that there were traces of some pencil rulings, all the same size. I think two acre plots or something of that sort, or three acres or something like that. Hundreds of them. This was - I never could trace who wrote those in. It must have been long before my[land clerk], perhaps fifty years ago. Obviously there was some land clerk long before his time - he couldn't tell me - that were obviously - it was a village settlement scheme. It was round a village which had disappeared in the meantime. The whole thing was now a large European rubber or tea ...

I. So that means it had disappeared?

S. Mmm. Bought in, you see. And somebody had some idea that ... And of course this land was all round the village. The higher mountains uncultivable. Nobody wanted them. And that was the only Crown land left. But you couldn't tell the villager, 'If you want some land I'll give you some. Its fifty hundred feet up that hill which is covered in high jungle'.

I. So this - you feel that this village had disappeared under the plantation?

S. Yes.

I. I was coming to that aspect. Were the villagers improvident in selling their own lands to proctors for a song? Proctors and other speculators?

S. They weren't willing.

I. They were willing?

S. It was done against their will very often. I told you the story of a man who gradually encroached on their land and there was trouble. And he - the legal - land dispute you might say, a boundary dispute ... the chap that paid his costs in order to save his land, he'd spend all his money. And he was willing to give the land away in order to pay his fees, legal fees.

I. Yes, I see.

S. That was one method.

I. That's one method. Apart from that, would you say that there

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1. That is, the map referred to an area in the wild parts. See Questions forwarded to Mr. Strong.

was a class of Sinhalese - of Ceylonese who could be called land-brokers? Who specialised in buying up dubious claims for a small sum?

S. That's what(?) ...

I. And selling them again?

S. It was very, very noticeable when the land was being opened up, a hundred years ago. You see, all these viharegama lands - and take any land - was bought in by the unscrupulous proctors who bought it in for five rupees an acre, which meant a lot in those days to a villager, you see. And he sold it for six, or ten, to the tea and rubber ...

I. Plantations?

S. ... planters who, of course, made Ceylon what it is. I mean, it was useless scrub jungle, uncultivated, and it became, well, the backbone of Ceylon's economic prosperity.

I. Now, in the 1920's and much earlier you got many politicians attacking Government's policy in the sale of waste-lands, and criticising the Land Settlement Department in particular?

S. Yes.

I. Would you say that some of these politicians were themselves land speculators who were being foiled by the L.S.D.?

S. I don't know. I've no conception. Before my time. I had no experience of it.

I. In the 1920's this was so.

S. No. I never noticed it.

I. Earlier you mentioned the fact that your report on land tenure was frowned on in the Secretariat simply because these politicians were big land-owners.

S. Yes, yes.

I. So that would imply that they had an interest in the land, for their own ...., and were not willing to go far in land reform because their own interests would suffer?

S. That's - this is what the Director of Agriculture told me, yes. He was in the Parliament, Legislative ... He was a Member of Parliament[1] then.

I. You see, there's ...

S. An official Member.

I. There is some evidence to show that some of these politicians, who were leading this attack, had their own interests ...

S. Which ... What? On the other hand from the land-owners point

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1. Ex-officio member of the Legislative Council.

of view - I've discussed it with them, of course, in my time. They said, 'Well, its not profitable. I only get 5% return on my money and there's always the risk of bad crops' and, 'Well, of course, he had his own side of the thing(?). I wasn't getting at any particular party when I said that. It was just what the Government's view was. 'For heaven's sake, don't raise this snake under this stone. We don't want to arouse any trouble. A quiet life.' I don't know what they could have done about it anyhow. I was only reporting facts. I don't know why - what prompted me to do it but I was interested, generally, in the villager.

I. Yes. What about the villagers' marketing facilities? Did you feel that they ...?

S. Oh, that was a shame. Oh, dear, oh, dear, how angry I used to get about it all. I forget where I first came across it. I was crossing a field coming to a village and a man picked me - I picked up a villager and I walked along. We suddenly came to his village[sic., land] and there was, I think, something like an acre and a half of beautiful pineapples, which he'd grown, was growing. This was about five miles off the cart-road, and twenty miles off a market. There was one bus a day. So I said, 'How much do you get for these?' He said, 'One rupee'. Well, just for a moment ... 'One rupee!' The average price in the market was anything from twenty-five to thirty-five cents each, you see. Well, there being no word for dozen in Sinhalese it meant rupee a hundred.

I. He was selling them at a rupee a hundred? Simply - on the spot?

S. Yes, collected. So how came this about? Well, a travelling Moorman - this was part of the riots business, you know - he comes up and says, 'I want to buy these, your next year's crop, or for five years. I'll give you - let me see now'. Out comes a wad of notes, the villager had never seen in his life in such quantity. And he reels off twenty-five or fifty of these. Well, I mean, 'This is my dream come true. This is riches. New cloths, new sarong, new sarees, etc.' You know. Oh, dear, and paying off some debts perhaps, or something of that sort. And he's tied now. And he wouldn't break - he wouldn't sell me one pineapple for five rupees. No, they were promised.

I. So, simply they had ...

S. I said, 'Get on ... Take a pingo. Walk five miles with it, sell it to the bus-conductor. He'll give you at least ten or

fifteen cents.

I. So, simply lack of initiative? Lack of initiative?

S. Greed to start with. The sight of money. The bargain was intolerable. If he'd come to court he'd have been ruled out altogether. You see, they don't go back on their promises.

I. Yes, I ...

S. The next thing was a woman in Galle, Galle District. A cushion, reels of cotton and about five hundred pins, making this lace which is sold to this day, as you know, in the Galle Face Hotel, the Galle, the Grand Oriental - what do you call it?

I. N.O.H., yes.

S. N.O.H. At five rupees a yard, or something like that. Five rupees for two yards. I said to this woman, 'How much of this do you make in the day?' She said, 'Two feet'. 'And how many hours do you work?' 'Oh, as soon as its light'. 'And when do you stop?' 'As soon as its dark, except for preparing a meal'. 'How much do you get for that?' 'A rupee, ten cents a foot'. 'How many feet do you make in a day?' 'One, two'.

I. Yes.

S. Oh, wicked. She'd done the same thing. Sold it to a man who came along every day - every month perhaps, you see, and bought what she'd got, at a twentieth of its retail price. Another time I opened a small - four miles of a bridle path, you might call it, a footpath. You only approached the village by - on foot. So I went - I had occasion to go up there and somebody said to me, 'We're rather cut off here because we can't even get a <u>hackery</u> through it, and we've got to carry our sick to the hospital on stretchers, litters! So I said I'd look into this. I had a bit of spare money from somewhere and I said I'd do - put in about three culvets where they showed me, where the flood took place, you see. Drainage. If they'd do the cutting back, widen the road. 'Yes, of course'. They did that. The whole village turned out and did it in a week. Made a six foot road, certainly a dry weather track and in wet weather not flooded. Well, it was done in no time. They told me they'd finished it and I went to see it, and I drove my car there. The only thing they hadn't done was to widen the road. When we got to the village I couldn't turn my car round. You know the sort of thing. They had - the whole village moved it round by hand. Now the next thing that happened was I went back after a bit and a man told me that the bottom had dropped

out of his whole world. He couldn't believe it true. I said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'Well, I used to sell my plantains' - (which they grew in profusion there) - and a comb this size used to sell for a rupee to one of these travelling merchants who'd bought his stock in advance, with an advance of payment'. Same old story. And now he'd discovered this - he could take this in on a hackery or something, you see. So he took it and sat on the roadside till the Galle bus arrived. This is about fifty miles from Galle, up in the Morawak Korale. And he took them in. No, the busman - the bus conductor said, 'What are you doing with these?' 'I'm selling them on the Galle Market'. 'Oh', he said, 'I'll buy them off you'. And he gave him two rupees, instead of one. Bought it off him. Well, saved his journey, you see. And he did that three or four times. And one day he thought he'd like to go in himself. So he didn't sell them to the bus conductor. He took it in and got eight rupees for it. Well, eight rupees instead of one, he just couldn't believe it was true.

I. Yes, that's a very good example. Do you think that Government should have done more in the way of improving roads in this way?

S. Certainly. I think roads were the - they showed the biggest dividends in the shortest time. You could - much of my handiwork would appear - the results would appear in twenty years, perhaps. Like planting. The opening of communications was a goldmine really.

I. And coming to Government's land policy, or lack of it really: now, there was this one policy of selling Crown lands in order to get money and to encourage cultivation, either in rice or cash crops. And secondly would you say that there was a tendency to try and conserve the land in a native peasantry?

S. Conserve in what way?

I. I mean, prevent them losing their smallholdings.

S. Well, how could you? What was to prevent this kangany buying in this little plot of land I told you about.

I. Why didn't anyone think of passing a law of non-alienation?

S. Well, I did. As I was explaining, I said, 'No, I'm going to defeat this foolish(?) policy, this threat. I'm going to have a long lease'. Brayne wouldn't look at it and I did it myself, got into trouble and they adopted it. Its now called a landless peasants scheme or something funny like that. And ...

I. Yes, I see.

S. Surely I'm not claiming any credit for it. I was just annoyed that I should be defeated by this - under the threat of the sack. I was on the villagers' side.

I. And don't you think ...?

S. That was a case of exploitation. It goes on daily.

I. Don't you think that somehow at the centre they never went to the essence of the matter and thought policy out on these sort of questions?

S. Yes, I think so.

I. Wouldn't you say that there was, sometimes at least, a conflict between this policy of selling land to the planters and trying to prevent the - I mean their desire to prevent the peasant losing his land?

S. The damage had already been done, you see, mostly.

I. It had already been done?

S. The places where - the fertile places, which would grow tea or coffee or rubber or whatever it was, were snaffled up and Government were only too anxious ... After all it wasn't Crown land very often they were buying. It was viharegam, temple lands or any other kind - private lands, undeveloped. Some of the Kandyan chiefs must have owned lots of land ...

I. And sold it, yes.

S. ... and they hadn't got the capital to open up. I mean, it cost a thousand rupees for half an acre, you burn the thing down. That goes on to chenas too.

I. And what do you think of this fact of plantations being near the villages? They did give them a new source of income, but on the other hand they had removed from the villagers their sources of pasture and other uses?

S. Yes, they were working as coolies on their own land, what had been their own land.

I. So don't you think that this was bad for the villager, in that sense?

S. It was very good for him indirectly, otherwise there would have been no schools and no hospitals.

I. Yes, but ...

S. You see, opening up these vast acreages was beyond the power of any peasant.

I. Agreed, in the - looking at Ceylon as an economic unit. But

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taking, say, village X, which had lost some of its pasture land and which didn't have enough pasture land for its cattle, it was - in this sense, it was suffering?

S. Yes. Of course there should have been more supervision - land shouldn't have been allowed to be sold without leaving .... Its now the rule of course.

I. Its now a rule?

S. Yes. But too ...

I. Was it the practice in the 1910's too? To prevent land ...?

S. No, not until this land scheme of 1925; villagers land. And the restrictions on sale land were very much increased. The village had to be supplied first but the time had gone when there was anything left, very largely.

I. Well, that was in Matara District. Wasn't there - what was the state in Ratnapura?

S. I don't know. I was only Assistant Agent then. I was quite young. I - after all I was never taught anything. Nobody ever wrote a book about it. I suppose one had to wait for experience.

I. Yes. This is, of course, a very interesting aspect discussed by Heussler. Did you think that this rule of thumb approach so characteristic of British rule - was it so in your time?

S. Yes, I think so.

I. Was it pushed too far?

S. I don't know.

I. I mean, after all, couldn't you have had - done with some instruction and discussion on matters pertaining to land?

S. Its difficult to say. Can you instruct people on paper, without the - unless you've got the experience? I mean ...

I. Well, presumably, the instructor would be some Ceylon Civil Servant, say, if it was out in Ceylon. He would give you something on the history of the chena problem or some problem, which is after all fairly important.

S. I never got any kind of instruction. What I - Newnham probably told you this too that ... A favourite hobby of his. I mean, a point of interest. From first to last we never - we learned from listening to our seniors and watching them. Taking - following their example and listening to our seniors after tennis or dinner-parties and that sort of thing. I mean, shop was talked most of the time and one picked up a hell of a lot

of information in that way. For instance, I was talking to a very senior man one day in Colombo. I was Police Magistrate in Kurunegala at the time. And he said, 'How are you getting on?' I chatted with him and this sort of thing. And he said, 'I had that job years ago. I suppose you've still got a lot of cattle thefts?' 'Oh', I said, 'about twice a week, three times a week'. 'Aha', he says, 'Of course you acquit all the accused?' I said, 'Oh, yes'. 'Ah, usual thing? Two witnesses?' 'Uhuh, yes'. In other words somebody's charged with - two men charged with stealing an animal. They're seen at night by a man who's suddenly called out to go to the dispensary to get some ginger to stop the child's tummy ache, you see. Now why should people go in the moonlight to be recognised. The story so closely fitted in with these two independent witnesses ...

I. Obviously prefabricated?

S. Obviously prefabricated. So you found it out. So he said, 'Yes, I see what you mean. Now you try - you can look at it from two angles. One is that its so closely connected that its obviously prefabricated. On the other hand its so true that they both must agree on the truth. In other words, you try accepting the evidence as being obviously not prefabricated because they couldn't have been so correct on every possible detail, as to who said what. 'I've got my tongue in my cheek', he said, 'but you try it'. Well, I did. I learned the truth from him afterwards. I started - instead of saying, 'I don't call on the defence, its obviously prefabricated', I said, 'Well, come on, let's get on. What is your defence?' 'Oh, but, sir'. I said, 'Oh, no, no, I accept the evidence so far'. 'Oh'. Well, they were at a loss. They hadn't got a defence ready. That was more(?) than necessary. And one of the first cases was the man said, or his proctor said, 'Oh, at the time he was in Bingiriya', which is about sixty miles away, somewhere. I said, 'Right. We'll put this off for a week'. And then back comes the man, put in the - he produces - said where he - he got in the box. So his proctor said - by this time he'd got a proctor; oh, yes.- 'Now, where were you on the night in question?' He said, 'I was at home'. 'You haven't answered my question. You were in Bingiriya'. 'Oh, no, I've never been there in my life'. Whether he'd forgotten what he'd said or couldn't produce the false evidence I never knew, and I convicted

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the man. Immediate result, it stopped. These cattle thefts stopped, because I was taking a different line.

I. Oh, I see.

S. And then I heard from the - this very wise old Freeman what the position was. That in every village you'll find the usual bully who lives on cattle thefts. He does that quite openly. Middle of the day possibly, he sneaks an animal off his[the owners] so-called pasture, a bit of rough ground or something like that. He drives him off into the jungle. Mind you he's a bully. Nobody's going to tackle him physically. He ties up his animal and he comes back to the owner and says, 'You've lost a cow'. 'Yes'. 'Well, I know where it is and you don't. Its tethered in the jungle. Its got no food near and no water so give it about three days and its dead. Now for ten rupees and a bottle of arrack, I'll show you where it is'. Well, what's the man to do. He's not going to lose a cow for five rupees or something like that, (?) (?). So he pays blackmail. And when that's happened to everybody in the village ...

I. They get together?

S. ... they get together: 'Now we've got to run this chap in'. A true case but false evidence.

I. I see what you mean. What about these - the question of repairing roads and things. Did you have to depend on the irrigation people or P.W.D. people for - for these small repairs?

S. Oh, no, they only did majors, major works - a few of them. All the village works were under me.

I. Wouldn't you have felt ... I don't know whether you're a, what I would call, a practical-minded man, but wouldn't you have felt more at home if you had had some sort of training in the elements of engineering or done some practical training before?

S. Well, as a matter of fact, I picked up quite a good deal from observation and common sense and watching other people. The P.W.D. only had the main roads. Then I had the District Committee roads which were passable, cartroads proper, which were gradually taken over as they increased in importance, the traffic, by the P.W.D. Very slowly. Then the village roads were all mine.

I. Who were these <u>vel vidanes</u> under? You or the Irrigation ...?

S. Me. Me, always.

I. What did you think of their competence?

S. Oh, first-class.

I. Vel vidanes?

S. Oh, yes. They were practical chaps, who turned the water off and on when required. I never - any complaints.

I. Oh, they were .... The general impression I had was to the contrary. I don't know why. I thought they were not very good in their work?

S. Well, the work only consisted of turning on the water from field to field, or laya[sic] to laya[sic].

I. Didn't they have to call out labour to clear the channels and things like that?

S. Yes, but then that was part of the village works which had been since the time - long before the time of the Kings, for centuries. Its rajakariya[forced labour] in effect, which ...

I. What if the villagers sometimes didn't respond?

S. Well, the only case I ever came across was this big fellow where Obeyesekere interfered. When the order had come to me in the first place with ... No, I - if there were any cases they were minor ones, where a man was run in for not doing his share. That would be in the village tribunal and he'd be fined five rupees or something like that. I wouldn't even hear about it, except in the monthly returns: number of cases and convictions. No, I think they were very good. They may have taken a - oh, I daresay they took the odd santosum[gift] of five rupees or five cents or something for it. The man said, 'I want the water in my field now, in my (?)'. It wasn't ... There was a lot of talk of corruption but I never ... We took our ideas of integrity a little too far considering the conditions of the country. We've got nothing to boast about in this country.

I. What about this ...? Oh, first let me find out. Was there much chenaing in Matara? Chena cultivation?

S. No.

I. In Matara?

S. No. It was practically all rice-growing, you see, but in Batticaloa that's where I came across it. In the Wanni. Not the Wanni; the Bintenne. I was going to say, I've got a note about that. You asked me whether I agree with Woolf?

I. Yes.

S. Well, I don't know what Woolf said about it. But I do know this: that I handed them out right, left and centre.

I. Pardon?

S. I handed them out right, left and centre.

I. So it was left entirely to your discretion?

S. Yes. Under strict protest from Government. I mean, the Forest Department wouldn't touch chenas. They said it would destroy good timber. Good timber my foot, it was low scrub.

I. Yes, I know. That's what - exactly what Woolf is saying, and what Freeman at a later date was saying.

S. I'm sure Woolf was saying that. I've said it all my time.

I. You see, Woolf's criticism applies to districts like Hambantota, the Dry Zone, in fact.

S. Yes.

I. He was saying, this is a sea of old chena, it is absolutely useless ...

S. Absolutely useless.

I. Why not give them a licence in this sphere?

S. Of course. Well, the Forest Department were the culprits. They sat on their backsides in an office thinking that all the timber was good timber. You know, valuable. It was useless, of course. And what struck me was that they hadn't been out on their flat feet looking at the ... I've seen cases literally of starvation. No water, no rain, no rice or hill paddy, or whatever you call it - dry grain.

I. So this is a ...

S. I had to introduce flood relief at Government expense. You know, supplying rice to keep people from literal starvation, when there were chenas available. Well, I dished out ... I had a row with the G.A. next door to me once when I was in Batticaloa.

I. Who was that?

S. Whoever he was, I don't remember now. Anyhow on the - the Bintenne covered part of Uva too, you see. A lot of his people came over to my district and applied for chenas, which I issued to them freely, and he wouldn't.

I. Yes, this is the sort of thing that is in a way a bit ridiculous. There's an inconsistency here. I mean, I'm glad there was inconsistency in the sense that some G.A's and A.G.A's relaxed regulations. But others had a phobia about it, and still others didn't think one way or an other and they simply followed Government's strict orders. And I don't know what the people thought. One G.A. did this and one did the other.

S. Well, the whole village was coming over to me for some - over

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the border.

I. But, I mean, this is simply a question of protecting Crown land which had no use.

S. No value whatever, no. Once I wanted to build a school, which I could do anytime I liked. The villagers would do it for me. All they wanted was a Crown permit to cut down - what? - eight uprights. You know, for poles, about fifty, sixty, seventy rafter things for the thatched roof. And mud which - mud walls, you know, half-walls. [One could] get a school built in three weeks and the Education Department would always give me a teacher. I'd put up schools free of charge all over the shop. On one occasion it was far away from any road. There was some Crown timber of a size which I personally would not have had the authority to use, so I had to apply. And the Forest Department wanted me to pay three or 400 Rs. royalty. I pointed out that the royalty only became 400 Rs. value at all when it got to Colombo. Twelve miles by elephant, pull all these trees out of the jungle and another twenty miles on road, another sixty miles by rail. Then they'd got to store it in Colombo. Right, then, that's where the cost - the value went up. As it stood it wasn't even firewood, because no villager would want to cut down the hell of a tree like that for firewood when he'd got plenty of scrub.

I. Scrub, yes.

S. Well, six months after I won my point on paper. The school had been in existence for five of them.

I. This is the sort of thing, you see. You get these people out in the centre and - well, I met Blood - and they look on people like Freeman and ...

S. Just old cranks, yes.

I. And Sandys even, with amused tolerance. You know, they liked them but - when in fact these people were far closer to what was happening.

S. Yes, yes. I'm not sure about Sandys.

I. Well, I don't know. Sandys, I would say, was a chap who followed orders?

S. Yes. And he was - he got ideas. He was very sympathetic, we'll say, with the villager but he didn't seem to put his enthusiasm into practical channels. Well, I ran a big flood scheme once by work - villagers' work for protection of their

own fields. They did it free of charge. And for the first time for a generation they were free of flood for a couple of years. I left them. All they had to do was to do the odd repairs which could probably take an hour a year, you see. Just mended one little hole instead of letting it expand into floods. And Sandys then took over from me and within a year the whole thing fell down. Yes. They came to him and said, 'Api okkama dhuppath minissu. [We are all poor men.]' You know, we can't do this work. And he said, 'That's alright, I'll pay'. Well, he hadn't got the funds and the whole thing fell flat.

I. Did you know Freeman personally?

S. Not well, but I knew him. I'd met him and that sort of thing. (?) (?) .

I. Did you feel he was impracticable?

S. No, no. He was a little visionary in a way, in some ways I think, but he certainly had the ... He was a real villager in his own heart. I think we all had the interests of the villagers ...

I. Yes, I think so. And certainly I was impressed by the Land Settlement Officers' Diaries.

S. Yes.

INTERRUPTION END OF SECOND SIDE OF TAPE

S. They were quite delighted with this.[1] I said, 'Now then I want so many, so often'. 'Oh, no, oh, no, what about the quality(?)' and so on. 'Yes. Well, can't you guarantee me, say, fifty of these every fortnight', or whatever it was. 'Oh, no, if I give you two hundred every six months or possibly that; we don't know. I can't ...' In other words they weren't interested in my proposition. So I had to write to Brayne and say, 'Well, I can't promise you the output'. Although, he would give them ten times what they were getting. Its the old pineapple thing all again; sort of idea.

I. Yes. What sort of man was Wedderburn?

S. He was an able chap, eh.

I. He had plenty of experience in the field I know.

S. Yes. I think he was inclined to be a little tactless when he .... He got in a bit of a mess over the Bracegirdle case.

I. Oh, yes, the Bracegirdle thing. That was very interesting. But I think ....

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1. I think we were discussing either the question of marketing facilities or that of apathy on the part of the villagers. Strong related an incident where he had come across a marketable product being sold far too cheaply and had therefore written to Government (he mentions Brayne later so it was presumably to the Controller of Revenue) to see if they were interested. They were, but wanted a fairly regular supply.

S. Well, some of the people were wrong over that. I mean ....

I. Yes. When it came to the issue Jayatilaka had shelved the responsibility there.

S. Well, the common impression is, without any question, that Jayatilaka lied.

I. Yes, I know that, for a fact.

S. He was such an honest man that I don't believe he knew that he was. I think he had been misadvised or misinformed. I'm taking a charitable view because he was such a fine character that I hardly - I can't bring myself to believe that he deliberately told a lie.

I. Why in the - well, I have met Mr. Ferguson and ...

S. He is one man who knew all about it.

I. Well, it was his advise that he [Bracegirdle] should be deported. But it seems rather an illiberal point of view?

S. The deportation?

I. Mmm.

S. Oh, I wasn't thinking of the merits of the case, I was thinking of the aftermath.

I. Yes, well, apart from the aftermath, do you think that he was creating really serious trouble?

S. Who? Bracegirdle?

I. Mmm.

S. Oh, undoubtedly.

I. Oh, what exactly was happening?

S. Oh, I forget now. I forget the details. But he should have been deported long before that. Well, I say deported - I mean ...

I. Was he a crank?

S. A crook, I should say; more than a crank, or both. No, I was thinking of the after effects of the ... Oh, I remember now. Caldecott called the Minister a liar.

I. Must have been Jayatilaka then.

S. No. 1941.

I. Oh, 1941.

S. Yes, They had a meeting of the Ministers and Caldecott told Senanayake - I think its in this book of Jeffries - anyhow called him a liar.[1] Senanayake walked out, followed by the whole of the Cabinet; (?) (?) . He got them back, by climbing down.

I. What was the issue on? You don't know?

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1. Strong has got the issues mixed up. The Bracegirdle affair was in 1937. The contretemps between Caldecott and Senanayake was in 1940 and is related to the Mooloya incident, a shooting incident during the strike on Mooloya estate.

