HUBERT ERNEST NEWNHAM

b. 1 October 1886.
M.A., Oxon.
C.C.S. 1909 - 1939

Date	Appointment
13 Nov. 1909	apptd. to C.C.S.
13 Dec. 1909	attached to Colombo Kachcheri.
18 Jan. 1910	Extra O.A. to G.A., Western Province.
14 March 1910	attached to the Col. Sec's Office.
12 Sept. 1910	attached to Colombo Kachcheri.
31 Oct. 1910	attached to Kandy Kachcheri.
4 Jan. 1911	Acting O.A., Anuradhapura Kachcheri.
13 Nov. 1911	O.A., Badulla.
29 March 1913	P.M., Matale.
6 Oct. 1913	Landing Surveyor, Customs.
3 June 1919	on leave.
11 Feb. 1920	Acting Com'er of Requests, Colombo.
31 May 1920	A.G.A., Colombo and O.A. to G.A., Western Province.
1 June 1921	also Secretary to the Local Govt. Board.
9 April 1924	on leave.
9 Aug. 1924	seconded for service as Chairman, Colombo Municipal Commission.
27 Feb. 1928	on leave.
9 June 1928	resumed duties as Chairman.
7 July 1931	Com'er of Local Govt. and President, Local Govt. Board, as well as Secretary to the Minister for Local Administration.
5 July 1932	on leave.
7 Dec. 1932	resumed duties.
21 Jan. 1935	Com'er for relief of distress.
2 Aug. 1936	on leave.
30 Nov. 1935	Chairman, Colombo Port Commission.
1939	retired.
1939-43	nominated Member in the State Council.

Comments on Interview with Mr. Newnham, 1 December, 1965.

The presence of the tape-recorder had absolutely no effect on Mr. Newnham's main remarks, except with regard to other Civil Servants. On this point he was openly unwilling to reveal the severely critical opinions he held about particular individuals. Though his opinion of Stubbs as expressed was telling enough, he clearly felt something that was more "outrageous" and severe. Regarding praiseworthy officials, of course, he did not restrain his views but these were obviously few according to his very high standards.

Mr. Newnham the man, then and now, strikes me as being a restless, active, impatient, and highly industrious worker; an initiator, a progressive; a domineering, or perhaps rather a dominating personality (for I am not prepared to say he would not have been receptive to other men's ideas); an ebullient personality; likely to cut across red-tape; a strong man with forthright, almost sweeping, views. He was not merely a restless worker seeing to his day to day affairs but one who asked the deeper questions. Take for instance my question: "was efficiency made an end in itself?". He was not ready to admit that efficiency was achieved and only when I was more specific and said "efficiency in fixed grooves" or something to that effect that he answered "Yes". Clearly, his opinion was that greater efficiency could have been achieved if they did not move in set lines. His major criticism of British policy in Ceylon was that there was no policy, that there was no ultimate ideal, that it was drift - and basically due to lethargy at the top.

When reading over the headline summary of topics I had sent him and coming to "Personalities in the C.C.S." he said : "There were none" or words to that effect - a very severe, and I am inclined to think, rather a sweeping view.

This interview was not on the normal lines. He already had jottings and views on the "heads" I had sent and was eager to express them. Since I was due to interview him again I preferred to let him go full steam ahead; he was clearly full of his own ideas - and important ones at that - and it was unwise to try and mould the interview too much one's own way.

M.W. Roberts
7.12.65

Comments on Interview of 24th December 1965.

This took the form of a question and answer interview but it was always in a very discursive style. As usual Mr. Newnham was frank and had plenty to say.

P.S. On replaying the interview and going over the transcript I wish to reemphasise that Newnham has always been an impetuous, enthusiastic and restlessly active individual. In this sense I think that a Ceylonese contemporary was speaking very aptly in referring to him as an "overgrown schoolboy", though it was used in this instance in a derogatory sense. There can be little doubt, too, that he delighted in the unorthodox and the unexpected; and in shocking people. I should say that he also liked to hit the limelight. But his activity must not be dismissed as mere glory-seeking ventures. He belonged to the species of individual who lived at high gear and could not stay complacent, tranquil or inactive.

Some Ceylonese also regarded him as pompous and superior in attitude. I find this less easy to understand or accept. He had little colour feeling and was not the sort to stand on his dignity. Poulier, a Ceylonese Civil Servant, found him to be the sort who could see both sides of questions and considered him pretty liberal in outlook

M.W. Roberts

August 1966.

INTERVIEWS WITH MR. H.E. NEWNHAM, C.M.G., V.D., DECEMBER 1965.

FIRST INTERVIEW, 2 DECEMBER 1965.

N. And stop me at any moment you like.

I. Fine.

N. Shall I begin?

I. Yes.

N. I should like to make it clear first of all that in fact, as far as I could see, there never was any policy in the governing of Ceylon. Stace says that over a government office somewhere there was a slogan written, 'There is no reason for it. Its just our policy'. And that seems to me to be very, very apt. I went to Ceylon in the Civil Service in 1909. At that time the service was recruited, mostly by chance, from Oxford and Cambridge, from among people who had done classics. That is to say Latin, Greek, Philosophy. We had no instruction or training whatever. Before we came to Ceylon, nor on our way. Nor, indeed, after we got there. The Service was run very much like a British public - very much as a British public school was run. We were expected to know how the game was played. Just as public school boys are expected to know how to play cricket. And I think the administration and cricket were regarded in very much the same light. And if you asked any questions about administration the answer was, 'Well, you surely know that'. You see? Now our assets were, I might say, perhaps some degree of intelligence, absolute integrity, a spirit of public service, a sense of responsibility, industriousness and initiative. That is to say that we were not expected to wait for orders.

