

SIR CHARLES HERBERT HARTWELL, C.M.G.

b. 25 April 1904.

B.A., Cantab.

C.C.S. 1926-35, 1936-40, 1942-47.

17 Dec. 1926	apptd. to C.C.S.
17 Jan. 1927	attached to Kandy Kachcheri.
25 Oct. 1927	attached to the Secretariat.
7 May 1928	O.A., Nuwara Eliya.
4 Jan. 1929	P.M., Gampola.
13 Jan. 1930	O.A., Galle.
12 May 1930	on leave.
31 Aug. 1931	Asst. Chief Sec.
4 Jan. 1932	O.A., Batticaloa Kachcheri.
27 March 1933	Sec. to Minister for Labour Industry & Commerce and Deputy Dir. of Commercial Intelligence.
19 May 1933	Additional Deputy Controller of Labour.
8 June 1933	attached to the General Treasury and Sec. to the Select Committee on the Salaries and Cadres Commission Reports.
	16 Oct. 1935 - 15 March 1936 seconded to act as Sec. to Sir Alan Pim during his Enquiry into the cost of administration and the system of taxation in Kenya.
16 March 1936	on leave.
3 Dec. 1936	A.G.A., Kurunegala.
7 Oct. 1937	attached to the Chief Sec's Office.
1 June 1938	Asst. to the Chief Sec.
	4 Oct. 1940 apptd. Admin. Sec., Palestine by the Sec. of State.
15 March 1942	re-transferred to Ceylon by the Sec. of State.
25 March 1942	Sec. to the Governor[Sir Andrew Caldecott].
5 Nov. 1942	Asst. Controller of Imports, Exports & Exchange.
16 Jan. 1945	Acting Controller of Imports, Exports & Exchange.
30 June 1945	Asst. Controller of Imports, Exports & Exchange.
31 Dec. 1945	attached to Chief Sec's Office.
Feb. 1946	Acting A.G.A., Nuwara Eliya.
14 March 1946	Acting Sec. to the Governor[Sir H.M. Moore].
1947	transferred.
	1947 Director of Establishments, Kenya.
	1952 Deputy Chief. Sec. and Member for Education and Labour of Legislative Council of Kenya.
	1955-60 Chief Sec., Uganda. 1960-63 Chairman of Public Service Commission and Police Service Commission in N. Rhodesia.
	1966 serving in the Ministry of Overseas Development.

11 January, 1966.

Six foot, six or so in his shoes Sir Charles presents an imposing figure and has a business-like nature and an ability to match it. He is still in active service having returned from Zambia to a senior post in the Ministry of Overseas Development. On the other hand the very fact that he has been on active colonial service in several African countries has meant that many of his preceding Ceylon memories have been wiped out. On many details, therefore, his memory was vague. I found him extremely frank throughout the interview even when it came to individuals, though no doubt he moderated any 'outrageous' opinions he might have held with regard to some. I should think that candidness and forthrightness were part of his nature and that he was a man who had the courage of his convictions. What were as useful were his objectivity, his insight and his width of interest. Much as he stressed the fact that as a young Civil Servant he was more concerned with his tennis, etc. and his daily tasks rather than political issues and the like - no doubt largely so - his reference to discussions with Dr. W.A. De Silva at the club would suggest that he was politically-minded. I am certain that he was a man of liberal views and, by the time of the interview, had acquired such a considerable experience on colonial questions on top of this as to make the interview of great value. The fact that the white settlers of Kenya wished him recalled is a yardstick of his liberality and his guts; and his views on the Mau Mau uprising emphasise this. On the more sensitive issues concerning racial prejudice in Ceylon he was quite ready to agree with Stace's view; and in such views he was never sweeping. Nor were they the criticisms of a Labour man, for I should be surprised if he is not a Conservative. In other words, I believe him objective and balanced in his views. I should think that even in his younger days he had a questioning mind which did not, perforce, follow the old grooves. I would say that he had considerable drive; to hazard a more tentative guess I feel he might have been a superior who was not easy to please in that he demanded a very high standard of efficiency.

Given these traits it is of significance to the interview that he was very much in the inner circle; i.e. either holding Secretariat posts or acting as Secretary to the Governor, etc. during a good proportion of his stay in Ceylon. However, some of his Secretariat experience was in a very junior position.

Without much hesitation I would tend to value his assessment of men and matters highly. It is of significance that as Caldecott's Secretary he formed as high an opinion of him as Sir J.B. Nihill. It is of relevance that his picture of Wedderburn tallies with the knowledgeable opinion of Mr. Mulhall.

M.W. Roberts

13.1 and 16.1.66

INTERVIEW WITH SIR CHARLES HARTWELL

11 January 1966.

- I. ... beginning by ...
- H. Asking questions.
- I. Yes. And usually on the administrative aspect. If I may ask what made you join the Colonial Service?
- H. Well, my father was a Civil Servant. But I didn't want to - therefore I had a predeliction for the Service. But I didn't want to commute to London, you know. By far I preferred a job abroad, which meant either the I.C.S. or the Colonial Service.
- I. Would you have preferred the I.C.S.?
- H. No.
- I. I notice at this stage several people would rather not have gone there, even if they had the choice.
- H. I had a choice. I chose Ceylon rather than India, Malaya or Hong Kong because - really by chance (?) (?) (?). But I was introduced by the Colonial Office to two Ceylon people, (?) Murphy(?), Dave Lanktree(?), both dead now. And I got such a good account of Ceylon from them, which was entirely justified, that I chose Ceylon; and never regretted it.
- I. How did you pick up your job once you went there? For instance, did you find that you were given any inkling of what your job was like, once you landed there?
- H. Oh yes. I learnt the job my first post was Cadet in the Kandy kachcheri, and I learnt the job by doing it. But everybody from the Government Agent, who was old Kindersley, downwards, was very helpful to me. The people who really taught me were the clerks. And people like the kachcheri mudaliyar and kachcheri muhandiram and so on.
- I. Yes, I see.
- H. You picked it up as you went along. It was a very good way of learning I think.
- I. It was very much in the empirical British tradition?
-

- H. Very much so. Yes. It worked quite well.
- I. Not quite?
- H. It was. It worked quite well.
- I. Quite well. What about the larger issues? Did you feel that, for instance, the Colonial Secretary, whom you met when you landed, could have given you an idea of what the - of the larger issues?
- H. Well, I think now - I don't think it would have been suitable for the Colonial Secretary to do this. But I think now, looking back on my service, that it would have been a great advantage if somebody at the Colonial Office had given us background-reading-material. So that we knew much more about the history and the economics and the politics of the country than we did in fact know. I knew nothing about this, and picked it up gradually while I was working in Ceylon.
- I. What about the more general sort of courses that they had later on in Oxford and Cambridge?
- H. Well... You mean the Devonshire courses?
- I. Yes, that's right.
- H. Yes. Well, of course we - Ceylon never did these, as you know. The African territories did a Devonshire course before leaving - did a Devonshire course before they went out to their territory. Ceylon never did this. And its true that, I suppose, Ceylon people went on second Devonshire courses. I never went on one myself. I think that the Devonshire courses served a useful purpose in this way. It did give the people some general background to the territory they were going to. Which I lacked.
- I. And also would you have liked a bit more specialised instruction on rather peculiar problems like the chena problem, and tenurial questions in Ceylon?
- H. Well, I don't think so, no. Because when you came to deal with that subject, then you got to know about it.
- I. I see.
- H. I think if we'd - if we'd had, not a formal course, but if we'd been given reading material on a subject like ancient history, economics, and political background it would have been a tremendous advantage. And we could
-

have got a grasp of the general problems of the country much quicker than we did in fact.

- I. Of course, I'm somewhat of an academic bent, and I was wondering whether even in questions like the chena problem or general land questions, apart from something on Ceylon, some knowledge of policies in places like Indonesia and India, which presented alternatives, would have helped you in formulating policy in Ceylon?
- H. I think - I think it would have been excellent. But I daresay the people who actually deal with these things like the Land Commissioner's Department(?) and the Land Settlement, Forest, Agriculture, for all I know they may have studied what was done in other places. I certainly think they ought to have done so.
- I. Did this empirical sort of training also mean a certain degree of trial by error?
- H. I don't think so. I don't think so because, you see, we were filling a niche in an existing organisation. I mean when I went and started as a Cadet in Kandy there was an organisation, which I think was pretty efficient, already in being. And I gradually grew up doing my little bit in first this and then some other organisation. And taking it pretty much for granted. I mean, it only gradually began to dawn on me till I should think I probably - probably by the time I'd had ten or twelve years service. I felt that and political problems. For example, the fact that really I was superfluous because there were plenty of Ceylonese who could do the job better than I could. You see? This didn't occur to me at first. I just took it for granted that this was the system, and I was there.
- I. When you were a Cadet, and even as an O.A., did you feel that you could have been given more responsibility than was actually devolved?
- H. No, I didn't. I didn't feel that at all, except ...
- INTERRUPTION
- H. I was in Kandy. The Office Assistant in my time was a man called Sudbury, who had been injured in the World War. And he had long periods off duty. He was ill. His head
-

gave him trouble. And so I had - had to do rather more than perhaps I might have done otherwise. It was a very good thing for me. It pitched me into it and made me do the job. Then, after that, once I ceased to be - when I went into the Secretariat, which was very instructive, I was a sort of dogsbody. But one of the things that the Cadet had to do was to sign letters for the Colonial Secretary or Chief Secretary or whoever it was. And I used to read the files and see what had led up to the letter which was being set out. But, of course, this was really the best way of learning the job. Oh, I wouldn't say that. I think I got the degree of responsibility which I was capable of carrying.

