

EDWARD TREVOR DYSON

b. 17 Sept. 1886.

Aberystwyth,

Jesus, Oxford.

C.C.S. 1910 - 1946

21	Nov.	1910	Apptd. to C.C.S.
31	Dec.	1910	Cadet, Trincomalee Kachcheri.
23	May	1912	P.M., Puttalam.
1	Sept.	1912	G.A., Kurunegala.
9	Aug.	1913	P.M., Kurunegala.
1	June	1915	D.J., Kurunegala in addition to his own duties.
6	April	1916	Acting P.M., Kandy.
4	March	1918	Additional Assistant Col. Sec.
25	May	1918	3rd Assistant Col. Sec.
9	Nov.	1919	On leave.
	July	1920	Continued as 3rd Assistant Col. Sec.
15	Sept.	1920	P.M., Kandy.
14	Feb.	1921	A.G.A., Muwara Eliya.
14	Nov.	1924	Acting Assistant Controller of Revenue.
10	Dec.	1924	A.G.A., Jaffna.
28	July	1925	On leave
11	Feb.	1926	A.G.A., Galle.
13	March	1926	D.J., Matara.
15	May	1926	A.G.A., Kalutara.
10	March	1928	Acting G.A., North-Central Province.
4	July	1930	On leave.
21	Oct.	1930	Additional G.A., Northern Province.
16	Nov.	1930	G.A., Northern Province.
5	Nov.	1933	On leave.
27	Feb.	1934	G.A., Central Province.
18	April	1934	Chairman, Kandy Municipal Council as well.
13	Feb.	1935	G.A., Northern Province.
10	May	1937	G.A., Central Province.
5	Nov.	1937	G.A., Northern Province.
	March	1939	G.A., Central Province

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31 Dec. 1910	attached to Trincomalee Kachcheri.
23 May 1912	Acting P.M., Puttalam.
1 Sept. 1912	O.A., Kurunegala.
9 Aug. 1913	P.M., Kurunegala.
1 June 1915	Additional D.J., Kurunegala as well.
6 April 1916	Acting P.M., Kandy.
4 March 1918	Additional Asst. Col. Sec.
25 May 1918	Third Asst. Col. Sec.
9 Nov. 1919	on leave.
July 1920	Third Asst. Col. Sec.
15 Sept. 1920	P.M., Kandy.
14 Feb. 1921	A.G.A., Nuwara Eliya.
14 Nov. 1924	Acting Asst. Controller of Revenue.
10 Dec. 1924	A.G.A., Jaffna.
28 July 1925	on leave.
11 Feb. 1926	A.G.A., Galle.
13 March 1926	D.J., Matara.
15 May 1926	A.G.A., Kalutara.
10 March 1928	Acting G.A., North Central Province.
4 July 1930	on leave.
21 Oct. 1930	Additional G.A., Northern Province.
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5 Nov. 1937	G.A., Northern Province.
March 1939	G.A., Central Province.
1946	retired.

Comments on Interview with Mr. E.T. Dyson, 17 November, 1965.

Mr. Dyson is in his 70's and shows many signs of encroaching old age. It was to be expected that his memory was not very vivid on many points, the more so under the pressure of a prolonged interview with a break for lunch and a sightseeing drive round Bristol. I found him a nice and homely man, anxious to help and, therefore, hardly guarded in his views though, perhaps, taken aback by some of the leading questions (which were perhaps baldly or crudely put!)

Mr. Dyson had been very much a provincial officer serving largely in administrative posts and holding G.A. ships for a long time. Thus he had had considerable experience in certain parts of Ceylon. Given his experience I had been expecting much from the interview, but I was, on the whole, rather disappointed. I found him very mediocre in his thinking. It was not all that surprising that his interest in political matters like the Donoughmore Constitution was highly limited but he does not seem to have thought out alternatives or problems in the agricultural and administrative field. I was wondering whether this could merely be a picture of Mr. Dyson in his 70's rather than Mr. Dyson the G.A. but several other factors indicate otherwise. For one thing, some reminiscences of his - admittedly written for the benefit of a blind boy in Ceylon - make pedestrian reading. For another Mr. Dyson admitted his very limited knowledge of the vernacular and this is surprising in an experienced G.A. But most conclusive is the verdict of an active and able man like Mr. Newnham that he was merely "a clerk".

M.W. Roberts

13.1.66

P.S. The transcript of the interview might appear to begin abruptly on Page 2; actually Page 2 should read as Page 1. The abruptness flows from the fact that we began talking about the past while I was getting the taperecorder ready.

The end of this transcription (Page 42) is really at a point midway in the interview when I flipped the spool over. The rest has not been transcribed as yet because I began to adopt a scale of priorities in selecting interviews for transcription.

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*this is the second half of the interview*

D. ... since about 1830 in the Constitution.

I. Oh yes, that was [ sic ] the MacCallum reforms.

D. The what reforms?

I. MacCallum.

D. Yes, that's right.

I. Of course, Sir Hugh Clifford was supposed to have written that despatch.

D. I think he probably did; and that was in 1910, I think when I arrived in December they just had the first election for an elected Sinhalese member educated Ceylonese .... Actually, Sir Ramanathan, Sir Ponnambalam R. Ramanathan was elected.

I. That's right.

D. I think his opponent was Sir James Pieris, wasn't he?

I. Quite likely; I think so, yes.

D. Yes, and it was assumed by many people that Ramanathan got in partly on caste grounds - I mean he was Vellala or Goigama of course, and Sir James Pieris, I think, was Karawa, wasn't he?

I. I'm not sure of the castes but Ramanathan was a Tamil ....

D. Yes, I know. And so it was rather surprising that in one vote only for an educated Sinhalese ....

I. That a Tamil should get in.

D. That a Tamil should have got in. But it was so. Of course, he got a great - he was a very distinguished man and he's got ....

I. Did you know him at all?

D. Yes, yes.

I. What sort of man was he?

D. Well, I was much impressed by him. I didn't altogether sometimes like his statements in public, but I remember seeing him when I was in the Secretariat and he came in ....

I. What struck me in the little reading I've been doing is that - you see, in 1910 before this reforms' despatch, when the Jaffna Association and the other Tamil associations wrote in suggesting reforms they did not want communal representation.

D. Mmm.

I. That means the Tamils did not want .... But around 1920 - 21 or earlier there was this split between the leaders, educated Ceylonese ....

D. Mmm.

I. Communal split; and as far as I can see it was Ramanathan who begun working against it.

D. Well, that's possible I should think because I think he may have first thought, 'Well, this is a good thing to be all in one', but as the constitution developed and he saw the Tamils would be so outnumbered by the Sinhalese, he probably thought, 'Well, we better have some communal representation'.

I. You didn't ever have occasion to discuss this with him?

D. No, no, no. I only had just had sort of a little few words with him; he came into my room in the Secretariat to ask some questions about the State Council<sup>1</sup> and ....

I. And this was around 1919?

D. Oh, yes ....

I. When you were Colonial, Third Assistant [Col. Sec] ?

D. That's right.

I. It was just about that period that he began working on communal lines and I think it was a bad feature.

D. Yes. Well, now, I have no doubt that Collins would be able to give you very reliable information about that, wouldn't he?

I. Yes.

D. Sure to be.

I. Do you know much about these 1910 Reforms? You see they asked for wider representation, wider representation for the educated classes and more power, and Clifford's despatch in effect denied - in other words by implications - denied that Ceylon was ready for

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1. Error. Legislative Council at this stage.

I. the self-governing process at that stage and suggested that they merely give one, the educated Ceylonese a vote.

D. Mmm.

I. Do you think their attitude to these demands was coloured by some sort of cynicism?

D. Oh, I think quite likely in the case of Sir Clifford, yes.

I. Because Bowes himself says he advised Clifford, 'Just give a Fernando or a Pieris another seat and they would be satisfied.'