I. One point, only classical scholars were taken, were they?

N. No, no, that was chance.

I. That was chance?

N. Like everything else it was chance. The examination was open to everybody, all British subjects. Open, and then it was so arranged - the examination papers were arranged under different headings, really to suit the courses at the Universities in those days, which were chiefly Oxford and Cambridge. You could take all sorts of subjects and speaking as a Classics I would say that some curious people took Mathematics. You see what I mean?

I. Yes.

N. But nonetheless, it so happened they - that we were mostly Classics. It was not, as far as I know, intentional on the part of the Commissioners. But it worked out that way. Do you know Heussler's book?

I. Yes.

N. You know that?

I. Oh, yes, I've read it.

N. You've read it. Well, there's a great deal that I gave him in there.

I. I know.

N. And have you read that man Ralph ...?

I. Furse.

N. Who?

I. Furse. F-U-R-S-E is it? Furse.

N. Furse, yes, Furse. You know his book?

I. No, I haven't. But I've heard of it.

N. Well, its very much the same, you see. Well, now - on our arrival in Ceylon we were told to report to the Acting Colonial Secretary, who was acting for Sir Hugh Clifford, who was on leave. He was a man called Crawford. We went solemnly into his room in fear and trembling. He shook hands with us and he at once proceeded to tell us that he had to play in the Ceylon croquet championship that morning, that his boy had forgotten to call him in time for him to have any early tea. He had to go off and play without early tea. He therefore had failed to win the championship. And believe me, that's all he told us, except that he asked us to dinner at the club that evening and after that we played bridge.

I. Do you think your public school career helped you to undertake these Colonial duties in this empirical fashion?

N. Oh, yes.

I. In what specific way?

N. Oh, yes, reared on the Classics and Philosophy, and having been at public school and at Oxford or Cambridge, we knew how to handle people. And there was a system of prefects and sixth-form and so on at school. And they knew how to keep order and discipline among the younger boys and all that sort .... We were used to that and we had the idea that if anything happened it was our business to deal with it. As quite a youngster in

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Anuradhapura, when I was - what was I? - about ... now, now, now ... - 3 years old in the service - very - a youngster. The new Government Agent had just arrived and had pushed off into the jungle on circuit and I had a code telegram from - from the Government. And the Government Agent had locked up the code book and taken the key with him. And I was wondering what to do when a curious person turned up, in a banian and cloth, at my bungalow, and said that he was a C.I.D. police inspector. And that he'd been sent for at midnight to a conference at Queens House to see the Governor and the Colonial Secretary and others. And they thought that there was going to be a serious outbreak of riots in Anuradhapura ....

I. When was this?

N. 1912. Serious outbreak of riots. And they had sent him up there to give us - in disguise - give assistance to the Government Agent, and that there was a train waiting in Kernigalle [Kurunegala], with steam up, ready to take 40 armed police up to help. Well, there was I - Government - my boss away and - it was up to me to do. And I did. The - I sent a message to the Government Agent to the jungle to say I wanted the key. I wanted the code book, you see. And I wired back to Government to say that, 'Your telegram arrived. Code book locked up. Key with Government Agent on circuit. Cannot decode until tomorrow', you see. And, well, that was that. I went out to Mihintale, into the middle of all the crowds next day.

I. Why were they expecting riots?

N. Oh, there'd been some articles in the newspapers, inflammatory stuff. But as soon as I'd been to Mihintale and wandered about among the crowds and the rest of it I cabled to the Government and said, 'All quiet. No obvious signs of impending unrest". I took the responsibility.

I. It was all quiet was it?

N. Pardon?

I. Subsequently it was all quiet?

N. Oh, it was quiet. And, I mean, I had to deal with it.

I. No, I was wondering about the incident. Had it anything to do with this big case in Gampola in 1912?

N. It was long before that.

I. It was before that?

N. Long before. Because - there's no need to go into that.

I. But its - just an example.

N. Well ... - well, everyone was told what office to report at and there one was simply put down at a desk and literally a peon told one what to do. 'Master will sign there', 'Master will initial there'. Literally. And one signed things one didn't understand, one initialled accounts one didn't understand, and hoped for the best. And one gradually absorbed some idea of administration. Well, now, - that's another - oh, yes, the next point is: the Civil Service very much kept to itself. One lived in a chummery with four or five other Civil Servants who were senior and they were always talking shop, telling service stories. They would say, 'Oh, such a B.F. of a Government Agent, at one time, did so and so and so and so and so and so', and one learnt.

I. What not to do?

N. What not to do; yes, exactly. I mean, I'm not making this up. Its true. Well, then, I was lucky in Anuradhapura because I had two duds of Government Agents. Admittedly duds.