- I. Is there any truth in some of these anecdotes about Chief Secretaries and Governors who signed a thing without even reading it, sometimes - you know, on occasions?
- H. I wouldn't think so. You mean - it depends what the thing is. I mean often enough I'd say, when I was Chief Secretary in Uganda, 'Can I sign this, clerk?'; or this would be something which was either a formal document or else something which I'd previously approved. And I really wanted to know that it had been correctly copied. But no, I don't think so. I don't think that's justified at all.
- I. One thing I found during my interviews with the Civil Servants, with regard to the training out in the field, was that it varied very much. Some had felt that they'd had a good training and ultimately a lot seemed to have boiled down to who the particular G.A. was.
- H. I think this is absolutely true. Yes, absolutely true. Now old Kindersley, when he was Government Agent in Kandy, he took me out a lot. And - which was useful and instructive to me.
- I. Yes.
- H. On the other hand, when I was in some other places I didn't go out at all. For example, when I was an Office Assistant in Nuwara Eliya I did all the office work. And the A.G.A. did all the tours.
- I. Yes, I see.
- H. I'm not going to tell you who the A.G.A. was.
-

- I. Yes, now Mr. Bond was under Campbell in Puttalam I think.
- H. That's right.
- I. And he said he got - he was staying with him so he got a very good training.
- H. Yes. Yes.
- I. But others have complained about having hardly any relations with the G.A.
- H. Yes. I couldn't complain of that. For example, when I was in Galle, Wedderburn was the Government Agent, and he was first rate in his way. I learnt a lot from him.
- I. Yes, he was a very good provincial officer wasn't he?
- H. Yes, excellent. Yes.
- I. What about the Secretariat? You were there pretty early on?
- H. For a short time. For a year.
- I. Would you agree with the Donoughmore Commission's view that it was a bottleneck? At this stage?
- H. I think it was a bottleneck. But I also think that it was supremely efficient. I think the technical organisation of the Secretariat was magnificent. It was - but you see it was a small number of people dealing with a huge mass of business.
- I. Yes, well, I don't think they are ...
- H. The clerks and the system of filing and the precis writers were mag... - far better than this place. Far better than the Ministry of Overseas Development. Much better.
- I. Who had been responsible for this organisation?
- H. I suppose people gradually built it up over the years. It was a bottleneck in the sense that large issues of policy, no doubt, would get stuck at the top. Because they required a long time to consider.
- I. And also perhaps the very volume of ...?
- H. Of the work. Yes. If you think of it, you see, what have you got? You've got the Colonial Secretary, the Treasurer, The Controller of Revenue. These were really the only people who existed in what you might call minister level. Below that you've got all the departmental level. Nowadays for a corresponding volume of business you'd have perhaps ten or a dozen ministers.
- I. I'm rather surprised that earlier on, they hadn't in effect
-

created more ministers? In the last executive council, to cope with this volume of business?

H. Oh, you mean, when they actually did do so?

I. Well, yes.

H. It was Donoughmore, 1933 was it? '34? '31 was it?

I. That was in effect done for political reasons. But without having the political paraphernalia, purely for administrative convenience, the Secretariat might have devolved more work ...

H. Yes. Well, now, I don't know. I mean, I can't - its a long time ago. I was operating at a low level in those days. I can't say whether that would have been a good thing or not. I would think it might have been. To split up. I mean to elevate, at any rate, the Colonial Treasurer, old Woods, to the level of a minister; and perhaps two or three other people like the Labour Commissioner, the Controller of Revenue.

I. Did you feel - this was in these early days, pre Donoughmore - did you feel that the Secretariat was - tended to be somewhat unreceptive to new ideas? And more for a policy of quieta non movere? I know you were at a very junior level of course.

H. Obviously so - just - I just can't - I just don't know whether that is so or not. It wouldn't surprise me but, I mean, it was so long ago and I was, as you say, at such a low level that I just don't know about that.

I. Of course this was just about the time when the Commission was due to come out ...

H. That's right, yes.

I. ... and there were some changes.

H. Yes.

I. What about the political interference and the personal political attacks in Council and in the newspapers, which were - seemed to have been rather prevalent at this time?

H. Well, it didn't affect me at all. I mean, no doubt, I just took it for granted. People who were being attacked in the more senior positions perhaps felt it, but it didn't affect me at all.

I. I'm wondering whether you can recall any incidences when you could - when some of the senior officers complained about it, or, you know, swore about this interference?

- H. No, I can't recall that at all. My recollections of - no, I can't remember that at all. My recollections of Ceylon, of course, are much clearer in later times when I was there. Its perhaps natural.
- I. Its very natural. Do you know if Civil Servants resented these sort of attacks?
- H. Well, I know some did, yes.
- I. I was raising questions on this point because the Donoughmore Commission went so far as to say that the Civil Service were demoralised as a result. But I was wondering ...
- H. I should have thought that was a great exaggeration.
- I. Yes. I was wondering about that.
- H. I should have thought so. Yes. Because after all you've got some fairly tough characters like Woods and Sir Wilfred Jackson, who was Attorney-General. My recollection is that they were perfectly capable of coping with the situation in the Legislative Council. I should think in the Executive Council as well. I wasn't a member of it of course, ...
- I. Yes, Woods was known as a good spokesman. And I think he was in effect the Government spokesman.
- H. Well, on all the financial things, certainly he was. He was a much better speaker than most of the other people were. He was a good speaker. Jackson was a very fluent speaker.
- I. Is this St. John Jackson or ...?
- H. That's right.
- I. What sort of man was Woods as a - as a ...?
- H. (?) (?). Very able, very hard-working.
- I. What about the Donoughmore Commission itself? Do you know if it consulted Civil Servants widely?
- H. Well, my recollection is that it did. But it certainly didn't consult me. I was too humble at that time.
- I. Yes.
- H. I think it did so.
- I. The impression seems to be that it was Sir Drummond Shiels who was responsible for the more radical aspects?
- H. I think that's probably true.
- I. You wouldn't know for certain?
-

H. I don't know about things like that.

I. Another ...

H. Dr. Drummond Shiels.

I. Oh yes, doctor. Another thing that seems to have come up was that they favoured having Tom Reid is it? - as Secretary later on.

H. Tim Reid.

I. Tim Reid.

H. That's right.

I. But I'm surprised that they would have favoured him being the Chief Secretary under this new Constitution because his - he was not all that senior was he at that stage?

H. My recollection is that Tim Reid was Labour Commissioner. I might be wrong though. But - I don't know at all....

I. Someone mentioned it. He was not certain, the person who mentioned it. He was not certain whether this was true or not.

H. I've no idea whether its - I mean I never heard a suggestion that Tim Reid should be Chief Secretary. I think he retired about this time, didn't he? About the time the Donoughmore came in?

I. Oh, I see.

H. But was he associated in some way with the preparation of material for the Donoughmore, or was that (?) (?). I seem to remember him having a special job about this time.¹

I. Oh. Maybe that's what brought him to their attention.

H. Yes.

I. But since he was a Labour man - I mean he became a Labour M.P. afterwards ...

H. That's right. He did.

I. ... it seems quite a possibility that Dr. Drummond Shiels would favour him being the Chief Secretary.

H. Well, you might think that. But I can't remember that it ever - such a suggestion was ever made. It wouldn't be the business of the Donoughmore Commission, of course, to suggest who should be Chief Secretary. It would be outside their terms of reference.

I. What was your own reaction to the whole Constitution?

H. Donoughmore?

I. Yes.

1. Reid was put in charge of the preparations for the elections.

H. Well, I'm not - I'm not so critical of the Donoughmore as many people were. I think, on the whole, that it served a lot of useful purposes. And after all it lasted until the end of the war. It was made to work in very difficult circumstances during the war. And I think it achieved a lot. I mean, it gave the Ceylonese politicians the opportunity of taking part in the formulation of policy, and the supervision of department. It gave them some practical experience of Government work. It produced some people who became - like Senanayake - who became very successful ministers. It accustomed the Public Service to working under Ministers. And it carried the Government on from about 1931 until, I suppose, nineteen ...?

I. '47.

H. '47, '48. I think its true - people often say that it didn't work as it was meant to work, because powerful Ministers like Senanayake brushed aside the Executive Committee, and more or less did what they wanted. But still it did work and I think probably it achieved more than could have been achieved with a - the old-fashioned Crown colony sort of government. Well, in fact, it would have been totally impossible to carry on with that form of government.

I. That's a very interesting view, Sir Charles. Of course, I think, its also a mistake to think that constitutions always work the way in which they are intended to work.

H. Yes, yes. Maybe my views on this are influenced by the fact that subsequently, elsewhere, in Kenya and Uganda, I've worked in ministerial systems which, although there were no Executive Committees of the sort we had in Ceylon, they've got a broad resemblance to the general system which operated there. I mean, I personally would favour associating the people of the country with the Government as Ministers before - long before they get to the stage of independence. I think that's the right thing to do.