D. Oh, I see. Well, that's a typical Freddie Bowes too, I should think.

I. I see. You know their attitude was, 'They just want a finger in the political pie, so give them that finger.'

D. Yes.

I. But I think events have disproved this sort of ...?

D. Oh, I think yes. But I think in 1910 .... Of course I was absolutely new to the place and was perhaps more interested in the scenery and customs and things like that than in politics, but my impression was that it wasn't till a year or two later than that that things began to, you know, really get - people began to get really keen on .... One of the earliest people I seem to remember was E.W. Perera, and Senanayake of course ....

I. What sort of man was E.W. Perera?

D. Well, he was the State Councillor for the District when I was A.G.A., Kalutara.

I. Oh, I see.

D. So I saw him every now and again. I got on very well with him. He didn't strike me as being a man of ability or stature of Ramanathan, or of Senanayake as a matter of fact. Senanayake was a very able person, but ... huh, rather an absurd thing, but what I didn't like about Perera was his handshake - he's got a terrible flabby hand.

I. Oh, I see. He didn't .... Were they indulging in sort of personal criticisms at this time; they tended to do that, didn't they?

D. Well, in no person ...; he didn't, as far as I remember, personally criticise me at all, but I do remember him getting one of my decisions upset; I think he was probably right. I'd, there'd been an application for some land, for the extension of some Kalutara estate, forest land, and it was just about, or shortly before the publication of Sir Hugh Clifford's memorandum (?) that you were talking about<sup>1</sup>. and I'd actually got to the stage of advertising in the Gazette the sale of this piece of land and all arrangements had been made no doubt for the raising of the money and that sort of thing, and suddenly I had instructions from Colombo that this was to be withdrawn. I didn't personally mind, and I'm not touchy, but some people would have been rather annoyed about that and I think it was probably due to intervention, probably quite justified, intervention on the part of Perera who thought that the land ought to be kept for the villagers.

I. What sort of body was the Ceylon National Association - this was before the National Congress as such?

D. Good God, I'm afraid, I mean, I'm afraid I couldn't tell you that.

I. How about the politicians - do you think that they were rather impudent and brash in the way they ...?

D. Ah, some of them were. Especially some of the minor ones. Um, there was one young chap from Negombo called Terence De Silva, I think. He wasn't a person of any importance at all, but he used to appear on platforms and he was definitely brash I thought. But, on the whole, no. I, E.W. Perera used rather, well, language like this occasionally, um, when - what was coming in, something - the Manning Reforms I think it was, he said, 'Don't touch this unclean thing ...' ha, ha, Still that's ....

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1. I was talking about the constitutional reforms despatch of 1909; Mr. Dyson is referring here to Clifford's memorandum on the Land Question in the year 1927.



I. Well, politicians on the make, I suppose?

D. Yes, oh absolutely, - I mean it was no wilder, certainly no wilder than the remarks that politicians in this country make.

I. Do you know what officialdom's attitude, or say even Government's attitude, to the religio-cultural renaissance of the time was?

D. The religious cultural - religio-cultural renaissance.

I. Yes, the - what was the attitude to the Theosophists and the Free Thinkers and the Buddhist revival at this time?

D. I don't think there was any definite reaction as far as I ever heard of, um ....

I. Well, you didn't really take notice of it?

D. No, I didn't. No. It wasn't - of course the riots of 1915 was [sic] the first time that things got warmed up at all.

I. Yes, I was going to come to that of course. For instance, these temperance meetings before 1915 ....

D. Oh, yes.

I. Did you view them disfavour?

D. Oh, no, I thought they were rather unnecessarily opposed to the Excise Ordinance, but I didn't, I mean it didn't worry me at all. It didn't strike me as foolish - I thought it was, you know, it was rather - temperance advocates gone a bit extreme.

I. Oh, I see. Weren't their meetings quite often rather openly political in content?

D. Yes, I think that's true, yes. Yes, I think - there was quite - and, yes that was something to link that up with the riots - of course as you probably know ....

I. Would you agree with the view - its a quote really - that the temperance meetings were 'political meetings held under the cloak of temperance'?

D. Oh, I don't think so - no. I think it was quite a genuine movement and people did think it was a bad show to license toddy,

D. and perhaps still more, to have arrack taverns where there hadn't been arrack taverns before.

I. Yes, I see, yes.

D. I think so.

I. Before coming on to the 1915 riots as such - I was wondering, I was thinking of the 1910 reforms and Sir Hugh Clifford in particular. He was rather unpopular among the Ceylonese?

D. I should think so, yes.

I. Do you know why?

D. No, I don't, I don't know why. The only time I have ever seen him in close touch with Ceylonese was when I was at Caltura [Kalutara]; he was invited down by, what's that man with very big estates in Kalutara district?

I. De Mel?

D. No, not De Mel.

I. Rodrigo? De Silva?

D. No.

I. Pieris?

D. No, it wasn't even Pieris. He lived a bit inland - he'd got lots of other estates, but - Fernan - was it - not Fernando either - oh dear, how silly of me to forget.<sup>1</sup> But at any rate I think he was invited there to lunch and I was invited too and he seemed to me to be on very good terms, get on very well - Well, I suppose he always would be in those circumstances.

I. Was he a man of considerable vanity?

D. Oh, I say; yes, I should say so. Definitely. And I remember him once at a dinner - it was at the G.O.H. I think. As far as I remember it was a kind of annual Civil Service dinner when we used to go up to Colombo ... a kind of darbar and he spoke of - or it may have been a farewell dinner for somebody - he spoke

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1. I think he was referring to the Dias family.

D. of his, himself being a great lumbering elephant and that his wife being the mahout who kept him in order, ha, ha, ha. But I think he probably was a man who got - he was certainly a man of great ability and tremendous driving power and I think probably ....

I. Did he inspire the Civil Servants under him as such?

D. Oh, I think so. Definitely I should say so. He, yes, I should say so. Not as much in my mind as Clementi - Clementi was the man whom I admired, but ....

I. But ....

D. ... he was much quieter.

I. ... wasn't he rather impractical?

D. Yes, he did, the first time he came up to Nuwara Eliya he sent instructions that they should make a new road of an easier gradient, going round through Maturata or something like that.

I. Through estates?

D. Yes.

I. But he was a man of considerable intellectual ability?

D. Oh, great intellectual ability. He even, he was really a scholar in Chinese and he was also a most intrepid traveller. On his first leave from Hong Kong he - I'm afraid I'm getting away from Ceylon - but he went overland by rail as far as he could, that was to Tashkent I think, and at Tashkent he engaged a caravan of some sort to go over to Kashgar in Chinese Turkestan and this meant crossing the Pamirs or some great range and for the whole of that period he was - his Chinese was of no use to him - and his European languages were of no use to him - he had to arrange beforehand exactly what's done.

I. Do you think he was rather at sea in Ceylon?

D. He didn't strike me so. I think he was, he wasn't very popular with the planters - I don't know about what his, what do you think his [popularity] with the Sinhalese? - I should think

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D. he was rather liked by the Sinhalese; perhaps he didn't make much impression one way or the other. No, I don't really know.

I. Getting back to this 1910 despatch. It was argued that Ceylonese middle class represented an oligarchic interest which was true I think, but isn't it also true that historical evolution of self-government as such has often been the work of an oligarchic interest?

D. Oh, very much so, yes.

I. So in effect that argument - well, take the Magna Carta for instance.

D. Yes, oh, very much so. I mean all the development in England has been gradually permeating from the higher classes to the middle classes and then ultimately to the working classes.

I. So in effect you could invalidate that argument, I suppose?

D. Um; Um. [yes].

I. Well, they also argued that they did not represent the masses on political problems and that the G.A.'s and the village headmen represented them better?

D. Well, I don't know. I don't think the masses were really interested at all. I mean, I think they were quite happy to go on cultivating their lands and as long as they weren't worried in any particular way, I don't - I wouldn't say they were a'gin reforms, but I don't think they were particularly ardent for reforms, I remember once being told - this isn't exactly a reflection on this point but - do you remember L.J.B. Turner who was ....