I. Who were they?

N. I'm not going to tell you. Ha-ha-ha.

I. I could find out soon.

N. Oh, yes, ... I could tell you but not for this. They were admittedly duds and so I had to take a grip myself, as a youngster. And it so happened that one of those duds, afterwards, came to Badulla, where I was. I had an awful job in trying to cope with this fellow. However, the planters there were very good. They used to come to me instead of him and I could get a move on. And then he got ill with enteric and cleared out. Then they sent another dud. But, meanwhile, when I got to Badulla, I found there the Government Agent was Cumberland, who was quite admirable. Quite admirable. And I owe a great, great deal to him. He said to me, 'Well', - he'd had a row with my predecessor - and he said, 'Will you clearly understand that you can carry on here and attend to the work that falls to you and if you're in doubt as to whether to make an order or not', he said, 'submit it to me'. He said, 'Its my Province, not yours'. And he said, 'I'm responsible. But meanwhile, carry on, and for god's sake don't embroil ~~on~~ me with anyone'. And I did carry on and with the greatest enjoyment under Cumberland. He was one of the very few first class people. Well, one day walking back with

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him from the kachcheri I said to him, 'Well, sir, as Aristotle would say, "What is the end or object of all this activity of ours? What are we driving at?"' And he ground his teeth at me, as he always did, and said, 'Well, it ought to be obvious that Queen Victoria sent a message to the - to the people of India to say that we were only governing in India in order to teach the people to govern themselves.' And he said, 'I take it that that's what we're here for'. So I said, 'Well, thank you very much, sir. Its taken three years for anyone to tell me what the object was. But now I know, I'll act accordingly', and did.

I. Hmm. But wasn't that an individual viewpoint and at the policy level in Colombo wouldn't you say that they had lost sight of this object?

N. Oh, entirely, entirely. Well, - my throat will give out shortly and I shall have to go out. Another point is this: that Ceylon, in those days, was a senior Crown colony. The Governor had realised all his ambitions and all he wanted was a quiet life until he retired. This, you see, was his last job. The Colonial Secretary had climbed up and that was his last job as a Colonial Secretary and he was hoping for a Governorship. And that largely depended on a good report from the Governor. Therefore, he, the Colonial Secretary, found it his policy - his best policy was to see that the Governor has a quiet life. I mean it. Well, under the Colonial Secretary were a number of junior Civil Servants, who all wanted to get promotion out of the colony. And they realised that the object - their chances lay in keeping their bosses quiet, seeing that they had a quiet life. And, therefore, if anybody wrote in with any bright suggestions for this, that or the rest, these youngsters always found fault. Everybody raised every objection they possibly could, to any new move, any new step of any sort or kind. And they tried to keep the files moving around - moving around so that no action should be taken. And so that those above should not be disturbed. Now, I was in the Secretariat for a few months once. So I've seen it working. And it was so. And another cadet and I, who were there alternately, we used to joke about the way in which we were expected to sign stinkers to Heads of Departments. And this seemed to be the joke, to write rude letters to Heads of Departments. I mean, we didn't invent it, we found that that was so. And that seemed to be the tradition of the office, you see.

I. Was there what you would call a clerk's mentality of trying to be clever in this obstructionist way?

N. Well, it was primarily, I think, so as not to bother the people above with the problem. But as I always say, secondly, it was a result of the English essay having been a compulsory subject in the exam.

I. Yes.

N. Now, this is again true. English essay was a compulsory subject and these blighters in the Colonial Secretary's Office, they spent all their time writing essays to each other. They were called minutes - minutes. Long minutes. The papers would start at the bottom but the youngster, he'd write a minute, to go up and up and up and up and up with these minutes. Until - the man at the top of the local service there was called the Principal Assistant - well, he was usually a capable fellow, usually, capable fellow. And he had to see what was in all these blessed minutes and he was usually a sound person. But he was not - he didn't want to wreck his chances so that he didn't disturb the Governor or the Colonial Secretary unless it was really necessary, you see. He very often was a person who could make orders himself on behalf of Government. There was a man called Bowes there.

I. I know. I read his book.

N. Oh, you ...

I. Autobiography.

N. Yes. Well, he was very good. And everybody respected him. And when I was opening - you know, what they call _tappal_ - there at Anuradhapura, when I had a weak boss, I used to argue with this boss and beg him not to write some letter to Government, and he'd none the less write it. Sure enough two days later opening the _tappal_ there would be a private letter addressed to my boss. Frank Bowes, you see, - he'd send for me and say, 'Well, apparently you were right. I've just had a stinker from Bowes'. Bowes used to do a lot of that sort of thing. And he was very good. But they were always writing these essays to each other. And there was a fellow from the Colonial Office once - no names - who came out to Ceylon at one time. We were talking about a certain man in the Secretariat, you see. And I said casually, 'Oh, I suppose he'll get promoted', you see, to some job, Colonial Secretary or Governor. And this

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man said, 'Oh, no, I don't think so. I don't think he's fitted'. I said, 'Why not?' He said, 'Oh, he doesn't put very good English in his despatches'. Now that's the sort .... The man actually, ultimately, was promoted. He wasn't any good but I mean ... he nonetheless was promoted. But that's what the Colonial Office man said talking about it. 'Oh, no', he said, 'His English in his despatches isn't very good'.

I. So you had to be able to write clever minutes?

N. Yes, you see. Its this paper, paper, paper. Well, is that the sort of stuff you want?

I. Oh, yes. Very much so. And could I ask some questions on this?

N. Yes, do.

I. This pragmatic approach to administration, do you think it was pushed too far? Was it pushed too far? Would you have liked to have more instruction and more discussion?

N. Yes, I would, most certainly. The - but you would need to have intelligent people to give the instruction.

I. Agreed.

N. You see, the Government Agents, at the turn of the century, talked almost entirely about shooting snipe. They would talk about how many snipe they'd shot on the last circuit. Now, that doesn't mean that their circuits were useless. In fact, they went around shooting snipe and they stayed in the villages, they talked to the villagers. They went and inspected the paddy fields, they inspected the village tanks and they inspected the chenas, They lived very close to the people, you see. But, they'd have been quite unable to talk about it, for the most part, for the most part.