I. Why? For the training?

H. Yes. And also because its a natural desire of people to take part in the government of their own country, isn't it?

I. And did you feel, not only in Ceylon but elsewhere, that

this gave a greater drive and a sense of purpose?

- H. Well, I think - certainly I think that was so in Ceylon. For example, look at Senanayake's party policies. I don't think there's any doubt about that. I think it was so in Africa too. But the essential part about it is that, I mean, you can't - we had a democratic system here and it was natural that - in these territories that people should want to have a voice in their own government, their own Civil Service. This is the way to do it.
- I. That is - it was also very interesting to hear you say that it [the Donoughmore Constitution] was generally not in favour. Would you say that most Civil Servants didn't like the idea?
- H. Well, I don't know about the Civil Service. But you'll find most people, most writers and, I think, most Civil Servants, criticised the Donoughmore scheme.
- I. Oh, I see.
- H. But, in fact, it operated - enabled us to run the country for a period, as you said, fifteen or sixteen years. Including the period of the war.
- I. What about the general Civil Service reaction at that time? I know it was - well, there were varying views. But would you say that the majority thought it rather premature?
- H. Rather?
- I. Premature.
- H. I can't recollect that. I expect there was a lot of belly-aching about it. But, in fact, of course, most people settled down quite happily to the ministerial system. And remarkably few people retired. As you know, they could take-off with some small degree of compensation.
- I. What did you think of the terms of retirement that were offered?
- H. Well, they were nothing like as generous as what's offered nowadays. But then, the change was nothing like so dramatic. You see, after all, the Secretary of State still retained control of the Public Service at that time. These compensation schemes - which, as a matter of fact, is one of my responsibilities now, have - they were introduced in territories where the Secretary of State gives up all control of the Public Service and the territory becomes
-

- independent and totally responsible for the Public Service.
- I. Yes, I see.
- H. You see? Quite different. Well, I think - I should think there was quite a lot of criticism by Civil Servants. Mainly according to their temperament. But, in fact, it wasn't so bad that many people wanted to get out. And some people, of course, would much rather work under their - under a minister, than work under the old system.
- I. Oh, you have heard several Civil Servants ...?
- H. Oh yes, most certainly, yes. Particularly those working in Senanayake's ministries. Because they could get money, people like the Irrigation Department, could get money to do the things they'd always wanted to do.
- I. I thought Senanayake didn't hit it off with some of the ...?
- H. True. He didn't hit it off with everybody. But he hit it off with some. I'm a great admirer of Senanayake.
- I. What did you think were his particular qualities?
- H. I think he had drive and imagination, and great devotion and lots of guts and tenacity.
- I. Wasn't he ruthless at times?
- H. Ruthless?
- I. Yes.
- H. In regard to people?
- I. Yes, perhaps, and in his demands.
- H. Oh I - can I think of a case? I can't think of a case where I - it may have been so, but it wouldn't have been one of the things I would have said about him. No.
- I. What about particular bees in his bonnet? You know, particular schemes which he was enamoured of, and which he, well, rigidly adhered to, whatever ...?
- H. Against technical advice?
- I. Yes.
- H. There may have been such for all I know but I'm not conscious of them. I think, by and large, most of the people in his ministries would have said that because of his interest and his drive, and his power of course - political power - ...
- I. Yes.
- H. ... they were able to do much more than they would have been able to do under a different system.
-

- I. No, I also agree with you. But I was just trying to get the other side.
- H. Yes, yes.
- I. What about the grant of universal franchise? Did you favour it then?
- H. Well, I - do you know I think - 'Did I favour it then?' I don't - I can't remember and I think I was probably indifferent. You know, I'd probably thought, 'Well, this isn't a thing for me to decide. What the heck ... Well, let them. I will get on in implementing(?) speed(?)'.
- I. What do you think about it now in retrospect?
- H. I think that it was right. I think it was right. I think that ... I know that Ceylon has run into frightful difficulties. I don't think its due to universal franchise. I think its due to other things. It was easier for us to avoid the difficulties which they've run into. Because if you think of it the British Government had at its disposal a decisive degree of physical power, which could be used whenever necessary. Now this was never stated; nobody ever mentioned it openly. But it was realised, it was at the back of everybody's mind. So that any row between the Sinhalese and the Tamils over the use of the Tamil language, for example, was inconceivable. Because the Government wouldn't have let it happen, and was in a position to stop it happening. So it was really very much easier for an alien government, with force at its disposal, to cope with problems of this sort than it is for a democratic local government. You see what I mean?
- I. Yes. Regarding this communal split, on the other hand, couldn't you say that, at the verbal level, the very fact that there was a third power who was supposed to be an umpire, meant that there was more squabbling between the two communities? Squabbling for power more or less?
- H. Between the Sinhalese and Tamils?
- I. Tamils.
- H. You mean the existence of the other power encouraged them to ...?
- I. To pitch high demands.
-

- H. Yes. You mean - what you're suggesting here is that the only way that they could in fact become reconciled is to fight it out between themselves - I don't mean physically - without an umpire, and gradually get used to each other?
- I. Either that or a pretty firm statement by the umpire very early on what was going to be the end, and a strict adherence to that, you see.
- H. Yes. I think there may be something in this. But I think though - the real fact is that, because the conflict between them would never be allowed to become a physical conflict, that I would think it would tend to be damped down.
- I. Yes, I see.
- H. Because I can remember that there were always something between the communities. There were those riots in 1914 for example.
- I. Mmm. 'Fifteen.
- H. Against the Muslims.
- I. Yes, that's right.
- H. Now this was really because the Sinhalese resented their industry and their ability to make money and so - so that the place wasn't entirely free from communal strife.
- I. No, it wasn't. But it was still not like India.
- H. Nothing like India, no, no.
- I. What about the Executive Committee system itself. What do you think now of its working?
- H. Well, I don't think it was a good idea personally. Assuming that you've got a party system. Of course in Ceylon at that time there wasn't a party system. No proper political parties in existence. And therefore it was quite a good way, I think, of giving all the people in the Legislative Council the opportunity of getting some political experience. Of taking a part in the work of a Government. I went as Secretary to G.C.S. Corea at one time before - I've forgotten when about. And they took quite an interest in the work of the Executive Committee. Some much more than others. He wasn't a Minister who dominated the people the way that Senanayake did. I think it helped a party system to develop.
- I. Did you have to attend any committee meetings as secretary?
-

- H. Oh yes, I had to attend all of them, yes.
- I. Were they rather confusing or - and was there much squabbling?
- H. Oh, a good deal of argument, yes. Yes, there was, yes.
- I. And I was wondering whether, well, there was so much argument that hardly any decisions ...?
- H. No, no, no, that's not true at all. Oh no. Oh no. Oh, it was possible - it was certainly possible to - to get business done. I mean the departments - what did we have? We had the Labour Department.
- I. Industry and Commerce.
- H. Commerce and Industry. Can't very well think of anything else. Immigration did we have? No, I don't think so. Anyway at least when a decision required to be taken, it was taken. I mean, it wasn't impossible to work it at all.
- I. How did you find Corea as a Minister?
- H. I liked him very much.
- I. Regarding this training which these Committees were supposed to give the politicians, could it be called bad training in the sense that they began to meddle in the wrong things, and gave the wrong sense of priorities?
- H. I don't think so. I wouldn't have said that, no. I wouldn't say that at all. I mean, I think that one of the handicaps of Ministers elsewhere, for example in Africa - one of the handicaps there is that the Ministers haven't got any previous experience of government business at all. But I would have said that the advantages would certainly outweigh the disadvantages.
- I. Yes.
- H. Its true that there was a certain amount of intrigue and jockeying. I mean, trying to get jobs for people, and trying to get decisions made which would benefit the community or relations or something of this kind. But I think this has been exaggerated a good deal.
- I. Was there a certain amount of log-rolling? You support me in this and ...?
- H. Oh, certainly, yes. Quite a lot of it.
- I. I suppose that sort of thing is inevitable in committees?
-

- H. Yes. I think its inevitable in the Colonial Government, Executive Council. You get Ministers doing a deal with each other. Perhaps they don't say so but its, you know, more or less taken for granted that if the Financial Secretary gives way to Mr. Somebody-or-another, to Mr. Banker(?), over this then Mr. Banker(?) will support him over something else. I think this is inevitable. When you've got people who've got to make decisions and are bargaining with each other I don't think you can avoid it.
- I. Was the whole system cumbersome? Having ...?
- H. Yes. That was the defect of ... That was the - that's the main criticism, I think, of the Executive Committee system. It was very cumbersome. See, if you think of the actual physical side of it: I mean, memorandums submitted to the Executive Committee: each member's got to get his copy of it. I mean, the actual physical side.
- I. Also did you feel that these ministries tended to work at cross-purposes? The different Committees and Ministers?
- H. Well, I can't remember an instance of it. I mean there was supposed to be proper arrangement for coordination between portfolios. For example, the Chief Secretary had the right to attend any Executive Committee meeting. I can remember Tyrrell attending some of ours, when he was Chief Secretary.
- I. Oh, ^{was} that done often at the outset?
- H. Well, it was certainly done by Tyrrell. I mean, I can remember a number of occasions.
- I. There was always someone? Either the Chief Secretary or ...?
- H. No, no, no, not always, by any means. But if there was a thing in which he had an interest, then ... Moreover I think that - I mean, after all the Minister isn't a fool. If he can see that some other Minister has an interest in a thing which he's dealing with, well, then he would - I think he would see that he was consulted. Old Woods, I should think, would come down very heavily - would have come down very heavily on any Minister who failed to consult the Treasury about anything.
- I. Yes, there seems to have been a considerable amount of friction at the outset and no doubt much of this would
-

have been inevitable because it was ...