I. Yes, the writer.

D. Well, he told me that he met a Danishman, a Dane up in Mannar district I think, and he was having a talk with him, and he said, 'You'll be surprised to find how unpopular you are;' the English you know; we rather patted ourselves on the back as having been reasonably popular, but this, this Dane seemed to think there was a great deal of criticism and so on.

I. I wonder whether he had been in touch with the peasantry or with the educated class?

D. Well, I think he must have been in touch with the educated class, not the peasantry, but the impression he gave me through Turner was that he was talking about fishing people and that sort of thing.

I. Wasn't this mass silence just a case of being inarticulate rather than being content with British rule as such?

D. Well, I thought it was apathy rather than ...; not so much inarticulate as apathetic, and not really very interested.

I. Well, it's probable that their horizons were rather limited?

D. Yes, yes. Of course, schoolmasters and people like that were interested undoubtedly. What were you going to say?

I. I was coming to the 1915 riots. You were in Kurunegala then?

D. Yes, that's right.

I. Was there much trouble in Kurunegala?

D. No, Cumberland, the G.A. at the time, had the thing very well in hand. I don't know exactly what he did, but I was magistrates so I had the aftermath of it mostly.

I. Oh, I see.

D. There were certain .... Wenda was the village where there was a lot of rioting and looting and other places too, quite a number.

I. What was the village?

D. Well, WEUDA ....

I. Oh, I see.

D. On the road to Kandy. And there were rumours that there was going to be trouble from the disorderly elements of Dodangaslanda - you know the Dodangaslanda plumbago mines - there were rumours that people were coming in from there.

I. There were a lot of rumours flying about, weren't there,

D. Yes, and as I said, Cumberland took steps to deal with this... I don't know, perhaps he got De Mel to intervene, or something like that; I don't know.

I. De Mel was a big man in the district, wasn't he?

D. Oh, he was ... yes.

I. But wasn't he a low countryman?

D. He was, but he had bought up masses of land.

I. H.J. De Mel?

D. The father of the Metropolitan. [Lakdasa De Mel, present Anglican Metropolitan].

I. Oh, I see. Of course, ....

D. Jacob De Mel. No, not Jacob - yes, Jacob De Mel, I think. No that was the grandfather; Lakdasa's - his Lakdasa's own name is Jacob, but his grandfather was Jacob De Mel. H.L. De Mel, Henry De Mel. He was knighted and he was murdered, do you remember? Well, you wouldn't remember - it was long before your time.

I. What was the government view of the 1915 riots as a whole?

D. Well, I think they entirely discounted the idea that it was inspired by German agitation ....

I. Who put forward this idea?

D. Oh, I think just a few rash people who thought this ... you know, the way these rumours get about ....

I. You would not support the theory that local agents of the Freudenburgs<sup>1</sup> inspired the Kandy riots?

D. I shouldn't think so, no.

I. This was in Dumbara.

D. My opinion is [that] it was entirely economic, it was the - it is rather curious, I must admit, that it broke out simultaneously in so many places at almost the same time.

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1. A Commercial firm in Colombo with men of German origin at the head.

I. But it was almost the same time. Don't you think this coincidence in timing was the effect of rumour and a few instigators?

D. Quite likely, yes. Very likely. Of course, as you know it broke out on religious grounds in Kandy, but I think the animosity behind the Sinhalese was due to the fact that they resented the dominance of the Moors in economic and in trading and in buying up land when they got to a village, and ....

I. Do you think officials considered these riots an organised and premeditated uprising against British rule?

D. No, I don't think so myself. I certainly never believed that and I don't think my colleagues did either.<sup>1</sup>

I. Well, yes, I have read a thesis on this - Chalmers, Governor Chalmers ....

D. Oh yes.

I. Chalmers' first despatch categorically states it was not political and not anti-British as such. On the other hand, in 1916 Bonar Law - well, 1916 many of the European community - and by this I do not mean the officials only - ....

D. No, no.

I. ... definitely - I think especially the planters in outstations - definitely believed that it was, that there were intentions to attack them.

D. Mmm.

I. Would you say that this was correct?

D. No, I would say it wasn't correct, but I think it is quite possible that quite a number of planters did believe that, but I don't think it was a correct belief.

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1. Incorrect. Quite a number of Civil Servants in the thick of the riots were of this belief. See despatches and their enclosures during the later half of 1915.



I. Yes, I see. And Bonar Law stated in Parliament that it was a premeditated - he used the word 'premeditated' - uprising. I think - and Bowes, he called it 'an organised rebellion'.

D. Bowes did?

I. Yes.

D. Really!

I. He not only does that, he says that, he suspects in this case, that Frendenburg's local agents in Dumbara inspired the Kandy riots.

D. Oh, well, I quite disbelieve that myself. I don't know if I've got any deep grounds for my disbelief, but it doesn't seem to me correct at all. They struck me as pretty spontaneous things.

I. Yes. I think in Colombo, a recent study has shown that in Colombo alone there was some industrial unrest - you see the railway workers who had struck in 1912 - they were dissatisfied with - they had called off the strike expecting concessions and they were dissatisfied ever since.

D. Yes.

I. And there's some proof to show that they led some of the attacks on boutiques, you see.

D. Oh, I see.

I. But this is purely a Colombo point.

D. Yes, yes.

I. But why do you think Government arrested D.S. Senanayake and these other leaders?

D. Well, I don't know. I knew of a planter of my own name - not a relative but a great friend of mine - who lived in that area, ? and he was in touch with Moore, afterwards Governor-General, who was at that time specially appointed as A.G.A. for riot duty in that area, and I think he told me that it was Moore who arrested Senanayake and of course, in later years they were on very good terms as Governor and Prime Minister; but I don't know why it was,

D. it was .... The fact, the fact that he had been very much, I immersed in this temperance agitation that we've been talking about - although, as I say, I don't personally think it was political - there was a lot of feeling at the time - suspicion on that ground; and he was a man of great influence and so on, but what he did to rouse Moore's immediate suspicion I really don't know.

I. Do you think that some of the officials at least, and taking the [ whole ] British community, were rather ultra-sensitive on this point about criticisms of British rule? Well, it was a new thing and ...?

D. Oh, I think some were, yes, I do. I don't remember anybody expressing real indignation, but more in a supercilious sort of way.

I. Uh huh, do you think that - this is again hypothetical - that firmer action in Kandy would have quelled the riots?

D. No, I don't think it would.

I. Who was the G.A.?

D. Was it Vaughan? Now let me see, it was ....

I. I think it was.

D. It was before Kindersley's time. I think Vaughan. Well, I shouldn't ....

I. Was he a weak man as such?

D. Well, some people might say he was. He gave, he almost gave the impression of being .... Well, certainly not a strong man, didn't [sic] he?

I. Indecisive?

D. Yes, I think perhaps so. But he was a man who knew the place well. I remember Turner saying that he knew - Turner was then in the Excise and did a lot of travelling and he was very good at picking up information - and he said that Vaughan had got a very good knowledge of the Province.

I. And in Colombo, would you say that the Police didn't have the training and the backbone to handle this sort of thing? The Police?

D. Well, I don't know. I couldn't express an opinion on that.

I. Of course, it was sheer coincidence - it so happened that the riots in Colombo broke up when the Governor and the Colonial Secretary and the I.G.P. were all away, and the impression I get is that first few days there was no-one in charge ....

D. And no-one prepared to take great responsibility.

I. And to order shooting?

D. Yes. Yes. That may have been so. Mmm.

I. Do you think martial law was necessary?

D. Well, considering the state of affairs in Colombo, Yes I think it was. It certainly wasn't necessary in Kurunegala. There was no need of it at all there.

I. What about - do you think it was necessary - I'm inclined to think it was - but was it necessary to prolong it for three months?

D. Well, I don't, I don't really remember. As I say, I was all that time I was in Kurunegala and I was very busy with the court cases arising from the riots and that's about all I could say.