S. No, I forget.

I. Mmm. I think it was the estates' strikes.

S. Mmm?

I. It may have been the strikes on estates.

S. Mooloya type of thing? Possibly Mooloya.

I. Fine. Regarding the Bracegirdle affair, did you take any notice of the L.S.S.P.?

S. L.S.S.P.?

I. The Marxist Parties, which were small parties growing up in ...

S. I never knew anything about them at all, wasn't interested in them. I only came across them - directly effecting me in the war. That was mainly over trade union - strikes and things like that. Oh, your father might be interested at this reminiscence. I was, as a Land Commissioner - no, Labour Commissioner - who had charge of a whole lot of labour troubles, you see.

I. When was this?

S. During the war. Been for some years. And as I was - I had something like thirty thousand or forty thousand people at any one time in the port, generally (?) (?) . It was agreed between us all that I should be made the - his Deputy,[1] so to speak. I should be in charge of the Port. Port labour and not - well, semi-technical in a way, you know what I mean. Anyhow the point was Christoffelsz, the Land[sic] Commissioner, wasn't worried with Port matters. Well, something blew up; some claims were put in and somebody, not me, somebody else - one of them I suppose - in the Union reported this to Christoffelsz, as a trade dispute. Then the act of - the Ordinance applied and nobody had any option. It had to be dealt with by the Land[sic] Commissioner, and he had to take necessary action. Well, his next step was to appoint an arbitrator.

I. This was the Controller of Labour?

S. Yes. He appointed an arbitrator. Well, the arbitrator was your father. He came down to the - by arrangement - to the Port one day. Of course, by this time there were about six proctors, K.C., two K.C's were there and it effected hundreds and thousands of people, of course. Claims for pensions and more holidays and God knows what. Which I was supposed to - I would deal with in the normal way. I attended, of course, as an observer. Well, after about twenty-five minutes I could see

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1. There was a Controller of Labour [A.E. Christoffelsz] with overall supervision of labour. As Chairman of the Port Commission Strong was made a 'Deputy Controller' in that port labour was left to him.

that nobody knew what they were talking about. I mean: what's the difference between a waterman and a lighterman, you know that sort of ... I could see that the Counsel concerned were reading from something they didn't understand. Everybody was foxed, nobody quite knew what the issues were or who had - who was what. And after about half-an-hour your father stopped them and said, 'Here, this seems highly technical, its difficult without technical knowledge to follow what the hell you're all talking about', sort of thing, you see. 'I consider this is only a matter for arbitration'. He wasn't the arbiter. He was holding an enquiry. 'And we won't(?) agree(?) ... Instead of twenty people crowding into this small room, let's have an arbiter', you see. So: of course, the conditions that I impose are that whatever his decision is, [it is] accepted willy nilly by both sides'. 'Oh, yes, of course, that's the law'. So he looks round and says, 'Well, can anybody suggest an arbitrator?' Well, nobody had any ideas so your father says, 'Right. I think it ought to be referred to Mr. Strong'. Well, it should have come to me in the first place. So with that the enquiry ended. I've no doubt your father was relieved. And I too, because I was now in a position of having my decision accepted, you see; which was the last thing in the world that would have been agreed to in any ordinary case, and then the disappointed party would still go on minding(?) it. So he left. Thanked him and so on. Then the proctors, the K.C. came ... I said, 'Look here, we're all here, why put it off till tomorrow? Come upstairs to my board room, more room there, we've got fans'. 'Right'. We all went up, sat down at the table, employers and unions, both sides. We finished the whole damned thing in forty minutes. 'Cause some of these lawyers could see, 'Look here, we haven't got a leg to stand on. I mean, we quite agree. Cancel that. This is no time to talk about pensions. These pensions are a matter for world-wide, I mean, Ceylon-wide law, not covering a few parties here. Its a question quite beyond exception'. I said, 'Alright, so and so'. And I agreed with them. I mean, I would have said the same thing if they'd come to me in the first place. The only thing was that nobody had any comeback. It was the shortest settlement of a land dispute I'd ever - of a labour dispute I'd ever been in touch with.

I. Of course the war had inflated costs around 1944, '45, '46.

Living costs had shot up, hadn't they?

S. Well, I left in '45, end of the war. We went through without a strike through the war.

I. You said something earlier about Caldecott being unpopular with the planters?

S. No, you did.

I. Oh! Well, ...

S. Or suggested something about it.

I. Yes. Did you know if that was so or not?

S. I never came across it. I don't know; might have been so.

I. Of course this incident he had with the Ministers is rather strange, because as far as I can gather he got on fairly well with them?

S. I think so.

I. The politicians I mean.

S. Well, in the war I was so busy with about a fourteen hour day that I just had no time for anything except my job, and that kept me busy. I was never in a position to ...

I. Judge?

S. ... know anything ...

I. What about Drayton?

S. He was a lawyer.

I. Was he very legalistic?

S. Highly. You couldn't get ... I don't know how he came to get the job except that Layton, the Commander in Chief, was annoyed with Drayton's predecessor.

I. Wedderburn?

S. Wodeman.

I. Wodeman, mmm.

S. The bombing - they bombed a hospital at Ragama thinking it was a barracks. So Layton ordered that all hospitals should have a red cross painted on their roofs. As it wasn't - these weren't visible within three days, he sacked Wodeman. At least, told him to go and he went. And they put in Drayton, a lawyer. It was the first time in anybody's knowledge that anybody like that had suddenly become Chief Secretary. He wasn't in the Civil Service. Well, he was a Legal Secretary but, I mean, that's a different matter. And his whole life had been taken up with balancing one thing - he was - he'd never give a decision. Well, one day the Commander-in-Chief asked me, 'How the hell

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did this fellow get this job?' Oh, his Chief of Staff said, 'How did this fellow get this job? We can't get an answer out of him. He writes essays and things'. I said, 'Well, you'd better ask the Commander-in-Chief. He put him there'. I didn't get on with him at all well.

I. Well, funny. No-one seems to have got on with him at all. He seems to have been rather unpopular. Amongst ...

S. ... quite inefficiently. I mean, he hadn't .... When you go to the Secretariat you want a reply now, you don't want to know three weeks hence. I'm talking about war.

I. Yes.

S. War-time when .... I only had to go to them when I really had to. And of course - pretty quick. Because I always had the Commander-in-Chief breathing down my neck. And everybody else had it too. 'Quick's the word, quick's the word and don't write things and argue'. "Get a move on" atmosphere. Well, I wanted badly some engineers, and they weren't available locally. And there were plenty of men on ships who were quite anxious and willing to apply for a shore job, and leave their ship. And I wanted them. But I was told that I could only take them on on the understanding that a resolution would be required, their being non-Ceylonese. That would take probably about three or four months. Well, they wouldn't look at the job. 'What three months! Lose my job at sea, and then at the end of three months I'm told I'm not wanted. Oh, no, no. I come to stay or not'. And I tried to shorten the process, and got into trouble with Drayton. He must have told the Constitution [sic]. You see, it wasn't built for these conditions. Well, unfortunately, I had mentioned something about this in my weekly diary I had to send to the Commander-in-Chief. I also sent it to the Governor, the Chief Secretary, the Minister. Usual, you know, information. And Layton was livid, and on my account gave Drayton a ticking off, for being obstructive. I hadn't criticised. I merely stated that I couldn't get the men I wanted. And Drayton had me on the mat; he'd been ticked off and ...

I. Would you say that he was trying to keep on the good side of the politicians?

S. I really don't know. I didn't see any of the politicians, except the Executive Committees. I only saw one politician there, the Chairman. I don't know what went on in the House

of Parliament or ...

I. What did you think of Sir John as a Minister?

S. First-class. He'd get on with ... We had an agreement. We had a big row in the first week when I suggested that the best thing I could do would be to hand in my resignation. He realised that we'd have to get onto a better footing. So he said: 'I'll tell you what. You know your job, at least I hope you so. I know mine. You carry on your job, I'll leave you alone. If you get into trouble, you carry the can'. I said, 'Exactly. If there's any credit going, you get it. If there's anything goes wrong, I get the ... That's what I'm paid for'. We never looked back. We got onto christian name terms and ...

I. Yes, I see.

S. He gave me his policy, of course, which I carried out. He didn't butt into matters of detail like the old Secretariat used to do. And he stuck by me through thick and thin and always supported me.

I. Oh, yes. Going back to a bit earlier times, this non voting of passage allowances to European officers. Was that taken seriously by the Service?

S. Indeed. Oh, indeed. It was part of our salary structure.

I. Yes, I know. I know it was important to you, but did you take the political opposition to it as a bad thing?

S. Well, it was based on bad principles. The point was that this was only for non-Ceylonese. Why shouldn't it apply to Ceylonese people?

I. You think it should have applied to Ceylonese?

S. That's what they said. That's why they[1] objected. Why should a Ceylonese officer want to go to a country he'd never seen before? We admittedly did require home leave for climatic reasons. We hadn't been brought up in the country. And on that ground we got the - we always had passages but we paid for them. Well, when we got them free - well, ... But to say that a Parsee from Bombay, who happened to be in Ceylon, should have leave every three years, free of charge, to England ... Well, why? I mean, local leave, yes, but why free passage. That was the argument. I'm not saying ...

I. That was the argument?

S. Yes. And then they refused to vote. The Legislative Committee refused to pass the vote, you see.[2]

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1. Government. Government could not see why the special home-leave allowances should apply to Ceylonese.

2. The State Council refused to vote the passage allowances, etc. to all Civil Servants, Europeans included.

I. For Europeans included?

S. Yes, yes.

I. Did you consider this unreasonable? Unreasonable?

S. We didn't care two hoots whether the Ceylonese had these passages. Well, we had ours. What right had we to say nobody else should. We were quite neutral on that point. The Government said, 'Oh, no. This is going miles away beyond the original idea. A man wants leave in his own climate, in the non-tropical climate. That can't apply to people already living in a tropical climate'. And Government wouldn't give way to that. Apart from the immense cost of course. I don't know about it. Anyhow the Secretary of State, the first and only time, certified, that's the Governor's reserve powers. Reserve powers for a matter of 'paramount importance'.[1] Of course, we regarded that 'paramount importance', from the start, as just wastepaper because, - well, verbiage - because nothing in itself is of paramount importance. But the accumulation of twenty of them may lead to a dispute of paramount importance. And often did of course. The times when the Governor really should have - or would have been justified in doing so would have been many. And if he'd done it the Constitution would have broken up. I mean, the Parliament would have resigned and said, 'Well, carry on'. Of course they wouldn't. Nothing in itself ... I don't think these passages were of paramount importance, except from the point of view of - wasn't even a breach of contract with us. The actual(?) cause(?),of course, was that they were taking something we - depriving us of a privilegewe had enjoyed for many years.

I. Going back a bit further, can you remember a person called A.E. Goonesinha?

S. Ahai, very well, yes. He was a great friend of mine.

I. But he was rather in the black with Government, wasn't he?

S. Well, he was a demagogue, you see. He toned down a good deal. He came to the scene first of all ...

I. In the 1920's?

S. 1923. He came out of prison or somewhere, out of obscurity. Moneyless, got hold of the - first man in - its true - first man into the Port, ran a strike. I was in charge of the prison labour and we were trying to land foodstuffs and mails and that sort of thing. And of course I wouldn't talk to him.

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1. A term used in the Donoughmore Constitution with reference to the Governor's reserve powers.

He was my enemy. The Governor, Manning, broke that strike in one afternoon. By parading the - [by] having a route march from the ship; sailors, bayonets fixed.

I. Of course Manning was a soldier.

S. Yes. Then I came across him [Goonesinha] later when I was Deputy Collector. He'd had a quarrel with the Lake Press, so he put them on the black market, you see. Wouldn't handle their cargo. So I broke that strike personally. It started off with about twelve huge rolls of paper for the Lake Press. Wijewardena, was he ...?

I. Wijewardena, yes.

S. Yes, very nice chap. They couldn't carry on for another week without it. They each weighed about seven tons. So I had them taken off. I went on board the ship. The ships derrricks put them into our tug. We took the tug to the graving dock, miles away from the Port. Had lorries waiting there, and delivered them to the Lake Press within half an hour, behind Goonesinha's back. He was very angry about that. Then I didn't see him again until the war.

I. At that stage he was changed - later really - was he very opportunistic?

S. Well, I - what I've told is all I knew about him.

I. Because, you see, many Government officers, Bowes included, tended to label him an agitator.

S. No, I wouldn't call him that, I don't think.

I. And of course an agitator was a bad word then.

S. A chap who ferments a strike is, of course, an anathema to the employers.

I. But I think while these people who ferment strikes may have personal aggrandisement behind, as one of their motives ....

S. Well, he may have had that too. He did very well out of it, of course. He became a little less poor, we'll say.

I. Highly suspect is it?

S. When I came back after the war - during the war - back from Rangoon I asked him to come and see me. So - we always were - we didn't let these disputes affect our personal exchanges. I shook him by the hand and said, 'I'm glad to see you again. Sit down'. I said, 'I've sent for you in order to ask for your help'. Oh, he purred. I said, 'Yes, you see, now we've got about eighteen trade unions in the harbour and I want your

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help. You've had by far the longest experience and I'm sure you can help me settle some of the disputes which are bound to arise', and that sort of thing. Oh, he promised he would and ... Never saw him again. Anyhow, I killed any opposition he might have - been there. I could never trace the unions. I knew them on paper. They wouldn't come and see me and they wouldn't discuss things.

I. Oh, why?

S. Well, they hadn't a leg to stand on, very often. I came across a crowd of coolies sitting doing nothing. I said, 'What are you doing?' They all knew me by sight. They stood up. 'No work?' 'No. Strike'. 'Strike, do I know? Am I supposed [to know]?' 'No'. 'What are you striking about?' 'We don't know'. 'Well, of all the children. Striking and you don't even know why'. They said, 'No, our union will tell you'. Nice lot of children. So I rang up the union, and I couldn't get one of them. The President was away visiting a sick aunt. The Secretary was gone to Matara and, you know: 'Nobody here?' 'No'. 'Don't know when they'll be back?' They wouldn't discuss ... And I don't know to this day what they were supposed to be striking over.

I. I think - I can't remember who said something ... Mr. Miles had pretty serious things to say about Goonesinha, and I wondered whether they - there was - and I was wondering whether they were very prejudiced against him?

S. I can't think how Miles ever came in contact with him.

I. He was in the Secretariat for a little while.

S. Yes, but being in the Secretariat doesn't mean that he knew anything about a trade union agitator.

I. And I think sometimes they tend to throw out the bath with some of the bath water. Because - I mean, people - sometimes they may strike over little but there's usually some sort of grievance that they're striking about even though it may not be the one that they're proclaiming. If you see what I mean. The slogans may not represent their real grievance sometimes.

S. Quite, yes. Of course, being in charge of the labour in the Port I had almost every week something to deal with, adjustment of wages....For instance, certain coolies who were doing this unloading were paid higher or lower than the people who are doing the same thing at the other end. Instead of putting it into the cart they were taking it out and putting it into the

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warehouse. Well, there was no justification for any differentiations. Provide the same pay to one as to the other and that was that. I mean, it was quite simple to amend the issue before the strike started.

I. Yes, but[sic] once the strike started the tempers have risen and its difficult to deal with them.

S. I don't know what prompted me but I thought I'd like to know what was going on. Because I'd got a very good man, called Hilarian De Silva, who's now a big number in Carson and Cumberbatch, as a sort of Welfare Officer. I gave him six sort of underlings.

I. What did you think of these wharfage companies. Were they reasonable in dealing with their ...?

S. They were the lousiest I've ever come across in the world. Exploitation! Only during the war.[1] I'd known them for twenty years or more but I never knew how mean they were.

I. Till you came to administer the Port?

S. Mmm?

I. Till you came to administer the Port, you didn't know?

S. Well, I'd no ...

I. Experience?

S. Not my business. I couldn't ask a private firm for information. I wouldn't have got it. And when I had to vow to fix wages I just told them what to do. I said, 'You've got to raise these chaps' wages, and like it. If you don't, I will. And I want to see your books'. They consulted a lawyer and said, 'Are we bound to show these books?' They said, 'Yes, you are. So you had better do it and like it'.

I. But ... Now, see, this sort of thing[2] could never have been done in peace time?

S. Never. It was wicked. A man had been there forty-two years and they let him go without five rupees, or a handshake. Meanness wasn't the word for it. I was ashamed of my countrymen. (?) ...

I. Yes, and this brings us to the issue of why Gimson, for instance, he was unpopular with the planters - this was on a larger scale. You know, the estate labour - because he stood up for the labour, you see.

INTERRUPTION

S. No, I was thinking about Gimson and his labour because ...

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1. Only realised it during the war years.

2. Examining the books of the wharfage companies and private firms.

I. That was when you were not there, I think, really. 1939, '38.

S. Yes, yes. But one night there had been trouble in the Port about - just before the bombing.

I. Yes?

S. The war had started of course. And he had - he was appointed a Commission of one man, a one man Commission. He held a series of enquiries and he took all the evidence from one side only.

I. For labour?

S. Labour. He didn't consult any employers.

I. Well, that's not quite fair.

S. Well, its ... Fair! Just made a bloody mess of everything. You can't conduct a thing like that, not a thing that's full of loopholes. Full of anomalies.

I. What were the - it created difficulties for you did it? This report?

S. I just tore it up because it was so full of anomalies. The only thing to do was to start again. He admitted half the - he didn't take into account all the various ...

I. Ramifications?

S. ... people concerned. For instance, he - oh, I don't want to go into more detail. Its rather fatuous listening to one side only. Because many of the statements passed uncontradicted. Quite untrue of course. There was nobody there to contradict them.

I. I see.

S. He ...

I. I think he must have been starting with a bias against the employers?

S. Actually, I don't remember this report on that.[1] '38, '39. No, I was away at that ...

I. In what other ways were these wharfage companies mean? What about the salary scales, were they very low?

S. That's what I mean, yes. Getting ... Of course there was an excessive demand over supply. The supply over - the demand over supply. There were so many ...

I. Too many labourers?

S. There were too many labourers, yes. And particularly in the middle-class section, you see. There were so many boys whose fathers - we'll say, whose families - had been cultivators. Well, they'd had an English education, and nothing would induce

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1. Ignoring my question Mr. Strong has gone off at a tangent towards a reference made earlier to some report. I think this occurred during the previous interruption(p.85) -, the report in question being that by an outsider named Butler who reviewed labour problems in Ceylon(and the East). See interview with Gimson, p. 3

them to take any manual work. They wanted white-collar work, you see.

I. Yes. This is this white-collar mentality which is a bane in so many Asian societies.

S. Yes. And, of course, they took full advantage of that. And the man on a salary of forty rupees a month which ought to have been about three times that under modern conditions, rising prices and all that sort of thing. It was that or the sack. And there were plenty of people waiting on the doorstep.

I. Mmm. So these wharfage companies were pretty liberal in chucking out people were they?

S. Well, chaps - not only chuck them out, just underpaid them. Take it or else. And if a man didn't like it, he left. What man who's got four children, he doesn't sit and say, 'Well, I can't live on this wage'. Which he couldn't. Well, better than joining the queque miles long waiting for ...

I. Well, this thing about estate labour is ... They didn't have any trade unions.

S. Yes.

I. And, per se, they could be exploited. You see what I mean? Trade unions are not always the - not that trade unions act like angels the whole time. But the planters were totally against any form of trade union.

S. Yes, no doubt. But on the whole the labour was treated very well, considering. Pipe water supplied, free houses, a rice allowance and hospitals, education. Many big estates all had hospitals and a school for children. I mean, by comparison with other countries, in India, for instance, where these chaps came from. I mean, they were ... A goldmine. They were sending home to their families half their wages.

I. How did the Civil Servants get on with the planters?

S. Perfectly well. They were all friends. They were all out of the same - more or less out of the same social classes. I mean, most of the planters were chaps who'd failed to get into Sandhurst, or Oxford or something. Public School boys - Blues, tennis, cricket, rugger, you know.

I. Outdoor types?

S. Yes. Oh, no, we all got on very well.

I. I'm not saying that you didn't get - I knew perfectly well you got on well socially because for one thing planters are very hospitable.

S. Yes.

I. But I was wondering when it came to, when it came to administration, you didn't - well, you were very wary of what the planters wanted?

S. Well, no, we got on perfectly well. We had not much to do with ... They hadn't anything more to do with Public Administration than the ordinary man in the street. And they had no particular connection with the local kachcheri except for gun licenses, or whatever it was. We had no say in the matter of their administration of their estates and I don't remember any particular quarrel with any of them, officially, at all.

I. Mmm. No, but when it came to big matters like trade unions or ...

S. Well, that's a matter in which we ...

I. Master-servant laws and all [that]. The question is: didn't Government feel that since they were in a position of responsibility, that they should act as arbiters above the tumult?

S. Well, there again I've no conception of any Government policy. We were never told how to treat planters or given a hint that we shouldn't do this or that, or we should do this or that. We just, in the good old way, nothing written down, we carried on in a sort of compromise way. We all got on very well. No, on the whole, I should say that the Government and planters got on very well. There was no reason why they shouldn't, there was nothing to argue about really. I don't know what Government's attitude to trade unions on the estates was, they certainly supported the principle of trade unions. And only, of course, went half way. For instance, they ought to have taken the matter in hand. All they'd got to do was to register, just like that. Put their name on paper and they were a union. I'd have gone much further than that and say, 'Right. Well, you, first of all you hand in your accounts'. To Government. See what the money - how the money goes. How much of that is spent on the top staff? Overpaid the staff; probably took about 90% of the revenue from the coolies. And - because they would have nothing but office expenses - and probably went, most of it, into their pockets, like the Oxfam. How much of the money we subscribe here gets into the pocket of the cultivators in India and doesn't stick half way, somewhere ... passing through so many hands.

I. Yes, I ... That's - of course this is the laissez-faire attitude isn't it? British Governments tend to baulk at having too much regulation, when in some cases it is very necessary.

S. Another thing which would improve matters would be to pass a proper legislation, binding him down fairly closely. For instance, nobody should hold office unless he's a member of the union, unless he himself is employed in that union as a worker. All these - the headmen in all these shows were out-of-work lawyers; or that type; parasites. Who had no more interest except drawing money.

I. What about the bus companies, for instance. Did you know anything about them?

S. Who?

I. The bus companies.

S. No.

I. Because they also grew up very haphazardly. There was a lot of cut-throat, real cut-throat competition.

S. I know that. Almost carrying people free.

I. Oh, where was this?

S. Under-cutting, you know, to attract the public. One bus would go only five cents instead of six, you know.

I. And to jump to another sphere: had you any experience of elections under the Donoughmore Constitution?

S. Gimson had.

I. Umm. He supervised some.

S. Supervised some of them, yes.

I. No, I was wondering whether there were false practices and what were the factors that counted in the actual voting, you see?

S. I've never known. The only one I had to do with was the '24 one, when I was the ..., something or other.

I. Among other things, in 1938 Caldecottsaid that public statements in Ceylon were always, well, invariably exaggerated and over-painted. Would you agree?

S. No, not ... Its a rash thing to say "all". Some of them might be. In any walk of life you expect it. You'll get the side arguing its own case overpainted, and vica versa. Well, does that apply to Government statements too?

I. No, he said ... Ha-ha-ha. I think he was referring to the politicians. Did you have much to do with E.B. Denham? I noticed that you were Deputy Food Controller at one time.

S. Yes. He wasn't anything to do with that.

I. Oh?

S. No. That was when I was done out of my [overtime] because it was not in writing.

I. Oh, that was the job?

S. I was Deputy Food Controller ...

I. Oh, I see.

S. ... under Alexander.

I. Oh, yes. What sort of man was Alexander?

S. Oh, delightful.

I. And Woods, he was a Government spokesman often, later on?

S. He was Colonial Treasurer. After [that] became Financial Secretary. In the Donoughmore, I think.

I. Was he a run-of-the-mill type or ...?

S. Mmm?

I. Was he stereotyped?

S. No. No, I wouldn't say that. I don't know much about him from the political point of view. As Treasurer we knew what he was like. Opposing everything he could. Well, if there was a paragraph which could be read either way, he would always go against the Service, whether it cost money or not.

I. Wasn't he born and ... Was he from outside or was he a ...?

S. He was - no, not Civil Service. No, he came in ... I think he used to be - he was a Crown auditor before he got the Financial Secretaryship. He was a very able chap, but he wasn't a great friend of the Service. We didn't think much of him. He certainly was about as mean as he could be. Took the prize over the terms of compensation for loss of career when the Donoughmore thing came up. Of course, nowadays its common practice. I mean, every colony nowadays - well, ex-colony is bound to - people who were sacked at the age of forty, and lost another fifteen years of service, and have been given compensation. Well, we got in Ceylon roughly a third of the pro rata true salaries, roughly a third of what they're getting now. That was mainly Woods.

I. Oh, I see.

S. Though I think the Secretary of State ...

I. Had something to do with it?

S. No, I think he would have gone further than that if we'd asked, if we'd pressed. We weren't consulted you know. We wrote masses of memorandums to the Secretary of State but never got

any answer at all. Weren't listened to. Woods wouldn't even discuss it with us. Latterly, I think, he got a little megalomania, I think.