H. A new system.

I. A new system. But I was wondering whether the Ministers, for instance, were often very unreasonable in their demands?

H. I don't think so.

II. You don't think so?

H. I don't think so. I mean, I think the Ministers have got a natural desire to do things in their own portfolios. This always happens. They want to spend all the money on education and hospitals and what have you. And this must lead to arguments with the Treasury. But you can't say they're wrong to want to do this. Its quite right that they should want to do it.

I. Also did you feel that the Ministers and the whole State Council considered these three Officers-of-State rather an affront? And therefore tended to oppose them?

H. I don't think they tended to oppose them. But I certainly think that latterly they regarded it as being an anachronism that the 'three policemen', as they used to be called, should be there. And that these ought to be ordinary ministerial posts. And of course it is true that if you compare it with the situation today, a country with the standard of education and development and sophistication and all the rest of it of Ceylon, would certainly have passed with a full ministerial system without any Officers-of-State. I think it would have happened much sooner in Ceylon if it hadn't have been for the war.

I. Oh, you think independence would have come earlier?

H. Oh yes. Definitely. If it hadn't have been for the war, yes.

I. Yes, Sir Ivor Jennings had a similar view.

H. Did he? I didn't know that, no. Of course, Jennings was the advisor to D.S. Senanayake. I knew Jennings well in Ceylon.

I. This - with regard to the friction between the Ministers and the Officers-of-State, I was wondering whether the personalities of the three Officers-of-State had anything to do with it?

H. Let's think. I find this hard to answer. The Chief Secretary ...

I. Was Tyrrell, and ...

- H. Tyrrell to begin with.
- I. Bourdillon for a while I think.
- H. Bourdillon. Wedderburn - was it after Bourdillon?
- I. Yes, that's right. And then Drayton.
- H. Drayton, yes. Well, I don't know. I wouldn't have thought - I wouldn't have thought any of those people were ... Tyrrell was out-of-fashion of course.
- I. Pardon?
- H. Tyrrell was out-of-fashion. I mean he'd been accustomed to a different system. Max Wedderburn, in my opinion, wasn't really suited for the rough and tumble of politics. He was a good provincial administrator, but he wasn't, I don't think, really suited for (?) Executive Council. He was too - wasn't tough enough for it.¹
- I. Oh, I see. I suppose that he was able to become Chief Secretary in the sense that he had always been in the provinces and people would ...
- H. He was an extremely able man, you see. Very able man. I suppose he was Deputy Chief Secretary. I can't remember. But I don't think he'd got the qualities of toughness, physical and mental and psychological toughness. I mean the ideal man in that way was Woods, who was ... Nothing which was said in the Executive Council disturbed him in the least. And he could always give at least as good as he received.
- I. But wasn't Woods a bit of the old guard? A bit of a diehard perhaps, you know rather of the old school?
- H. He was, but at the same time he was a very - he was a very able man. And I think - I think he adapted himself very well to the new ministerial system. Personally. Are you thinking in regard to financial policy? Because I mean I just - in those days I didn't have any opinions about financial policy. You see, this is one of the ... You've got to remember that at that stage in my life I was just a little cog in a machine. I was interested in playing tennis and reading novels, and going for holidays. And I tried to do my work efficiently but it was within the very narrow, sort of (?) you see. I mean, its not like you, because your job requires you to take a wider interest. That wasn't so with us. Provided I was an efficient Assistant Secretary in charge of something or other,

1. Mr. Mulhall made the same point. But note that Hartwell, Mulhall and Leigh-Clare have remained in fairly close contact since retirement. Hartwell was going down to Mulhall's the next week-end.

- well that was okay. You see?
- I. I see. I was wondering whether Woods was rather difficult to get on with because I heard something about him and Turner. He seems to have been - had ...
- H. Turner?
- I. L.J.B. Turner.
- H. He might have had a row with Turner. I personally worked for Woods on a number of occasions and I found him very exacting; very exacting. For example, I can remember one time as a Secretary to the Select Committee and I thought I had found something wrong with an interim report, which had been completed before I took over. So I sent this up to Woods with a note saying: 'Perhaps I was wrong but I would like the chance to discuss it with him'. And I got a note back saying: 'By all means. Any time after seven o'clock, any evening will suit me'. And this was the way that he worked you see. He worked till late at night. But if you got used to this, got - knew what sort of person he was, he was admirable to work with.
- I. And I should have thought that in any government, anywhere, the man at the Treasury would inevitably ...
- H. Yes.
- I. ... quarrel with ...
- H. I think you'll find plenty of people to criticise Woods. And I think you'll find that they probably blame him for the fact that there weren't salary revisions when there should have been, or something of that sort. But I personally had a very high opinion of him.
- I. What about Tyrrell?
- H. Yes, Tyrrell was out-of-fashion, but he was decisive. And absolutely honest, and completely reliable.
- I. How about the Governors themselves? I know Thomson was rather sick but ...?
- H. I couldn't - I couldn't really form any opinion of any Governor until the time of Caldecott. I was Secretary to Caldecott for some years.
- I. Oh yes.
- H. But until that time I didn't have sufficiently close contact with any Governor really, to be able to make any estimate of
-

them. You see, subsequently, when I was more senior I'd be in close touch with Governors. In those days I don't think it occurred to me really to form an opinion of the Governor's abilities. He just was there as a sort of part of the - a part of nature, as it were, you see.

- I. No, I was wondering whether either Thomson or, in particular, Stubbs, had the imagination to work under this Constitution?
- H. I think Stubbs was a - Thomson, I think, was vain(?), opiniated(?). Stubbs, I think, was a clever man, very - he was a bit of a stick in the mud, I think. But I think he was a clever man.
- I. What did you say about Thomson? He was vain?
- H. He was vain, yes - he was - yes, very vain. Hugh Clifford is clearer to me than Stubbs, [sorry] - than Thomson. Because when I was Cadet in Kandy and Clifford was Governor, I used to meet him there.
- I. Oh, what were your impressions of him?
- H. Oh, I thought he was terrific. Extremely - very, very able.
- I. Mr. Strong also has a very high opinion of him.
- H. Yes, mmm.
- I. And its very interesting, if I may take your mind back to this earlier Constitution, ...
- H. Yes.
- I. ... which was in the familiar Crown colony model, but which had an unofficial majority: Clifford called it an unworkable Constitution. Would you agree?
- H. Yes. Yes, certainly.
- I. Then, in effect, you wholly disagree with Stanley's verdict that it was a qualified success?
- H. Well, I didn't know that Stanley even said that. But I would say that its a ridiculous position to have an unofficial majority. It creates a ridiculous - it means that the Governor's got to be using his own powers all the time.
- I. Or not using them and in effect ...?
- H. Everything would go wrong.
- I. What surprised me is that such a Constitution ever got through at all. You know, that it was set up ...
- H. Yes, I can't tell you the reasons for that. In those days I didn't take - I think you - perhaps you don't understand
-

the degree to which a young man, who had been put into the existing organisation, tends to take things for granted. Almost as though they're part of nature, you see.

- I. No, I'm - I quite see that, but I was just voicing that view. Because I also interviewed Sir Hilary Blood and he said that this sort of Constitution has been worked in Sierra Leone and Gambia and other places. But then I would have said that conditions there must have been very, very different.
- H. Yes.
- I. And ...
- H. Oh, this is true. There have been other territories where they worked with an/^{un}official majority. That is true, it is so. We had it in Kenya at one time.
- I. How did it work?
- H. Not well. We had to do a deal with the members on the other side in order to get things through.
- I. Was that happening in Ceylon too? I mean ...
- H. Well, I should think it would. I think undoubtedly it would.
- I. If I may say so I found that Sir Murchison Fletcher was very unpopular.
- H. Yes, he was unpopular. Yes, I think he was.
- I. Partly because he was, perhaps, doing these deals?
- H. I don't know if that was so. He was an outsider for one thing. I mean, he didn't belong to Ceylon. He wasn't a very attractive personality in my opinion.
- I. What about Stanley? I suppose you had no impressions on him either?
- H. No, except his splendid handwriting. I can remember that clearly.
- I. Splendid ...?
- H. Yes. He had magnificent handwriting.
- I. I notice that you were in Batticaloa for a while.
- H. I was, yes, that's right. For about a year. Yes.
- I. And what were your impressions on the Tamils of Batticaloa as compared to the Sinhalese?
- H. I got on alright with the Tamils, but I never felt the same liking for the Tamils as I did for the Sinhalese.
- I. What about your languages? How - how ...?
- H. I was quite good at Sinhalese. I passed my examinations in
-

both Sinhalese and Tamil. But I was lucky in Sinhalese because for a year I was Police Magistrate at Gampola. And I had very little work, its a light court, and there was a school next door.