I. You wouldn't happen to know how much influence Herbert Dowbiggin<sup>1</sup> and Brigadier General Malcolm had with regard to advice on handling the riots?

D. Well, I should say, Dowbiggin a lot. I mean, he was a very strong man and a very able man and I should think any Governor or Colonial Secretary would definitely take his [advice].

I. What about Bowes? He was Principal Collector of Customs.

D. He was. He was very able, in quite a different way from Dowbiggin.

I. In what way?

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1. The Inspector-General of Police at the time.

D. Well, you mentioned cynicism for one thing.

I. Oh, I see.

D. I mean nobody would have accused Dowbiggin of being cynical. I can quite imagine Freddie Bowes .... I was very, very fond of Freddie Bowes, but I think ....

I. He was a bit unpredictable?

D. Pardon?

I. A bit French was he?

D. Oh yes. He married a French wife. I was ??.... But not until after he retired.

I. And, what about Sir Anton Bertram?<sup>1</sup> Was he a weak man? Bowes seems to think so.

D. Well, I should think he might have been. Again, I liked Sir Anton Bertram very much but I should be inclined to think he was, wouldn't you? [looking at Mrs. Dyson]. A little bit on the weak side?

Mrs. D. He was always suffering breakdowns, wasn't he?

D. Yes, he was. He was temperamental.

I. Temperamental.

D. Um. Well, at any rate perhaps not temperamental, but suffering from a nervous strain; quite apart from the riots, I mean ...

I. Yes, I see.

D. Perhaps overwork, you know. He was a nice chap.

I. You didn't talk to any European planters in you area about the riots?

D. Well, I must have done so. Actually, I mean they were always coming - we weren't very near any - we used to go out and visit a chap called Warburton Grey. We went out to see him and his wife several times. Arumpola (?), that was the nearest place. But lots of planters used to come in regularly to play tennis and so on. I

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1. The Attorney-General.

D. must have talked to them but I don't seem to remember any special impressions.

I. They were not alarmed as such?

D. Oh, I don't remember any - I mean, it wasn't a question like when the Moslem riots were [sic] in India.

I. Yes, I see. Were Indian events in your mind, say before these riots? Did - well, there were some forms of extremism and terrorism in India. Did you reflect on these or on their application?

D. Well, I thought how lucky we were in Ceylon to have nothing of that sort. I mean, I didn't think that, I didn't think there was any likelihood of political assassination or anything of that sort.

I. Is it true that, well, in the height of these riots, once they had clamped down martial law, Brigadier-General Malcolm sent an order, 'Take no prisoners'?

D. Oh dear! I never heard that. But I did hear the case of a chap, a Colombo man, a professional man, I'm not sure whether he was an American actually, rather boasting that when they rioted in Sabaragamuwa, they fired more or less at random ....

I. Oh, I see.

D. Well, I mean - well, that's - I mean, he was just - whether he was just a boaster ...?

I. Well, my father seems to think that Malcolm was a bit dotty.

D. Well, I never heard any enthusiastic praise of Malcolm I must say; but to me he was a very shadowy character. I never met him.

I. What about these drum-head court martials which - well, later there was some agitation against these.

D. Mmm.

I. What were the findings of this Commission of Inquiry? There was a Commission?

D. Yes, there was. I don't remember. No.

I. As far as I know, they said these were illegal as such - these court martials and these shootings on the spot - but they had been done in good faith. That's the impression I have but I was trying to confirm it.

D. Um. Well, I should have thought that from most of the people who were - not that I knew many of the people, if any, I can't remember any who were on any of these court martials - but I should have thought, on the whole, things were done in good faith, possibly in the desire to show the strong arm, and ....

I. Well, Bowes says that quite often these patrols were so helpless; they arrived at the tail-end of everything when the people had vanished because they knew they [ the patrols ] were coming ....

D. Yes.

I. ... but when they went back to headquarters they were sent out again and told, 'For God's sake do something.'

D. Oh, I see.

I. Some sort of frustration.

D. Yes. Well, I do remember a case of a headman being shot in the Kegalla District which was a very bad show. That was in Wood-Renton's <sup>1</sup>. report, I think.

I. Why was he shot?

D. Oh, because he said he couldn't arrest somebody or - and some....

I. They shot him on the spot?

D. Shot him on the spot. But that, that was one of the cases referred to in the - taken up in that Commission.

I. Was it, would you say that - would it be correct to say that sometimes the platoon leaders couldn't quite control the Punjabi troops?

D. Oh, I don't know at all.

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1. Chief Justice Arthur Wood-Renton. Actually it was Sir John Anderson, the next Governor who spotlighted the Kegalla shooters following a Commission under Renton.

I. Partly because of language difficulties.

D. Yes. I couldn't tell you that at all. As far as I remember, there were no Punjabi troops in Kurunegala District. I don't remember any, and I - I couldn't express an opinion.

I. The popular view - well, among some of the politicians - was that government rather panicked and went to extremes. Would you comment on that?

D. Um. Well, I don't know that this little story would be at all relevant on that. Cumberland was summoned - [the chap] who kept order very well, as far as I could see, in Kurunegala - was summoned down to Colombo and was interviewed by Stubbs, who said, 'Why didn't you do this and that and the other.' And he said, 'Well, of course, if you ordered me to, I would stand on my head, but I don't think it would do any good.' I mean that may have indicated that Stubbs was a bit panicky, I don't know.

I. In your court cases, would you say that you found these Moors - well, having been at the butt-end of these riots - they now had the opportunity of bringing charges against some of their old enemies?

D. Well, I had to dismiss a lot of cases if that's any indication of that. I mean, because I didn't think the evidence was good enough; but I don't remember any cases in which the defence was that they were charged because they'd got a grudge against them.

I. And Bowes also says that only one person lost his - her life actually - accidentally, but this seems rather an extreme point of view?

D. 'Only one person lost her life accidentally'; what does he mean by that?

I. Oh, I don't know. He uses the phrase 'accidentally', but certainly it can't be true because my father says that when they were chasing some people, a policeman fell down and his gun went off and shot some old man ....

D. I see.

I. Well ....

D. Well, where was your father at that time?

I. He was P.M., Colombo.

D. Colombo, yes. Oh well, he'll know a lot. Um.

I. Was, was Sir John Anderson rather unpopular because of his views on the handling of the riots? This was 1917.

D. I would say he, I wouldn't say he was unpopular. I think he was probably unpopular with some of the planters, but I shouldn't think he was unpopular - he wasn't enthusiastically loved by the Civil Service and ...

I. Why, was it because of - what sort of qualities ...?

D. Well, he was, um, perhaps he was rather reserved. I only met him once at a dinner party at Queens, at the Kings Pavilion, and so my impressions aren't worth very much.

I. Yes, I see.

D. I thought he was quite a good fellow.

I. Just one last question - is there any foundation for local gossip that Mr. Ennis did not get a knighthood because of his, because he was critical of the Government's action in 1915?

D. I shouldn't have thought so, but he wasn't, I know that he wasn't very popular with the Government, owing to his ... he was generally regarded as an acquitting judge and ....

I. Oh, I see. My father seemed to think that he was not a very good judge.

D. Yes. Well, I think he upset decisions unnecessarily and things like that, in appeal. I remember one particular case where two policemen were charged with, um, assaulting, I don't know whether in - to what - at any rate, intimidating a woman who was at Polgahawela police-station, and I, as magistrate, took up the case and I convicted (?) it, and it was tried twice - I can't quite remember why it was tried twice - but one occasion it was tried by



D. Wood-Renton and on the other occasion it was tried by Ennis, and Ennis definitely summed up for an acquittal and Wood-Renton summed up for a conviction. Well, they were, the men were acquitted.

I. Oh, I see, yes.

D. So I think Ennis's must have been the second case.

I. If I may switch to another sphere - I was going to ask you about the village headmen system. The gansabhas. Did you find them useful as administrative bodies?