I. Agricultural policy?

S. Never.

I. Never heard of one?

S. No. Agriculture Department was quite out of touch with the villager. It didn't get round the country.

I. Don't you think that before - I mean before 1931, this Department should have been given more priority and more push?

S. The Agriculture Department?

I. Mmm.

S. I don't think they were neglected in any way. I don't think they got down to the actual facts of the ...

I. Brass tacks?

S. Brass tacks. I mean, the Agricultural Officer would come round and advise people to use steel ploughs which go in about a foot and a half. And the villagers said, 'No, you may laugh at our little scratching of the surface but we know better. When you go down more than about six inches in the mud, you see, you bring up things from the sub-soil which is inimical to the crops. It produces sand flies, paddy flies, etc., etc. We know this from thousands of years experience'. Well, I backed the villager.

I. Pardon?

S. I backed the villager. For knowing more than the chap looking up in the book in Colombo.

I. Did you - would it be fair to say, as a criticism, that many of these specialist officers tried to adapt the villager to scientific principles rather than adapting the scientific principles to the ...?

S. You've hit the nail on the head, exactly.

I. It is very interesting [to note] that Furnivall makes a very similar point with regard to Burma. Under very similar conditions too.

S. Really? Yes. Well, we've done irrigation. I was in charge of the village works, you know.

I. Mmm. What did you think of the Irrigation Department?

S. They were only employed on the major works.

I. How was the liaison between the A.G.A's and the Irrigation

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Officers?

S. Well, they hadn't much to do with each other. Because they were employed on the huge things, a tank fifteen square miles or something. And we were dealing with village channels most of the time, you see. They would always help, but they were difficult to get on with. They regarded themselves as a class apart and they looked down on us very much. A sort of enmity. They hated the Civil Servant. I don't know why. But ...

I. I'm not saying that it was so in your case but, possibly, there was a history of some snobbishness on the part of the Civil Service, earlier?

S. Well, we all traced it to the fact that the Agricultural Department [sic][1] lived in Trincomalee. That was their headquarters, apart from the Secretariat by miles. They regarded themselves as not under the control of the Chief Secretary, sort of thing. You know the attitude. This is not my own view. It was the general view and in certain cases they rather seemed to me to be resentful of any ...

I. Interference?

S. Well, even suggestions about something.

I. Was there something of a - professional snobbery, if I may use the term?

S. Mmm. I suppose it would be professional rather than social.

I. You know: "this is something you know nothing about'.

S. Well, of course, everybody's rather inclined to do that. I mean the P.W.D. For instance, I was to build a new residency and I had a certain amount of money allotted. And I had to split my allowance up, you see. First of all the cost of the land, you see, and then the cost of the building. So in forming my estimate, which I was bound to do, I had been told to do, you see ... And put down on paper what I thought was required in the way of - how many rooms, and all that sort of thing. I wrote to the Provincial Engineer and said, 'Could you kindly give me a rough idea of the cost per cubic foot in this country - in this area?' It would vary of course with towns and villages and so on. He said, 'Yes. Seventy-five cents', or whatever it was per cubic foot. Well, working on that I framed something which would come well within my estimate, and sent that up to the Headquarters, the P.W.D. Architects Department and they queried it and said, 'Don't

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1. Irrigation Department.

talk silly. Where did you get this figure of seventy-five cents from? Nonsense'. So I wrote back and said, 'From your Provincial Engineer'. Senior man in the province at Galle. He got into trouble. He told me he got a censure for disclosing confidential information to outsiders. Well, of all the things! Ha-ha-ha. Well, I built the house, the finest one in Ceylon, and never occupied it. I saw it rising from the ground but never saw it completely built. I know they had a dining-room which could hold at least sixty people. I said, 'Well, that could do for four rooms, including a sewing-room for my wife and two or three other rooms as well, using the space to much greater ...' In Matara we don't hold dinner parties of sixty, six is perhaps the maximum at one time.

I. There are some other odds and ends I was thinking of asking you about. Bowes, for instance,regarding Anderson's despatch on the riots. He says that Anderson was fooled by cases specially prepared and concocted by the lawyers. Well, something to that effect. I think he used the word 'conc o cted'. But I have read the despatch and it relates solely to these shootings in Kegalla. And it goes into quite a lot of detail about them and seems fairly sound.

S. I didn't see the despatch of course. It was only in the Kegalla area these things happened. I think we have covered most of this.

I. Yes, I think we have covered most of them [the topics listed].

S. 'Cooperative credit': well, I don't know much about them. It didn't seem to catch on somehow. Lack of staff, I think. After all, these things have always got to be kept under constant pressure, constant supervision otherwise the natural instinct is to let things slide. Some ...

I. Push?

S. Push.

I. What sort of man was Campbell?

S. Oh, first-class. They all were. Big men, and they did a lot of good. But it wanted six of them at least, a dozen of them.

I. And they didn't have that?

S. No, just about four of them, I think, for the whole country, you see. They could have done quite well with one in each province at least.

I. Did you feel any change between the period pre 1931 and post 1931? The Donoughmore Constitution.

S. Change in what?

I. In drive, sense of purpose?

S. No, I can't say that I did.

I. Of course you were in the Customs then and not in the field. But ...

S. No, I was in the field in the Eastern Province, in the '30's.

I. In the '30's?

S. '31 - '32, yes.

I. Well, because - this I'm just asking solely because I know that Senanayake brought a lot of drive in to his ...

S. Oh, yes, he certainly did. Yes, yes.

I. And I was wondering whether this was felt in the provinces? Was he perhaps anticipating too much? Rather sanguine in his hopes?

S. Who?

I. Senanayake.

S. I don't think so. He'd got the drive and he was on the right wicket all the time. He was a most able man. Could you turn that off for a moment.

END OF INTERVIEW

Confidential and Unrecorded Information provided by Mr. A.N. Strong*, O.B.E., 15 December 1965.

Example of arrogance.

While he was A.G.A. Matara a military officer arrived with orders to check on plans prepared to meet any eventuality of a riot. An appointment was made for 10.00 a.m. in the morning. But the officer turned up earlier when Strong was out and walked into an office in which the Cadet or O.A., D.C.R. Gunewardena, was working at a desk. Gunewardena told him that Strong would be in by ten o'clock. The military officer addressed Gunewardena derogatorily and arrogantly using the term 'native' and asking him why he did not stand up when he spoke.[1] Later when Strong arrived, Gunewardena came to him virtually in tears and related this incident. Strong said he would see to it. Strong was damn wild. When the officer arrived (a second time) and entered Strong's room, Strong made it a point not to offer him a seat and refused to have anything to do with him till he apologised to Gunewardena - who was then called in to accept the officer's apology. 'The military were like that', said Mr. Strong after concluding this tale.

Mr. Strong did not think that Ceylonese were excluded from G.A'ships deliberately. Some men were particularly suited for judicial work, my father, for example. Even among the Europeans there were some who were not considered suitable as G.A's. There were few Ceylonese in the C.C.S. in the first few decades who were senior enough to be G.A's. There were only about 8 or so senior to Strong and he did not think these were of the calibre or temperament for G.A'ships. In his opinion the early (i.e. the older) Ceylonese intake were not of the calibre of those who entered at a later date.

Regarding the 1915 riots Strong did not think that it was necessary to continue martial law for so long. The trouble was over within a week to ten days.

He agreed that rumour spread extremely rapidly. Ratnapura had heard of the Kandy troubles by the 31st May.

Clearly, he felt that Government panicked. He was pretty critical of the Military both in this regard and in general. He stated quite categorically that the military authorities did not know the people or the country. The law of evidence 'went by the board' during their Court Martials (i.e. the official ones as distinct from the few on-the-spot executions).

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1. Mr. D.C.R. Gunewardena could not recall such an incident.

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

Most Civil Servants' knowledge of the vernacular was 'very bad'. As for individuals, it was usually the case that one was 'either very good or very bad'. Brayne and Campbell were masters. Brayne knew Tamil very well too (?). Strong himself had mastered Sinhalese sufficiently to address a meeting. When he did so for the first time in Matara, Forrester Obeyesekere who was on the dais with him had been all admiration and remarked, 'I could never do that'. Educated in England, Obeyesekere knew little Sinhalese and carried an interpreter around.

Strong did not like the Tamils as much as he did the Sinhalese. Felt them 'crude' and 'common'. The Sinhalese villager had 'more charm'.

Another example of arrogance: This concerned a Civil Servant named Forrest serving in the Police Force. He chucked a Buddhist priest out of a first-class compartment. Armand de Souza received 6 months for libel for the way he described Forrest in relating this incident. [This point may be on record, M.W. Roberts.]

Little notice was taken of the Suriya Mal Campaign. Only one incident. A Police Officer called Hennessy hit one of the bearded johnnies who was walking along with anti-Poppy Day signboards.

Hennessy was eventually served with a summons. He walked into the I.G.P. Dowbiggin's office and laughingly waved the summons and said, 'Ha,ha, look at this ', implying that it was, surely, not seriously meant. Dowbiggin was not amused. He let it be understood that Hennessy had no right to hit the chappie and would have to face the music. He did. He was fined.

But Hennessy received numerous letters offering to pay the fine. What is more, the Poppy Day collections benefited to the tune of Rs. 800 as a result.

Strong was Secretary(?) to the Committee handling Poppy Day funds. The charge that most of the money went to ex-soldiers outside Ceylon was not correct. (?)

Once while having a meal with Tyrrell, Tyrrell kept pressing Strong for his opinion on Wadia. Strong said he was O.K. but Tyrrell (the Col. Sec.) kept pressing, obviously inviting a derogatory remark. In the end Strong had alluded to a trifling disagreement which he had had with Wadia in Batticaloa District. The next day when meeting Wadia in his official capacity Tyrrell had said, 'What's this I hear that you do not get on with your brother-officers?'. Wadia had wanted to know who had said so.

Tyrrell said that he could not divulge his sources. But Wadia had naturally pressed the issue and said that he had no answer till he knew who had made the allegation. Tyrrell had told him that it was Strong.

Strong had come to hear of this from another quarter at a much later date. Whereupon he rushed to Wadia's office, apologised and told him the whole story. Wadia had been quite understanding.

Strong considered Forrester Obeyesekere a very objectionable, interfering and 'conceited' type of politician. When A.G.A. Matara, Forrester had given him endless trouble. Strong had got his own back at times, but Strong was more harrassed than able to score off Forrester.

There was the question of a breach in some ella which the villagers refused to repair. In due course the vel vidane took proceedings against them. They represented matters to Obeyesekere rather than to Strong. He had said he would see to it. He must have gone to Sir M. Fletcher, then Col. Sec.; Fletcher wired Strong to waive the cases. Strong immediately sent a Mudaliyar round to the villagers to pass the word that they would be charged next to nothing if they pleaded Guilty rather than Not Guilty. They obeyed and were fined 5 cents each. Strong then wired to the Secretariat that the message was received too late. His concern here was to protect the principle of the villagers' liability to effect repairs. Later he went round to the spot - found that the breach was too big for the villagers to handle and got it repaired by Government, asking the villagers why they had not come to him in the first place.

When leaving Matara (going home on leave) Strong had been invited to a farewell tea party by some mahajana sabha - a tea party in his honour. At the party he had inquired where Forrester - a local big-bug - was; he was informed that Forrester had refused to come on the ground that 'nothing would induce him to attend a meeting in Mr. Strong's honour.'

Immediately afterwards Strong had been staying as guest at a friend's house in Colombo prior to embarking and it so happened that Forrester's Colombo residence was nearby. Forrester sent an invitation to Strong to dine with him. Strong made some excuse. Forrester persisted with other invitations and in the end Strong replied that nothing could induce him to accept one of Forrester's invitations.

Strong felt that Forrester was 'insincere'. He also felt that the villagers soon saw through him.

When Strong was in charge of Batticaloa District he clashed with D.S. Senanayake. On his own initiative Strong proposed to wipe out some arrears in revenue(?). Someone must have got at D.S. for he received a wire asking him to desist. He left the wire on the desk and promptly went on circuit with orders to send the wire after him. After as much explainable delay as possible Strong replied that the order had only just reached him and that it was too late. [N.B. I can only recollect the details of this anecdote rather vaguely. It may be incorrect on some points.]

M.W. Roberts
16/12/65

Mr. A.N. Strong's Comments on Saparamadu's Introduction to Woolf's Diaries.

Extract from letter: Strong - M.W. Roberts,
16 December 1965.

.... I find it hard to understand how Woolf came to permit all this nonsense to be included in his book - for 90% of it would be pure imagination within his own knowledge.

P.S. On re-reading these pencil notes, I feel sorry that I did not spend more time on them - and tear Mr. de Silva into smaller pieces. I do not feel unqualified for such a task, as I would be dealing, not with opinions which differ from mine, but with matters of pure fact within my own personal knowledge.

I have underlined some of the major falsehoods.

P.P.S.I had forgotten I had written this. I see that I have quoted only a few of the more glaring monstrosities - in effect, every statement mentioned here is untrue and admits of no question of difference of opinion.

You will find the notes barely legible, I am afraid - if you find this so, please return them; it will be no trouble to have them typed.

His Comments: "Woolf's Hambantota Diaries"

The publication of these diaries (1908-11) was authorised by the P.M. (Dahanayaka) on the occasion of Woolf's visit in 1960, in view of the literary eminence he had attained between 1911 and 1960.

They will not be found to add anything to W's[Woolf's] literary reputation, but what A.G.A's diaries could? His are almost purely factual, and almost wholly concerned with Salt revenues, chena permits, and the hundreds of village tanks, long waterless or abandoned. In effect, the unmistakeable background of the "Village in the Jungle". So far as his own feelings come through,he is obviously deeply affected by the life of the villager, the constant prey of starvation and disease. It is difficult to imagine that after a long circuit on foot or horse he went to bed filled not with plans for improving the lot of the people (which he was, according to his diaries), but with the thought that these people should be governing themselves and freed from colonial exploitation. Did this latter idea first appear in 1960? He hints himself that the true reason was that he wished to marry Virginia Woolf.

The Introduction, partly by "S.D.S." and partly by a Mervyn de Silva, is to me the really interesting part of the volume, for it is packed with mis-statements, and shows a C.C.S. which will surprise any of us reading it. To take some of the more glaring instances:-

The essence, first and last of the C.C.S. was its "traditions", a word which recurs and recurs ad nauseum. One infers, in the absence of

any precise definition, that these consisted of fairness regardless of race, etc. incorruptibility, and so on. Perhaps above all, exclusiveness, though coupled with a lack of sympathy - not with the people, but with the unselfish lawyers & politicians who were attempting to substitute their own power for ours.

Hence, the Cadet, on arrival, received special instruction in Service traditions,[1] by which, among other things, his private conduct was to be strictly regulated. He was particularly told that he must be, above all things, exclusive, e.g. mingling with Ceylonese of any kind was taboo. Even with other Europeans, planters, social intercourse was permitted only to the extent that it did not interfere with official work. Stress was laid upon the social practice of leaving visiting cards (presumably on non-Ceylonese, non-planters, etc.)

As a result, Civil Servants normally moved in the more exclusive Hotels and Clubs!

Officially, the Cadet was first appointed to a Police Magistry. "It was not unusual for a Cadet with a few days(sic) service and with no knowledge of either the law or the local languages to be appointed a P.M. and given (sic) in charge of a Court". Only after a year or two was he "promoted" to a post of O.A.[Office Assistant]. Any disadvantages in this premature introduction to law were presumably offset by the existence of some 250-300 Unofficial Police Magistrates, one of whose duties was to sit on the Bench in the temporary absence of the P.M.!!

All officers were bound to work for some time in all departments of the Administration, both in the Provinces and in the Secretariat, thus acquiring a knowledge of every aspect of administration.

The least breach of tradition involved instant dismissal. (The only 2 examples quoted are those of le Mesurier (who became a Muslim in order to have two wives) and Smythe (who was not dismissed but voluntarily resigned because he said he was tired of menial work like signing gun licenses.)

One result of all these traditions was that the C.C.S. became the depository of all power, in the face of which a Governor was powerless! Thus, the Governor could not act in the teeth of the opposition of his official Executive Council. Furthermore, he could give effect to no policy whatever unless it was backed by the whole Service, fully entrenched as they had become through this strict adherence to their traditions!

The main duty of the G.A. was to preserve law and order and, by means of his Headmen, to ensure that the population remained loyal to the British Government, Nobody could become a G.A. until 40.

Implicit obedience to traditions meant that there was no place for private opinions. The elaborate training eventually killed imagination; fire and zeal had to be toned down to ensure success. So an officer was obliged to carry out faithfully a policy with which he heartily

① This and other points below are a reiteration of statements made by Saparamadu ("S.D.S") which Mr. Strong considers altogether incorrect.

disagreed, the alternative being resignation. The persons sent out as Governors were never outstanding men; few educated or able persons were anxious to come to an obscure Colony, so the post was often entrusted to members of the Col. Service who had been Governors elsewhere. With such ordinary Governors the C.C.S. invariably had its way, and the Governor only rarely dared to over-rule its advice! particularly when the Sec. of State required an explanation for disregarding such advice. Thus invariably the Governors were content to let the C.S. rule. (The apparent incompatibility between this statement and the previous one that tradition demanded unquestioning obedience may presumably be explained if one supposes that the Service invariably approved all policies of the Governor, i.e. their own policies.)

More and more, stress is placed on the intensive training which officers, drawn from certain social groups, received in the business of ruling, after being selected, and the complicated training in traditions which began immediately on his arrival, doubtless even before he became a Magistrate in his first few days.

Further Comments from Mr. A.N. Strong in Response to Remarks and Queries Presented by M.W. Roberts on Saparamadu's Introduction,

29 December 1965.

A. "Tradition" - dismissal for breach of.

Nil. In fact, in all my years I remember nobody being dismissed for any reason at all. I vaguely recall one or perhaps 2 cases, but not involving any scandal or particular misdeed. Most probably premature retirement more or less by mutual consent.

B. Governor acting in spite of C.S. opposition.

Never, because there was no such opposition. The Service was never consulted as such, and only rarely as individuals. E.g. a G.A. might be asked his advice on the best route for a railway extension (as I once was) but I find it very difficult to recall any other of these ad hoc so-called consultations. In more general cases and more important, where the general consensus of the whole Service might be invaluable, our opinions were not sought - I am thinking of such cases as the payment of Headmen - a revolutionary change from age-old and engrained traditions, which probably kept out some of the best men, and certainly produced a class of applicants of inferior status and no more financial or social standing than a job-less bus conductor. Many desirable men felt that they were demeaning themselves by competing with such as these. [This feeling extended to higher circles. Several of high standing, who would have adorned the Leg. Co. or State Co. told me that they refused to compete with a "basket-woman".]

C. Governors as spontaneous originators of policy.

We have, I think, generally agreed on the scarcity of new or altered policies, but where one was adumbrated, it would never be clear whether the initiative came from H.E. himself or from his advisers, or M.P., the Press or what. In one case only can I say that a proposal came from H.E. himself (or so he said) i.e to drop the building of large hospitals in the larger towns and villages, and substitute a system of more local "cottage hospitals". But having started the idea, in a Budget speech, he quickly dropped it for no reason that I know of. In speaking of it to me, he was wildly enthusiastic.

D. G.A. ships before 40.

I have gone through the Civil Lists, or some of them for the last years - (1922-1942) and find that of 17 cases, the average was about 42-43, only 4 at 40. Two at 39½, one at 41 (C.L. Wickremasinghe of the well-known Galle family - who, alas, died young) and one or two as late as 48. This age, of course, was dictated by

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the fact that all these posts were in Class 1 which could not be reached in less than some 17 years' service, for up to Class 11 promotion went by seniority.

[Here I must apologise for having credited M. de Silva with the absurdities of "S.D.S." (pp. vii, etc. of Woolf's Diaries, which precede the contribution by Mr. de S.)]

I am sure you are correct in describing the Service as less a composite body than a collection of individuals. We only acted as a body when we formed an Association (or"Soviet") in protection of our own interests, e.g. our chief activity, I think, was in connexion with our altered position under the Donoughmore Scheme. But even when we started the Assoc. - in the early 20's - and Govt. had a composite body to deal with ["recognised" only with the greatest reluctance] they never consulted such a ready source of advice based on experience, and it was outside our province to address Govt. except on matters affecting our own terms and conditions of service.

E. Woolf and self-Govt.

I see here, as in other cases, a certain amount of hind-sight. Running through his contemporary Diaries, there is a thread, on nearly every page, of incompatibility between a theory that people should have been left more to help themselves and rely more on local "Gansabhava" principles and the actualities. It is a well-known fact that whatever scheme was started up was liable to perish in no time once you removed the interest, encouragement, supervision and help of the A.G.A. I am,of course,not speaking of the intelligensia, say in Colombo, but with the peasants of Hambantota, which Woolf himself is speaking of - his practical experience in his short 4 years never went beyond that District, leaving out his short time in the Jaffna Kachcheri! It seems to me utterly unrealistic to expect self-reliance and initiative from these poor cultivators, 95% illiterate, riddled with fever, habitually undernourished and having to wage a constant battle even to keep alive. The "Village in the Jungle" was repeated in the Wanni and Bintenne, and is a true picture to my knowledge.

Govt. did tend to favour local self-government, i.e they carried on what they inherited, but did not invent, until quite recently. The formation of Urban (and the short-lived District) Councils was a big step and I think a highly successful one. But to say in 1910 that the villagers of the H. district offered the slightest promise of self-Govt., e.g. on Donoughmore lines, is an obvious after-thought, conceived only 50 years later. I cannot follow Woolf along these ideological paths.

You have, I believe, hit the nail on the head in suggesting

that, in the then context, Govt. "domination" was the only alternative to impracticable theories and that Woolf himself showed that by his unremitting efforts to help and guide. As you say, why did he not try the experiment and see what happened if he stuck to his office desk? Chaos?

I don't know about kow-towing to the A.G.A's. People of course paid due respect to his authority, but first and last, he was their own and only friend they could turn to, which they invariably did in all kinds of trouble. I am quite sure that not one in 1000's knew or cared whether there was a G.A. in Galle or a Leg. Co. in Colombo. The A.G.A. was "Government" embodied in these remote villages, and even in some less remote ones.

Since our talk, I find myself with a feeling that we, or I at least, may have been misled by Saparamadu's insistence on "traditions" and our rigorous "training" in them, into the fallacy of forming judgements on the Service, its defects and, if possible, its contribution towards the general welfare, not on an examination of its work so much as by seeing how far it approached or deviated from Saparamadu's unfounded theories about rigid instruction, training, traditions, etc. which never existed in fact. I feel rather annoyed that statements such as the one that a Cadet could be made a Magistrate on his second rather than his 732nd day in the Island, ever got into Woolf's book - Woolf well knew what a false picture it all was: could he ever have read Saparamadu!

Mr. A.N. Strong's Answers to Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts*, January 1966.[1]

1. As I am not quite certain what post you held just before you left for Rangoon and when exactly you left, could you provide these details for the record. Also when you took up duties again in Ceylon in the 40's.

Answer:

1930-5.

G.A. Batticaloa - Excise Commissioner - Principal Collector of Customs and Chairman Port Commission, Colombo.

1935 - March.

Port of Rangoon job vacant. Double present salary, and more - rising to double that of the Chief Secretary. Consulted Govt. and offered not to apply if I could be left in my present post for good. Not a hope, so applied and got the job, resigning, under the Donoughmore Scheme in December 1935. When kicked out of Rangoon in March 1942, was asked to return to my former Colombo job, which I did in April 1942 (28th?).

1942-5.

Served on contract terms, retaining my pension.

2. Would you comment on the following: '"good government"' is by no means the objective idea that its advocates seem to think. On the contrary what seems to be good government to one man my be anathema to his neighbour; and who is to say which of them is right?'

Answer:

This being purely a matter of opinion, there can be no right or wrong. And to say what one likes another dislikes is a mere platitude.

3. .... and the following by another person, Revd. Trevor Huddleston, with reference to Tanzania: 'The end of colonialism in East Africa has brought life and purpose to the country. This is not to say that colonial administrators were bad or repressive men .... But they could not be part of the new Africa however hard they tried, however great their sympathy, however deep their

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

1. This was subsequent to an interview of over five hours on the 15th December 1965.

understanding. They could not be part of it because foreign domination cannot co-exist with freedom. And colonialism, even at its most enlightened, is domination.

.... It would be absurd and dishonest to claim that the changes have necessarily meant greater efficiency at every level ...

But one comes to see that there is a more important quality than mere efficiency in administration: and it is a sense of social power and purpose.'

Answer:

Fr. Huddleston is saying:-

a. Life and purpose did not exist under 'Colonialism.'
b. Colonial administrators could not be part of the new Africa.
c. Colonialism is domination.
d. It cannot co-exist with freedom.
e. A sense of social power and purpose is preferable to mere efficiency.