I. Pardon?

H. A school next door to my - between the court and my house, you see. Almost between them was a school. And I used to get children up to the bungalow, after school in the afternoon, and give them biscuits and sweets and things to talk Sinhalese. So I became quite fluent in Sinhalese.

I. Oh, that's - that's a very good way of learning.

H. It is because children speak very clearly; and more slowly than adults do.

I. What about the political interference under the Donoughmore Commission? Were there many instances when they went over the heads of Civil Servants or - or criticised them personally in Council?

H. Well, of course, the - after all the members of Council were all members of Executive Committees, and, therefore, had a perfectly legitimate interest in what was going on. I should - I think cases of this kind undoubtedly did occur: that Civil Servants were criticised, perhaps unfairly, in the Legislative Council by politicians. But this is all part of the - the job, I think. I can't remember if there were many outrages about it.

I. And most Civil Servants took it in their stride?

H. Yes, but there again I think it would depend on the temperament of the individual. And you've got to remember - you see this is - the people who suffer from this would be the more senior people, of whom I wasn't one. I was too lowly to have been bothered about.

I. Did you feel that the State Council and the politicians tended to be in more or less permanent opposition to the Civil Service at this time?

H. Oh, I don't think so, no. I don't think so, no.

I. There is ...

H. I mean, I think they - well, as I say, they'd got to make use of the Civil Servants. And they did do so.

I. There are stories about Civil Servants who felt that their

- nominee for a post was bound to be rejected simply because they'd nominated him. So they carefully put their best man down as two or number three, in that choice, and found that he got in.
- H. Well, I - I don't think this is ... Could this happen anyway? I'm trying to think of what the procedure was. I'm not sure that the - it was done by the Public Service Commission which consisted of the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Legal Secretary. I'm just trying to remember whether the Executive Committee had anything whatever to do with it.
- I. Well, that's why ...
- H. If they had a right to express an opinion on it.
- I. They had a right to express an opinion.
- H. They did do so; yes, mmm. Of course this is entirely contrary to the modern idea.
- I. Yes, what do they do now in the - do the - in Kenya and Uganda and other places?
- H. Well, in Sierra Leone, the Public Service Commission runs the thing but, of course, in practice in these countries the Public Service Commission is under the thumb of the Government of the day.
- I. Well, that's what was - what has been happening in Ceylon, too, recently.
- H. Is that so? Yes?
- I. At least, that's the impression I have. I ...
- H. I went to - after I retired from Uganda, I went to Northern Rhodesia, as it then was, to start the Public Service Commission. And I raised - I set it up within(?) a year. Then I packed up and - before Independence - and handed over to another member of the executive who had been Chief Justice. And I know that - he's told me subsequently that this has happened there.
- I. I see.
- H. I'm surprised to hear that it happened in Ceylon. It was ...
- I. It didn't happen at once ...
- H. No.
- I. And took some time. And, as far as I know, it happened more under the Bandaranaike regime.
-

- H. Yes, mmm. Bandaranaike? I was - I think, looking back, Bandaranaike was the beginning of the decay of Ceylon. He was the Minister for Local Government in my time. And I think he was a very clever man, an intellectual type, and a fluent speaker, an ingenious arguer, but no use from the practical point of view of doing the job of the portfolio.
- I. Mmm. When was this? When was your experience? Thirties or forties?
- H. Oh, it would be forties.
- I. Forties.
- H. Forties, certainly. Yes, yes.
- I. You didn't feel that he was an able Minister, as a Minister?
- H. I think he was a clever man, but not an able Minister.
- I. Did you feel that he had a chip on his shoulder? Against Europeans?
- H. [Reflective pause]. I don't think that, no. I think he was tremendously ambitious and discontented with the position that he occupied.
- I. A touch of megalomania?
- H. I can't ... I think that's an exaggeration. But very ambitious, and latterly I think rather unscrupulous in the way that he became Prime Minister.
- I. If I may turn to the time when you were Additional Deputy Controller of Labour, was that for very long?
- H. No. A very short time.
- I. What is your impression of the labour problems in Ceylon?
- H. You're talking about the Tamil ...
- I. Yes, the Indian immigrant labour especially.
- H. On the estates. I rather took this for granted. I thought that it must be ... The estates had got to be run by somebody. This was the system; it seemed to me to work alright. Although I can see now that it has presented Ceylon, now, with a serious problem. I don't think - I mean, if you're going to create tea estates, in particular tea estates, and in some instances rubber, I think this is inevitable.
- I. What about the condition of these workers on the estates?
- H. Well, they had - I think in many cases the conditions weren't awfully good. But I think they were probably just as good as they were in the village in India.
- I. Oh, much better, I should think.
-

- H. Yes.
- I. No, I was wondering whether at that stage trade unions were called for among these workers?
- H. Well, of course, they were just being formed in my time in Ceylon. What's that man's name?
- I. Pereira?
- H. No. No, no, no, no. Goone...?
- I. Goonesinha.
- H. Goonesinha, that's right, yes. He was very active. In fact, he was a member of my Executive Committee for a time.
- I. Oh. What did you think of him?
- H. He wasn't a bad fellow at all, I didn't think. When it came really(?) to the point I rather think he - I'm not sure he wasn't a member of a thing called the Headman Commission of which I was appointed Secretary. Max Wedderburn was the Chairman of it.
- I. Well, he was very much out of favour with the Secretariat in the early twenties, and even perhaps in the late twenties.
- H. I know he was, yes, yes. He was an agitator.
- I. Mmm. And that was a bad word?
- H. As a member of an Executive Committee I don't think he was frightfully - I mean, this is all mere recollection - I don't think he was particularly troublesome.
- I. He mellowed somewhat as ...
- H. Yes.
- I. ... the years went by.
- H. Yes, yes.
- I. Can you recall the strike he led in 1929?
- H. I can't, no. I can't remember that at all.
- I. Oh, that was in Colombo and you would have been up country.
- H. 1929. Where was I in 1929?
- I. Nuwara Eliya?
- H. Perhaps Nuwara Eliya. Yes, probably was, yes.
- I. What about this Headman's Commission? What was the purpose?
- H. Oh, to examine whether there ought to be a headman system. I think there was political criticism of it. They felt it was old-fashioned, you know, that there should be headmen. And felt that it ought to be done away with over the years. So a Commission was appointed on the subject and I was the
-

Secretary of it.

- I. Was there any question of jealousy on the part of the politicians?
- H. I think so, yes. But anyway the conclusion that we came to was that/^{since}the headman/^[system]was an essential part of the framework and construction you must have it.
- I. I see. What was your impression of the calibre of the headmen?
- H. On the whole, taking all things into account, - I mean the field of recruitment available - I think they were quite good.
- I. I know it would have been an enormous task but wouldn't it have been better to pay them more, much much more?
- H. Right down to the village headmen?
- I. Certainly the top men. Perhaps even the village headmen.
- H. I think it would have been much better. Yes, I think it would have been. I think they were - this is a just criticism - they were underpaid for what they did. They did a hell of a lot though. I mean, they were - when you got below the Assistant Government Agent, they were the Government in the field. Whatever happened, down at the grass roots, the first thing to do was get a report from the R.M.[ratemahatmaya] about it.
- I. Did you feel that some of these headmen used their position for their own ends? Not merely from the point of view of getting money - I mean, that was a traditional practice - but I was thinking of the sort of deeper effect of getting more land for their section of the ...
- H. I expect - I'm sure that some of them did do this. But I can't recall specific instances of it. I mean, after all, if you have a large number of people and you give them power, some of them inevitably abuse it don't they? And of course, there was an awful lot of, what you've just referred to as a customary(?) kind of thing: old woman bringing a lime(?) when she wants to give you a petition. Well, there's nothing corrupt about that at all, is there?
- I. Wasn't there a tendency among some officials to view that as corrupt?
- H. As corrupt? I wouldn't think so.
- I. Perhaps - I'm not sure whether its officials but even townsmen regard this sort of thing as bribery, when in effect it was ...
-

- H. Just custom.
- I. Custom.
- H. Yes, well, I mean, supposing its something of value; but I mean to me personally - lots of old women, while I was on tour somewhere as A.G.A. Kurunegala, if they wanted something or other, as a matter of politeness they'd give one egg or a lime or something, which was - obviously didn't think would affect my judgement; just a piece of politeness.
- I. When was it that you went to Kenya as Secretary to Sir Alan Paton?
- H. Oh, that was in 1935.
- I. '35.
- H. That was just an interlude.
- I. For how long was it?
- H. Six months.
- I. Six months. Oh, I see. Did you have any experience of elections under the Donoughmore Constitution?
- H. Well, I think I must have done in the Southern ... I was talking to Harry Leigh-Clare about it the other day. I think I must have done while I was in Galle. But I don't recollect the - the elections themselves at all. I rather - I must have been somewhere out of it, perhaps in Colombo or on leave. But I remember vaguely the preparations for the elections.
- I. And were you in Ceylon at the time of this Bracegirdle affair?
- H. I was, yes, yes, yes. My recollections of it are very hazy I fear.
- I. Yes. What made them deport Bracegirdle?
- H. I can't honestly remember. I've forgotten what Bracegirdle did now.
- I. I know that he was an Australian communist.
- H. Yes.
- I. And that he was - he wanted to form trade unions among the estate labour.
- H. Oh, was that what it was. I didn't - I'm afraid I've completely forgotten.
- I. Well, this was one of the things which ...
- H. But there was a lot more to it than that, wasn't there? Wasn't there a judicial enquiry at one stage?
- I. Well, you see, they failed to deport him. Or rather he
-

didn't - he went into hiding. And then there's a question of whether Jayatilaka had been consulted or not by the Chief Secretary and the Police. And Jayatilaka said one - gave one story and the policemen gave another.