D. Oh, they were quite all right. I mean - they, um, I mean I think they did their job satisfactorily.

I. What about - I thought they did not really - what about their work in irrigation matters - they were not quite up to the mark, were they?

D. Well, they needed keeping up to the mark - I mean there were - in Anuradhapura there were four or five inspectors who, if they hadn't gone around frequently, I have no doubt a lot more village work, irrigation work would have been neglected and was neglected, but ....

I. What would you say were their shortcomings?

D. Shortcomings? Well, oh well, lethargy and taking things too easily and ....

I. Corruption?

D. No, I shouldn't have thought so, but I really don't know ....

I. A difficult thing [to spot].

D. Well, one thing very much struck me in that connection when I was G.A., Anuradhapura - Freeman, you've heard of Freeman, I expect?

I. Oh yes.

D. He was still living there in retirement and I had a case where there was strong ground for suspicion against the Kachcheri Mudaliyar and I was holding an enquiry and I had a talk with Freeman and he

D. said, 'Well, the villagers do say that he takes more than he ought to.' I mean, ha, ha, ha....

I. Oh, I see.

D. Justified that he is taking something ....

I. But not ...?

D. Yes.

I. What sort of man was Freeman?

D. Oh, he was a very interesting man indeed. A little bit of a visionary ....

I. Impractical?

D. A bit impractical. They had a special kind of tenure in Anuradhapura: 'Freeman unanse dhipu idama'. There was 'akkra idama' and then inherited idama - I forgot what that was - and then 'Freeman unanse dhipu idama' - 'the land given by Mr. Freeman; ha, ha.

I. Ha, ha. I see. Would you say that he was somewhat naive and guileless?

D. Yes, oh definitely yes. He was thoroughly sympathetic with [sic] the villager, but prepared, prepared to say, 'Well, you ought to be able to, if they need the land, the forest, and if they need to cut it down, you ought to let them cut it down.' But he wasn't prepared to subscribe to any system of rotation by which ...; at least he might have subscribed to the system but [modified the] enforcing of it, but he wasn't ....

I. Mmm. How useful were the gansabhawa courts, the judicial work.

D. Oh, I think they were - I feel that I had more to do with the....

I. Administrative?

D. With the tribunals rather than with the gansabhawas.

I. Yes.

D. Well, the village tribunals?

I. Tribunals.

D. Oh, they were quite useful.

- I. Did they help, do you think, in reducing litigation?
- D. Oh yes, I do, yes.
- I. But didn't people prefer Police Courts?
- D. Well, I really couldn't say.
- I. And, for instance, did you find any difference between the working of the gansabha in Anuradhapura and in Kalutara?
- D. Um, now that's hard to say. I'm afraid I wasn't really observant enough, but ?? - but, I should think probably they were more, there would be more active people in Kalutara district than in Anuradhapura. They were more sophisticated down there.
- I. You didn't find any difference between, say, the Kandyan headmen and the Low-Country headmen?
- D. Yes, I did, in some ways. Well now, in what ways? You, of course, you count the - naturally you count the Anuradhapura headmen as Kandyan headmen, wouldn't you?
- I. Yes.
- D. And my own experience of Low-Country headmen was two brief years at Kalutara. Well, just a few months at Matara, um, and of course in Jaffna, but that's rather difficult. Well, I think there was more paternalism in Anuradhapura than in Kalutara. I mean they ....
- I. That is to be expected.
- D. Yes, you were still in the old traditional phase, whereas in Kalutara you were in a developing economy and ....
- I. Do you think the headmen were overloaded with work?
- D. No, I shouldn't think so. They had plenty to do, but I shouldn't say they were overloaded with work. You mean not the chief headmen, you mean the village headmen?
- I. Yes, the village headmen.
- D. No, I don't think so.
- I. What about the Korales and the Ratemahatmayas?

D. Well, I think some of the Ratemahatmayas had pretty hard work, but nobody ever struck me as being overworked or sort of reduced to a shadow or anything like that.

I. Do you think they should have been paid more?

D. Well, they weren't paid at all until, I mean, after quite a long time and I think the traditional idea - there was much to be said for the traditional idea of depending on local people of influence, but I think the time had come when it was necessary to pay them and I think perhaps they should have been paid rather more.

I. Just a shot at this question: I mean, have you any idea what motivated the political criticism of this system?

D. Oh, well, I think, I think probably a feeling that the headmen would resent anybody coming into their areas and asking for support from the villagers quite independent of them ....

I. Some jealousy then?

D. Yes, I should say so. Yes.

I. What sort of Governor was Manning?

D. Very level-headed I should say. Not, probably not terribly sympathetic, but shrewd, a sensible man.

I. You were under him?

D. Yes, yes, all of his time.

I. Did you like working in the Secretariat?

D. Yes, but I wasn't working when, it was during the interregnum when - wasn't it I think .... He came in 1919, didn't he.

I. Yes. And you were under Stubbs, were you?

D. I was under Stubbs, yes. I must have been under St.... - I must have been under Manning just when he first came but only for a few months. Oh yes, I do definitely remember, because I do remember Stubbs had a very amusing way of - I mean, minutes that he put up to the Governor - well, on any minutes - rather caustic comments he used to put in the margin sometimes, not complimentary to some of the officers whose ....

I. Stubbs or Manning?

D. No, Stubbs used to do them.

I. He had a sharp tongue, did he?

D. Oh, very sharp wit, yes. Very sharp. And on one occasion - one of his quotations - this is nothing to do with Manning - but he said ... some fellow - you know it was a very favourite phrase in petitions to say, 'You are next to God', and he said, 'Proximus sit longo intervalo', ha, ha, ha .... And, um, some other - oh yes, there was a man, a German Swiss who'd been expelled during the war and was seeking permission to come back from America I think - and Stubbs ....

I. ?, was it?

D. No; ? no, I don't remember the name at all. And Stubbs put up a memo [about] the man; he made a lot of qu ? ... and said, 'Well, the best thing is to leave him in some doubts as to whether he'll be admitted or not. After all, he would probably say to himself, "past omnia fura est perdere nolon"; which means - you are a classical man, are you?

I. No, I'm not.

D. No, well that means, 'After all, it would be madness to risk losing one's passage money'; and I thought it was rather bad taste for him to put these classical quotations in minutes to the military Governor who probably didn't know much Latin.

I. Yes, I see. Was he really bureaucratic-minded?

D. Stubbs?

I. Yes. Officious and ...?

D. I - well, I think he was quite fair-minded. He was - I think perhaps he was a bit bureaucratic-minded. You see, after all, he'd been trained from, immediately from leaving Oxford he'd gone into the Colonial Office and ....

I. Because Bowes has a really vast diatribe against him. I mean he said that Stubbs thought in terms of details and not on general questions.

D. Well, that might be true.

I. You didn't get that impression?

D. No, I didn't get that impression, but I wouldn't be prepared to counter it.

I. Mmm. And how about Sir Graeme Thomson?

D. Oh, I found he was a very able chap. Very nice fellow; I mean, very able. Of course he was ill and he ....

I. Even in the 1920's?

D. Oh, no, no, no. When he was Chief Secretary?

I. Colonial Secretary?

D. Oh, no, he was quite fit. It was when he was Governor. He died on the voyage home, as you probably know.

I. Oh, I see, yes.

D. Oh, yes, I had admiration for him. You probably know the story of how he came to be appointed - when he was in the Admiralty, Churchill of ten used to send for an admiral who was in charge of some particular branch and ask him questions, and he said, 'Oh, I'll send for Graeme Thomson; he'll know all about this '. And eventually Churchill said, 'Oh well, I'll send for Graeme Thomson myself, you can go out and do some sea, work at sea', and so he appointed Graeme Thomson in charge of that department instead of being the Chief Administrative Secretary; and that was what gave him his chance to get the Governorship.