I disagree with every one of these judgements. [For 16 years, 1946-62, I was first, Secretary, and later President, of the Colonial Civil Servants Association, with some 30 odd members (i.e. local Assocns.) comprising some 15,000 individuals, was in close touch (100 letters a week) with them and also with the Colonial Office, was intimately connected with all the compensation and re-settlement schemes for officers who were forced to retire or did so voluntarily. I am therefore not so clearly out of touch as my own resignation might imply. During that period, I visited some 8 different colonies.]

a.)

b.) I do not accept either of these. In Ceylon (the first to attain independence) a mere half dozen officers retired before giving 'the new Africa' a trial. The rest mostly finished their normal term of service, the last one retiring only in 1959, at usual age of 55, with 30 odd years service, the last 27 in a country of which he could form no part. (This applies to the C.C.S.; there was in other Departments a similar story.)

c. This is a platitude. Every form of government automatically implies domination.

d. This implies that freedom did not exist before Independence; we are daily reminded that the converse is true.

e. I wonder what the villager, who is the man that really matters, would say to inefficiency, as affecting his daily life, compared with a 'sense of social power and purpose', which is the mere verbiage used to disguise woolly thinking. I would like to see this 'sense' closely defined, and translated into terms of practical human existence. Who regards it as 'more important'? The governors? no doubt. The governees? -----?

Addenda: Perhaps Fr. H. had in mind something like this: 'You say that transfer of power, at this premature stage, will lead to a loss of efficiency. We quite agree. But the inefficiency would be of our own making, and we would be the sufferers. We however, would willingly pay that price for independence.' In many friendly conversations, I found this line irrefutable.

4(a). Did the British bring law rather than justice?

Answer:

The British found, ready waiting, three excellent systems of law, the Kandyan, the Roman-Dutch and the Mohammedan. These still remain, according to the region or the religion, except where they are (rarely) inconsistent with natural law, e.g. the power of a husband to kill a faithless wife. The British filled gaps with the Common Law of England. So much for law. As for justice, the question obviously implies that the British did not always act justly in their administration of the laws. This seems to me to be merely a cheap and facile accusation of the vaguest nature and unsupported by the least evidence. The author merely reads out the charge, calls no evidence and puts the onus upon the accused to prove his innocence, thus falling into his own trap, for such a procedure would be precisely the injustice with which the British are charged, by implication, in the question we are now considering.

The answer should really come from those who would have been affected by a judicial administration of the law which was not incorruptible and impartial (or whatever constitutes injustice). Perhaps the answer is that 'British justice' became a common cliche.

4(b). When you were on the bench did you feel that some of your decisions were a mere shot in the dark?

Answer:

No, never. If I did not feel completely sure, I threw the case out, if it were a civil case, or acquitted the accused in a criminal one. One must, of course, have made mistakes, but through guess-work - no. One had to go on the evidence plus one's view of it, and I had a feeling myself that as one became older, one acquired, perhaps, a deeper insight into the mentality of suitors (or a superficial one?). After all, false cases, false defences and so on, tended to become somewhat stereotyped in time, and one also began to look behind what was actually said to the possible motive behind it.

4(c). Could a man decide land cases (presumably the majority of cases) from the bench without knowing the ins and outs of the particular villagers' and village's relationships, without seeing the configuration of the land - i.e. an examination on the spot - and without having all the village deeds etc. before him rather than a few deeds etc. pertaining to a particular plot?

Answer:

There were two types of cases, in this context. 1. where the question was one of pure law, and required no witnesses, except e.g. for the production of documents. Here one judged simply on the legal arguments of counsel and their interpretation of the relevant law and precedents. 2. for the cases you visualise, my own rule, which I imagine was fairly general, was invariably to do nothing without a personal, visual inspection of the land. Where the case involved local relationships, feuds and animosities, one could only go on the verbal evidence as in any other case; I am not sure that I see any particular advantage in the production of deeds etc. which are not relevant to the particular plot in issue.

4(d). Did cases like that related as fiction in 'The Village in the Jungle' when a bad headman and a few others successfully framed the ignorant Babun and Silindu occur sufficiently frequently in real life to warrant great concern?

uncalled for invasion of the Governor's discretion in the matter of appointments. Tyrrell got the job in the normal way, one must presume, i.e. possibly the recommendation of the Public Service Commission; certainly the approval of the Governor and the final sanction of the Secretary of State.

In many minds the obvious choice was Newnham, and I have reason to believe that this was prevented by Stubbs, on personal grounds.

6. What is your personal appraisal of Reid?

Answer:

I always thought Reid extremely able.

7. How did the leading officials adapt themselves to a diminition of their power in 1931 with the establishment of the Donoughmore Constitution? ... particularly the Executive Councillors?

Answer:

As I have already said, the Service generally accepted their loss(if any!) of power, and loyally adapted themselves to the changes. Anyone who did not relish the prospect could leave without giving any reason, but I never heard of a case of anyone retiring because of having to serve a Minister rather than a Chief Secretary. I think I have mentioned that the half dozen who retired at once, must have done so for other reasons, considering that they went without giving the new Constitution a trial.

The Executive Councillors had little power anyhow, being merely advisory, the Governor being in no way bound to accept their advice.

8. If any resented it, did they show it?

Answer:

There was no sign that anyone resented the altered conditions, whatever their private thoughts.

9. Did the politicians make this adaptation more difficult by their attitude - their interference and, perhaps, ultra-criticism? Could they have been more understanding and less touchy?

Answer:

I feel quite sure that Woolf's case of Babun and Silindu was by no means unique. But how could one know? You feel in doubt, so you acquit the accused, as Woolf did not. Did you in fact unwittingly deny justice to the complainant by acquitting an accused who was in fact guilty?

That a frame-up had taken place could never be demonstrable, so there was little to arouse any concern at all.

Addenda : The only people likely to know whether a case was framed, would be the bar, but they too could be deceived. [On several occasions, I asked Counsel, after the case was over, where the actual truth lay. The only reply I got was 'I followed my instructions; beyond that I really could not say, except that I don't think you were wrong in convicting, or acquitting.'] But I think it would certainly have got round if a given judge were felt by the Bar to be habitually 'taken in.'

4(e). Note that all this is in the light of the peoples' proclivity to perjury and to misuse the courts. Would you say that while the British legal system was corrupted by the people it also corrupted the people?

Answer:

The Ceylonese generally are litigious by nature, and perjury was far from uncommon. But these would be no reason for denying or limiting access to the courts of law. I do not by any means agree that misuse or abuse could corrupt the legal system, and I do not see how the impartial administration of the law could corrupt the people.

5. Do you know if the Donoughmore Commission wanted to have Thomas Reid as Chief Secretary in 1930-31 and, if so, how Sir F.G. Tyrrell came to get the job?

Answer:

The Donoughmore Commission may, for all I know, have regarded Reid as an obvious choice as Chief Secretary; but I very much doubt whether they would have expressed any opinion, which would have been far beyond their terms of reference and, I should say, justly resented as an

Answer:

The politicians seemed to me at least to make the adaptation as easy as possible (there were no doubt certain exceptions, due, I thought rather to clash of personalities than to any desire to abuse their new powers). I well remember that at the time this was commonly explained by the fear lest undue criticism or interference might lead to wholesale retirements, thus denuding the service of experienced advisers at a crucial stage and at the same time running up a huge bill by way of compensation for loss of career; I myself was very fortunate in having to serve under at least four Ministers whom I found it much more pleasure to work with than under the old regime of Tyrrell, Huxham and Co.

Addenda : On one occasion, a colleague refused to obey an order of his Minister (who was notoriously corrupt) which he knew to be corrupt. The Minister threatened to resign if the officer were not removed. The Chief Secretary told me this, and added that he proposed to transfer him and give me the job. I flatly refused: my first act would be carrying out an indefensible order, and ever after I too would be liable to be sacked if I did not get on with the Minister for whatever reason. The result was that Stubbs came down on my side, and the difficulty overcome by transferring the officer several months later. But this row was unique, as far as I know.

10. Would you agree that it 'was not the Donoughmore Constitution which discouraged the growth of parties but the social situation which made them unnecessary [because] extra-political considerations and the activities of [a] tribe of 'fixers' were more decisive than party organisation'?

Answer:

I really had neither the time nor the inclination to notice. At a rough guess, I should say that the general set-up did not favour the growth of parties, as in Britain. There was no real split vertically as with Free Trade/Protection, private enterprise/nationalisation, and so on, nor is there much sign of this today. My impression is that the question is rather one of search for personal power than of ideological differences. One gets little help from election results. A typical remark made by a former subordinate of mine (the 'man in the street') when Banda came into power, was 'Thanks be to Allah, we have at last got rid of this tyrannical

Government (J.K.L's)[1] for the price of rice and sugar is to be reduced.' And it is a sorry fact that with information as to the distribution of castes and religions in the constituency, the caste or religion of the candidates, etc. the result of an election is often quite predictable. Parties seemed distinguishable by name rather than by any difference in their 'party platforms.'

11. Would you comment on the elections and electioneering methods under the Donoughmore Constitution? Did bus companies and local mudalalis have a pronounced influence in many constituencies?

Answer:

I was not implicated in any way in the Donoughmore elections - but I should conjecture that the factors just mentioned would be far more influential than local mudalalis etc., whose mainweapon could only be 'buying' votes in some form, an expensive process. This did happen in minor spheres, e.g. possibly in U.D.C. elections, certainly in voting on excise matters, e.g. boot-leggers bought votes to make, or keep, the area 'dry.'

Lobbies, such as bus companies, had little or no influence in 1930, compared with their subsequent extent and power today (i.e. till Government took them over?).

12. It is generally agreed that this Constitution gave the politicians some administrative training but was it the wrong kind of training in the sense of furthering misplaced priorities?

Answer:

No, I do not think so. There were individual preferences no doubt, as in any Committee, but these would be ironed out in debate and the final result was always fair enough in my experience; at least, not swayed by any particular 'racket'.

13. During our interview you referred to a man in one of the Executive Committees who always opposed you as being incompetent etc. At what period was this? 1930's or 1940's? and who was it?

1. Error; read as J.L.K. for John Lionel Kotelawala who, incidentally, ~~[illegible]~~ lives near Strong's village in Kent.

Answer:

This bugbear was an unlikeable man called G.K.W. Perera, 1930-5. He did not, however, treat me any worse than other Heads of Department. Incidentally, he stood for Matara against my F.A. Obeyesekera and got about 2% as against 98% of the votes (see end of Question 10); the hinterland being wholly Goygama, with a coastal fringe of Karawas.

I found a way to tame him - sarcasm. In answer to a question, I would say to him, 'As you know, I know nothing, so I will ask my Chief Engineer. But I rather think the roof needs repair in order to keep the rain out.' And the rest of them would laugh.

14. During the 1930's and 1940's did you ever feel that the British Officers of State and the Governor expected you to be their man as distinct from the Ministers'? Did you feel that on certain issues your position was dichotomous - a servant of a Minister and a Chief Secretary who were pulling in different directions?

Answer:

Never. Government never tried to invade Ministerial functions On the contrary, in one or two solitary cases, it was the other way about; e.g. in matters of discipline, where a Minister sought to invade the province of the Governor. (I should add that once or twice the Financial Secretary tried the same thing!) In no case did any friction arise.

15. (a) Have you any idea how Wedderburn got on with the Ministers apart from the Bracegirdle case - and particularly before it (as it rather strained relations)?
(b) Did he have the imagination, sympathy and flexibility (in the good sense) to work under the Donoughmore Constitution?

Answer:

(a) Very well, I think. He was easy to get on with.
(b) Yes, I think so. I saw nothing to the contrary.

16. Do you have any idea why Wodeman was preferred over Newnham? Would you comment on this choice. I personally think it was an idiotic one and hardly reflects well on Government, [i,e. Wedderburn and the P.S.C. and Caldecott(?)]?

Answer:

I have no idea. I had great respect for my friend W. On three occasions I succeeded him in office, and I found that in no case did he not leave his Department in a better condition than when he entered it. At the same time, I agree with your view. They were (W. and N.) of equal seniority, and Newnham, as it happened, had just acquired great credit and a C.M.G. for a masterly singlehanded dealing with one of the most fatal Malaria epidemics Ceylon had ever known. (Within the hour, he collected a clerk and a typewriter, left his desk and was not seen in Colombo for many months, having visited every village affected).

17. Could you provide an appraisal of the following politicians. (i.e. if you knew them). E.R. Thambimuttu, Sir James Peiris, Sir P. Ramanathan, W.F. Duraiswamy, Victor Corea, Madawela, C. Batuwantudawe, A.C.G. Wijeyekoon, Sir T.B. Panabokke, Sir S. Dias Bandaranayke (S.W.R.D's father), Sir F. Molamure, A.E. de Silva, K. Balasingham, C.H.Z. Fernando.

Answer:

Thambimuttu: Rather a rogue elephant to begin with. But with experience (in Opposition) he became more gentle; was very helpful and I liked him very much. Sympathetic rather than critical.

Sir James: A very charming man. In the thick of the fight since 1910(?) for self-government. Always courteous, he gained the respect of all communities and of Government, and deserved as well of his country as any man.

Sir Solomon: A perfect gentleman in every respect, and one of the most charming I ever met. A wise (unofficial) Counsellor of Governors and a favourite friend of Clifford's.

F. Molamure: Not half the man his father was (the Adigar). He was somewhat volatile, and I thought unreliable. As Speaker, he got into a scandalous mess in a divorce case, and also went to jail for 6 months (when Speaker) for misappropriation as Executor of his father's estate. (He was allowed full Speaker's pay during his enforced absence).

The rest I know, not very well, and can hardly venture any opinion.

18. On reading a memo by Bowes I found that he expected Ceylonese

who had received a University education in England should 'show' their gratitude' by working smoothly with Government in Ceylon. Any comments?

Answer:

This sounds like one of F.B's remarks he would throw off on occasions. I do not agree with the sentiment expressed, if it implies subservience to the British, as I think it must, at that date (even if Government had paid for the University - but such scholarships came only later?).

19. Was the British community in Ceylon not unduly sensitive and at times virtually petty-minded in defending their honour - i.e. British honour in sense of King and Country?

Answer:

No, I think not. At least I saw no sign of this sensitiveness in clubs and general converse with planters, Fort merchants, and the community at large. The younger men were mostly aloof from politics, and the elders were old enough to take 'abuse' with a grain of salt. I have heard 'unfriends' of Britain say that the English were too damned arrogant to heed the yelpings of the jackals? (This was not in connexion with Ceylon or any other particular country).

20. It was one of the aims of British administrators of the nineteenth century to build up a class of Ceylonese elite - an educated elite - who would help to further progress in the island (and to men like MacCauley these elitist groups would help in the progress of the country towards self-government), but when this elite arrived on the scene in Ceylon, it was stated that they did not represent the masses and they were denied a substantial share in Government (in 1909-10). Any comments?

Answer:

No doubt the British helped to foster the growth of such an elite, which was certainly produced, with or without Government help. But I cannot think what evidence there is of Government's alleged motive, viz. training towards self-government, and rather doubt whether they had this remote (nineteenth century) object in mind. We were well into the

twentieth century, for example, when we first heard the 'trusteeship' theory publicly enunciated (1910?).

What 'share in Government' did this elite expect, as private individuals? This could only come in two ways - by admission to the executive civil service, or to the legislature? By 1890, if not before, a beginning had been made with the Local Division of the C.C.S., but 'representation of the masses' sounds like a concept unknown in that century.

21. Would you say that one of the prominent weaknesses among leading Ceylonese - Civil Servants, Public Servants and politicians - in the 1910's and early 20's was a lack of assurance and an unwillingness to shoulder responsibility?

Answer:

These defects, if they were such, were not peculiar to the particular classes whom you mention; they were, and perhaps still are, to a lesser extent, national characteristics. I was for several years the Chairman of a Selection Board, both in Burma and in Ceylon (where it was the embryo of the later Public Service Commission (Donoughmore). It met several times a year, to interview candidates for gazetted posts as in the Police, Excise and other non-C.C.S. Departments.) and it was our general experience that a sense of unself-reliance and fear of shouldering responsibility (test questions invariably) was one of the major causes of failure.

Addenda : An important reservation - a sense of responsibility is not innate: it can only come from training, (partly unconscious?) e.g. a good school, organised games, team spirit, emulation of captains or other 'heroes,' University, sportmanship, acceptance of umpire's decision, and so on, must all go to foster a sense of pulling one's weight in the boat. With a similar background, this is possible with any race. But too often the local applicant for a post would 'telephone for orders' when an incipient riot was taking place under his nose, while others would at once wade in and hit somebody over the head. He might do the wrong thing, but he would at least do something rather than do nothing to stop the fight. What was wrong? Something in the training? I am far from suggesting an inherent defect in national character.

22. What were the criticisms levelled at the Poppy-Day collections

by those who were behind the Suriya-Mal campaign? From your first-hand knowledge in the Poppy-Day Collection Committee could you describe how the collections in Ceylon were distributed?

Answer:

I think it is pretty safe to say that no European was ever a beneficiary, i.e. the entire proceeds were devoted to local ex-Servicemen. This is perhaps the more credible in view of the fact that no European in need of any form of charity would be likely to remain in Ceylon. The office bearers of the 'Comrades' always included a full complement of local ex-soldiers.

Addenda : I would like to record that, before the 'Comrades' got going, my war wounds ran up for me a considerable bill. The surgeon refused to send me his account, on the ground that he would never charge an ex-soldier for his professional services. On my pressing him further, he most tactfully and charmingly sent me a bill for Rs. 10 (I expected Rs. 500!). This was A.M. de Silva.

23. Would you comment on Stace's account of the riots in Kandy? Did you think it rather lame? In this connection do you know where Wodeman was at the time?

Answer:

The riots broke out at the end of May 1915. Returning from U.K. leave in April, Wodeman became Assistant to the G.A. Kandy and so remained until August, when he went to Matale as A.G.A.

I read Stace's account recently but have not got it by me now, but I still have a vague idea that it was as you describe. Some points, I remember, were not altogether consistent with other accounts. But my bad memory precludes further details.

24. Once Anderson discovered that Stubbs had lied, were their relations strained?

Answer:

I imagine they must have been, but I was too junior to know much about it. Anyhow, I went off to the war before the 'row' started.

25. I have heard the tale of Stubbs' treatment of E.F. Marshall

from Mr. Newnham. Did you come to hear of it in your Service days and do you have any idea what other Civil Servants thought about it?

Answer:

Do you not mean F. Marshall? He was in Galle in 1911 and was transferred somewhere owing to some affair with a young lady there. This was two years before Stubbs' time, or mine. I only heard of it (from H.G.N.) quite recently.

E.F. Marshall does not recall any particular incident.

My own opinion and that, I believe, of the majority of us, would be that Government had no business to interfere in any officer's private affairs. Their own Orders laid down that private conduct was no concern of Government unless and until it became so notorious that it was liable to bring Government into public disrepute. This rule was observed in one or two similar subsequent cases.

26. Is there any foundation in the local gossip that G.F.M. Ennis did not get a knighthood because of his attitude towards Government action during the 1915 riots? Presumably he was critical of Government but what specifically was Ennis' viewpoint?

Answer:

I never heard any gossip of this nature, and few, if any, could ever read the Governor's mind on the subject, in the nature of things. From the outside point of view, the cause would more likely be the known homosexual tendencies of the person in question. And I don't see how his opinion reached Government: it would be outside his sphere, and uncalled for, to criticise.

27. Would you provide a personal appraisal of J.P. Lewis, L.J.B. Turner, Cumberland, Fraser, Lushington, Codrington, Denham and Elphinstone and also of your friend Worsley who, unfortunately, died so prematurely?

Answer:

J.P.L. before my time.

L.J.B.T. a very able officer.

C.R.C.[Cumberland] one of the best G.A's ever. He was

fiercely independent and would take no nonsense from the Secretariat.

J.G.F.[Fraser] an able G.A. but a bit of a crank. E.g. he would spend most of his time running round Sanitary Boards, building a hotel in Negombo, etc. leaving his Assistant [H.E.N.] to run the Province, and blindly sign letters to Government which N. had drafted. On the whole, therefore, rather futile(?) in his latter days at least, or so he appeared to me.

Lushington I hardly came into contact with him, until he retired and settled down in Nuwara Eliya.

Codrington Highly intellectual. One hobby was Ceylon numismatics, and he was held in high repute for his knowledge of the Classics, i.e. Sanskrit and Pali. His knowledge of Sinhala was such that he was the accepted arbiter when 2 Sinhalese pundits disagreed on a point of their own language.

I do not mean that these activities interfered in any way with his official duties.

I did not see him much, but I know he was very well liked as G.A. Sabaragamuwa.

Denham was first and last a complete snob. He kow-towed to the higher circles and bullied his subordinates. A careerist and a place-hunter, and so much disliked.

Elphinstone A vegetarian who lived on carrots and rabbit-food, and looked like it. An authority on Constitutional Law but that was of little use to us. As Attorney-General he left no mark, except that he was completely in the pockets of Fletcher (later sacked as a confirmed double-crosser) and was only too ready to sacrifice the individual officer on the political altar. ,I may sound bitter, but I am, for I was one of the victims on several occasions. It was he who tried to censure me for the illegal introduction of leases in the 'Landless peasant' business, until he was shouted down by Don Stephen and other Ministers.[1]

R.M.M.W.[Worsley] As an intimate friend since 1914, he puts me in the position that I am too biassed to say more than that in every respect, he was my ideal.

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1. Not Ministers at this stage (c.1927) but leading politicians.

28. Have you any idea why Woods and Turner could not get on?

Answer:

I did not know they could not get on, until they had the mother and father of a row, about 1930.

L.J.B. had been sent to America to study 'time and motion' office organisation, and of course returned absolutely soaked in its theory and [its] practice.

He then took up Department by Department and effected immense economies. Under his guidance I dealt with the Customs, and quite easily saved some Rs. 20,000 per annum by looking into things which had never been looked at. (In abolishing many posts, I had to dismiss nobody, leaving it to normal wastage and slowing up recruitment for a short time.) T's total savings must have been enormous, until it came to the Treasury. Woods put every stumbling-block in his way (T. himself conducted this investigation) even to the extent of what was tantamount to an embargo on answering T's questions. Finally, Woods, who as Treasurer (Financial Secretary) should have been T's strongest supporter declined to accept any of T's recommendations. So T. went to the Governor (Stanley) who promptly let him down, as he naturally would, and backed W. - upon which T. resigned and so the country lost one of its ablest administrators.

29. Would you comment on Turner's administrative reform proposals?

Answer:

I did not see, nor do I remember hearing of these proposals. I think Turner had a say in the general re-organisation (so did Reid) following Donoughmore, and I can only comment that whatever Turner may have put up was ipso facto thoroughly sound and worthy of close consideration.

30(a) I believe Woods did not help Civil Servants much and tended to be obstructionist?

Answer:

This is so. As Colonial Auditor, we thought him reasonable, fair and helpful. Promoted to Treasurer (later Financial Secretary) he greatly changed, partly, perhaps because he had inherited the well-known 'Treasury' attitude which was universal (so also in England). I can best sum it all up by describing the effects - where a Financial order could be

construed in more than one way, the construction would be adverse to the Service, even if it involved some form of distortion. When Donoughmore came, I fancy that Woods had by that time acquired a form of megalomania, and seemed to go beyond his purely financial sphere. He became Public Enemy No. 1 when dealing with the Donoughmore question of compensation for those who retired prematurely. (There was no argument against the principle laid down by Donoughmore. I speak only of details.) W. seemed 'anti' from the start, as though he secretly disagreed. Anyhow, his advice on this and other questions was given to the Secretary of State over our heads and he refused to discuss proposals with us who were the victims concerned. E.g. in computing compensation annuities, the vital factor of course, was age (expectation of life). Woods produced a draft for the Secretary of State in which he based his proposed scheme on the Government of India's mortality tables. At this juncture, I was acting for my chief who was in Delhi on some conference, where he chanced to come across the Indian tables. These were quite different from those Woods had used, relying on an out-of-date Table which had been quite appreciably revised, very much in our favour. My boss at once sent me a long-call, on which L.J.B.T. and I went to see Woods and pointed out the error. Woods absolutely refused to budge, although there was ample time to amend the draft. (It was not a trivial matter; in my own case, I lost about £50 per annum for life, so up to date Woods' refusal has cost me some £1,500). Moreover, Woods' scheme generally turned out to be about one-third of the compensation level of the many schemes which have come into force since 1948.

30(b). Have you any idea how he got on with the Ceylonese politicians

Answer:
Very well, I think. No evidence to the contrary.

30(c). Your criticism that he did not protect the C.C.S. might be held by nationalist-minded historians to mean that he was liberal and reasonable in his dealings with the polticians (so too re Fletcher) and therefore win their (the historians') praise. I suspect, however, that this was not so either in Woods' or Fletcher's case?

Answer:

This will not hold water. I was speaking of day-to-day matters of pure administration far removed from politics. No politician would ever know, or care, when some claim was cut down, although the individual officer did very much. For example, a poor widow lost her pension on her husband's death, because the Treasury itself had omitted to publish an essential Gazette notification, and I had a long battle to remedy the defect on her behalf.

So generally. Such an attitude, including Fletcher's and Elphinstone's, would never be known outside the circle of 2 or 3 people concerned, and I am perfectly certain that if they had been, these people would have gone down, rather than up in the eyes of the politicians, who were mostly gentlemen and were devoid of antipathy towards the Civil Servant as such, or anyone else ofor that matter.

31(a) Apart from the question of chenaing in the Dry Zone, have you any idea what the main aims of the Forest Department were? Any criticisms?

(b) Any shortcomings in their methods and their administration?

Answer:

(a) Protection of reserved forests, re-afforestation, and selling timber. I can imagine no grounds for criticism; the Department very rarely impinged on our administration.