H. Oh, I see. Which - who was the policeman at the time?

I. Banks and Ferguson.

H. Oh. Yes, yes. I knew both of them quite well.

I. And also whether this deportation order was constitutional or not.

H. Yes.

I. And the Commission found (a) that the deportation was ultra vires, but (b) that Jayatilake had lied.

H. Did they?

I. Yes.

H. Was this Abrahams? Was the ...?

I. He was one of them.

H. I thought he was. He was the Chairman of the - the Commission of Enquiry?

I. He was. This was one of the things which caused a lot of friction between Wedderburn and the Ministers.

H. Ah, yes. Wedderburn was Chief Secretary at the time. That's right.

I. And Stubbs was the Governor.

H. Well, (?) Wedderburn, he wasn't a ...; you wanted a much tougher man, less sensitive man. He was a very sensitive man.

I. Oh, he took this to heart, did he?

H. Yes, very much so.

I. Stubbs of course was a - I don't think he was ever liked in Ceylon, even earlier, or in the 1930's. And Sir John Kotelawala...

H. Had he been Chief Secretary at one time?

I. Yes.

H. I thought he was. Yes, yes.

I. Sir John Kotelawala quotes a Governor who referred to the Donoughmore Constitution as, 'Born in a delirium and brought to rest in a coma', or something like that.

H. Yes.

I. And it sounds very much like Stubbs.

- H. It does, yes. He was a very witty man.
- I. But in effect he was saying that this was a madness, referring to the Constitution.
- H. I wouldn't agree at all.
- I. But, for example, to say that would imply that he was not the sort of chap who could work the Constitution.
- H. Might, yes, yes. Might have been, yes, yes.
- I. When you were in the field - turning to an entirely different aspect - did you have any experience of these gansabhas?
- H. Oh, I did, yes, yes, yes. I did.
- I. What were your impressions?
- H. Well, they seemed to me to perform a very useful job.
- I. Mmm. Useful in what way?
- H. Village committees, you mean; or village courts?
- I. Committees.
- H. Yes. Oh, yes, well, a multitude of things like buildings, roads, bridges, paths.
- I. What were their shortcomings if any?
- H. I think they hadn't got enough money for one thing. That was always a difficulty. I think there was a certain amount of intrigue and power struggles(?), probably as to who should get the money.
- I. Local factions.
- H. That's right, yes.
- I. But isn't that sort of thing common to local government?
- H. I think so, yes, yes, yes. But I think they - this is all a long time ago. I'd say they certainly seemed to serve a useful purpose. And they formed quite a large part of life at that time. And then of course there were also the ...
- I. Courts?
- H. Presidents of the village tribunals.
- I. Yes.
- H. They also performed an essential purpose.
- I. In what way?
- H. Well, you've got to have somebody to try these ...
- I. Small.
- H. Petty cases. They couldn't all go to the police courts; unless you had far more police magistrates.
- I. I was wondering whether this sort of court could have been extended, given larger powers and ...?
-

- H. I thought it was later on, wasn't it?
- I. No, I thought the movement was the other way and ...
- H. Oh, perhaps it was. I don't know. I thought after my time that the presidents of the village tribunals had been upgraded to the position of minor magistrates.
- I. Yes, perhaps, but I think lawyers have also been allowed to ...
- H. That's right, yes.
- I. ... come to the courts.
- H. Which wasn't originally allowed.
- I. You see, these courts had one great advantage over the magisterial courts in that they were on the spot.
- H. That's right, yes.
- I. It was, I think, far more difficult for people to lie.
- H. Yes.
- I. Would you agree with that?
- H. I think so, yes, mmm.
- I. And it was, of course, summary and less expensive.
- H. Yes.
- I. And ...
- H. They had assessors didn't they? I think - weren't - there were two assessors sitting with the president? I think so, yes.
- I. And also something which the people could understand.
- H. Yes. I think the people could understand the police court alright.
- I. Oh, you think so?
- H. Oh, yes, yes. My - I was a police magistrate for a year in Gampola. I think it was a very popular - very popular thing, a police court. They liked coming to the police court. They understood what was going on alright. Most magistrates, I think, certainly magistrates who were not from the bar, Civil Service magistrates tried to do the thing on a common sense basis. No, I think that the thing worked quite well, as a matter of fact.
- I. As a magistrate I presume you dealt only with criminal matters?
- H. No, you were also Commissioner of Request. So you had got a limited civic jurisdiction. I did quite a number of land cases in Gampola which I ... There were land cases to be done. And then of course you had - there was a provision in
-

the criminal procedure code by which, if the accused agreed, you could try cases above your normal ceiling. They frequently did this. In order to avoid being committed to the district court. They thought, 'Let's get it over', you see.

I. With regard to this and keeping the advantages of the village tribunal in mind, I was wondering whether the British system of law tended to bring law rather than justice?

H. Well, I think, you could - I think that could be argued. That's why I said that, at any rate, the administration magistrate tried to do things on a common sense basis. Sometimes got overruled by the Supreme Court or the Privy Council, I dare say.

I. Of course, this is totally against the British tradition of having a judge who knew nothing about the case.

H. Yes.

I. I mean, trial. Whereas wouldn't you say in Ceylon it was an advantage for the judge to have an inkling of what sort ...?

H. Well, certainly to know the background to the thing, I would think so, yes. Certainly, yes.

I. Yes. You see, if I may raise a point brought up by Mr. Leach, Frank Leach.

H. Yes.

I. He said that quite often in land cases he had an inside knowledge of a certain case.

H. Yes.

I. And he knew that the judge had reached a wrong decision.

H. Yes.

I. Though it was not a wrong decision on the evidence before the judge.

H. This was when he was in the Land Settlement Department? Yes, mmm.

I. It was not a wrong decision on the evidence before the judge.

H. Yes.

I. But evidence was limited.

H. Yes. I could imagine that happening.

I. And again one wonders whether the judge, who was remote from the area and seated on the Bench in a town, can decide some land cases. Because for some cases wouldn't you say that it

- was - it would be very useful for a judge to see the configuration of the land?
- H. Certainly; essential. But of course in the - the Land Settlement people had powers of settlement. It was only if a settlement couldn't be reached that one of the parties had the right to go to the district court.
- I. Yes. No, I'm not ...
- H. They were in a sense judicial officers. They could make legal orders. No doubt Mr. Leach told you much more about this. I've never been - I was never in the Settlement Department.
- I. I think it was a very good department.
- H. Yes, so do I.
- I. In respect - in regard to this point I was wondering whether they couldn't have extended - either extended these village tribunals or given A.G.A.'s, who presumably had quite an, well, an inside knowledge of certain villages, concurrent judicial powers, and powers in fact to try cases while on circuit?
- H. Yes. Well, this of course is - this was the system in Africa where very often in the early days the same man did the administrative work and the judicial work. Very often taking cases on tour.
- I. Well, this was the system in Ceylon in the early nineteenth century.
- H. Was it? Yes.
- I. And of course in India it was ...
- H. It certainly was so there, yes.
- I. For a while but it - in India it was - under some Governors it had been done away with on the theory that the judiciary and executive should be separated. But ...
- H. Oh, I mean, I think this is right in theory, that they should do it. But in practice I think they feel that this system worked quite well.
- I. Oh, you think so? I'm very ...
- H. Yes.
- I. That's very interesting.
- H. And I also agree that there is a great advantage in knowing something about the local background and politics and the general set-up. I can quite imagine the sort of situation that Frank Leach referred to.
-

- I. And, for instance, if you know that the headman is unreliable or know that the ...
- H. Yes, quite so, yes.
- I. ... local bad character is involved.
- H. Yes, yes.
- I. Of course, in Ceylon one of the reasons why it had been done away with, and they had two officers, was simply because ...
- H. Volume of work?
- I. Volume of work - one aspect.
- H. Yes, yes.
- I. But wasn't the answer to that sort of thing to have more officers, or to have smaller areas?
- H. Oh, of course, there is - I can remember, for example, William Howard, who was Legal Secretary; and he would have been very hot on this sort of cutting the judiciary off from the administration. I think it was at that time that the policy to staff the courts entirely from the bar was introduced. You see, in my time some of the posts of Police Magistrate were filled from the Civil Service. And after some date, which I've forgotten, that stopped and they were all ...
- I. All lawyers?
- H. Lawyers, yes, yes, mmm.
- I. And Howard was very much for the lawyers?
- H. Yes, yes.
- I. Was he very legalistic then?
- H. I'm not going to say that, but ... No, I wouldn't say that. But on this particular thing he was certainly strongly in favour of confining judicial posts to lawyers.
- I. How did Howard get on with the politicians?
- H. I don't know. I can't remember at all. He was - I honestly don't know how to answer this. Because he was acting for the Governor for a short time. As Private Secretary. I can't answer this. I mean, I can remember clearly, for example, that Caldecott got on extremely well with the Ministers. And handled them very cleverly.
- I. Yes. Since you were his Secretary I would very much like a picture of Caldecott.
- H. Well, I think he was an extremely able man. Of course, during
-

the war when we had a Commander-in-Chief, he was operating in very difficult circumstances. Because he wasn't really master of his own house. As an administrative Civil Servant he was first-rate. You know, in the technical business of being a Civil Servant and doing the files, he was excellent. He was also very imaginative and he was very good in dealing with people; particularly with difficult Ministers.