I. I see. Was he a man of much imagination?

D. Yes, I should think so.

I. In this period - in the 1920's, well, you were mostly out in the Provinces, weren't you?

D. Yes, I only had two spells - one - only really one spell in Colombo, that was in 1918 to 1920.

I. What was your - did you read the Ceylonese - run English newspapers as such?

D. Well, I didn't read them as my regular duty - I just glanced at them sometimes and ....

I. What did you think of their style and tone?

D. Well, I wasn't - um, what were they, the Independent and the Morning Leader, was it?

I. Then the Daily News in the 1920's.

D. Well, I wasn't very much impressed, but, um, oh, I felt they were the kind of newspapers you probably, um, the kind of cheaper journalism that you had in this country.

I. I see, yes. And at this time there were legislative reforms; What did you think of these Manning, those called the Manning Reforms?

D. Yes.

I. In 1920 and 1924. For instance, the one in 1920, did Manning have much to do with it or was it the work of his Secretariat staff?

D. Oh no, it was Manning himself. I know Collins will be able to tell you a lot about this because he was ... - I was in the Secretariat at the time and working in the same room as he mostly and he was summoned to Queens Cottage in Eliya for three or four days to type out the despatch. It was essential that it should be completely confidential and he was quite a good typist, so ...

I. Collins?

D. Yes.

I. I see. And this was a period - do you remember a man called Goonesinha?

D. Yes, I do, yes.

I. What was your opinion of him?

D. Do you mean the sort of agitator stuff?

I. Yes, yes.

D. Well, I, I - I don't remember details about him, but if you refresh my memory a little, I may remember a little more ...

I. There was the 1923 strike ...?

D. The railway strike, was it?

I. Railwaymen and I think it spread to the harbour, and he led this. Were his activities looked on ....

D. With disfavour?

I. Yes, with horror more or less.

D. Oh, I should think so, yes. Didn't he afterwards become a State Councillor in Galle or somewhere?

I. Not in Galle, but somewhere.

D. Umm. Yes.

I. This sort of penal - er, I mean what about the Legislative Council? These personal attacks on Civil Servants, were they greatly resented?

D. I think some people did resent them quite a lot, yes. Um, but - I should n't think it was general - I mean, I can't remember at the moment any particular one [sic] speaking hotly against them or anything of that sort.

I. The Donoughmore Commission said that Civil Servants were demoralised as a result but were they?

D. Well, I shouldn't think so; no. No, I think that's, yes, um, yes I do remember that coming in to the report and I thought, 'Well, I didn't feel like that myself', um. There was quite a bit of talk of - I mentioned the incident where E.W. Perera put his oar in, but I thought that was justified. I didn't think - and of course some Civil Servants would have felt that interference like that was very bad and they would resent it. But on the whole I think at that time - let me see, Sir Graeme Tyrrell was then G.A. Kurunegala, and I remember him coming up to Nuwara Eliya and coming to - I was then A.G.A. Nuwara Eliya - and coming to see us and talking about arrangements he was making for the, for the elections and so on, and he didn't seem to bear any ill-will against the local members.

I. Socially, did you discuss Indian events, at all, at this time?

D. You mean ....



I. Now Gandhi was coming up and there was this mass movement. Did you discuss this sort of thing?

Yes, Gandhi was very much in the picture, discussions and talks, certainly.

I. Did you feel that this sort of thing had any implications in Ceylon?

D. Of course he did come over to Ceylon. I was invited by the sponser of a meeting at Kalatura to go and hear him, but unfortunately I was, I had arranged to go Up-country at the time and I didn't feel inclined to beak the - break my arrangement and stay back for that, but .... Gandhi was undoubtedly enormously admired in Ceylon I think - I don't mean by the Europeans; I think most Europeans thought he was rather a nuisance of a visionary, or perhaps they didn't regard him as a visionary, perhaps they thought he was an agitator - but I think most people did give him credit for being sincere.

I. Would you say that a man like Goonesinha - would you, was he regarded as an opportunist and a rather irresponsible ...

D. Oh, I would say so, yes.

I. Do you think .... Of course, you did not know him personally?

D. No.

I. What trade-union activites per se regarded as seditious?

D. Well, it was likely to be seditious, I should think perhaps, but not necessarily seditious.

I. For instance, well, ultimately there was some labour legislation in 1929. Do you remember ...?

D. 1929. No, I was, at that time I was in Anuradhapura.

I. G.A., weren't you?

D. Yes. Well, Anuradhapura would have nothing to do with trade-unions at all. No, I'm afraid I have no recollections about that.

I. No. What about these [ sic ] 1924 Constitution, for instance? What strikes me is that it was very similar to the Constitutions -

I. well, to the system operating in the First Colonial Empire, and also similar to the Jamaica Constitution of the 19th century which had been abolished ultimately as unworkable and as having rather bad constitutional principles.

D. Yes, well yes, that's curious because Manning had been Governor of Jamaica and You'd have thought that he would ....

I. He would have known?

D. ... that recent experience, he wouldn't have ....

I. It was not all that recent; it was not in his time ....

D. Oh, not in his time.

I. It was around 1866 that there was trouble ....

D. Oh, I see.

I. But in the 1924 Constitution , it had very much the same system. The "legislative Council had financial power and the - well, not so much responsibility - but no executive power; and the Executives had lots of executive power, but couldn't control the finances.

D. Yes, well, I remember there was a lot of talk at the time about 'power without ...', no, yes, 'power without responsibility', yes, that's the talk. Um, well, I think those at headquarters probably had some difficulty in getting things through and done. I remember when the riot ..., the boycott, you know the boycott chap on, when the Donoughmore Commission came in, well, um, the Kachcheri Mudaliyar there, who was a very good chap, was speaking I think at some school prize giving or something of that sort, and he was advising the Jaffna people to give up the boycott and go in for ... and I think this was a very sound thing. To my great surprise I had a letter from Colombo telling me to tick off the Mudaliyar for taking part in politics and I, well, I told him I had had this letter and implied that I didn't at all agree with it and the ticking off was the mildest possible ticking off, and he could regard it as a pat on the back if he liked, or something

D. like that. But I was afterwards up in Nuwara Eliya and Tyrrell who was then Chief Secretary told me, talking about this incident, he said, 'Well, as a matter of fact, the Governor finds it difficult enough - the Governor then I think, being Sir Graeme Thomson - he finds it difficult enough to carry on the government of the country with the Legislative Council as it is, and if we had five more council members from Jaffna it would be still more difficult, so he was awfully pleased that the boycott carried on. [sic]'

I. Oh, I see. That's a very interesting point. But what was your reaction to the 1924 Constitution as such?

D. Well, I really don't - unless you refresh my memory I don't remember the difference between it and the 192 ... , was it 19 ... ?

I. The 1920 and the 1924 were very similar.

D. Yes.

I. And that sort of Constitution, what was your attitude to it?

D. Well, I thought it was a reasonable development and ....

Of course, I know the Donoughmore criticised it very much and they went right to different, entirely different arrangements, a sort of county council ....

I. You see, Clifford called it 'an unworkable constitution', but said that there'd been lots of friction, whereas Governor Stanley said it was not as bad as Clifford made it out [to be], and that - he uses the phrase - 'co-operation outweighed opposition'. You wouldn't like to comment on these views?

D. Well, I think probably Stanley's was right. I think Clifford was rather impetuous and autocratic, and he would resent very much having to - after having complete control in Malaya and Borneo and - he would resent having to argue and persuade instead of order. But Stanley was a much, well, ....

I. More amenable?

D. Amenable to that type of thing, yes. Much more ready to ....

I. What sort of a man was Stanley as Governor?

D. Eh, I think he was quite good, um, ....

I. Not as capable as Clifford.

D. He wasn't as capable as Clifford, but he was more level-headed than Clifford.

I. More balanced?

D. Definitely balanced I should say.

I. In Bowes especially I see an attitude whereby he expects the Ceylonese who had come out to England and received a university education, to show their gratitude, he uses the phrase, 'to show their gratitude', by working smoothly with Government. What would you say about this sort of view?

D. Well, it always rather amused me when people talked of gratitude and ingratitude. I mean, I couldn't see why a subject people should feel gratitude ....