(b) One can only judge by results, which would naturally not begin to appear for 30 years or more, if then. I can quote only one case where large sums of money were mis-spent on a teak plantation. This perished in my own short time. Apparently, what grew in Burma would not grow in Ceylon.

32. With reference to one of your letters to Mr. Newnham, who was Henman? I gather he was an Irrigation Engineer who formulated a scheme of reform? What was the scheme? When was this? What happened to it? Did it lead to any improvement?

Answer:

Henman was a D.I.E. (Divisional Irrigation Engineer). I knew him well. He privately took much interest in my Matara Flood Scheme (see separate note) but the atmosphere was such that had this come to the notice of his Director he would have been on the mat for even being on speaking terms with a civil

servant, and risking greater trouble for giving unauthorised advice.

I must ask H.E.N. about Henman's scheme of reform, which I cannot recall. On general principles, any such scheme would have been stamped upon by his Head Office, where jealousies reached untold proportions.

33. As far as you know, could you elaborate on the reasons why Smythe resigned?

Answer:

Yes; on his own statement, because (he said) his abilities were under-used. After one year, that is. He had not come out in order to sign gun licences, as he publicly stated. In one's first year, this task would normally be one of the more important of the duties of a dog's body of a Cadet. Smythe merely vanished, unknown and unsung.

34. Did you think that there were real grievances behind the 1923 strike? While having an eye to the main chance perhaps Goonesinha had a genuine sympathy for the underdog and felt that he should agitate on their behalf?

Answer:

Yes - the general exploitation of labour by the private interests whose business lay in the Harbour. In 1942-5 when I was the 'Proper Authority' (with power to examine Companies' books) and had control over all wages and other conditions of service, I was appalled to find how much capital had been made for many years by employers who traded on an excess supply of labour. Under payment was doubtless behind the 1923 strike. Goonesinha did not, I think, foment it - it was there already. I never had any reason to suppose that he was actuated by anything but genuine sympathy; he was not a bad chap, and if he personally got something out of it, why not? He could not, even if he wished, extort large sums, and if one examines motives, first, it is a futile occupation and second, how many millions of people have prospered from motives which could not bear the light of day? A subscription of 25 cts. per month would affect no individual, but mean quite a lot to G.

35. What about the Lake House strike: did you consider the possibility that it was justifiable?

Answer:

Not really. It was a purely personal matter, as G. confessed to me, between him and Wijeyewardena, the Lake Press having made some derogatory remarks about him. It only lasted a day or so, and nobody lost any wages. The whole thing was confined to landing or not landing, a certain tonnage of newsprint for which the L.P. were in urgent need. I myself got my own people to land it in an hour on a very hot afternoon, and all was over before G. rose from his afternoon siesta. G. was very displeased, the L.P. were very pleased, and I got into a muck-sweat. G. never repeated the experiment.

36. During the 1923 strike did a Ceylonese Knight (a 'Black Knight' according to Goonesinha) supply labour so that Government could break the strike?

Answer:

No. I was, as Landing Surveyor, in charge of the wharves, under F. Bowes, the Principle Collector. No outside labour was brought in, except Prison labour, who were under my daily personal control. Their only job was to land or ship the mails, foodstuffs and other perishables. The strike was only ended by a display of force by the Governor (Manning) the day before I was due to sail on Home leave!

37. Do you know if the Senanayakes and other leaders like H.L. de Mel and Dr. W.A. de Silva opposed Goonesinha in 1923? Did the leading politicians resent or fear Goonesinha's activities in the1920's and early 30's? If so, have you any idea why?

Answer:

I know nothing of this, and doubt whether G. inspired much fear in anyone's breast. At the most, I would say that G's activities (not unjustified in my opinion) were in the long view merely a passing nuisance.

38. Did Goonesinha ever employ the racial or communal issue during any of the strikes he led?

Answer:

None whatever to my knowledge.

39(a). Can you recall the great tramway strike of 1929 when other labour forces also struck work one day in sympathy and the mob got out of hand and attacked Maradana Police Station?

(b) Do you know if Police brutality and roughness had anything to do in turning a no doubt rough and ready strike into a near-riot?

(c) Do you happen to know whether Boustead Bros. were diehards when it came to trade union activity and pretty mean in their wage scales?

Answer:

(a) Yes.

(b) I am not sure. But (1) there was the usual tendency in the half-baked news reporter to exaggerate Police brutality. (2) withholding force at a critical stage might well have been an error; who can say what worse things might have happened but for its use? cf. Kandy riots. I do not recall that the Police officers let their men get out of control.

(c) I do not know about B. in particular, but have little doubt that they were no more enlightened employers than any other. They were certainly not over-generous to their European staff financially, and nepotism played a part.

40. During the interview you were of the opinion that only workers in a particular trade should have been allowed to fill the official seats in that particular trade-union. But surely few workers were qualified for such leadership (and one could not wait for them to qualify, educationally or socially)? Could it not be said that lawyers and other middle-class filled an existing vacuum?

Answer:

I would qualify my previous statement in this way - by all means have aneducated and respectable Chairman (such as Pieter Keuneman, if he were not nearly-insane) and ditto Secretary. But no more. As it was, there was a host of parasitic, out-of-work Chandiyas battening on these Unions, of which there are about 20 in the Harbour alone. The Chairman etc. were often people who commanded no respect, and as I found, were in Jaffna, visiting a sick aunt, at the appearance of trouble. They religiously avoided personal contact, and my invitations to come and see me and have a talk on common problems were invariably ignored, except once by Goonesinha. Of course,

there is no need to look too high, as when S.W.R.D.B. was the Patron of a Galle Union which under his patronage were out on strike (for months, if I remember).

Addenda : I would like to expand this by citing a case. In Rangoon, when Unions were only beginning to be mentioned, I wondered whether we could forestall the trouble I had seen in Colombo. So I decided on forming a Union of our own. In brief:-

1. Each Department - clerical, marine, engineering workshops, traffic and so on would form a branch, each electing its own Chairman, Committee, etc.
2. Two or three of these office bearers would form a central Committee.
3. Claims would be considered either by Branch or Central Committee, to be put before myself for adjudication.
4. If the claim concerned the Branch only, they could put it up direct to me. If of a nature affecting the whole, it was[sic] come up only via the Central Committee who would put it up (or turn it down if they regarded it as unjustified).
5. Office-bearers to receive no pay.
6. Informality was the idea. No formal agenda, minutes etc. and the least possible use of paper.
7. A meeting room, stationery and other minor expenditure to be supplied by me.
8. No subscriptions, as no expenses.
9. Impossible to suppose that even daily-paid workers could not normally find a suitable Chairman - If they did, they could choose someone from, say, the clerical Branch.

This scheme was circulated for comments. None came in. No Branch was even formed and the scheme never came into operation.

Conclusions : Service content with conditions and with existing procedure, i.e. direct access to me at all times; outside (usually politicians')claims for a T.U. met by pointing to the existence of one already. If one were formed, as I had hoped, it would(?) be run on proper lines and free from parasites with an eye on profits.

41. You referred to a strike in the harbour in which the workers did not know what they were striking about and when the trade-unions officials avoided you. Presumably this was in the 1940's? When exactly. Answer: About 1943.

42. You also mentioned coming across an old map which showed signs of a village and some land settlement at a spot which was a plantation in your time. I gathered that it was in 'wild area'. Presumably it was Morawaka Korala or Sabaragamuwa?

Answer:

It was in the wilds of north Morawaka. I think the name of the village was Siyambalangoda - not far from Urubokke, and close to the wilds of the neighbouring Ratnapura district.

43. In Mr. Frank Leach's opinion one of the reasons for Secretariat policy in restricting chena licenses in the Dry Zone was the belief that it would cause the Dry Zone to turn into a dust-bowl as had happened in some spots in some other countries. Did they have such an idea (in which case it would have been a layman's unqualified acceptance of semi-scientific opinion on the subject besides being an assumption that the climate in the Dry Zone was similar to those areas which had become dust-bowls)? Would you also comment on this idea: if it prevailed it was a reason which was not so much a Government consideration (as the other reason of protecting Crown forest) but one concerning the interests of Ceylon?

Answer:

1. I cannot guess what was in the mind of Government but cannot believe in the dust-bowl theory.
2. It is an accepted fact that the lack of rain is caused by the removal of trees from hill-tops, for which reason, it is known, that Government long ago prohibited the further sales of Crown land above a certain height.
3. Chenas were never found far away from the village.
4. Chenas do not spread of themselves, and are limited naturally by the fact that they are worked over again and again in a 5-7 year cycle.
5. The theory suggests the 'thought' of the whole of the Adam's Peak range bare of jungle.
6. On an ordinary wall map of Ceylon, chenas in the aggregate would hardly show at all.
7. Nobody would want more chena than for his personal needs. High timber would be too much for the villagers' tools or capacity. The low scrub would, lying fallow for 6/7 of its time, speedily re-grow and recover its moisture holding capacity.

8. Even the wildest theory would not suggest limiting chenas, which was done, for the whole Dry Zone (v. 2 and 3) when purely local control served its purpose.
9. If it was really behind Government policy, why on earth did Government conceal this important factor, which never appeared in any document I ever saw. In fact, I never heard it mentioned, e.g. by the Forest or Agriculture people, or anyone else until now.

I don't know what to think. The multiplicity of reasons or excuses seems in itself that there is no good reason beyond an arm-chair theory of the so-called scientists. A wasteful (of what?) form of cultivation? In 1910 the blood-heating properties of kurakkan: in 1965 the danger of dust-bowls, like those vast deserts left by the veddahs? The destruction of valuable timber? Quot homines?

When Government finds it possible (Gal Oya?) to bring the necessary water, it jumps with avidity, rightly, at the chance of clearing jungle by square mile after mile. Asweddumysing[sic] the land and financing large schemes of re-settlement, with all the concomitant costs of eradicating malaria, building schools and hospitals, re-settlement grants and so on, where go all these chena theories? Mostly into the waste-paper basket, where most of them seem to belong.

44. I quote some views presented by 'S.D.D.' in the Preface to Woolf's Diaries for your comments:

a. 'Being quite certain within themselves of what was required for the country, they [C.C.S.] were intolerant of other views. The views of the people who were ruled did not matter much .... The bureaucracy was strangely unsympathetic of local political aspirations.'

Answer:

We may have seemed intolerant - I do not know. But I do know that the views of the people who were ruled mattered a great deal to all of us with negligible exceptions - they were part of our lives, to the virtual exclusion of political aspirations. I have documentary evidence that many, including myself, foresaw self-government, and then independence, at least in the mid-twenties: indeed, this was one of my reasons for being called to the Bar in 1925-6. The future stared one in the face: the question of sympathy or non-sympathy with national aspirations did not arise, in my mind at least. They were accepted as a necessary step in political evolution?

44(b) '[The basic aims of the British Government and the C.C.S. were "good government under a rule of law" and the "economic advancement" of the people] - These ideals soon became the mission, the "white man's burden," for the British bureaucracy.' I suspect that he is guilty of some wishful thinking on behalf of the C.C.S. in the last phrase. I suspect that very few Civil Servants thought in such visionary or high-falluting terms (and thank God!). To most it was just another job which they conscientiously undertook. Would you agree? Did you - and others - have a sense of mission as attributed to the C.C.S. by Saparamadu?

Answer:

It happened that this question was fully pursued by Robert Heussler. I searched my mind, but could remember never having any sense of dedication or mission. One never thought that one was training others who would succeed one: later, wondering whether I was alone in this dereliction, I consulted many of my contemporaries, and received the unanimous reply that they also had no such sense - they all said that they merely got on with the job, with no time for metaphysical investigations into their state of mind. So I feel certain that the second half of your question is perfectly correct.

44(c) 'This elaborate training, however, tended to cast persons into a mould. By the time a recruit had gone through his training and spent several years in the "Service" his imagination was dead and he had learnt that fire and zeal had to be toned down if he was to be a success .... The result ... a good deal of uniformity and a lack of individuality .... Of course the service consisted of several hundred individuals spread over 150 years and no general judgement could be made to cover all.'

On his fatal error in attributing so much to his belief in 'the intensive training' received by a C.C.S. man, little need be said - in our discussions and in what you have written it is agreed that the training was very limited, etc., etc. What I want to draw attention to here is his point that fire and zeal were lacking and that there was too much uniformity.

I believe you disagree. Even with his qualification at the end I agree that it is far too sweeping and that it is

overdrawn, but I believe there is something in it.

In favour of his point, (i) I would refer to the criticism that both of us and Mr. Newnham agreed on: namely, the quieta non movere at the top which tended to work its way downwards. Those seeking promotion certainly would have seen to it that they did not trouble Government with troublesome proposals (ii) an admission by a restless sort like G.L.D. Davidson that his critical enthusiasm soon diminished in the face of obstructionism from the Centre etc. (iii) that a 'gadfly' like Brayne was kept in the wilderness for so long (Is this correct?) (iv)preference for Wodeman over the restless and active Mr. Newnham - who was much too active for the Chief Secretary's liking (v) in the political sphere it might be argued that the C.C.S. moved too slowly - giving 'too little, too late' - and in this sense showed a lack of imagination (but this is a debatable point).

Against his views: (i) the assumption that all sought 'success' - presumably promotion; several examples against this; Messrs. Campbell and Newnham to begin with - perhaps you can cite others. Indeed some conceived of 'success' as doing great things in the field and this provided them with fire and zeal. (ii) the many examples of imaginative and zealous officers: Campbell, Newnham, Leach, A.N. Strong, Woolf, Brayne, Worsley(?) Codrington, Fraser, Cumberland(?), F.C. Fisher, H.H. Cameron(?), Freeman, etc. Nevertheless these might be covered by his qualification and from what Mr. Newnham said I should think conformists preponderated; (iii) that 'gadfly' Brayne became Controller of Revenue; thus Brayne's career contradicts as well as supports S.D.S.

Even if conformists preponderated I think S.D.S. is going pretty far in claiming that they were 'cast in a mould.' What is more his point is based on the assumption that every C.C. Servant was given an 'elaborate training.' K.O. this foundation and how does he prove his point?

Answer:

Uniformity was the last quality we possessed, and we were far from being cast in the same mould.

Again I disagree - it seemed to me that, so far from losing fire and zeal, age and experience tended to make many all the bolder and free from the natural diffidence of the junior man. There were obvious exceptions, and I agree with some of the

points raised on pages [20-21] of your notes.
(i) This was certainly true at the very top, but how far down it went is hard to estimate. For example, if a zealous officer had what he thought a good scheme, he would put it up - I do not think we were a race of promotion-hunters. Then there was this consideration - if he put up nothing much except what he had to, would he be marked down as indifferent and lacking in initiative?
(ii) We all had some sort of obstruction from the top. The fact that Davidson lost heart and some others did not merely shows that all were not cast in the same mould.
(iii) Brayne may have shown signs of the wild-cat, but you could hardly say he had lost zeal. Was he kept in the wilderness? On the contrary, he had the usual career of D.J., A.G.A. etc. (A.G.A. after 5 years service, G.A. at the age of 43) and finished as Controller of Revenue, the senior post after the Chief Secretary.
(iv) Wodeman versus Newnham. Personal; certainly not lack of zeal: nor putting up troublesome questions. For Chief Secretary read 'Stubbs'.
(v) Did the 'rate of progress' have any possible political effect? I do not see how it could.

For the rest, I seem to have already answered your main question.

The names you recall are mostly of those who merited but did not receive promotion (i.e. elsewhere). None of us seemed to know on what basis promotion arrived. At one time (late 20's) we actually raised the question with Government - could we assume that a term of service in the Secretariat was a sine qua non? (at the time, this seemed to be the case) while we all knew of far superior officers who were more highly deserving. Of course, we got no answer.

Reid and de Glanville were names worthy of being added to your list. Neither served in the C.S.O.

On the other hand, I once had to write an annual 'Confidential Report' on a junior. I said, in effect, 'excellent in the field - wonderful knack of gaining confidence of villagers, etc. but hopeless on paper. For God's sake keep him out of an Office Chair; can't even write decent English.' As this might be thought to contain a certain criticism, I showed this to the officer concerned, wondering how he would take it - he would have every opportunity to

contest anything he did not like, and I was rather afraid. To my surprise, he was delighted, and thanked me handsomely. Within a few years, he was promoted as Chief Secretary in another Colony!

In the final resort, the decision lay with the Secretary of State, who would naturally be influenced by what the Governor gave as his own summing-up of the annual confidential reports. E.g. he could hot up or tone them down according to his own idiosyncrasy. The Secretary of State would naturally be influenced mainly by what Governors said. In the Colonial Office at home, the system, I know, was as good as it could be. When the post, say, of Chief Secretary, Hongkong became vacant, the scheme went into action. An ad hoc Committee would be set up, composed of the Heads or representatives of each Department, i.e. Far East, Meditteranean, East, West, Central Africa and so on. Each member would bring his files and put forward one or more names from among his own Colonies and of course press their claims. All members would see all the confidential reports, going back for years, from all Colonies, and finally agree on one 'candidate.' No officer from any Department served more than once - in fact, the member to attend was not notified until the morning of the meeting. It was never suggested, nor would one ever have supposed, that there was any risk of favouritism or nepotism, but the C.O., as you see, went out of its way to
(A) kill any criticism on that score. So, in the event, the names put up would largely depend on the advice of the Governor and Chief Secretary. (I don't think these recommendations come within the purview of the Public Service Commission.) So there was the possibility at least that a local view might be taken of a C.S.O. man who was in constant contact, regardless of the claims of a G.A. who had seldom even met the Governor. The men concerned would of course be too senior to be reported upon at all, so the latest report on him might be 5 years old.

All this of course is guess-work, i.e. from (A) downwards.

Incidentally, it was said that clerks sometimes asked not to be transferred to H.R. Freeman, as blocking promotion. Reason: - all Freeman's geese were swans. Everyone in his Kachcheri was the best clerk he ever had. So all praise was discounted to some extent. I was told this when I happened to be talking in the Secretariat about one of my own 'geeses' or 'swans'.

P.S. By now, you must have discarded any idea that we were all cast in the same mould?!

X. At the end of our interview I recall that you asked me whether I disagreed with you on any points. I was a bit too full of the interview to provide a proper answer. I can now detail a few points for your comments.

I have serious doubts whether the 'Sinhalese conspiracy' theory of Government was 'an after thought.' Subsequent to the interview I have read J.G. Fraser's official account (written in 1916) of his actions during the riots; while describing his day to day activities in minute detail he states that on San Sebastian hill on June 1st he came to the conclusion that the riots were an organised outbreak. As he was G.A., Western Province it would be a reasonable conclusion that his views influenced Government - particularly a military Government which knew little about the Island.

Answer:

I had remarked on the lack of evidence of advance organisation, and am not prepared to alter my opinion on the evidence of a sudden thought in the mind of one individual some days after the outbreak.

The obvious signs of preparation were absent - i.e. one would expect that at least there would have been a 'zero' hour for a combined operation. In fact, had the minor row in Castle Street, Kandy been snuffed out, it is generally believed that the trouble would not have spread as it did. Signs of organisation might have been seen, e.g. in Colombo, in the sense that gangs might have been formed to act on a kind of programme such as 'Now let us move into Borella.' That would not necessarily affect the question of the initial outbreak.

There was no military Government. The civil Government never ceased to function, and the military were merely ad hoc executives. I do not suppose that Government would regard their opinion as carrying any weight, or indeed that they would venture to offer one.

Anyhow, Jeffries makes it pretty clear that the Secretary of State was not disposed to accept the conspiracy theory.

Y. I attach great weight to your view that non-Europeans were not excluded from the G.A'ships as a result of deliberate policy but because, in the first decades of the twentieth century, few were senior enough and few of the sort considered suitable G.A's; but, on the whole, I think you are wrong. (I intend undertaking a detailed study on this point, hence my tentative

verdict). Let's take some personnel: P. Arunachalam was given the post of Registrar-General which he considered 'obscure' and certainly did not prefer to a G.A'ship; C.L. Wickremasinghe joined in 1909 but was not made an A.G.A. till 1923; I do not know whether you would agree with my belief that both of them would have been good revenue administrators. Paul Peiris is another possible case. My father felt that he would be an ideal G.A. though convinced that he gave biased judicial decisions - a seemingly contradictory view. What is more I would cite the remark of a Colonial Secretary with regard to the Ceylonese Civil Servants; 'Oh, they drift about from court to court.' And, I ask, in heaven's name, who posted them! I should add that my father, Woolf and Davidson felt it was a definite policy (and so did the Ceylonese Civil Servants).

Answer:

I certainly agree with your belief regarding the fitness of those whom you mention. It is certainly true that from the C.L.W. era (1923) Government's attitude was nothing like what it was in the 'Pongo' Arunachalam days. But the question is really whether there was a definite policy of virtual exclusion.

Thinking it over again, perhaps I took 'policy' in too narrow a sense. E.g. the Governor consults the Ex. Co. and after argument pro and con, decides No, let it be understood that our policy in the matter should be such and such. On the other hand, the practice might, almost unconsciously(?) become so free from exception as to suggest a deliberate policy. To illustrate:-

'In the 80's, Government's policy was one of laissez faire.' or

'Recently the Minister's policy seems to be one of annoying the motorist.'

But I am beginning to quibble?

I certainly do not feel I am on strong enough ground to oppose any further the view of such as your Father, with his 'massive mental equipment,' as I once heard it described by a colleague.

Z. I believe you have doubts about Stace's criticisms re 'arrogance' though agreeing that there were some incidents of slights etc. It is of some relevance that Messrs. Newnham, Woolf and Davidson agree (and I think Leach and Gimson in qualified ways). F. Price for instance used to say that 'the natives must be kept in their place.' I can label others: Forrest, Lushington,

Bowes. I think it got less pronounced as time went on. I also think that it was more exceptional than otherwise as far as Civil Servants were concerned but the point is that these exceptions get repeatedly quoted, stories spread and popular opinion makes it the rule (besides imagining slights where there were none).

Answer:

I do not dispute the examples you quote, that is, 3 or 4 taken from over 100, spread over 60 years. There must obviously have been others, but would it be easy to increase their number materially? In my time at least Price's concept would have been repudiated, I think, by the Service generally.

I think you have summed it all up very correctly, viz.

1. it was exceptional in the C.C.S.
2. exceptions are dwelt upon and given a disproportionate importance.
3. Slights, unintended, are often imagined.

I would stress No.3; it was too common. I would not care to say how often my best intentions were distorted in this manner, and I found it very distressing to be thus misunderstood.

W. I would prefer a dictatorship in Ceylon but since it was obviously impractical for you to hand over Ceylon to one (he would have been labelled a stooge), I can see no alternative to democracy. On no account would I favour an oligarchy whether it was composed of my Varsity friends or business men in alliance with landlords. Limited voting would tend to set up an oligarchy. An electoral college? A possibility, but I have my doubts - pretty inefficient and leading to something like the present day Ceylonese parliamentary chaos or the pre-de Gaulle French conditions; i.e. to warring factions. It all boils down to the men at the helm.

Answer:

I cannot profess to suggest a suitable alternative (can anyone?) but when the democracy, under the system, turn, within 3 or 4 years, into an oligarchy and then into an autocracy with most of the Opposition in gaol, and parading under the euphemism of a 'one-party Government,' there are surely some grounds for feeling that the Westminster model has achieved very doubtful success, to put it mildly.

This seems to boil down to your concluding remark; the men required have too seldom been found, as was visualised from the start by the opponents of 'too speedy' independence.

But this only puts the dilemma one stage further back. In the ultimate resort, the only alternative would seem to have been government by force, which is impossible. As the last Governor of the Gold Coast reported to the Secretary of State, 'In default of the adoption of my proposals, I shall have to insist on two full strong battalions of British infantry to be permanently stationed in this country.'

N.B. It is this Governor who so supported the aim of independence, and he was not alone in this. (Contrary to the views of some people who supposed that the local Governor was inclined to pay only lip-service to the express policy of H.M.G.)

Additional Notes by Mr. A.N. Strong, January 1966.

Two notes on (i) help from above
(ii) small example of practical effect of constitution (1922).

(i) Flood Scheme (Matara 1925-7)

The Nilganga was about 100-150 feet wide in its middle reaches, and in the S.W. Monsoon was always liable to overflow its banks. About 20 miles from the estuary, it invariably did, flooding thousands of acres of very fertile paddy fields and thereby doing much damage. The Irrigation Department knew this, but were too busy to attend to 1/1000th of such local problems.

I was in camp near where the breach used to begin, and one evening I went for a stroll after work was over, crossed the river by a wooden bridge, and began to walk along a village path which ran parallel with the river. I was at once joined by every villager who could walk, about 200 or more, mostly all talking at the same time.

At one spot, I noticed what looked like a small embankment, about 2 to 3 feet high, about 25 yards long. After a while, I saw a similar feature, and when I had come across a few more, it seemed clear that these were not accidental, but part of a former continuous bund. So I asked the Headman, who was beside me, what he knew of it. He said, yes, it had once been a continuous embankment, raised as an anti-flood barrier by a Lord Elphinstone about 100 years back, according to what the old man's father had told him.