I. Yes. Apart from instruction at the local level in Ceylon, would you have liked some sort of instruction, as they had later in these courses in Oxford and Cambridge?

N. Certainly I should. Yes, very much, very much.

I. But, of course, some people say that this sort of theory is useless. What would you say to that?

N. That's a typical thing. This is always said. The man on the spot always says that the Staff Officer is useless. The Staff Officer says that the man on the spot is short-sighted.

I. Yes.

N. When Lord Curzon was Viceroy in India, he had a difference of

opinion with the Viceroy's Council - these people that Kipling describes as the grey-bearded seniors who sit about the council board of India - he had a difference of opinion and one of them said, 'Well, sir, may I remind you that we have spent our lives working in India'. And Curzon replied, 'Precisely. And I have been sent here to correct that'.

I. Yes.

N. Don't you think that's a very illuminating remark? 'I've been sent out to correct that.' And there's a great deal of truth in that. Yes, and what's your next question?

I. Yes, well, since you were forced, per se, to adopt an empirical approach, couldn't the people sometimes suffer from your lack of experience?

N. It meant stagnation. Here's another point.

I. Yes.

N. Yes. It resulted in what you might call a paternal form of Government, which was unquestioned by the people. They accepted it and they were quite reasonably prosperous and very happy. The villager was not then pushed around. He regarded - there were plagues in life. There was the paddy fly, you know, which spoilt paddy. There was a visit, perhaps, by the Government Agent who was not as bad as the paddy fly but - I mean, he happened - God sent him - but on the whole he was happy. But - and the people - the villager type didn't want what these blasted politicians call freedom. When I was A.G.A., Colombo, I went to hold some gansabhawa elections, in that area between Colombo and Negombo, where that large flooded area is. I've forgotten what its called.

I. Muturajevela.

N. Muturajevela. And I thought I'd try and rouse the villagers to take some interest in these elections. So I gave a notice to say that I hoped they'd all turn up, especially as there was a proposal to raise the gansabhawa tax. There wasn't except mine, but, I mean, I thought that would frighten them into coming. No more people than usual turned up. And I said, 'Now then, there's a proposal to raise the gansabhawa tax to improve the roads and this, that and the other'. I was merely trying to rouse them. I said, 'What do you think about that?' And their answer was, 'As master pleases'.

I. Hmm. That's what we would call the 'ovu mahathmaya' attitude; 'ovu mahathmaya' attitude.

N. Yes, yes, yes, yes, exactly. The - precisely, yes, that's right. But I definitely tried that. Now, another aspect of that administration is exemplified in what a man in Harrison & Crossfield's said to me that - the mercantile firm in Colombo ....

I. Yes, I know.

N. You know? He's now - was retired and was the boss - and is extremely well off. But we were youngsters together and we used to talk about administration. And he said to me, 'My dear Newnham it seems to me that most Civil Servants' idea of administration is to sit in a chair and wait to see what happens'. Well, that sums that up very well. That's what people did. I mean, there were people who were Mayors of Colombo and things of that kind, they'd go into the office and they'd wait and see what papers came up. And if no papers came up, well, then, after a time, they went home again.

I. Yes.

N. Instead of going out and looking at the roads and looking at the things and saying, 'Look at these people and these children in the slums. What are we going to do about it? What about child welfare?' Stirring things up.

I. Yes.

N. No, they sat in a chair and waited to see what came up.

I. Yes. In the Civil Service, you would get what I would call the - one type who would be the initiators, and the other type who would move on stereotyped lines.

N. Yes.

I. Laissez-faire. And wait for things to crop up.

N. Yes, quite.

I. Would you say there - which type were there more of?

N. Oh, well, at the start we were all of us I think anxious to be, what they're called now, do-gooders.

I. Yes.

N. And to look after the people and so forth. But one's efforts were so frequently snubbed and squashed.

I. That's in Colombo or provincial headquarters?

N. Well, it depended. Anybody who was much older than you were tended to behave like that. And to - they didn't say, 'Look here my dear fellow, I know what you're driving at and something ought to be done, but I think that's not the way to do

it. I think, possibly, we'll - what we'll do is so and so, and so and so'. Instead of that they would lose - if you put a minute up they'd lose it. Or initial it and send it back, meaning nothing. You know, the damned old, 'Go and play golf. For god's sake go and play golf and don't bother'. That was very much the attitude of a very large number. There's no doubt. Well, there's another point. You asked about local government. There was a great - good man. I had three very good bosses indeed. One was Cumberland, one was Bowes and another was J.G. Fraser, Government Agent, Western Province.

I. John Fraser?

N. Now, Fraser, during the 14-18 War, foresaw that when the War was over, there would be a demand for self-government or something on those lines, from politicians, people at the top. And he thought that it was very desirable to prepare for that - now here's a man looking forward, you see - and to encourage local government.

I. Yes.

N. You see, give as many people as possible, experience of public administration. And he got that Ordinance, No. 19 of 1915, passed. The Local Government Ordinance. Providing for the establishment of Rural District Councils and - what do you call it? - local - what's it? - Urban District Councils and all that sort of thing, you see. And he tried to get experience of these things spread through the country. He could not - having got the Ordinance past - he could not get the Government to take any action. Well, in the end, when I was A.G.A., Colombo, they did establish a Local Government Board. He was the Chairman, I was the Secretary. We had the greatest difficulty in inducing the Government to take any interest in this. We had to proclaim a Notice in areas, to say that it was proposed to have these things, and so on. And then call for representations and public meetings and God knows what. Well, the - I've forgotten how many - in the end I think there were about five we got established. Urban Councils.