I. But were there some Civil Servants who did expect this sort of thing?

D. Yes, I think there were, yes.

I. Many or just a group?

D. Well, um, I think there were quite a lot who'd resent any indication of ingratitude or hostility, but I think there were some who did think that they ought to be more grateful .... My wife, who was much more liberal than I am generally speaking, rather feels, sometimes, how ungrateful people have been; not to herself personally of course.

I. But in general?

D. Yes.

I. Of course, one of the hot issues in the 1920's was this rather delicate question of Ceylonisation.

D. Yes.

I. And I do know as Government policy it was argued there were, the Government was against rather like any rapid for of Ceylonisation. Do you know what arguments were used?

D. Well, I should have thought - I thought that Stubbs was rather keen on Ceylonisation and of course it had been started, you know, considerably before that. When I went out in 1910 there was a local division of the Civil Service which consisted of, I should think, about 20 - I should think there were out of the service of about 120, there were 20 or so local division, and a very - I think that while Stubbs was Acting-Governor he amalgamated the local division - brought it in, worked it in with the service, and then of course they aimed at the fifty-fifty basis and then before I left Ceylon in 1946 it was rather more like 20 Europeans and the rest Ceylonese.

I. I do know that one of the arguments was that the stability of government would be undermined; and that local chaps could not be disinterested in local politics and that they could be worked upon. What is your view on this sort of argument, about this sort of argument?

D. Well, if you're going to have self-government you've got to run that risk obviously, but, um, ....

I. In effect this argument was not prepared for self-government [ sic ] .

D. Pardon?

I. In effect a person who argued thus was not prepared to give self-government?

D. No. Of course I mean in this country you might say that it's difficult for anybody administrative, doing an administrative job, not to be interested .... Well, of course it is, I mean, a man's bound to be interested, but he can hold the balance and ....

I. Yes, that's true.

D. I, I think that the chaps who did get in, as far as I saw, carried on much in the traditions of the Civil Service.

I. Well, I think one of the real props of this argument, of their argument against rapid Ceylonisation was that the, well, whereas

I. the other one was what you would call 'a government consideration', they brought in a popular consideration that the masses - the people would not trust these people's decisions ....

D. No. I see.

I. Their impartiality. Would you comment on that?

D. Well, I've seen no indication of that. Richard Aluwihare who succeeded me in Anuradhapura must have commanded - well, he didn't immediately succeed me, but he was one of my successors there, and did enormously good work during the war - he must have commanded very great respect and, um, admiration from the villagers generally. I can't remember any ....

I. But there seem to be a feeling among some, many of the Ceylonese officers that they were shunted into the judicial line, and not given, well, certainly in the 1920's and the 1930's.

D. Mm. I think there was an element of truth in that, yes. Um, where ....

I. Was this a question of status? I mean, at the top level as distinct from your case and the case of the individual officers, was there a feeling at policy level that since the G.A.'s were top men, it was better to have European officers?

D. Eh, well, there was at one time certainly feelings like that....

I. When was this?

D. I, oh, it goes back a very long time. There was an able Colonial Secretary before my time, Ashcroft or some such name ....

I. Ashmore?

D. Ashmore, that's right. He is said to have told Arunachalam - that's Ramanathan's brother -

I. Mmm.

D. ... 'Of course you would have been a G.A. years ago if it hadn't been for your, or you'd have been promoted out to the colonies if it had not been for the fact that you're a Tamil'.

I. Yes, I see, yes.

D. And he, I mean, he definitely said that in sympathy.

I. But it must have existed for him to say it.

D. Yes, yes.

I. And, in the 1920's, do you know if when these attacks were being made in Council for instance, whether the Civil Servants felt that Government should have protected them to a greater extent.

D. Um, well, I can't remember feeling that or hearing any of my colleagues express such a view, but I think it's, I can quite imagine it was said, but ....

I. You see these people could say so many things in the Council and government policy was not to have a clash in the Council because they had so little power there ....

D. Yes.

I. And it was a sort of deliberate policy of placation. And the Civil servants had to bear the result of this.

D. Yes, yes.

I. I was wondering whether there was ...?

D. Mm, I think you're right. There probably was some feeling about it, but it didn't seem to be - I don't remember any discussion or talks or any individual telling me how ill treated he felt, and ....

I. And what about the Donoughmore reforms? What was your reaction there to them?

D. Well, I thought how extraordinarily interesting to have this completely new kind of government. I think they spoke of it as being - this Committee system - as being introduced because under the previous constitution the councillors had rather fretted at not having had any executive power and they said, 'we'll give them, everybody, each member ...' - they would divide the whole thing up into committees and everybody, and we'll call - I think they did - the chairmen weren't strictly speaking ministers, but they

D. became known as ministers, um, and they thought well, this will be a main means of interesting them all and giving them all something to so .... And I also thought that the introduction - my wife didn't agree with me there; she thought I had made a mistake and I've come to see that she was right and I was wrong - I thought that the introduction of adult franchise was quite a good idea because it would make bribery impossible. But of course I'd forgotten that you could bribe by means of rash promises and well as by doling out rupees.

I. What do you think, what is your impression of the general reaction in the Civil Service?

D. To the Donoughmore Commission?

I. Yes.

D. I should be inclined to think, but I'm not at all sure, that people almost thought that it was a bit of improvement on the previous, but I don't really know. No.

I. Stubbs is - I think it's Stubbs - certainly some Governor is reputed to have said that, 'It was born in a delirium ...' (laughter) you know in effect saying that was a madness.

D. No, no, it wasn't madness. After all, it worked quite well for, how many years? 1920 to ....?

I. 1947.

D. Yes, 17 years.

I. And you think it was as good as a half-way house as could be devised?

D. Yes, I think so. It's just possible that - of course if they hadn't had the Committee system and gone straight on the Ministerial system it might have - but of course when it - independence - when the Soulbury Commission came along and finally independence, it worked exceedingly well until '46, didn't it? Until '56, I mean.

I. '47?



D. Yes, from '47 - the riots were in '56, weren't they?

I. In '58.

D. In '58, yes. Yes, and the Bandaranaike government came in in '56.

I. Yes, that's right. Do you know if it was Drummond Shield who was responsible for the more radical aspects [of the Donoughmore Constitution] ?

D. Well, I always felt that it was. I don't know; I mean, I met him and I was impressed by his ability, and actually I thought Sir Geoffrey Butler had a big hand in it too.

I. He did I think. A rather hypothetical question. What do you think the - do you think a Conservative ministry would have given such a report colder treatment? You see Sir Sidney Webb was Secretary at the time. And Sir Drummond Shields was Parliamentary Under-Secretary.

D. Oh! Well, I don't really know.

I. It was so high-powered, the Commission, that I think it wouldn't have made much difference.

D. No. Perhaps not.

I. Coming back to this question of universal franchise. Why have you changed your mind? You were ....

D. Oh, because I think it's done so fightfully badly in Africa.

I. Oh, I see. But don't you think it was a very great political education for the people, gradually, but ....

D. I think also in Ceylon it's been so bad in bringing up this contest between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, and racial, the development, the way Mrs. Bandaranaike, and perhaps he husband before her, used religious and linguistic arguments for getting votes, I thought, was thoroughly bad.

I. That is true, but this communal rift had appeared before even universal franchise.

D. Yes, yes. That's true, the Tamils were demanding fifty-fifty, which was silly of course. I mean, how could they possibly when they were about one quarter or a fifth of the population - how could they expect to have fifty-fifty?

I. And do you think for instance the communal representation that existed before the Donoughmore report; do you think it [the presence of communal representation] widened the rift? Or made things worse?

D. That is to say under the Manning Constitution?

I. Yes. And even before that?

D. No. No, I shouldn't have thought so. I think that until, well I should say up to about 1930 at any rate, if not 1940, there was very little communal friction. I may be wrong, but they all seemed to get along very well together.