This was most interesting, and I wondered whether, if the bund once served its purpose, it might not do so again. There were at least 4 miles of river to be protected, but I knew from having driven a car along the 'road' we were now on, that there were stretches where this road was well above flood level.

So I pursued my enquiries and enlisted a small staff of young children at about 50 cents per month as 'gauge readers', marking on trees where the highest floods had reached. I then received the greatest help from an unexpected source, namely, a villager who had 'resigned' (been dismissed) from the Irrigation Department and had carried with him an old dumpy level. I most willingly enlisted his (voluntary) services, and in a few weeks, he had marked out the stretches in between the patches of comparatively high land. To my delight, I found that of the 3 or 4 miles, there was in the aggregate a bare half mile of bund required, varying in height from only a foot or two to 3 or 4 at the most, and then mostly in short stretches up to say 20 yards.

I had of course no funds whatever, and no prospect of obtaining any from Government, (1) because such a scheme would have been referred to the Irrigation people and filed for another 100 years, and (2) my wild-cat amateur idea would have been rejected out of hand. So I fell back on the age-old principle, under which the cultivators were responsible for maintaining field channels, and if channels, why not other forms of irrigation? The only snag was whether I could legally compel them. So I tried the voluntary method, and summoned a meeting on the spot. It was attended by over 100 tenants, for there were many square miles of fields which would benefit.

By this time, everyone knew what I wasafter, and when I had briefly explained my proposals, there was unanimous and vociferous applause. In brief, each tenant affected, working under his own village Headman, would bring along his mamoty and undertake a certain length of bund in proportion to the acreage benefited. And no time like the present, and I left everything in the charge of my 'Resident Engineer,' who laid everything out with string. I need hardly say that I visited the work almost every day, and it was completed within a week or two. These inspections were very necessary, as there was a natural tendency to economise, and raise something like this ~~~ instead of ——————— with a wider base, and to scamp the revetment of turves[?] on the slope nearest the river. I could hardly bear to await the next floods, and when they came, I was overjoyed to find that the work was 100% effective.

Meanwhile, some cultivators a few miles down river came to me and said they had a similar problem - why should I leave them out? Another meeting, and work began at once. It was a smaller job than the first, and proved equally effective.

Over the next year or so, the river was several times in flood but all the works stood up to it. Incidentally the pestiferous paddy fly, said to be due to excessive water at the wrong time, cleared up.

I had arranged for regular inspections in order to deal promptly with minor damage, such as might be caused by cattle, before it grew into a major disaster. Here I was on a better wicket, for, whatever its origin, it was now a 'Village Work,' and maintenance was compulsory. So I felt happy when I later went on Home leave.

But tragedy followed.

A year or so after my return, I happened to meet my successor, and naturally asked him about these flood schemes. As he is name less,[1] I may say that I was not surprised to hear

1. I think it was M.K.T. Sandys.

that the bund had been practically washed away through neglect. He was completely unpractical, and moreover 'soft,' admirable in its place, but fatal when the situation called, in the peoples' own interests, for firmness. There is such a thing as 'misplaced leniency,' to be as kind as I can. In this case, the cultivators, who like the Sinhalese in general, are among the quickest and most accurate judges of character, seized on this feature at once, and took early steps to get the A.G.A. to relieve them of the simple task of keeping the bund in repair. They pleaded this and that excuse, all of which I could have written myself as they were stereotyped for such occasions. He gave way, and had sufficient money in the Irrigation Fine Fund - kept up by the Gansabhawa fines and used for minor jobs - to do it once - once only. For the money being exhausted, he could not keep it up, nor by that time fall back on the cultivators, even if he felt like it; they had lost interest.

A typical example of the view that the best of schemes will perish with the removal of encouragement and supervision from above.

Lest I seem to be merely destructive, I might add that the alternative was quite simple. One had merely to say:

> You built this river defence. You above all people, know that it required normal maintenance, and you tacitly agreed to supply it. You have so far supplied it, and you are under a legal obligation to continue to do so. I am not going to stand by and watch you wreck the scheme. So any one of you who fails to help will be prosecuted in the Gansabhawa, and will inevitably be fined - with this money I will have the work done. You know that one hour's work twice a year will be quite enough. If, to escape this tiny task, you prefer to pay a fine of 10 rupees, carry on - I do not mind either way.

(This Fund was useful, when something gave way from causes other than neglect and proved beyond the power of human endeavour, e.g. say, a concrete revetment. It was rather ironical, I often reflected, that on the one hand, the Fund was usually bankrupt, while on the other, this was due to the fact that in general the cultivator honestly carried out his tasks, and the need for prosecution was extremely rare.)

I must have mentioned this scheme of course, in my daily Diary, which went up to the C.S.O. every month. So Government knew what was going. But they were silent neither help nor opposition, neither praise nor blame. This suited me - I was terrified lest they took the matter out of my hands and told me to hand it over to the Irrigation Department.

(ii) Rajakariya[1]

Irrigation, village. By law, cultivators were compelled, in person or by proxy, to keep their field channels in proper repair. On default, they were prosecuted before the Gansabhawa, and so indirectly paid to have the work done for them. (It was very unusual to have to prosecute.)

In one case, where the village tribunal sat only a few miles from my H.Q., some 20 cultivators failed to attend to some gap in the bund, and were run in. Normally, I should never have heard of such a minor routine matter. Here, however, the people decided to follow the doctrine preached by my local M.P. - 'Come to me, not the A.G.A., when in difficulties.' This was foolish of them, but he was more foolish in promising them that he would have the prosecution withdrawn. When he approached me I turned him away, pointing out that this was a try-on, and if it succeeded, then goodbye to the Ordinance, and Govt. would have an annual bill of millions for the labour and the staff for many thousands of village works all over the country.

By this time, this futile promise was public property, and the trial had been fixed for only a few days ahead. About an hour or two before the Court would be sitting, I received a letter from Fletcher ordering me to withdraw the cases. Another victim on the political altar. I was really enraged. But I thought that this back-door treatment justified retaliation in kind. So I sent for my trusted Kachcheri Mudaliyar, who like all the Headmen, was very much on my side in this M.P. versus A.G.A. fight.

I told him - nothing on paper. Strictly confidential. Take your car to ——— and on the way casually call in at the Court-house, have a chat with the President, and mention, in passing, that you happen to know that the A.G.A. does not wish to have these men harshly dealt with, and merely to establish the principle would be quite satisfied if they would plead guilty and paid a fine of 5 cents each.

He was back within the hour, with the glad news that the plan had come off.

Next day, I went into action. The 'gap' was big enough to hold an omnibus and was clearly beyond the village capacity - a ton of concrete was the only remedy. I made a note to tick somebody off for not reporting this to me; I was in complete sympathy with people who had to slave twice a year on earthwork which was rapidly

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1. This incident was related to me over lunch during my interview with Mr. Strong and is therefore also found - in less detail - under my notes on 'Unrecorded Information.'

ARTHUR NESBITT STRONG, O.B.E.

b. 19 February 1890.
M.A. Edinburgh.
C.C.S. 1913-35, 1942-45.

13 Dec.	1913	apptd. to C.C.S.
14 Jan.	1914	O.A., Central Province.
1 June	1914	also Addnl. P.M., Kandy.
16 Nov.	1914	Acting O.A., Ratnapura.
10 Dec.	1914	Addnl. P.M., Ratnapura as well.
13 Dec.	1916	P.M., Jaffna.
14 April	1917	on leave.
9 July	1917	on war service.
2 Aug.	1919	Acting A.G.A., Mullaittivu.
3 Nov.	1919	P.M., Kurunegala.
8 Nov.	1920	Landing Surveyor, Colombo.
13 July	1921	also Deputy Food Controller.
21 June	1923	on leave.
18 Feb.	1924	D.J., Nuwara Eliya.
17 April	1925	A.G.A., Matara.
1 Nov.	1927	on leave; temporarily attached to Colonial Office for most of the period.
28 May	1928	Deputy Collector of Customs.
29 May	1932	Acting G.A., Eastern Province.
12 Nov.	1932	Addnl. Excise Commissioner.
(?)	1933	Principal Collector of Customs & Chairman, Colombo Port Commission.
	1935 -42	Left C.C.S. to take up job in charge of the Port of Rangoon.
	1942 -45	Chairman, Colombo Port Commission on contract basis.
	NB.	I think he was also Private Secretary to Sir Hugh Clifford (Governor) for a little while; i.e. early 1927(?) or 1926-27.

Comments on Interview with Mr. A.N. Strong, 15 December 1965.

Mr. Strong had received a summarised list of my interests in headline-form and had taken the trouble to jot some notes: at times his comments were partially based on these notes. Questions pertaining to colonial rule have been one of Mr. Strong's interests during retirement, as his interviews with Robert Heusller and his copious letters to Mr. Newnham, full of Ceylon anecdotes etc., testify. As I expected, therefore, he was very forthcoming and candid. By nature an outspoken man, Mr. Strong took scarcely any notice of the recorder except on some personal issues. I also found him a very friendly man and intensely interested in our discussion.

He was
But He was also convinced that underdeveloped nations like Ceylon were not the lands for democracy; i.e. wholly against 'one man, one vote'. He was, and is, a man with a high sense of honour and a man who set much store by upright, honourable behaviour; I should think he was prone to be rather demanding in the standards of honour demanded from others. He had no noticeable racial prejudice and seemed quite objective and fair on questions on delicate issues of this sort. But he also showed traces of class consciousness: e.g., his views on Armand de Souza and reference to the way in which Sir H. Stanley stooped low. Combined with his outspokenness and his undoubted ability (and I suspect, quick temper), I should think these traits would not have made him all that easy to get on with. I would conjecture that he might have made several enemies and that he would, himself, be a good friend but a dangerous adversary. As far as I was concerned however, I did not find him rigid in his views; but he was quite receptive to other viewpoints.

Mr. Strong clearly was an officer with ability; an initiator; ready to be insubordinate; ready to defy the Government if the ends were good; ready to be out of pocket to help the villager. He had also thought about many of the deeper or ancillary questions which did not strike the eye of the conformists and those content to grapple with day-to-day tasks.

The interview might possibly give the impression that he is conceited; perhaps so; but this sort of impression is difficult to avoid when an able man is subject to such an interview: he can only quote from his experiences and, naturally, recalls the more striking ones.

I would tend to rate his assessment of other individuals quite highly, though one must watch for the possibility of bias against some individuals (for example, regards Stanley and Caldecott). Indeed his opinions on almost all subjects should be given great weight. A valuable interview.

P.T.O.

M.W. Roberts 16.12.65 and 1.1.66

washed away, as had been going on for some years. In front of the whole village I promised to make a good job of it, and went as far as I dared, by adding that it might have been better to appeal to me in the first place. This went home. I did make a proper job of it.

Later, I replied to F's letter, saying sorry too late. All pleaded guilty and were duly fined. Obeyesekera, M.P. was livid with me - the entire story had been related to him.

This case did me a world of good. The pie-crust promise affair quickly spread, and O's campaign came to a quick and nasty end: nobody listened to him after that.

Extracts from a private letter: [A friend of Strong's with an experience-span in Ceylon dating from 1913 - 1966] - A.N. Strong, January 1966(?) [1]

1. Bowes said of Freeman: 'F. was a great gentleman.'
2. He, F., had a long spell in Ceylon and what a man he was!
3. 1915. After the Riots died down, was it safe to hold the Poson in A'pura? Govt. were doubtful and asked F. how many troops he needed to ensure order. F. replied, 'If you send none at all, I will guarantee law and order. If one single soldier is present I will take no responsibility.' No troops. No disorder. F. said he felt the Govt. never forgave him!
4. I always thought that the ordinary villager had a respect for the law and the judges which was genuine and not fear. Not sure about their feelings for the Police. (I am! A.N.S.) Precious little was ever said against a judge. Can recall only one case - on enquiry the P.M. concerned was removed. (I don't recall this. A.N.S.) The respect, in my belief, is still there. (Writer left Ceylon for good only one year ago, A.N.S.)
5. Clifford. Another great man - helped Ceylon's progress much more than many suppose. Many Ceylonese think of him as a die-hard obstructionist - an ignorant error.
   Wrote a State Paper - circa 1925 - on a Land Policy - a pity that politicians ignored it. (I never heard of it - unfortunately, for this was when I was getting on to my 'Landless Peasant' hobby-horse. A.N.S.)
6. Riots. Nothing organised. Acts of suppression brutal??
   Remember: things going badly for Britain
   Gallipoli, with big consequences among Indian muslims.
   Palestine, Mesopot., etc.
   Raider 'Emden' at large, and perhaps one other (there eventually was).
   German influences at work in some areas of the world and so suspected in others.
   Services mutiny of Sikh regiment in S'pore.
   Abortive mutiny of Indian troops in Rangoon, etc.
   The latter two may have preceded or followed our Riots, but the point is that the general atmosphere was so bad that suspicion was justified - and when violence did occur, stern

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1. In sending me these extracts, Mr. Strong commented: 'These were quite spontaneous and not unconnected with your present mission.'

measures were called for. With a supine Govt. very serious trouble could have developed, and in my view, would.

As regards suppression, Govt.'s case was allowed to go by default, thanks to Anderson, and some young men coming out even the 30's seemed to regard with pity, if not horror, anyone who had to do Govt. work in 1915.

Note by A.N. Strong on 6:- I got into trouble with Stanley - he was talking of the 'victims' of 1915. Seeing that we were at cross-purposes, I remarked that he was thinking of leaders like D.S.S. and D.B.J. who had been locked up; I was thinking of some of the atrocities committed by Bud. rioters on Muslim women and children. S. called an A.D.C. and had me removed.

Memo[1] from Mr. A.N. Strong on Personnel in the C.C.S.

16 February 1966.

Confidential

It is curious that one could live for 25 or 30 years in the same country without seeing much of some of one's colleagues, or even meeting them. I do not remember even seeing W.A. Weerakoon or A.P. Boone. Geography and chance had much to do with this, and so one varied between bare acquaintance and intimate friendship.

In some cases, in the absence of personal knowledge, I have relied on a colleagues general repute in the Service; otherwise I have ommitted all mention. In few cases have I been led to say anything derogatory, I hope.

W.L. Murphy. A popular and witty Irishman, of high administrative ability. Retired to S. Rhodesia, where he was now and again pulled out of private life to act as Governor.

C.W. Bickmore. Rowed in the boat which took New College (?1908-9) to Head of the River. Unmarried, was reserved and retiring, and not given to intimacy. Officially very able, and made a name largely in the inhuman Treasury. Said, on good authority, to have retired rather than accept the offer of the Financial Secretaryship (1931 circa).

E.R. Sudbury. Got a bad head-wound in 1914-8 war, and suffered periodically from bad health on this account.

N.J. Luddington. Knew him only in his earliest and his latest days. Meanwhile, in the busiest P/Court of Colombo, G.A. Sab. and elsewhere, Labour Comm^{er} etc. was highly thought of.

N. Izat. Knew (or rather, met) him in England before he came out. I followed one year later. Found a letter awaiting me, asking what god, wishing to destroy me, had first demented me - I should resign at once and sail back home by the first ship. He had a chip on his shoulder, possibly the warning of whatever enforced his premature retirement on medical grounds. Also perhaps for this reason, one heard little of him, & certainly nothing ill.

M.T. Archibald. M.C. Tank Corps. Cambrai, 1917. One of the most likeable personality, & a charming companion. In public, sometimes tried, in vain, to conceal an acute brain under a pose of flippancy. At about 40, was carried off within 24 hours, by acute celebral

1. This memo was in response to my request. I provided a list of some Civil Service personnel.

1750

malaria.

J.D. Brown. Invariably known as PAPAW (Papaiya) from a curiously high forehead. I had very little to do with him personally - officially, the only officer I ever quarrelled with, so the less said the better. Record, I should say, pedestrian.

R.N. Thaine. Served under him on 2 or 3 occasions. If I may break my record, can only say he was the worst I ever came across. Mentally not very well equipped, had the knack of getting the worst out of one. [I was by no means the only sufferer. A friend of mine actually asked to be transferred to some other Dept: unique, I believe.]

T.B. Russell. One of my very best superiors. 'T.B.' being common Kandyan initials, was always affectionately known as 'Tikiri Banda'. As A.G.A. Matara, I could not have received greater sympathy, advice and practical help and guidance from the then G.A. Galle. Was a master of Sinhala, as I found when he visited my District on circuit. Extremely sound in all things & universally liked.

C.E. de Pinto. Got to know him very well when he was P.M. Matara. A local appointee. Most able, and of a nature that demanded one's affection. Excellent on the Bench, but, alas! died young.

N.E. Ernst. O.A., N.W.P. when I was P.M., Kurunegala. A curious character, so reserved as to defy classification. I liked him, and so did we all, but he resisted intimacy. So in his work, in which he seemed neither to put a foot wrong nor to achieve anything outstanding. I heard recently that he had committed suicide, long after his retirement.

L.L. Hunter. My Cadet, for a time, in Ratnapura. A local appointee, a son of the Chief Clerk in the Colombo Kachcheri. For reasons unknown, had an acute inferiority complex, which I, for one, tried all means to eradicate. You know what I mean when I say that friendly gestures or advances seemed to be regarded as condescension. He told me himself, many years later, of a typical incident. He was in camp in the L.S.D. in a remote part on the Sab - S.P. border. One week-end the entire staff had gone off to Colombo, leaving him quite alone. On the Saturday, an aged lady had walked in some 20 miles on official business. He sent her home again and told her to return on the Monday. As it seemed that he could very well have attended to the matter, I asked why he had not done so. He replied

that in the absence of brother-officers, he might later be accused of accepting a bribe.

T.G. Willett. Very able, very likeable, and bone-idle. The rule, not often applied, was that failure to pass the higher (Second) C.C.S. exam in language, law, etc. within 6 years of appointment entailed stagnation of salary and promotion until it was passed. I see that under this rule, Tom W. took 14 years at least (my records fall short) and lost nearly 40 places in the seniority list. His desk was habitually covered with unopened letters, official and private. Leading case: - living in a Colombo hotel suddenly had his credit stopped for failing to pay his bill for some 6 months. Astonished, because he had regularly paid by cheque. Reason: - amid the heap of unopened letters there were found: - reminders and threats from the hotel, dishonoured cheques returned by the bank, and above all a months-old letter from the Treasury saying that his salary would cease to be paid in future except on presentation of numerous outstanding receipts. Finally, when he must have been well over 40, met and married a charming girl, who took him in hand. Her first move was to persuade Govt. to post him to a semi-sinecure in Point Pedro. She put his nose to the grindstone, and he passed everything in 6 months, and thereafter took his proper place in society. A model worker and a model husband. He died before his time.[1]

L.W.C. Schrader. Succeeded Tikiri Banda as my G.A. in Galle. Was very good to me, and I liked him both privately and officially. Was rather fussy over trifles, but essentially sound. E.g. He had to examine me for my final (Class II) Sinhalese exam. He had an excellent command of the language and put me through a long and stiff test. On leaving, I asked whether I had passed. He said, very formally, "I cannot discuss the question. I shall be reporting in due course to Govt. I hope to see you tonight when you are dining with me". When I arrived, he said, 'Congratulations. I can now tell you informally that you passed very well". This illustrates his strict sense of duty and propriety.

E.H. Davies. A Welshman whose fine voice was in great demand at social parties. As Sec. for some years, of the Port Commission, spent most of his leisure on the reformation of the Office, re-organising the filing system, effecting improvements generally

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1. Mr. Strong's footnote: I see I am often using the word "able". This is meant as notably well-equipped, not that others were lacking in ability.

and compiling a manual of office procedure. As this took place in between my 2 spells there, I was in the best position to estimate the extreme value of this re-organisation. Succeeded me as Chairman at the end of the war, having latterly been my Deputy. Full of initiative and utterly reliable.

C.E. Jones. A curious mixture. Had what I call a "Cockney" quick-wittedness, but apt to be too spontaneous and jumped to conclusions, sometimes bordering on the superficial. Was my Cadet in Sab. and my Deputy as P.C.[Principal Collector] Customs. Created a stir in 1915 riots when, with only a few months' service, he decided that a censorship was necessary, without my knowledge. Took up his position in the P.O.[Post Office] and censured all letters in and out. This of course was entirely illegal, and Govt. threw several fits when the matter came to light. Finished up in the Treasury, where, temporarily acting as Fin. Sec. he failed to please the Governor. Carried off by cancer a few years after retiring.

Edmond Rodrigo. I came across him very infrequently but what I know of him confirmed his general reputation as an sound and able administrator - had much service in the Excise Dept. and Treasury before settling down as G.A. in and after his 43rd year. Was popular and got on well with all.

T.A. Hodson. Full of energy and initiative, sometimes excitably so. I knew and liked him personally, but had little to do with him officially. Finished up as G.A. Kandy, and died, a cripple, a year or two ago. Beneath his buoyancy, I never heard that he was in any way unsound, but perhaps his reputation as a young officer clung to him unfairly. e.g. as a P.M. he got into hot water for slapping the face of a proctor who had annoyed him in Court.

W.E. Wait. An expert ornothologist, whose book on Ceylon birds remains a masterpiece. I served under him as Deputy C. of Customs. Apart from a year as D.C.C. some 10 or 12 years before he had no great knowledge of customs work, so left a good deal to me, which suited me, and our time together was most pleasant. Apt to be unduly diffident in exercising his full powers, but always open to reasonable persuasion. E.g. Stanley (Gov.) once wrote complaining of the conduct of a certain Customs officer. Within the hour, I discovered that the latter had acted, with due politeness, strictly in accordance with my instructions. I so reported to the P.C.C. [Principal Collector of Customs] who ordered me to

reply to H.E. to the effect that the officer concerned had been "suitably dealt with". I protested at once against the implication that he had been in some way reprimanded: on the contrary. So I said that I would rather the P.C.C. wrote, as I would not do so. This led to much hesitation. Finally he said I could write as I wished. So I told the Gov. that he was misinformed, my officer was in no way culpable and would in fact have been on the mat if he had not acted as he did. There the matter ended. The officer finally rose to high office, with a stainless record.

Furse Roberts. A remarkable record. Was a junior clerk in the U.K. Civil Service from age of 16 to 24. Leaving school so young, and with no University, he nevertheless worked in his spare time and passed an exam, normally taken only after 4 years at a Univ. and 2 more in postgraduate study, all after the age of 18. Needless to say, he was fully equipped for any post to which his service assigned him. He was a very quick worker, and was said to be too quick sometimes, e.g. in taking short cuts when on the Bench. My own impression was that there may have been less than appeared in such a criticism, and that his quick brain worked faster than his pen. Hence, possibly, the omission of certain logical steps with argument could be mistaken for deciding on intuition (which does not fit in as far as I am concerned). I believe he was a success in certain esoteric (extra cadre) jobs such as Tea Comm^{er}, Controller of Estate Supplies, etc. where he had to create an organisation without the help of precedents.

As you know, these remarks were written in a hurry, and are therefore perhaps too superficial. All I can say is that this is how the various men appear to me in retrospect.

Additional Information from Mr. A.N. Strong pertaining to past queries, 25 May 1966.

(i) It is true that Elphinstone slavishly collaborated with Fletcher in the sacrifice of the C.C.S. on the political altar. Authority - personal experience of myself and others. Specifically, a confession of E. in June 1927, who in Q.H. said to Worsley and me (we had both complained to him on this score) "You may feel you are being let down, but you don't appreciate how this helps in gaining the favour of the politicians" - or words to that precise effect.

(ii) Turner did an excellent job over Organisation and Method - under his guidance I saved several thousand a year by an investigation into H.M. Customs (1930 app.). Woods of course backed him, but finally failed him unaccountably by refusing to accept Turner's proposals when the Treasury itself came under review. This led to Turner's resignation, as Stanley backed W.[Woods] without hesitation and out of hand.

(iii) The Officers of State leaned over backwards in trying to keep out of the limelight, but their very presence was a constant source of annoyance to the Leg. Co.[Legislative Council] who openly called them "the three Govt. watch-dogs"; "spies" - perhaps also they seemed living relics of a despicable "Colonial" past. The 3 did little or no good, as their advice was rarely requested or accepted. I think there was no trace of friction or ill effects on Govt. administration. The value of their appointment seemed questionable.

(iv) Headmen had no say in elections - certainly not in the selection of sites for polling booths. All such matters were in the hands of election officers like myself and colleagues from the Public Service. It would be wrong to exaggerate Headmen's influence (or that of V.I.P's) on voting. Block votes were dictated almost purely by questions of race, religion or caste. I could quote plenty of examples.

(v) For appointments, it was open to any member of the public to apply when a vacancy occurred (as Headmen). This was the first and invariable step. The G.A. did not draw up a list and had nothing to go on except the list of applicants, from whom he tried to select purely on merit. Of course, caste entered in; a Karawa would never seek selection for a Goyigama village, and so on: it would never work anyhow. In one of my villages 2 castes of approx. equal size lived peacably together - I found the only solution to be 2 Vidanes.

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Extract from letter, A.N. Strong - M.W. Roberts, 7 June 1966.

.... Incidentally, while looking for something else, I stumbled across some cuttings from Hansard (1942) in which the P.M. (D.S.S., that good man) gave me a handsome meed of praise for (i) the landless peasant affair and (ii) refusing to consider the sale of a large acreage applied for by a well-to-do (Sinhalese) land-owner and earmarked it for village settlement! I do not remember doing this! He was in fact a very decent man, a good landlord and public spirited, whom in ordinary circumstances I would have wished to oblige!