I. Yes.

N. I think it was five. The - and I prepared for them with the utmost care. I ran Negombo then. And I went all through that office. I had all the files put in order. I got all the old rubbish destroyed. You know, all the old cattle

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vouchers, the whole place cleared up. So that whoever took over, took over in apple-pie order. I wrote to all the other G.A's and A.G.A's about some of the places and asked them to do the same. And for the most part they didn't to anything at all. One case was hopeless chaos. What's that?

I. Your wife.

INTERRUPTION

I. I know you felt that - you're convinced that there was a lack of drive and purpose in British rule. Because you have stated that.

N. Yes.

I. Would you say that efficiency was made an end in itself - efficiency was made an end ...?

N. It depends on what you mean by efficiency.

I. Oh, just carrying on. Well, efficiently carrying on the administration in their terms of ...

N. The - as far as I met it the administration was honest and it was efficient within limits.

I. Efficient within its fixed grooves?

N. Yes. In its own groove; within its own groove, that's right, yes.

I. That's right.

N. But the great point was that it was honest.

I. Yes, of course.

N. And ...

I. And was the Secretariat, in say the 1900's or even in the 1910 to 1920 period, was it too centralised, was it a bottleneck?

N. The Secretariat?

I. Yes.

N. Yes, in general it was. Yes.

I. And was too bureaucratic?

N. Yes.

I. Bowes, I think, accuses Stubbs of being very - of rather of that sort. Bureaucratic minded. Was he? Stubbs?

N. I don't think these general terms really apply. Stubbs was a very curious creature indeed. I mean, I - I should be loath to go into detail about him. I knew him pretty well. And I don't want to ...

I. To make adverse comments.

N. Well, there you are. If I said things they might be too adverse.

I. Yes, I see.

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n. The - he was an intellectual snob. He thought that he knew better than everybody else. He had no experience - he had no experience of the colonies till he came as Colonial Secretary to Ceylon, except that he had been sent on a Commission to Malaya to look into the salaries there - the Public Servants. And as I gather he reduced them rather than raised them, he wasn't very popular. But there are innumerable stories about him and I took a very grave view of some of the things he did. For example he took a positive delight in trying to thwart what Fraser did for local government. He took an absolute delight in it. And in thwarting it. And when he came back years afterwards as Governor he was asked to open something in an Urban Council area. And in a speech he said that, 'When I was here before I thought that Mr. Fraser had not got a mind above drains, but I now see - I now see that he was a man of wider outlook'. Well, fancy ever thinking that Fraser hadn't got a mind above drains. And drains are very important things in these small towns. But Stubbs was only too delighted to say something smart. And he was, I think, pretty cynical too.

I. Yes, Bowes makes that point about him being - trying to be smart.

N. Yes.

I. And would you say that he had the clerk's outlook? Looking at details rather than on general - rather than general questions?

N. Well, you've read Stace's - its what Stace said. He said that Chalmers remarked to him once, 'You know, my dear Stace, Stubbs is a very good clerk'.

I. You think so too?

N. Oh, yes. But he thought he was a wonderful fellow.

I. Oh, yes.

N. And he was continually trying to outwit people.

I. Were you appalled when he was appointed Governor?

N. Appalled?

I. Yes.

N. Oh, I was beyond worry and minding anything. The - yes, I'll leave it at that.

I. Yes. Turning to another point. You made this point about the Governors and Colonial Secretaries generally being lethargic, in that they wanted things to be quiet and peaceful. Were there

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any exceptions to this rule? Among the Governors?

N. Yes, well, Governor MacCallum was a Royal Engineer. And he was by way of taking an interest in Public Works. But Slater told me that he, Slater, who was afterwards Governor of various places, you know, Jamaica, etc...

I. Yes.

N. He'd remarked at the then Director of Public Works, Cooper, 'You must be having a wonderful time now that there's a Governor who takes an interest in Public Works'. And Cooper replied, 'I will agree with that if you will agree that a bull in a china shop is taking an interest in the china'. But he was - Chalmers, when he was Governor, he was going to look round and he was going to try and do things. He was going to spend his first year in becoming familiar with the place, you see. And then, I think, he was intending to do something other than the University. But then the war came. That finished that. He was recalled because he was wanted in the Treasury. He was not recalled over the Riots.

I. Yes?

N. That's an entire lie. Oh, Stace tells you all about that.

I. Yes.

N. Oh, and Clifford.

I. Yes?

N. Clifford would have - was anxious to - to do things. He'd got a great scheme for colonisation in the Kaltura District.

I. This was when he was Governor?

N. Governor, yes. Oh, yes.

I. Wasn't he a bit mentally unbalanced at that time?

N. Oh, well, poor man. As a matter of fact he was suffering from intermittent insanity then. One doesn't say that in public places. But that's what it was. It was - I've got pages of it, about it. But I can't show you or anybody. You know, he was - he was .... It was intermittent. Its a well known complaint. But he was - he was a very vigorous person. Yes, what's your next question?

I. Ah, yes. Just a rather queer line of enquiry. Mr. Strong, in his preface to Bowes' autobiography, says that - gives an example where Government destroyed some correspondence. Would that sort of thing be done? Would they destroy embarrassing correspondence?