- I. I've read something written by him. He seems to be quite witty too?
- H. Yes. He's written, well(?), two books of short stories, you know.
- I. I see - strange - well, I met Sir Barclay Nihill...
- H. Oh yes.
- I. And he seemed to think that Caldecott hasn't been given the credit he deserves.
- H. Yes, it may be true; yes, yes. I was a great admirer of Caldecott. Perhaps its because I worked closely with him. I thought he was first-rate.
- I. He seems - well, he felt that Moore had got most of the credit.
- H. Oh yes, because Monkey Moore was Governor at the time that they became independent. But he was not half the man that Caldecott was. In my opinion. From any point of view.
- I. Oh, from any point of view? What were the differences?
- H. I mean - the differences were that Caldecott was the much abler man than Moore was; much abler and much more imaginative. Now, you know, - you've heard of Andrew Cohen(?) who is head of this department now? Permanent Secretary. He was Governor of Uganda when I first went there. Well, he'd got the same sort of political imagination that Caldecott had. The ability to foresee how things will develop in the future and what ought to be done; (?). Caldecott was like this.
- I. Yes. Can you remember Caldecott's Reforms Despatch? You might not really - 1938. This was earlier.
- H. I can't, no. But I should think from what I know of Caldecott - I should think it was very far-seeing and sensible.
- I. Well, the Soulbury Commission praised it.
- H. Yes.
- I. Its rather surprising that Caldecott was like that because he came from an entirely different political climate. Malaya.
- H. Malaya, yes, yes.
-

- I. Malaya and Hong Kong.
- H. Yes, he did, yes. But he was very liberal in his views, you know.
- I. Oh, was he?
- H. Oh yes. Oh yes. Very much so. And very realistic, you see. He saw that this was inevitable.
- I. What about Drayton?
- H. A very able man. I don't think ... He was a bit of a hair-splitter. He'd got nothing like the breadth and imagination that Caldecott had. And wasn't so good with people as Caldecott was.
- I. He seems to have got on better with the politicians than the earlier Chief Secretaries? Till later on I think when there was some sort of row. But ...
- H. Was there? I don't remember a row. There might easily have been. I would have said that ... Might be true that he got on okay with them. It may be so, yes.
- I. Well, this is purely on Sir Ivor Jennings's articles which say that until Drayton came along there was more - quite a lot of friction, which would imply that he got on.
- H. Yes, yes. I wouldn't - I couldn't contradict that.
- I. If I may ask a rather sort of - somewhat personal question: the impression seems to be that Layton sacked Wodeman and got - made Drayton
- H. I daresay this is true, yes. I've always believed it to be so, yes.
- I. Rather a drastic thing to do - or ...?
- H. Yes, yes, yes. I've forgotten - I think 'sacked' is the wrong word because of course he retired with a pension.
- I. Yes, I know, but ...
- H. But got rid of him. Yes, I'm trying to think why - I've always believed this to be so and I must have known the reasons for it at one time. But I've forgotten now what they were. Layton was a most unreasonable man in my opinion. I had quite a bit to do with him.
- I. What sort of brain did he have?
- H. Very second-rate I would say. He'd got plenty of drive and plenty of confidence, but not much brain. And he was very impulsive and unreasonable.
-

- I. Certainly he seems to present a very mixed picture. Mr. Strong seems to have got on very well with him as ...
- H. Well, John Strong came back rather late from being - from being in Rangoon. And its true he was brought back specifically to clean up the Port of Colombo. And he did. He got on well with Layton.
- I. I think he - of course, he's speaking from his position. He wanted a fair amount of freedom ...
- H. That's right.
- I. ... and backing. And I think Layton gave it.
- H. And got it. Yes, yes. I don't know. I've never discussed Layton with John Strong. But I per... - my contacts with him were mainly when I was Secretary to the Governor and partly when for a short time I was in the Imports Control with Harry Leigh-Clare. And I would have said that Layton was an unreasonable man, personally.
- I. Well, several others also have opinions something ...
- H. Yes. And impulsive and bad-tempered and not the sort of person you'd want as an administrator.
- I. He seems to have got on with the Ministers though. I mean ...
- H. I think this was - I think he got on with them because he had the (?) there in Caldecott. I think this is one of Caldecott's great achievements. That he kept all the Ministers in office throughout the war in spite of Layton.
- I. Oh, was it? I ...
- H. I think so, yes.
- I. Oh, I was wondering whether they - the politicians - were rather dominated[sic] by Layton's manner?
- H. Oh, I'm sure that there would have been rows. I mean, I couldn't quote you a specific instance, but I've got no doubt in my own mind that there would have been shattering political rows, on account of Layton, if it hadn't been for Caldecott [being] there to smooth things over.
- I. As a sort of buffer?
- H. That's right, yes.
- I. Well, that's very important historically.
- H. Yes. I don't doubt that at all myself.
- I. I would also like some sort of comparisons drawn between pre-independent Ceylon in the period just before Independence and Kenya and Uganda.
-

- H. Yes.
- I. Its more contrast I should think but ...
- H. Yes.
- I. What were the problems like?
- H. Well, I think - now, the situations were so different in all three places. Ceylon was so much more sophisticated. You'd got thousands of Ceylonese who were educated, occupied important positions in the Civil Service, business, politics. And really - by this time no racial problem at all. Because there was no Sinhalese-Tamil problem and the Europeans were not a political force. In Kenya the position was entirely different of course. You'd got a backward African community with very little political influence, and a powerful settler community with the ear of the Secretary-of-State. This is what led to the Mau-Mau of course. Uganda was again utterly different because that had never been a country for European settlement. It had been - always been - except for a very short time when there was a little bit of European settlement, the policy had always been to develop the country for the Africans. In the way which seemed best for them. There had been little political development until Cohen(?) went there. And he had the imagination to see that inevitably, in view of what was happening in other parts of the world, there would develop strong irresistible pressure for participation in government by the Africans. So he deliberately set up institutions which would give them the opportunity of getting political experience.
- I. In Kenya you felt that the settler community had too much influence over ...?
- H. Yes, far too much. I was - I was not liked by the settler community in Kenya because they thought that I was anti-European and pro-African and Indian. They said so.
- I. Did that arise at all in Ceylon? Because I know that Caldecott was unpopular among the planters.
- H. I don't think that I was sufficiently conspicuous for anybody to have any opinions on the subject. But they certainly did have in Kenya. They even went to the extent of asking the Secretary-of-State to remove me from the scene, because they thought this. And I haven't got the slightest doubt that it
-

was the power of the European community which in - ultimately - which caused the Mau-Mau. It was a political rebellion. They'd got no other way of getting what they wanted so this is what they did.

- I. Well, I suppose its very much like the situation which leads to acts of terrorism in South Africa.
- H. Yes, that's right, yes, yes. But this wasn't - I can remember Mitchell, who was Governor in Kenya, telling me on a number of occasions that the mistake I made was to compare Ceylon with Africa. And that Africa was utterly different and that you couldn't base action in Africa on Ceylon experience. Well, I think he turned out to be absolutely wrong. Because in fact the African people wanted exactly the same thing. Wanted to run their own affairs, exactly the same thing as the Asiatic people.
- I. In view of the greater sophistication in Ceylon did you feel that the political atmosphere there was more supercharged?
- H. Well, I don't know. I mean, the people - the Ceylonese, of course, were far more able to express their views and knew how to make a fuss; [they were] far more effective than the African politicians were. But its hard to say that it was more supercharged when it was an actual physical rebellion in Kenya.
- I. In Kenya. Yes, that's right. Who were the politicians you came to know fairly well in Ceylon, apart from D.S. and Bandaranaike? What about Sir D.B. Jayatilaka?
- H. Hardly. I knew Jayatilaka, but not well. Kotelawala, Corea.
- I. Can you remember Kannangara?
- H. Yes. E.W. Perera,¹ yes, quite well, yes. Never worked for him.
- I. No, did they - did any strike you as being particularly able? I mean, ...
- H. I would have said that Senanayake was the most able. I think Kotelawala had got a kind of ability. He'd got ...
- I. Drive?
- H. He saw the main objective and went for it. I thought that Corea did his job as Minister for Commerce, Industry and Labour quite well. I can't think of anybody else who sticks

1. Kannangara's initials are C.W.W., so the confusion here is explainable.

in my mind at the moment.