Mr. A.N. Strong's Answers on Further Questions( ) forwarded by M.W. Roberts, 7 June 1966.

45. Regarding chena policy it appears that some G.A's and A.G.A's were for rather rigid restrictions and others for a lenient policy, though all agreed that some line had to be drawn. I wonder if you could name those who were of the former mould and those of the latter (from your experience, 1910's - 1930's).

Answer:

I have no idea who was or was not in favour of rigidity, going my own way regardless of others. However I do remember, in the 1930 era, that Uva was very sticky - so much so that Uva Bintenne people crossed the border to my E.P. Bintenne (they were all alike on the verge of "starvation" but for chenas) and I allotted ex-chena land regardless of geography. The G.A., Uva (I forget who it was) did not like this, but I ignored his protests.

46. What were "the climatic and other reasons" behind forest conservation measures, entailing as it did restrictions on chenaing? I can perceive the climatic reasons in the Highlands but, speaking from profound ignorance, they appear less obvious to me regarding the relatively flat Dry Zone districts? Doesn't the chena scrubland etc.etc. which replaces the jungle soon fulfill the usefulness of jungle in maintaining moisture?

Answer:

It is news to me that chena restrictions were connected with forest conservation, except indirectly, e.g. in preventing the removal of valuable timber, but this was not exclusive to chenas. I agree that climatic reasons were relatively inapplicable to the low-lying dry zones and that nature speedily replaces the scrub which has been removed. I should say that the moisture-maintaining properties are restored within a matter of months or even weeks, depending on the local climate.

47. One of the reasons, no doubt, was protection of valuable Crown timber. But in many Dry Zone districts weren't the <u>scattered</u> patches of valuable timber of very little <u>commercial</u> value because so expensive to cut and transport to markets?

Answer:

You have hit the nail on the head. The royalty recovered by the F.D.[Forest Department] on reserved timber was based on sales ex Colombo depot, and of course included the cost of felling, transport (often by elephant) to a road and then rail. In the result,

a large satinwood tree might cost Rs 600 whereas its value in situ was nil, not even as firewood, as far as the villager in the remote interior was concerned.

P.S. F.D.[Forest Department] I once asked for a tree in a remote part of Sab. No money. Refused to pay royalty. 6 cornered arguments between District F.O., Prov. do., Conservator, Cont. of Revenue, Govt. and self took 6 months. Did not tell Govt. that the School(?) had been erected and occupied for last 5 months, as I had privately authorised the Village Headman to cut the tree down.

48. I have a feeling that those who were very rabid in their criticism of chena cultivation as inefficient, wasteful, etc. were looking at it from European eyes and with an ignorance of the difficulties in Dry Zone cultivation. They seem to think that the cultivation of permanent crops is practicable (or this follows from their insistence that chena be prohibited). Granted that where irrigable land is available this is sensible. But it is realism to cater to the fact that most of the Dry Zone did not have irrigated land. A recent study by a geographer Mr. A.H. Farmer, involving a long period of field work, widespread reading and wide discussion with agricultural scientists in Ceylon and other Ceylonese throws much light on land use in the Dry Zone. He agrees that chenas are dangerous on steep slopes and on easily erodible soils while pernicious where there is population pressure on the land but shows how, for all the experiments of the 1930's -1950's, no alternative and lasting method of dry farming has been established - the chief problem being the maintenance of soil fertility "and even of keeping any soil on the holding at all". In fact, he states that "the chena system is a wise concession to the nature of the region, and in particular to the growing of annual crops in perpetuity where periodical soil regeneration is essential because of erodible soils, significant slopes, high temperature, and seasonally heavy rainfall". (p. 50)

Answer:

It is possible that the attitude you refer to was due to one or more of such factors as views differing according to the viewer, European or otherwise, disregard of the human factor, or a slavish adherence to an "accepted" theory of harmfulness to the soil. The last 2 seem to me to be the answer, especially the last. Woolf saw clearly that the choice lay between ignoring restrictions and dead bodies.

[Incidentally I think "starvation" in this context is commonly used to connote its literal meaning of death from undernourishment, which would eventually result in death but for

remedial measures, such as chenas or "famine relief" in the form of rice, etc. I always preferred "malnutrition".]

The "rigid" school seemed to prefer the preservation of useless scrub at the expense of human needs or (in the Village in the Jungle) even human life. We are thus left with the 3rd alternative, and if one discards it, what reasonable objections remain? In this connexion, I never could elicit in what particular sense the soil was said to be harmed. One perfectly good reason would be that it prevented some better form of cultivation, which would be untrue. I soon came to regard the phrase as a mere cliché, and I never looked beyond the preservation of human life as an overriding factor. Certainly, I never heard of erosion and such like. (Chenas were largely found in the jungle from, say, Tangalle, via parts of Uva and Sab. to the non-irrigated Southern portion of the E.P. - square mile after mile as flat as a pancake.)

(Mr. Farmer): I have a certain feeling that the problem suffers from a lack of proportion. The total chena acreage must constitute a more or less trivial fraction of cleared land, certainly compared with the immense acreage covered by tea and rubber, where whole hill-sides are denuded of surface vegetation, and millions are spent on weeding in order to keep them so. Here is erosion and wastage of top-soil with a vengeance. Has nobody seen acres of paddy land ruined by the deep sill-washed down from a neighbouring estate, in spite of contour-drains and the lip-service paid to planting a soil cover whose growth would not harm the tea? ("cover crops"?)

Are chenas commonly found on "significant slopes"? In the hilly zone with plenty of rain, the terraced paddy hill-sides usually render chenas unnecessary, and if my suggestion is correct that they are usually found in the flat, waterless regions I mentioned, no question of erosion arises; a rainfall of 10-14 inches per year, all falling within some 6 or 7 weeks puts an end to this talk!

I would like to go a little further on this subject - see continuation of notes.

I may seem to be flogging a dead horse, but I have lately found some interesting matter on this chena question, arising out of the "Waste Lands" legislation, particularly Ord. 12 of 1840.

It is essential to note that this law was specifically concerned with the <u>settlement</u> of <u>title</u> and nothing else.

Historically, the Sinhalese Kings owned all forests and uncultivated lands not specifically granted to individuals. As time went on, there were considerable encroachments on forest and other

Crown lands and in 1840 it was decided to act on the assumption that anyone unable to prove private ownership was a trespasser on Crown land. Chenas were now deemed to be forest or waste lands, and included in the Ord. definition of "forest, waste, unoccupied or uncultivated lands". It was of course as open to the possessor to prove private title to chenas as to any other kind of land.

An inscription dated about AD 1200 refers to the abolition of the "tax of grain produced from chenas", which therefore were of immemorial origin. Chenas are defined as "high ground" covered with scrub and "generally appurtenant to the low-lying fields". That this means a topographical appendix appears from D'Oyly who (1818) says "Every field, with few exceptions, has attached to it a garden and a jungle ground called hena which as a matter of course are transferred with it" (i.e. the field). "High ground" therefore is a relative term meaning adjoining ground which is NOT "low-lying". No question of hillsides or ....

Hayley remarks that there has been some speculation as to the intention of the above Ordce. - i.e. was there a deliberate attempt to discourage chenas "as harmful to the soil". He discards this suggestion - there were 1000's of acres of uncultivated non-chena lands. Moreover, when, under the Ordce. proof of private ownership was lacking and the chena reverted to the Crown, the Govt. never did anything to put it to other uses. (I would add that it seems a waste of time to enquire into the intention of an Ord. which very clearly lays down its intention, namely to "prevent further encroachments on Crown lands". Also, if the intention (undisclosed) was to discourage chenas, why did Govt. so signally fail to carry out this intention when it had a clear opportunity?* The fact seems to be that the "harm to the ground" theory was an afterthought - 60 years were to elapse before 1901, when there is the first record of the point being raised. A . G.V. Wanduragala)

* The Ord. could well have excluded (had it wished) chenas from the class of lands open to proof of private ownership. As it was numberless such claims were so admitted and Crown grants were issued accordingly. This is important in connexion with the wholesale purchases of private lands by European planting interests, when sales of vihare lands, chenas, etc. called for the strictest investigation of private titles. I myself witnessed the tail end of this process - Sab. 1914 - but that is not relevant here.

A lot of this may not be strictly relevant to your questions, but it ties up with previous monologues on the subject.

I have derived a lot of pleasure from these amateur researches and if I may make one remark, I am much impressed (apart altogether from questions of chenas) by the quite modern trend on the part of "technologists" to seek everywhere for principles, without which everything seems highly questionable. Even to the point of dogmatically asserting what was in the mind of King Parakrama Bahu centuries ago. It cannot be conceded by them as possible that a Governor, say, could suddenly hit on a fanciful scheme off his own bat. We even had examples, as you know, of non-existent "public declarations of Govt. policy", or suggestions that salutary laws should be repealed as being unpopular invasions of the "freedom of the subject".

A.N. Strong - M.W. Roberts, 15 June 1966.

Even if I am flogging a dead horse, I have been filling in a few odd hours with a violent attack on the anti-chena school. As you will see, I have stressed somewhat the human factor, which the "scientists" largely ignore. Whatever the agronomical arguments, the plain fact is that the population could hardly have survived without dry grains, which were not consumed by choice, but as a sheer necessity. It may be assumed that this would not have been the case if a more palatable nutriment had been discovered in the course of centuries, which it was not, and modern science has been no more successful....

We might have got on much better had there been more liaison between the Dept. of Ag. and the Revenue Officer. In all my time, I never met a single Ag. Officer officially. In fact, I only met 3 or 4 in clubs etc. and never had a talk on this important subject. Ag. officers on circuit would come into my district and leave without my even seeing them. They had museums, Peradeniya gardens, entomologists, botanists, plant pest laboratories, curators of bot. [botany] gardens and so on, but seemed never to impinge on the facts of life of the village cultivator.

Correction - I did once have 20 minutes with a Director of Ag. and found him quite ignorant of the practical needs of the cultivator, or his problems. I think I mentioned this to your tape recorder!

Memo on Chenas

In our recent discussions I have often felt myself in the position of a solitary defender of chenas, vainly arguing against a vast body of experts and scientists who must regard me as an ill-informed layman. Having tired of this, I now propose to carry the war into the enemy territory and expose, if I can, the fallacies and the clichés which I hold to be the main weapons of the 'anti-chena' school.

Chenas have been a subsidiary source of food for centuries, if not for thousands of years. 700 or 800 years ago they were common enough to carry a grain tax, which was abolished about the end of the 12th century (Galpota Inscription). 300 years ago Knox speaks of kurakkan and other dry grains as taking the place of rice when the latter proved insufficient. Indeed, even in the N.W. Province, these were far from being a negligible subsidiary, for he says that rice would in some regions supply a family for only half the year. So what of the drier zones?

One would therefore look for considerable evidence of the alleged ill-effects of this form of cultivation, in the form of soil erosion, dust-bowls and other results of the "harmfulness" which seems to be the chief stand-by of the opponents of chenas. But one would look in

vain. When asked to particularise about the harm, the only reply I have ever heard has been that fertility is so reduced as to render the ground valueless. This is demonstrably untrue. In the first place, it has a permanent value in that it continues to supply food to keep some of the population alive, provided only that it is allowed to lie fallow for a certain number of years between crops. N.B. Chenas are by definition lands which are cultivated in accordance with this process. A much more obvious disproof of the "harm" theory is found in the flourishing tea and other plantations which must include thousands of acres of land here and there which were already chenaed by the original possessor before the wholesale process began of alienation to European and other developers. Is it maintained that nothing grows on these ex-chenas? Clearly not. Again, the process of clearing waste (i.e. uncultivated) land for tea or rubber, the felling, the drying-out and the burning-off, is precisely the same whether the next step is the planting of kurakkan or tea plants or rubber seeds. The latter flourish and the soil is unharmed, the former harms the soil. The answer must therefore seem to be that it depends on what you plant, i.e. that it is the grain which saps fertility? On the question of harmfulness to the soil, the earliest instance on record, is not found (according to F.A. Hayley) until 1901, when the Crown unsuccessfully pleaded the theory, presumably in opposition to a private claim to a chena. It is notable that under the Waste Lands legislation of 1840, (designed solely to settle titles and prevent further encroachments on Crown land) chenas were freely settled by Govt. on those private possessors who could establish in the Law Courts some form of prescriptive title as against the Crown. It seems to have been a wise move on the part of the Government to refrain from any attempt to prohibit chenas, if it saw any harm in them, which seems highly questionable, apart from the risk of wholesale revolution over the deprivation of an age-old practice which must have kept millions of people from starvation and death. Instead of that, the Govt. turned to the far preferable course of supplying an alternative in the form of restoring old tanks and channels and opening up fresh irrigation, even if it was a slow process and only began to show real results after Ceylon attained self-government, 40 years ago. D.S.S. personally did more than any previous Govt. had ever done in this direction in centuries.

The anti school gravely underestimate, I think, the importance of the human factor, and in this I include successive Governments. According to Knox, as I said, people depended for food as much on dry grains as on rice, and that too in a well-watered region roughly in the Kandy-Kurunegala districts. The problem remains the same today, although (fortunately on a very minor scale) but the difference is one of degree, not principle.

The problem, too, is complicated by a lack of a sense of proportion. We are asked to picture the results of this deleterious practice of

chena-ing. I can only remark that the practice of many centuries has left singularly few deleterious traces on the country, at least to the lay observer.

[It is mainly the Dept. of Agriculture which condemns chenas. They may be right, but the criticism comes ill from the lips of those from whom it would be reasonable to expect something more constructive. But they have left no trace of even unsuccessful attempts to find a substitute which would remove the agronomical and dietetic shortcomings of dry grain cultivation. It would however be fair to add that the same applies to much of their activities vis-a-vis the practical cultivator, though not unnaturally, in the teeth of his rigid conservatism and general resistance to change, or even the total rejection of theoretical suggestions which his practical experience condemns. But I am digressing.]

Another point that has frequently occurred to me. Have the "anti" school been caught up in a self-contradiction? To "harm" land can only mean to impair its usefulness. As soon as a piece of ground is chenaed, it is useless, they say. Subsequent chenaings must therefore render useless something which is already useless! What sort of argument is this? Has it been forgotten that by its very definition, the same ground is re-chenaed time after time? Or that for centuries the traditional holding consisted of three elements, the lowlying paddy field, the watta, and an appurtenant and adjoining piece of chena, i.e. "high land", i.e. not low-lying and therefore capable of wet cultivation? (This chena was an essential part of the whole and was transferred as a matter of course along with the other parts.[a]) My point rests of course, on the assumption that we are not visualising the chenaing of virgin jungle, i.e. the unlimited extension of chena lands. This has been virtually abolished for many years, and must have been the general rule: otherwise, there would be little virgin land left after centuries of chenaing, which on Knox's evidence supplied at least one half of the country's daily sustenance, or more if rice supplied only one half in a well-watered district. (Going back for over 50 years, I tried thousands of cases in my Police Courts. Of these, illicit chenaing accounted for a bare dozen. All of these were purely minor affairs, mainly involving the encroachment, inadvertent or otherwise, beyond the boundaries allotted and set out by the Headman.) I wonder whether, if all the acres which are or ever have been chenaed were coloured on a map of the Island, they would be more than barely noticeable. And yet modern theorists talk wildly about soil erosion: have they never seen what is washed off a tea estate on steep slopes, and the tons of silt deposited on the paddy fields below? All this is what I meant by a lack of a sense of proportion.

(a) D'Oyly (1818) says "Every field (kumbura) with few exceptions has attached to it a garden and a jungle ground called hena, which as a matter of course are transferred with it."

There is no evidence that the Sinhalese kings regarded chenas as belonging to the Crown.

It seems clear that dry grains (Knox mentions 6 varieties, including kurakkan) were by no means a subsidiary food to fall back upon in times of distress: on the contrary, as I have suggested, the sparse population must have depended almost as [much on] this food as on rice. So much then for the theory of a harmful and inefficient form of cultivation.

Further Notes on Chenas by Mr. A.N. Strong in response to Memo by M.W. Roberts, 8 July 1966.

1. If I said that the "Dry Zone is flat" - I meant that it was largely flat e.g. the Wanni of the Vavuniya area and particularly the huge S.E. area of the Tangalle - Koslande- Pottuvil (including all the Hambantota district) triangle which is as flat as a pancake.

I am sorry in a way that I strayed into the territory of the experts, where I have no status, so I will not attempt to argue further on technical points re soil, etc.

My main points, if I may sum up, were

(i) the common failure to pay due regard to the humanity factor [as Woolf once hinted: the choice lies sometimes between chenas and dead bodies].

(ii) the over-emphasis on 'harmfulness'.

I am glad to see that on (i) there is no valid opposition. Farmer and some modern Ag. officers agree on the "wise concession", and also support my view that paper arguments (which as I say, I must accept) had far better give way to finding a practical alternative, not yet got past the unsuccessful results from experimental stations.

On (ii) I am glad to see C.E. Corea's support and Rosayro's note that 2 years' chenaing is in practice a beneficial preliminary to permanent asweddumisation, as well as a virtual acceptance of my remark that flourishing estates do not show traces of difference between areas which have or have not been previously chenaed. I wonder whether fertility is capable of near-restoration after a very long interval?

I note your assumption that 25 years will yield a better crop than 10, with which I would entirely agree. Carried a little further, would 30-40 years approach the ideal[i.e. re fertility]?

Some at least of your authorities quite valid objections are based on non-observance of the accepted rules. I was speaking always of a 10 year minimum of fallow, etc., not legislating for Champion's Muslims chenaing a plot for 3-4 years, or Dr. Leach's peasants working (through force majeure) on a less than 10 years cycle. Is this playing fair with me?!! I base a view on a minimum period of 10 years, others challenge it on the basis of a smaller minimum, sometimes of even 2 years!

I think we can now close down on a most interesting question, which at the time, say 30 years ago, was of no interest to me in practice. My attitude was: I am the G.A. This village is badly under-nourished, for whatever reason. Chenas alone are the immediate remedy, short of famine relief, so they shall have all the chenas they need, and to hell with theories and Govt. circulars!

Mr. A.N. Strong's Answers (3) to Further Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts, 8 July 1966.

49. In one of your answers[1] you allude to "A. ?? Wanduragala" as the first occasion when the point that chenaing rendered the land valueless was raised. Could you elaborate on this case, the why and the how it occurred etc.

Answer:

My bad handwriting, I fear. A. ?? W. is the title of the case in question, viz "Attorney General v Wanduragala"(1901) see 5 N.L.R. 98. Hayley mentions it in refuting a suggestion that the Ord. 12 of 1840 was designed to stop chenaing on the ground of its harmfulness to the soil.

This was a mere side-issue to the main one, namely the reversion of wastelands to the Crown except on proof of private ownership.

50. My research in the period 1840-71 has suggested very strongly that the peasantry did not lose much of their waste land as a result of coffee planting. Now, since tea flourished better on chena than did coffee and since rubber and coconut plantations expanded at elevations lower than tea and coffee (generally speaking) it is obvious that the impact of the plantation process was greater after the coffee era; i.e. after the late 1880's. But we can take it that the real damage was done by rubber and coconut plantations. These had their booms after 1900. Now, Frank Leach and others affirmed that the damage had been done before the 1920's. You confirm this in stating that you saw the tail-end of the process in Sab'wa in 1914 (I would love it if you could elaborate on this too). This would place the really damaging period at 1900-1915?

On the other hand I cannot but suspect that it prevailed in the 1920's as well because there was a rubber boom at that time too. At any rate Clifford spoke in this strain in his paper on "The Land Question" and elsewhere. He stressed the fact that many peasants had disposed of their land to speculators during the rubber and coconut booms and expressed concern at the drift of Sinhalese peasantry towards employment on the estates.

This is not easy to reconcile with the view that there was very little peasant land falling into planters' hands in the 1920's.

Answer:

What is the nature of the damage that Frank Leach & Co. refer to? I assume that it means damage to the independence of the ex-proprietor villager. Of course, it was mostly done prior to the

1. Supra, Question 48.

1920's. I should say long before. In speaking of Sab. [aragamuwa] I referred to both rubber and tea. In 1914 there were many large estates of both. I only meant that in my Sab.[aragamuwa] days, purchases were still going on and I witnessed wholesale clearing of hill-sides. I should say that by 1920 the process had largely come to an end, and that the peak came as you suggest about 1900-1905. This of course would not preclude later developments in the light of the booms. (My impression is these largely encouraged local, as opposed to European, initiative, for I knew of many cases where the mudalali type would open up quite small estates, e.g. 10, 15, 20 acres, in contrast with the 500 acre European blocks.) Up to 1925 I remember no embargo placed by Govt. on the sale of Crown lands, but the new areas were not necessarily Crown, i.e. nothing tangible had been done to redress or stop the drift of which Clifford bewailed.

I think these views are reconcilable with the view that comparatively little peasant land got into the hands of the planters. But my range was too limited to justify anything like a dogmatic opinion.

51. At the same time Clifford made the comment: "it can hardly be disputed that in the low-country today the prosperity of the villagers is usually in direct ratio to their proximity to large estates", in referring to the benefits they derived from part-time employment on the rubber estates, and coconut estates. Have you any comments on this point?

Answer:

Yes. I think Clifford was quite correct, as he was on most things.[1] Before being cleared, the land would be an almost unpopulated waste, and the arrival of hundreds or thousands of Indian labour would naturally attract shop-keepers and others, as the large estates would have many Kades on its perimeter and on the roads leading to the nearest town or large village to which hundreds flocked on Sunday for the purchase of clothes, or arrack which were beyond the range of a small estate Kade. All this, of course, in addition to part-time employment on the estate, and often full employment as carpenter-baases from Moratuwa, dispensers and so on.

52. As A.G.A., Matara in 1927 were you aware that Clifford had produced a paper on the Land Question?

Answer:

No. I was not aware. But see 53.

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1. Strong was Private Secretary to Clifford for a little while, probably early in 1927.

53. I have a suspicion that such papers and other statements of policy or inclination by those on the bridge - say in the Legislative Council - were rarely brought to the attention of G.A's, A.G.A's and others in the field (though, no doubt, such statements were rare). I cannot imagine that Dr. Leach referred to "a publicly declared policy" without having seen one such statement. Now if this was so, why weren't statements like this made known to the administrators in the field whether in the form of succint official directives or otherwise?

Answer:

I cannot quote a single case where as O.A., A.G.A. or G.A. I was sent a copy of any such statements, White Papers, etc. Few of us had the time or inclination to buy Hansard and wade through Leg. Co. proceedings, 90% rubbish. I am sure there were many of these Papers, but Dr. L.[Leach] most probably did not find them outside the Leg. Co. library. Newnham and I have often remarked on the almost complete lack of liaison between the C.S.O. and the field officer. I have no idea why we were kept in the dark. N's cynical explanation is that as Govt. never had any policy on any subject, they naturally could not impart it to others. I only wrote when I wanted ad hoc instructions or approval of something which required their sanction - so the only channel was one-way, in the form of diaries which were either unread or just ignored, except in a few cases where Govt. put its foot in and caused needless trouble by taking up with someone else, [that] which he was not meant to see. (If he had been I would naturally have tackled him direct.)

54. Much has been said against the sub-division of land into small units (or "fragmentation" as popularly known) but Farmer raises what seems to be a cogent point in arguing that the assumption that sub-division leads to very low productivity is invalid with regard to paddy cultivation in Ceylon:

"This partly because, given present and foreseeable future techniques of paddy cultivation, the unit of cultivation is bound to be the liyadda, for reasons of water control. A man with three liyaddas does not produce more paddy per acre than a man with only one liyadda, for he has to treat each of his liyaddas as separate units for most of the important operations in cultivation."

For comment.

Answer:

I never found the slightest evidence that fragmentation had the least bearing on productivity.

The liyadda was merely the extent of land between bunds, and one was like another. All had to be treated alike, i.e. ploughed and weeded at the same time: all the seed had to [have] the same period of maturation, and all had their water turned on or off according to rate of growth, need or otherwise of water, and all operations were carried out under the supervision of the Vel Vidane, regardless of individual ownership. The liyadda could hardly be a separate unit, for a cultivator might own several, one below the other, not horizontally, so naturally he would get his water at different times, the cultivator of the lowest* sometimes complaining that the top liyaddas used up a (perhaps exguous) supply and left him with too little. In any case, his operations had to comply most strictly with those of all other cultivators in the fields, in point of time as well as other factors.

*There was something wrong here, for the normal course was to choose their type of seed according to (i) the period of maturity coupled with (ii) the amount of water known to be available, for all the crop would be ruined if the water should fail before the seed grew ripe.

Obedience to the general orders of the Vel Vidane was inbred, and there was little need for the largely theoretical prosecution in the Gansabhawe. I remember no such case among the thousands dealt with in my Village Tribunals. There would certainly be a big row if 5 liyaddas were seen to have grown more quickly than the rest, or 3 others unweeded to neighbours' detriment. I therefore see no relevance in the supposition that one liyadda can produce more than another.