N. Who said that?

I. Mr. Strong.

N. Strong?

I. Yes. Mr. A.N. Strong. In his preface he says - it was something minor but it concerned him and Bowes and as a result Strong was not paid £150, or something like that, because he had done - taken on some extra tasks. Well, ...

N. Well, I know Mr. Strong. I've got a packet of letters from Strong here which I haven't answered yet, over the last few years. Look at them. I thought I'd just show you the inside ... These are all long memorandum and letters.

I. On what?

N. Oh, reminiscences and things.

I. Hmm.

N. I simply have - I've got a pocketful of them here. I simply haven't time to answer them. They're all very good stuff. But mostly I can't hand them to anybody else because they're too confidential, you see. But I've never heard of such a case.

I. Yes. I ...

N. Anything Strong said would be true.

I. Yes, I know.

N. It was something to do with acting pay or something, was it?

I. Yes, that's right.

N. Overtime or something?

I. Overtime, that's right.

N. But who destroyed what? I ...

I. He doesn't say who but apparently the correspondence was not - well, he says it was destroyed. He - Bowes says - has told him, 'Never trust Government'.

N. Oh? Now that's - to my mind that's unique. I've never heard of such a thing. I've never heard of such ...

I. Yes. I was making an enquiry about it because it was rather a strange fact.

N. I think there must be - who was it? Stubbs was at the bottom of the trouble?

I. I don't know. He didn't mention names.

N. No, there's some mistake there. You'd better ask Strong about it if you see him.

I. Yes, I'm meeting him. I'm meeting him on Monday.

N. Are you?

I. Mmm.

N. Oh, well, you ask him about it then.

I. Yes. Turning to this sphere of local government how useful did you find the gansabha? The village councils.

N. I know practically - now, I know practically nothing about the village committees and the gansabhas. When I was A.G.A., Colombo, I, for some reason or other, I don't think I had much to do with them. I dealt with the local boards and with the sanitary boards and with a few specific land questions. But I really - I don't think I had much to do with the gansabhas. But, in general, I should say that they served their purpose very well indeed in that time - at that time in that period. They were run by the Chief Headmen who were landed country gentlemen. Doubtless they had their defects but, by and large, it worked very well indeed.

I. What would you say their defects were?

N. Oh, well ... Ha-ha-ha. They ...

I. Corruption?

N. Well, you can't call it corruption. I mean, it was ...

I. Part of the tradition?

N. Mmm?

I. Part of the tradition?

N. Yes. The tradition was, apparently, you never went to see anyone empty handed.

I. Yes, that's right.

N. And if a Chief Headman was - if he was badly in need of money, I suppose he might take bribes, from time to time. But I was on - I was Secretary of the Headman's Commission and we went all ...

I. When was that?

N. 1920. When I was A.G.A., Colombo, 1920-21.

I. Yes.

N. Oh, I took that circus all round the place. Fraser, Dowbiggin, Bowes, Meedeniya Adigar, K. Balasingham, H.L. De Mel. I had to transport these people all round the show. And we took evidence everywhere and I wrote to the newspapers, I wrote to everybody who'd been out charging the headmen with corruption if they'd come and tell us.

I. What was the ...?

N. Oh, just inquire into the headman system to know whether it was serving its good purpose, what were its effects, and if it ought to be - needed any alteration. I wrote to all the newspapers and said, 'You were always charging the headmen with

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corruption. Please come and give evidence'. There were only two efforts made. One was by Armand de Sousa of the Daily News, or whatever it was, who - it wasn't convincing what he had to say and the other was some story by a missionary in Batticoloa. But apart from that you couldn't get any evidence at all. Except from Hercules Meedeniya. You know his son? Meedeniya Adigar's son?

I. Yes.

N. And, I think, possibly Bibile R.M. You know, young Bibile, old Bibile's son. When they were giving evidence ... 'Well, do you ever get presents from people?' he said. 'Oh, yes. Oh, yes'. 'What?' 'Oh, it depends. ... the people. Sometimes a 5 rupee note'. 'Yes, yes, but you ...' 'They always bring something, sir'. 'Yes, but do you ever get any large sums?'. 'Oh, no, no, no, not large sums but you always get something'. Perfectly frankly. But its a very easy - its a very easy charge to bring. You see, you've only got two people to give and receive, or whatever it is, their evidence. And whose to say? Well, I think that some of them probably did occasionally take bribes but I don't think - if they did - I don't think it was anything of very great hardship to the people who gave them. But - oh, you've never heard him I suppose. There was an old missionary. He's retired, living in Kandy. I've forgotten his name but 1910, when I was there, 1910 I dined with him or he dined with me - something of that sort. And he told me - he was a dear old thing - lived all his life in the Kandyan District - Garrett was it? Garrett? I forget. But there'd been a Government Agent, very highly respected and loved, universally, called Wace, in Kandy, for years. And he said, 'You know, Mr. Newnham, I told Mr. Wace just before he retired that every single Kandyan villager believed that he, Mr. Wace, took bribes'. And he said, 'Poor Mr. Wace was shattered at being told this'. He said, 'Yes, but it is so. They all believe that you take bribes'. And he said, 'Well, to think that I've been here ten years,' whatever it is, so on, so on, and so on. And Garrett said, 'Well,' he said, 'I'm not suggesting for a moment that you do.' But he said, 'All the villagers believe it. Because its the usual thing. By bribes, presents or whatever it is. And', he said, 'its probably due to your chief interpreter, Kachcheri mudaliyar'. And Garrett

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said that he once was out preaching the gospel somewhere and a man came hurrying through the village. 'Where are you going?' 'Oh, I'm going to the kachcheri. I've applied for the job of headman for (whatever it was) and I'm taking the money necessary. Here's so much for the Government Agent and so much for the Chief Interpreter', you see. 500 rupees, I think, for the Government Agent, 500 for whatever it was. 'I'm taking it there. I've, you know, mortgaged my land and all the rest of it. And here it is, this is the money'. Well, next day this man came hurrying back. 'Where are you going?' 'Oh', he said, 'Its not enough. The Government Agent wants a 1,000 and not 500. And now I've to go - to go back and see my brother and get him to mortgage his land'. And he came back with the other 500. Well, Garrett said, 'Well, all the villagers were bound to believe that! And he presumed that it was the Chief Interpreter. Who said of course the Government Agent doesn't take this money himself but you see ...