I. Marcan Markar?

H. Unknown to me, completely. I mean, except as a name.

I. Molamure?

H. Just knew him. He was Speaker.

I. Oh, E.W. Perera. You may have ... He was one of the old guard.

H. E.W. Perera I can just remember. I can remember seeing him make speeches. Funny looking little man in (?) garb(?). But he didn't mean anything to me at all. A man who sticks in my - people who stick in my mind particularly are Goonetilleke, for whom I had a tremendous admiration, a man called - a Tamil called ...

I. Ponnambalam?

H. Vaithianathan.

I. Oh, Kanthiah Vaithianathan.

H. Yes. Who became a Permanent Secretary and then retired and became Minister.

I. What sort of man was he?

H. Very, truly able; very able. And he was the obvious example of the untruth of the idea that the European Civil Servant was more efficient than the local Civil Servant.

I. Oh, I see.

H. Because he was way-up in the standards of any colour or race.

I. Did you feel that - when you first went out in particular - did you feel that the Ceylon Civil Service, the European group, was rather too aloof from the people?

H. Yes, I think so, yes.

I. I read some memoirs by Stace, which go back to an earlier period, and he accuses the British community of arrogance too. He says that this was one of the faults.

H. Well, I mean, I think that - I think that it was largely thoughtlessness. It seemed to me to become a natural - when I went to Kandy as a Cadet I lived in Kandy Club. All my contacts were Europeans. It wasn't - I can always remember getting very friendly with some Ceylonese in Colombo through playing tennis. We had a fellow called Anthonisz in the Imports Control and through him I got to know some of the tennis players. Then by this time I'd got to know quite well

- some people like W.A. De Silva in our own service¹ and I used to have political arguments with him. For example, he held the view strongly that they should be running their own affairs.
- I. What sort of ...?
- H. 'And what are you doing here anyway? I mean, we've plenty of people just as good as you who could do the job.' Which was quite true of course; absolutely true.
- I. What sort of man was he?
- H. W.A. De Silva?
- I. Yes.
- H. Oh, he was a nice fellow. I got the impression that he was a bit impulsive. I should think he was quite capable. I never knew anything about him from the official point of view. I never worked with him at all. Educated, intelligent, lively sort of chap. I think he - didn't he retire from the Service?
- I. Probably.
- H. I think he did. I think he - he was a brother of Colvin De Silva I think. Or a cousin I think.
- I. Of course Stace was not only referring to the officials. And I think it was less true of the Civil Servants. It was more true of some of the planters and the merchants. And ...
- H. Yes. Although, of course, there were planters - some planters who'd got very close relations with Ceylonese. I think this is a just criticism. I think its true of the English wherever they go. That they are like this.
- I. Ah yes, all these things they say about the English clubs sometimes?
- H. Yes.
- I. What about planters and villagers? From your experience in Kandy, Nuwara Eliya and Gampola did you ever come across a - come across conflicts between planters ...?
- H. Occasionally. But it was always over cattle trespass or buffaloes.
- I. Cattle trespass! That's very interesting. That was the same in the nineteenth century.
- H. Yes, yes.
- I. More over cattle trespass than ...

1. At this stage I thought he was referring to Dr. W.A. De Silva a politician, whereas he is talking about Walwin A. De Silva of the C.C.S., brother of the SamaSamajist leader, Colvin R.

- H. I used to get cases of this sort at Gampola. Buffaloes getting into tea and that kind of thing. I can remember going on inspections to these.
- I. And what did the planters do? Impound the cattle?
- H. Well, they tried to. I think there was an Ordinance, a cattle trespass Ordinance. They used to complain to the headman or the police or ... I think this wasn't a big problem. It was a - it might have been the subject of conversation at the tennis club but it wasn't a big problem at all.
- I. What about conflict for land? Was there any at this stage?
- H. Not in my time, no. That was all over. Its easy to criticise the system. Of course the criticism - because there's a chap - you've probably read a book on this by - I've forgotten the man's name now. Some Ceylonese wrote a book. Its easy to criticise the system on the ground that it took the chena land away from the people in the up-country and middle-country and made them, except for their paddy fields, either landless or nearly so. But on the other hand its also the case that it created the tea and rubber industries that Ceylon is now living on.
- I. Mmm. Did you feel that some of the politicians who were leading this attack on the Land Settlement Department, some of them, were also land speculators?
- H. I expect they were. I don't know whether it was so. Of course somebody - I've forgotten, was it old Brayne? - introduced this mapping-out system. Frank Leach must have told you all about it.
- I. Mapping-out was in the L.S.D. Brayne introduced this new scheme of tenure for Crown land. This was not for old land.
- H. Yes. Yes, I know what you mean, yes.
- I. Called indivisible leasehold.
- H. That's right, yes. Well, I did some of this when I was A.G.A. Kurunegala. Giving out land on these land kachcheries and that sort of thing.
- I. What did you think of the idea?
- H. I thought the idea was very good in the theory. I thought that in practice the areas that we gave were too small and an insufficient proportion of the people, in fact, stayed on the land.
-

- I. Did you feel that this idea was impracticable from the administrative point of view?
- H. No, I don't think so. No, not from that point of view. I used to enjoy these land kachcheries tremendously. We had a drill for it and we used to advertise, and the applications came in in quite an elaborate form. The chappie had to give his village and number of his family. 'Have you any land?' 'Has your father any land?', and so on. Then he went to the local land kachcheri and you - sometimes it took several days to do it. But you picked the people out and these were the fellows who'd get the land. And then you went back in, say, six months or a year, to see how they were getting on. The headman having inspected in the meantime. And this was where it fell down because a large proportion of them didn't stick it. I mean, they couldn't bear to be away from the village or they put their brother in or ...
- I. Mmm. And what did you do then?
- H. Well, you had to use your common sense. I mean, you could cancel the lease if you wanted to do so. This was regarded as being the last possible step. You tried to get hold of the fellow and say, 'Look here, if you don't develop the land and live on it and so on and improve it, then we shall take it away from you'.
- I. What about the capital to develop it? Did they have it?
- H. Well, they could - my recollection is that we had - they got - certainly latterly, Senanayake, shortly after I'd gone, got some central - I think they built houses for them.
- I. Did you feel that this sort of thing brought you into rather heartless contact with the villagers in the sense that you had to keep after them and collect money - the instalments - and threaten them with eviction, etc., etc., rather than ...?
- H. I wouldn't say this, no. I felt that on the contrary that it was something which was helping them, which was what it was intended to do of course.
- I. What about ...?
- H. I did feel that the areas for people were too small. But then this had to be so, because of the shortage of land.
- I. Who did you give the land to? How did you decide?
- H. Well, on the basis of what I told you. 'Has he got any land already?' 'Is he a cultivator?' 'What's the size of his
-

family?' 'What are his prospects as a farmer?' And so on. Most of them came from outside the province, mostly Southern and Western Provinces.

- I. You see, the definition of the word 'landless' is very important here because quite often you might find the son of a rich man claiming land.
- H. Asking at the land kachcheri? He wouldn't ...
- I. Son of a landowner.
- H. He wouldn't get it, no, no.
- I. You see, there's a Dr. Leach ...
- H. You try and find out - try and make sure that he was genuinely a person without land.
- I. Dr. Leach who lived in a village, in the 1950's, as a social anthropologist ...
- H. Yes.
- I. And he found that since this scheme was introduced, the villagers who have got land under this tenure are all the richer villagers. The poorer villagers invariably - in fact, none of the poorer villagers have any - ever got any land under this scheme. Simply because - probably because the headman's influence. Because the headman was tied up with the richer group.
- H. I doubt - I mean, I can't contradict this. Naturally at this time and distance. I'd be surprised if this was true. To begin with, most of the fellows came from outside the district in which we operated. And I was in the North-Western Province, the Kurunegala District, and most of my settlements - I didn't have many, perhaps five or six - were up in the northern part of the district and the applicants were mostly from the Western and Southern Provinces ...
- I. Oh, I see.
- H. ... where the landless people were. You see? So I ...
- I. No, he - he ...
- H. I couldn't contradict this. But I'm surprised to hear it.
- I. Its in a different district. Its near Anuradhapura where there's more land of course.
- H. Yes.
- I. And its in a settled village. And the question of village extensions under this scheme.
- H. Ah, that's a different thing, that's a different thing. Yes,
-

yes. Oh yes, I could believe this might be so; yes. But what - I've got two criticisms of the system. One was that the areas we gave were too small and the other is that it was really nibbling at the fringe of the problem.

I. What did you feel should be done?

H. Well, it should have been operated on a much bigger scale. But we couldn't do that in my district because the land wasn't available for the purpose. It was only when you brought in the ...

I. Water.

H. Yes, when you brought in the North-Central Province and water that you could do something about it. And the Eastern Province of course. I've never seen this - you've probably seen this something-or-other - what's it? - Gal Oya scheme. That was after my time. I've never been there.

I. Well, just one final aspect.

H. Yes.

I. When did you leave Ceylon?

H. '47. February.

I. Oh, I see. Is it true that Sir Oliver Goonetilleke had a large hand in winning independence for Ceylon?

H. That's so, yes.

I. Would you go so far as to say that he was - he almost terrified Whitehall in the sense that he was - had - was very effective?

H. I don't know. I couldn't say that he terrified Whitehall. I think he was a very effective negotiator.

END OF INTERVIEW