55. The general impression is that tattumaru (undivided proprietorship) is not conducive to improved cultivation and that it actually caused some degeneration. While this may seem likely, both Farmer and Leach flatly contradict this on the basis of their field experience. What has yours been?

Answer:

Does this question relate to undivided ownership as such or to the method (tattamaru) as opposed to others such as living in joint community of property? Presumably the former.

In either case, I have never noticed that joint ownership, one of the main causes of strife and trouble, had any bearing on the general health of the property. Though I have little field experience. I would suppose that prima facie, no owner would wish, or his co-owners allow him, to neglect their own property. i.e. by husbandry, e.g. - I cannot for the moment think of any other cause. Of course,

there are many reasons why a property could degenerate, but for myself I never thought to include joint ownership as one of them.

56. According to the 1946 statistics the percentage of the total paddy land cultivated under tattumaru was only 6.5%; while the percentage of holdings cultivated by tattumaru owners in the Dry Zone Districts averaged 6.8, it varied considerably in the Wet Zone Districts but was generally low with certain exceptions (Kegalla: 25.3%; Ratnapura 35.7%; Kalutara 14.4% The rest under 10). These figures seem low compared to the importance given to the subject.

Answer:

It follows from the above that I am in no position to comment.

57. Leading from Q.56, it would seem a general criticism of British rule that their collection of agrarian statistics was so poor. In the nineteenthcentury it was generally unreliable and valueless, though considerable effort and time must have gone into the Blue Books. Admittedly, the more meaningful forms of statistics collection only developed in the twentieth century even in the West, but Ceylon seems to have lagged behind. Statistics, of course, are merely a means to an end but they enable you to know what problem you are tackling, its size and the way things are moving; in short, it helps to get priorities straight.

Answer:

My only connexion with statistics was in annual returns of various kinds, which did not interest me seeing that I knew nothing of their reasons or objects - I merely collected figures from the Headmen, had them compiled and signed the return blind. So a statement of the number of village cattle did not encourage in me an investigation into bovine fecundity.

Private Letters from Mr. A.N. Strong - Mr. H.E.Newnham, 1965.

Mr. Newnham tore off bits here and there. This is indicated by an asterisk and a short gap.

Letter of 27 April 1965.

Thanks for card. Will now finish reply to your long letter of 19^2. See below for the unfinished symphony.

Your card came into contact with the wet ink of a P.O. post mark and I cannot read the bit which presumably is "tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade" - so don't follow Milton's "turnite" out of context. Anyhow, he preferred Amaryllis and sporting with the tangles of Neaera's hair. [My H.K. tells me that Plym. is in county Cardigan.] Sabrina, J. Hink, also occurs in C.S. Calverley's version of Lycidas, with which I was once well acquainted. At Wren's we used to put up a weekly English Essay, Latin and Greek verse - not compulsory, but to see how far one varied, up or down on either side of a beta. So when I was given 30 lines of Lycidas for hexometers, I gave it up, as it was too difficult to make anything of it without cribbing Calverley. Incidentally, I preferred Latin verse, and at Wren's put down Greek V (200) to bring my total marks up to 6,000. Far be me from it to boast, but in the exam. I got far more marks than the current BNC [Brasenose] winner of the Gaisford. (I ought to add damn little for my Latin hexometers).

Hancox would certainly welcome a letter (his main op. was yesterday) but I feel he would not expect a visit from you. He spoke of making a tour round his old friends if all goes well - he is coming here first, he says. So M's reluctance need not be put to the test.

Irrigation Dept. I think they were the end. They rejoiced to despise the C.C.S. and of course the lesser fry. Their H.Q. was a mess of internal jealousies and squabbles and were moved reluctantly from their fastness in Trinco, and were cut down to size as a minor gang on the fringe of things in Colombo. I knew best of all, Charles Harward and had much to do with Henman. When C.C.H. had completed his Colombo scheme he took all his plans to the Col. Sec. He was told to submit them (for appl.) through the D.I. Charles said not on your life - direct to Govt. or torn up - I don't mind. But not through H.Q., where they will be automatically condemned in advance. de G.[de Glanville] as A.G.A., Manaar, had a dumpy level which he used e.g. on petty matters like field channels (village works, below Irrig. notice). He was once watching an Irrig. man taking some levels, and pointed out some

mistake. Had an almighty row with Baker(?) who strongly resented lay interference, and was finally proved wrong, would never again even speak to de G. Who also told me that Denham had a row with the D.I. and lost his battle. Quite soon, he was brought in as P.A.C.S.[Principal Assistant to the Colonial Secretary], sent for the file and overruled the D.I.

* * *

Sara [Saravanamuttu] I thought a Sahib. He and C.L. Wickremesinghe were Hugh Clifford's pets. He once had them both as guests in a house party, of which I am sure they were much brighter ornaments than some of the European scum I saw lurking in the undergrowth. When Hugh left, I stayed on with Fletcher for a week or 2, at his request. I suppose to help with the take-over. My first job was to hint politely to 4 or 5 guests that their stay was up, F. not having granted an extension of the 2 weeks guesthood under Hugh. 2 merely declined to leave - a low caste mechanic from the India Rgs [Regiments] and a ½ caste wife. I also literally had to get their kit placed in a taxi. Should explain that they had a very pulchritudinous and nubile daughter. N.B. Barbara Mitchell (then Hopkins) also a guest, was under orders to sail with Hugh to Malaya as his Secretary. She was too young to think of refusing. I could not speak to Hugh of course, so I went round to the Hopkins and applied my unusual tactfulness in inducing them, most unwilling snobs, to apply parental embargo.

Sara's brother E.V. was a senior Supt. Excise when I took over E.C. and I quickly made him Deputy Comm. - a wise move. He later got the E.C. job itself. I was naturally very glad that my protége justified my choice in every way. When I returned in 1942, he was then at temp. H.Q. in Kandy and sent me a complimentary case of a dozen bottles of a gold-topped Double-distilled arrack, which was so free of the coconut smell that it deceived many people and was indeed undistinguishable from gin if diluted with lime or orange. He had much trouble with a naughty wife, who called on me at home and/or office, for advice about her domestic troubles. I threw her out, and E.C. was v. upset that she should have pestered me.

I met the Coreas (Claude) not very long ago at Kotalawala's - near here - also their son, a nice boy of 25(?). He asked if I knew his parents. I said, indeed I did, and but for me he might well not be alive today. Just then Lady C. joined us, and the son asked her what I had meant. She said Oh I see what he means. Mr. Strong played the organ at our wedding in St. M. [St. Michael's] Polwatte 30 years ago. I like the Claudes. He was one of the few gents in "my" Cabinets - D.S.S., Don Baron J., Macan Marker, etc.

and in a different way O.E.G. and Lionel Kot. I see O.E.G. is in some almighty racket with ?minor royalty? or? major Continental finance. It certainly won't be bird-seed. (Shortly before he died Geof Layton asked me for O.E.G's address - said he was a great man, and straight, as was J.K.L., but did not explain why it had taken him 18 years to re-seek him.)

I was one who regarded O.E.G., from much intimate working with him 1942-5, as one of the ablest administrators ever, and in the absence of evidence, discounted the numerous statements to the effect that "I happen to know for a fact" that O. coined money, etc. [I now recall, quite irrelevantly, that I once had a row with a Blistering Brigadier in 1943/4 who wanted to import certain things and wanted to take over the Harbour protem, and do the thing himself Seeing chaos ahead, I said I would do exactly what he wanted, but in my own way, and if he got the result, why worry over method? Oh no, he went to O.E.G. and complained of my non possamus attitude. I did not know this when O.E.G. rang up and asked if I would call on him at 2p.m. On arrival, I found the Brig. there, spitting blood. We sat down and O.E.G. said "Well now" when the Brig. interrupted and said, "I want to ..." O.E.G. interrupted and said, "I have know John for 20 years or more, and you will find that whatever he says is o.k. Good afternoon!! Total time 1½ minutes. The Brig. and I then went back to harbour. I showed him my plans - he agreed, and later wrote a chit of thanks - thereafter going to the other extreme of being rather smarmy.

* * *

Going back a little supra, I am mixed up in my mind, with Speaker Molamure, his divorce action, one Casie Chitty, a Mrs. Corea (or a Mr. Corea) - can you explain my confusion? I applaud the "Hobday-type" who, referring to the evidence of a chauffeur who spoke of happenings in the back seat, referred to a driving-mirror as "the husband's best friend".

I would not like to say a word against "our" Sara - it may not have been his fault - but the Rubber Control got me in a terrible jam over the export coupons. These he issued in units in 10, 20, and 100 lbs. etc. so that a shipment of 200 tons might involve counting a ¼ of a million bits of paper the size of a Rs. 5 note. The big agency houses, literally required a lorry to collect them, and had to hire W.H. space to store them - moreover, they were most valuable, being transferable and having a market value of up to 20 cts. each. The C of C were naturally aghast, so was I. I could see ships delayed 3 days with armies of clerks counting them, etc. Individual brokers too had no machinery, and had to have the relevant coupons for all they bought, even on paper. I

was of course rung up time after time. What to do man? I rang up Jack T., and asked for help. Within minutes, round came D.T.R. [Richards] and R.D.M.[Morrison] plus one or 2 more, and in half an hour, we got the answer "Rubber Bank". You know what it was, and it was a success ab initio. Our big job was counting the coupons before issuing a 'credit note'. It took 8 or 10 clerks a full week as firm after firm came in at(?) stated(?) hours with these long wads. Henry Hoare checked all that. Audit moaned later, having no adequate spare staff, and I told them that when they and R/C [Rubber Controller] had approved their scheme, they might at least have asked H.M.C. to comment first.

Incidentally, I was soundly smacked by the International Board at home, of whom E.B.A. [Alexander] was the "Ceylon" member. About the 25 of Dec. in the first year, an Estate sent down many tons for shipment to X. These were now lying in Lewis Brown's WH [Warehouse] on McCallum Road. Then found that no ship for X was due to leave before 2 Jan. I was in N.E. on leave. Henry[H.S.M. Hoare Deputy Collector of Customs] rang up for instructions: the coupons were for the year and could not be used after the end thereof, a dead loss in this case, financially as well. So I said to Hoare, "Customs seal on W.H. on 31 Dec. till shipment is made. i.e. shipped(?) constructively(?) this year." O.K. On 10 March we issued our usual Ad. Report. Henry who was a gold mine in all this plus textile quotes, etc., wrote the R/Control part of it and to show what businesslike people H.M.C. were, quoted this case. About May, the balloon went up, Malaya, D.E.I., etc. all up in arms, as if 100 tons out of 100's of 1000's mattered. So E.B.A. sent for me when I was on leave in May and gave me a nice lunch & a hell of a ticking off (which was rubbed out by fulsome praise for H.M.C. at the next Chamber A.G.M.[Annual General Meeting]) and it took me some time to explain "constructive" - he was at a loss for an answer to such questions as "Ship due to leave p.m. 31 Dec. 100 tons sent to Exports in a.m. etc. By midnight only 10 tons loaded - 90 shut out. Ship however leaves at 3a.m. 90 tons lost by 3 hour delay. What then? Exact parallel." So I was pardoned. E.B.A. was unlike his old self - but I suppose different when 20 foreigners breathing down the back of your neck.

E.B.A.[Alexander] When I took over Dep. Food Cont. 1922/23 from Hancox E.B.A. was F.C.[Food Controller]. Visited me once a week. One day a local reporter came to see me and wanted news. This was always dynamite - sometimes the country was down to 48 hours supply, and one can imagine the result if this had become known. So I said no news, and said it 20 times, until he went out. Next day, headlines in Daily News. "Interview with D.F.C."

expanded to a full column. "When I asked whether .... Mr. S.[Strong] explained that at the moment, etc. owing to .... no news yet." You know the style. H.E.(Manning) went off the handle, having read only the headlines, seized his pen and wrote a stinker (to E.B.A.) about his Dep. and then gave me a proper caning. E.B.A. called me in, read it out and then read his reply to this effect,"Y.E. I beg to be excused for not passing on your .... Mr. S. has my complete confidence and I take the liberty etc. Any censures going about may please be directed to me, etc." E.B. said, 'Is this O.K. John?' I said I could hardly express my gratitude:"may I tell exactly what I said in 1½ minutes to the reporter?" He said, 'No. I don't want to know'. I heard nothing more. Possibly H.E. read the column again: if so, there was nothing, beyond the reporter's own ideas, inconsistent with "I have no news for you". So with all my superiors, bar Thaine.

Letter of 27 October 1965.

I am doing very well out of my writing - every bit of nonsense I write to you brings in returns of 100% out of the depths of your colossal memory.

Elphy. That raw-carrot eating sycophant. I too am quite surprised at his educational origins, but in deep respect to those two honourable Alma Matres, I will promise not to mention them in connection with Sir Lancelot. He recalls a show-down with Worsley - he and I being guests of Hugh C.[Clifford]. We had been released from duty, went to the Garden Club, with unaccustomed freedom of which we both drank more than was necessary. Elph[Sir Lancelot Elphinstone] was later on a guest at a large dinner at Q.H.[Queen's House], where the champagne flowed, and how. W.[Worsley] and I , sitting together, were letting off steam about Elph who had slavishly backed up Fletcher in a double-cross, or two, in W's case, a Supt. of Minor Roads, in mine a cottage hospital - in both cases political motives were behind the wrong. After dinner, we happened to be standing together, very well oiled, when E. came up and with what was meant to be a smile, asked how we boys were getting on. W. was A.G.A., Hambantota, I Matara, next door. W. replied that he did not feel any better for his treatment over the S.M.R. I added, same here, over my Hospital case. E. looked a bit glum, as neither of us was joking, and went on (in his cups - of iced water) to explain that they had to give way to keep Leg. Co. [Legislative Council] people happy - and so get our way over something else. W. then said, "Of course, if you give a horse a handful

of oats, he will gobble them up - but have you tried offering him a bag of rusty nails?' I shall not forget the look on E's face, as he turned his back, and W. added, 'In fact, you are thoroughly unpopular with every A.G.A. in the S. Province'.

Hutchings I thought a good scout. He once represented the creditors in a bankruptcy case in Hatton, when I was D.J., Nuwara Eliya - case of G.C. Bliss, who went bust, and messed up an interminable case when just then his estate office was burned down, destroying little more than his private accounts. Everyone knew or thought he knew how and why, but without a shred of evidence. I had to give B. his certificate.

I never actually met, nor heard much of Cookson - he must have packed in before I came out in 1913. What a tragedy for his children.

Johnnie Bond I could not have liked less.

Lochore, I think, was at a stag party (short coats) at Bobbie Medens, and were all having the last of many gins before dinner, when up turns Scobie N. in tails. Seeing the rig and hearing Bobbie order another chair, looked queer and asked B. if he had come on the wrong night. B. replied No, but do come again next Saturday, again in your tails. How I, as L.S., came to be in such exalted company, I can't remember. I remember Lady L's [Lochore's] good work, and in fact followed her example in Rangoon. Every month there was a crowd of Afghans round our office door, and ½ the clerks had part-pay stopped under Court Orders. This was too much, but I must say that the remedy was originally that of our Secretary. We sent round a notice to the effect that (i) anyone who wished could disclose the full extent of his debts (ii) nobody need do so (iii) those who did would receive "help" (iv) those who did not make a full disclosure would be sacked, along with those of category (i) who incurred fresh debts without at once disclosing them (this later condition avoided the fate, as I see now, of C.E.V.N's scheme).

With 100's of clerks, this was a monstrous business, but for many weeks the Sec. put in an extra hour or two daily. The routine was for the debtor to produce the lender with proof of debt. By threats and bullying, the Sec. scaled down these debts, sometimes by 50%, e.g. by deducting the interest paid on interest, threatening to sack the borrower as a "security risk", and so on. I forget how much he thus saved, but it was a very considerable amount. The Afghan was then paid the reduced amount, surrendered the receipted pro-note, which we gave the clerk to destroy. As time went on, more and more "owned up", and no more Afghans on the pavement on the last day of the month. The money was repaid by

reasonable monthly deductions from pay, suited to the man's ability, and all this was on the security of his Provident Fund, which was a capitalised pension. This was always adequate, as nobody would lend very much to a junior - in any case the large majority of victims were senior and married, with expensive wives and families. This fund was created by deducting $\frac{1}{12}$ ($8\frac{1}{3}\%$) of each month's pay, the Comrs. adding $8\frac{1}{3}\%$ and paying 5% compound interest on the total. (I picked up £7500 in 7 years - it might well have been £20,000 if the Japs had not bitched my future service) with the huge snowball effect.

I remember having no difficulty at all - there was no real risk of loss except by way of interest on our loan, compensated by a happier staff - in getting my Board's sanction - in fact, I heard later that other "Fort" firms began to follow suit. I never heard of any case of breach of conditions, and those who were too old to be re-employed when the war ended got their P.F. at once, less unpaid balance of loans. I received hundreds(?) of letters of thanks, often from wives whom I had of course never met.

"Gratuities" - apart from Freddie's NOT seeing, how to cope anyhow? Remember the fate of the man who tried to hustle the East. As you will know, the regular charge at Govt. Dispensaries was 5 cts. per visit or per bottle. In 1927 ca.[circa] we had a very bad go of malaria in Matara District and no H.E.N. to put matters right. All the P.C.M.O.[Principal Civil Medical Officer] did or could do was to send out more quinine and a few extra dispensers. In every village there were daily queues with their bottles ready. In speaking of this in my Diary, I made some so-called facetious remark about the extra boodle reaped by the dispensary staff. Some fool, like Blood, in the C.S.O.[Colonial Secretary's office] marked the passage and sent the excerpt to the P.C.M.O.[Principal Civil Medical Officer] for comments. I got a hell of a stinker from Bridger[Director of Medical & Sanitary Services], pointing out that if I knew my job, I would know that all services were free, vide prominant notices to that affect in 3 languages. It was a rude letter, so I replied in kind, more or less to the effect that if he got off his backside and looked round, he would find out that these notices meant nothing, even if the patient could read. I added that as I was writing this latter, I saw the usual queue at the Dispensary in the next compound to the R.H. I strolled over and met a woman carrying a baby and a bottle. I asked after their health and she told me what the truth was. I did not ask her whether she had paid anything I merely asked how much she had paid. She looked at me as if I were barmy, and said,'Why, one fanam, of course! I then resumed

my letter, and quoted this and heard no more.

Another incident I could have quoted. I was on a long walk and stopped to rest in a small house of one room, which a Dispenser from the neighbouring village visited twice a week. He knew me of course and politely gave me a chair. Then he stood still. He said he would not be so rude, but would attend, after I had gone, to the patients at the window. I insisted, and was vastly amused. Under my eyes, a man would ask for so and so and plant 5 cents on the table. The dispenser pushed it back. The patient, in surprise, pushed it back again, and this shove-hipenny game went on as long as I was there, when there was a small heap on one side of the table. The dispenser was by this time in a terrible sweat. I did not report this. Why victimise one out of so many?

[I liked your C.C.C. Augustine men's story about the manure wagons.]

I was surprised (by why??) at the ignorance I so often found, especially in H.Q. in Colombo, among the non-C.C.S. I recall arguments, in particular, with G.M.R.[General Manager, Railways], D.M.S.S., and D.P.W.[Director of Public Works],which showed that from their office seats, they had no conception whatever of "Village life", of the reactions in the districts to their admin. or policies. For example, I reported (in my Diary, no doubt) that a certain schoolmaster, a new man, had got the whole village by the ears - a low-countryman who lorded it over Kandyans - and ought to be given a low-country billet. Naturally, nothing happened, and things got worse and worse, and I was constantly dealing with complaints. Conversely, the teacher began to complain of the hostile attitude, etc. and finally wrote D.O. to the D. of Ed.[Director of Education]. No reply. Later, I sent a reminder, adding that the village had threatened to burn the school down, and I was personally satisfied that this threat was not an empty one by any means. At last, they sent Roby[Robison, Deputy Director of Education] down to hold an enquiry, which I was not invited to attend. It did not seem to last very long, and L. Mc D.[Robison] finally absolved the teacher amd blamed the headman and the villagers. Satisfied, he returned to Colombo. Within the week, the school <u>was</u> burned down. Although I had on many occasions advised them all not to do anything silly, and they certainly behaved better when they heard that I had reported the position and got a promise of an enquiry. The teacher was ipso facto transferred while the new school was being built. (N.B. by the voluntary labour of the village(!) plus permits for Government timber and a grant for tiles.) So with the D.M.S.S., who got me to hold 3 "confidential" enquiries into alleged sexual intimacy

between the Prov. Surg. and a nurse 20 miles away. [It was common property outside the Med. Dept.] and another of French leave on the part of a dispenser, and another when a D.M.O.[District Medical Officer] had claimed travelling and batta for a visit 30 miles off which I accidentally discovered on circuit. In no case was any notice taken of my report - so the next time I told Colombo that in future they could hold their own enquiries.

When I was in Matara, the D.M.S.S. (who?) being on leave in Nuwara Eliya at Xmas, wrote to me privately and very confidentially saying that he would be returning to Colombo via Hambantota, and would visit us. His "circuit" programme was vague and secret. I asked him to lunch, dinner, beds and breakfasts, and so on. He said no thanks - it must be a complete surprise, and I must not give out any hint-he would lunch in his car and pick me up at 2p.m. on the agreed date, which he did, and ask me to accompany him to the hospital. Everything was in excellent order, clean drains, linen all correct and so on - so much so that after half an hour, he realised and asked the D.M.O., "Were you aware of my visit?" "Oh yes, sir." The D.M.S.S. turned on me and asked how this came about. I was rather nettled, and asked whether he was implying that I had divulged etc. [I had not even told Mary.] He aplogised, and asked the D.M.O, "How did you learn?" "We all knew, Sir, the S.M. told us several days ago that the Railway were sending down a truck to take you and your car back to Colombo by the evening train today." So the inspector broke off. Bridger, I think.

I think you and I shared the experience (Customs) of a secret visit to T.M.R.[Talaimannar] to be greeted by entire staff, at attention, on the jetty? (I had told nobody, except Deen, who bought my ticket at the Fort on the previous morning, and Deen knew of the "secrecy", and I did not tell my boy to pack a bag until ½ hour before the train left, nor did I say which train.) You couldn't win. But I did once catch a L.W. (Sela) asleep on a night round. I signed up in H.C.W.E. premises about 2a.m. walked on towards the P.O.W. Jetty, turned round and returned to find not only Sela asleep, but also his T.W., whose duty it was to keep cave. He(S) complained that it was unfair to pay a 3-hourly visit so soon. What hurt him most was that next day I cancelled his claim for one"all night" - he would much rather be censured.

Notes on Mr. A.N. Strong by Mr. Weerasiri, a clerk in the Matara Kachcheri, 10 June 1966.[1]

Mr. A.N. Strong was the Assistant Government Agent, Matara District in 1929 or so. Under the Provincial Administration, Matara District was under the Government Agent, Galle but A.G.A., Matara was the Chief Administrator of the District. In the Kachcheri, there were several Departments. viz. English Department, Native Department, District School Committee (Education Department) Provincial Registrar, Gansabawa Department and Fiscal's Department, etc. All these Departments were manned by about 50 officers. A.G.A., O.A., C.C. and Kachcheri Mudaliyar were the Staff Officers. Except K.M. all other Staff Officers were in the C.C.S. K.M. was the Gravets Mudaliyar, Chief Adviser and Chief Translating Officer to the A.G.A.

A.G.A. Strong took a keen interest over the welfare of the Rural Folk. Landlessness was prominent among the villagers. This was mainly due to the fact that the area abutting the town was all in thick jungle and there was no road access.

In order to meet this landlessness, he gave land from Dandeniya and Kekenadura Forest Reserves to the villagers, which were generally known as 'Colonies'. Dandeniya, Urugamuwa and Diyagaha Crown lands were alienated under this sytem, as a result of the initiative taken and keen enthusiasm shown by A.G.A. Strong Esquire.

These lands were alienated on the basis of 2 acres, one of which was given to commence with and the other on development of the first one. The great interest taken by Mr. Strong is amply shown by the fact that he had constructed roads connecting Kekanadura and Diyagaha upto the Matara main road, and as a mark of respect towards his untiring efforts this road was known as 'Strong Road' the usage of which is continued to this date. These lands are fully cultivated and grants are issued for almost all, and there is now a network of motorable roads.

A.G.A. did a lot of travelling weekly with his K.M. on horse-back as travelling otherwise was impossible. He used to travel on the previous day and lodge at the Rest House Dickwella, and resume the journey on the following morning.

None of the officers, among whom were D.A. Amarasekera, K.M. and N.A. Gunaratne Land Clerk are in service now, and almost [all] of them have departed this life. The only living officer Mr. O.J. Wickramasekera who is of course retired and living at Meddewatta,

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1. As Mr. Strong was interested in the present condition of a land-less villagers scheme he had started in the Matara district in the 1920's I wrote to a friend, the A.G.A. Galle (Sarath Amunugama). This memo is the result of enquiries he instituted through a clerk - an exercise in gathering residue impressions.

Matara now was very happy to release this information and was even kind enough to accompany me to Diyagaha Colony despite his old age.

At the village, when we reminded the men who are now advanced in years, about the A.G.A. Strong, they happily recollect this white gentleman, who commanded a respect even now.