I. And he took it himself?

N. And took it himself. That was what was believed. Poor old Wace. I mean - you don't know the Wace family ...?

I. No.

N. But his brother was Dean of Canterbury. Another was don - of B.N.C. in my day. And adjutant ...

I. Regarding this gansabha system and the village headman do you think by the 1930's it was anachronistic? Later on.

N. Oh, by the 1930's. Perhaps it was, perhaps it was. I doubt it - I very much doubt if the villager's very much better off now under whatever blasted system they've got now. Elections and God knows what else. Well, the elections were corrupt enough. I very much doubt if they're any better off.

I. What about these Urban Councils which you mentioned in connection with Mr. Fraser. Do you think they, these Urban Councils, as distinct from the Colombo Municipal Council and other Municipal Councils - do you think they provided politicians with a good training ground?

N. Mind you, I ceased to have anything to do with them in 1924. But .... Its difficult to say, you see, they .... They were still the poor wretched little local proctors and others, you see, they - instead of being on the local board, they were on the council and they'd no idea of - but they thought they'd

got power and they then proceeded to do the most ridiculous things and then they all quarrelled as to who should be the Chairman and then finally somebody got elected as Chairman, you see, and then as soon as you elect this Chairman all the other councillors proceeded to try and tear him down. Well, that's all natural, I suppose. You couldn't say that they were getting really any - much experience in administration. And I was, you see, on the Negombo Council but not Chairman, and no vote. But I was a member, no voting power. But I used to go there regularly and so on. And I - I didn't interfere, you see, more than I could help. I simply observed. If they asked advice I gave it. But, of course, the wretched Secretary used to come to me and say, 'What shall I do about so and so?' I said, 'For God's sake don't ask me', I said, 'That's Mudaliyar Rajapakse ....' They were very ignorant, you see. I suppose it was a good beginning. And, you see, they'd no conception of what the Civil Servant did. You see, I in Negombo, I checked the accounts myself as ?? of the local board. I mean, I checked the accounts. I checked all the slaughter-house fees and all the blessed things, you see. Chased them into the ledger and chased them into the cash book and chased it all into the bank. I checked all that. And when I - when the elected Chairman was there he never did anything or he left all to the Secretary. Well, he - the Secretary there was pretty good. He was lazy but some of the Secretaries, of course, put money in their pockets.

I. Hmm.

N. Elsewhere. Not there but - I mean and - I remember trouble at Matale. I've forgotten what. And I said to the - I went up to inspect that sort of thing and I said to the then - whatever he was called - Chairman, Van Royen, Crown Proctor - I said, 'But did you ever check the accounts?' And he said, 'No,no'. He said, 'Course not'. He said, 'Local government, to me, doesn't mean checking the accounts'. They had the sort of idea you sat in a chair and - and passed resolutions. I mean, I mean that. I'm not being funny.

I. Yes.

N. In Negombo, for example, one of the members proposed that there should be two midwives employed in Negombo, two midwives. Oh! So they all sat round. So I said to them after they'd talked it over, I said, 'You know, first of all you've got no power,

under the Ordinance you're working under, to employ midwives. Its not one of the things you do'. And I said, 'They're all under the Medical Department'. And I said, 'For another thing, the Medical Department can't get enough midwives as it is. They don't exist. And - so you're not likely to get two waiting(?) for you(?)'. 'Nevertheless we will pass the resolution', you see. And they passed it and they all went blowing out their chests and thought what fine fellows they were. But nothing happened. Nothing happened.

I. Yes, I see.

N. But they - quite a number of them were very well meaning.

I. Yes.

N. But just one point to show how difficult it was to discover what the people wanted. When we held - we prescribed public meetings, held in various places, to decide whether they wanted an Urban District Council or not. When it came to Batticaloa a public meeting was held one day there and that evening I had two telegrams. One from the Chairman of the public meeting saying that the public meeting unanimously, unanimously decided that they wanted to have an urban council. And I had the other telegram from the Secretary of the meeting saying the public meeting unanimously decided they did not want... Same meeting, chairman, but two different things. A public meeting. So then we wrote to the Government Agent and said, 'Could he tell us anything about it?' And he said he couldn't say except that the meeting ended in some confusion. That's true.

I. Yes.

N. Well, I mean, I'm not laughing at them, I'm just striving ... You see, you people who write books about these things, you start off - all sorts of theoretical ideas about the this and that and the other and the rest of it. But when it comes down to the point, the question is what sort of people are running these things? What are the people like?