I. You say it [universal franchise] brought these racial issues out, but couldn't, I would argue that whatever system of franchise you developed, it couldn't have obviated these class prejudices and these racial issues?

D. No, I suppose it couldn't. No. I don't think it could. And you're bound to get politicians using, using these methods for getting votes, yes.

I. Would, you, would you like to comment on the elections and electioneering methods under the Donoughmore Constitution?

D. Under the Donoughmore. Well, I had very little opportunity of judging that because I was G.A. Jaffna, and the boycott was on. There was one lot of, oh well, of course I sat ....

I. Later on in 1936?

D. Yes. Actually in 1930, it was '30, wasn't it?

I. Yes.

D. I did sit in the Rachcheri waiting for nominations and Mahadera came up from Colombo, I think, intending to put in his nomination if there was any reasonable hope of his being - oh no, he was

D. elected in Colombo - at any rate somebody came up and was ready to put in his nomination if he could get in unopposed, but there was somebody on the boycott side waiting and sitting there ready to slap in his the moment ... - so they thought better of it and decided not to.

I. Oh, I see.

D. Then after that, it was all boycott, boycott, until '36; and as far as I remember the elections then went off very quietly.

I. Was there a lot of impersonation?

D. Not to my knowledge.

I. Oh. And would you say that these sort of elections bred a bad type of politician and objectionable type?

D. No, not in Jaffna. I mean, Duraiswamy was a very good type I thought and ....

I. A capable man?

D. Yes, he was the Speaker, you know. Yes, he was capable and level-headed and ,....

I. Was he very communalistic or communal-minded?

D. No, he couldn't have been very much so because he was elected Speaker by a largely Sinhalese majority.

I. Well, perhaps that was one way of getting rid of a Tamil Vote!

D. Oh, ha, ha, ha. That's a possibility. Lets see, I - who were the other members now?

I. Mahadera?

D. Oh yes. Mahadera was a very ... - but he was really a Colombo man and not a, I mean, he had links with Jaffna of course, and ....

I. Ponnambalam?

D. Oh, Ponnambalam was quite a different type. He was ....

I. A firebrand?

D. He was a bit of a firebrand. He was quick-witted and a likeable chap in many ways, but definitely a bit of a firebrand.

I. Was he devious? I mean, did you consider him rather ....

D. Well, you mean, prepared to be a bit torturous?

I. Yes.

D. I should think he would be capable of it, yes. Yes?

I. Did you find things different, say between 1932 and '29.

Under the new constitution?

D. '32 and '29. Wait a minute, I must say, I mean my - things were very different for me because in '29 I was in Anuradhapura and in '32 I was in Jaffna, and of course, there is a world of difference between the two places in any case. Whether anything was due to the change of constitution I couldn't say at all.

I. What is your opinion of the administrative ability of these new Ministries?

D. Um, you mean the Ministers that exist now, do you mean?

I. No, under the Donoughmore?

D. Oh, I see. Under the Donoughmore. Well, they varied a lot, I mean Senanayake's Ministry was very capable because he was a strong man and he dominated his Ministry. I should think Kannangara's was very bad.

I. Mm. He was a weak man, was he?

D. I think so.

I. Vacillating?

D. No, I think he kept very strongly to his educational lines and what he thought was good, although he did send his daughters to a mission school. I believe. Um, now what school, [sic] were the others? Jayatilaka, I had an admiration for but he was much easier-going than Senanayake; he hadn't got his drive. I was much impressed by the difference between the two men when we had - just after they came in to office, the G.A.'s were down in Colombo for the January meeting and they [sic] two successfully came in to talk to the assembled G.A.'s and so on - ask for their co-operation I suppose and that sort of thing, and I was impressed by the difference between the rather scholarly and nice Jayatilaka and the much more vigorous and stronger personality of Senanayake.

I. Yes. Did you think these Ministries rather rushed into agricultural development before weighing the pros and cons?

D. No, I don't think so. I think it was very necessary to do agricultural development.

I. But weren't they rather sanguine as to what they could achieve through irrigation work?

D. Well, I don't know. What about the Gal Oya scheme, isn't that successful?

I. Well, as far as I can see, yes - well, with qualifications.

D. That was his biggest scheme. Then there was the raising of the bund of the Kala Wewa, that seemed to me a sensible .... And of course, Kala Wewa was one of the very best irrigation schemes, and it had got such a vast array of tanks under it - you know, small subsidiary tanks fed from it - which made it very very valuable.

I. Have you any idea how the leading officials, that is the former Colonial Secretary and the Secretariat men, took this diminution of power? Sir Graeme Tyrrell, I think, was one, and later on Sir Maxwell Wedderburn.

D. Well, I don't think - I knew both of them quite well, but not - I didn't discuss things like that with them, but I should have certainly said that Wedderburn wouldn't have any feelings of that sort. I should doubt whether Tyrrell - I mean, Tyrrell might think, 'Oh well, it's rather a pity to shed power', and so on .... He wouldn't resent it.

I. Yes, well, obviously there was a need for some adaptation, and it is said that there was considerable friction. I was wondering how far this was true?

D. You mean friction between them and the Ministers?

I. The Ministers and the Officers<sup>2</sup>of-State?

D. Oh, well, there must have been, because - I forget who told me - but somebody who really knew him quite well said that Wedderburn used to come away from meetings of the Ministers, not so depressed by not getting his own way ?, but the way they squabbled with one another.

I. Oh, I see.

D. He was physically sick afterwards.

I. Oh, I see, indignation and also at their lack of co-operation and ....

D. Yes, yes. Tyrrell, I don't know. He was certainly not a die-hard, by any means.

I. Oh, I see. He was a man of some imagination?

D. Oh yes, yes.

I. What would you say, what is your personal opinion of the Donoughmore Constitution in its working. Were there any shortcomings?

D. Well, I think the shortcomings were mostly to be seen by the people at headquarters, because of the difficulty of getting a decision, and I mean they didn't ....

I. Lack of efficiency?

D. Yes, in the Provinces it didn't come out ....

I. What do you think of the politicians' attitude to this question of passage allowances?

D. Well, what was their attitude about that?

I. They wouldn't vote the money for it, and the Governor had to pass it on his own.

D. Oh, I think that was, perhaps, they didn't want to incur unpopularity with their ....

I. With their own people?

D. With their own people. I don't suppose they .... most of them didn't mind a bit. But I know they did leave something - either Wedderburn or Tyrrell told me that on one occasion - I think it was Wedderburn - he told them that the Governor wasn't going to certify some measures that was ? , and they were quite taken aback, and rather horrified, because they thought they could safely oppose it, because the Governor would certify it. What it was, I'm sorry to say, I can't remember.

Mr. E.T. Dyson's Answers to Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts,  
February 1966.

It is 20 years since I retired and nearer 40 than 30 since I did land work in Kalutara District and the N.C.P. so I fear that my recollections are rather vague and that my observations will not be of much value; but such as they are, here they are.

1. Did you find Brayne's scheme of indivisible tenure rather impracticable from an administrative point of view? Did it mean a great deal of trouble for the G.A. and A.G.A.?

Answer:

I don't remember any difficulty arising over Brayn's[sic] scheme of indivisible tenure; on the other hand I have only a shadowy recollection of dealing with it. The only difference that I remember is that in certain cases bidding was restricted, but that did not cause any difficulty.

No, I should say that the change did not involve much trouble for G.A.A. and A.G.A.A.

2. What was the peasants' response to the Land Kachcheries and to the new form of tenure? Did they comprehend what sort of land they were getting?

Answer:

Frankly I have no recollection of the peasants' response. I don't remember any petitions protesting against the new arrangements.

3. Did it bring the A.G.A's and G.A's into odious contact with the villagers in that they had to keep after them and turn them out if they had broken the conditions? Was there much defaulting of this sort?

Answer:

A.G.A's and G.A's were not brought into odium as far as I know. If it were so I was blissfully unconscious of the fact. Such few evictions as I remember were from lands held on short term lease permits.