I. Mmm. Agreed.

N. And - I mean, whatever form of government you have, in any country, it'll be a mess for a long time. And you'll remember what Churchill said, that 'democracy was the worst possible form of government until you looked at all the others'. I mean, look at the condition of affairs in England. I mean, the local government in England, in some places - Birmingham, Liverpool, London - is most efficient. But I was on - for some years I

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was on a borough council, after I retired, and I resigned after a few years. As I told some of them, I said, 'I wouldn't have permitted this incompetence in a roadside bazaar in Ceylon'. I mean it. The Chairmen of the committees didn't know the first thing about what their committees did.

I. Yes, I see.

N. Incompetent.

I. If I may turn to a - the political aspect. In this - in the early years of your career, in Ceylon, did these Theosophists and Free Thinkers come to your attention much?

N. No, no.

I. Not much notice was taken of them?

N. Oh, I don't know whether other people did. I was not interested in that sort of thing and I - I did not ...

I. What about these Temperance meetings?

N. Which?

I. The Temperance meetings.

N. Oh, I know very little about it. But the general idea was that the Temperance meetings were all mixed up with the people who were wanting what was called a reform of the Constitution.

I. Yes.

N. And, therefore, there was a sort of general feeling that they were all seditious. But some years afterwards, in the 1920's was it? - I was at some lunch - I don't know what it was but - sitting next to D.S. Senanayake. I was - it must have been, I mean, when I was Mayor but I don't know - the 1920's or later. But I got talking to him. It was long before he was Prime Minister. And he said, 'You know', he said, 'when I began to take an interest in politics, I realised that I shouldn't get anywhere - I shouldn't get very far unless I linked it to the Buddhist religion, which meant that I had to take Buddhism seriously. But', he said, 'you know, it meant ...' He said, 'I did, but it meant I had to give up my two greatest - two most favourite pastimes. One was hunting and the other was beer'. I mean, he was - this was(?) his story. And he said, 'I've had to do without those ever since'. Well, what he meant was that the Temperance thing, you see, was necessary to catch the imagination of the Buddhists and so on and the rest of it.

I. Yes.

N. That's why(?).

I. But it was - would you say that it was an attempt to - by thinking politicians to evoke mass response?

N. To evoke?

I. Mass response. Political - political response from the people?

N. Yes, yes, that's it. Well, Senanayake told me so.

I. Mmm. And what was - do you have any idea what Government's attitude to these Temperance Societies was? Government?

N. No. It was like - Government felt that there was some giant that was stirring in his sleep. And wished to God he'd go to sleep again.

I. Ha-ha. Oh, I see.

N. I think that's all.

I. Yes. Would you - I was wondering whether they felt that these were sort of political meetings held under the cloak of temperance? Political meetings.

N. Oh, they probably were. Oh, yes, yes. Why not?

I. Yes, why not? And if I - can you remember this famous Reforms Despatch of 1910, I think? The one ...

N. No, I've forgotten all that.

I. Yes.

N. It was my subject once and I had copies of it all and the rest of it. But I haven't got them, I haven't read ...

I. Well, if I may say something about it.

N. Yes.

I. I think it was Clifford who really wrote it. He argued that - in effect his argument implied that Ceylon was not ready for the self-governing process to begin.

N. Yes, yes.

I. What would you say to that?

N. What?

I. What would you say to that?

N. Well, here again - I mean I - I don't want to be - try and be funny or ?? but I would say truthfully that no country in the world is really fit for the process of local - of self-government to begin. I mean, the - it means - self-government at the start means chaos and usually corruption. And it means upsetting the previous form of government which may have been, as ours was, honest and efficient and so forth, and all that. But the general view of the world is that - that people should govern themselves, and so on, and so on, even if they make a mess of it. And - they've got to begin sooner or later and you've got to get - it costs, of course, like all human enterprises - it means human sacrifice.

END OF FIRST INTERVIEW

Confidential and Unrecorded Information provided by Mr. Newnham, 1 December 1965.

R.N. Bond Mr. Newnham seemed to regard him highly and perhaps I will have to revise my belief that he would have been stereotyped in the lines on which he worked: i.e. following orders.

Sir Hilary Blood while regarding Sir Hilary's present activities (i.e. in the 1960's) with obvious respect, he viewed him as typical of the Secretariat wallah he criticised during the interview: i.e. a 'writer of clever essays' in his words.

Mr. Dyson 'a quiet fellow'

Sir W.L. Murphy he regarded as the lethargic sort moving on fixed lines and waiting for things to happen rather than searching for things he could do. Since Sir W.L. Murphy was Mayor of Colombo in the 1930's a remark made during the recorded interview obviously applied to him. He thought Murphy and Blood the ideal sort for the Caribbean Isles where, he imagined, a'do-nothing to disturb the quiet' policy was ideal and was followed.

Sir.F. Gimson 'pompous' he said, largely with reference to a letter Gimson had written to him in 1948 after attending the Independence celebrations and in which Gimson drew all manner of conclusions which he felt were awry, in effect making something out of nothing. But he also added that Gimson was the most efficient of all the provincial officers in dealing with the 1934-35 malaria epidemic. In this connection he also added that next in grading (i.e. his grading: he was the one who was given overall charge of Government's counter-campaign) to Gimson, the three 'next best', were all Ceylonese. He also felt Gimson stood up to the planters well while Controller of Labour.

Re my heading 'Ceylonisation controversy' he stressed that there was 'no controversy.' It was, in his words, just 'drift, drift, drift.'

M.W. Roberts
1/12/65

INTERVIEWS WITH MR. H.E. NEWNHAM, C.M.G., V.D., DECEMBER 1965.

SECOND INTERVIEW, 24 DECEMBER 1965.

I. The first topic - I want to start off with the Riots itself.

N. You do?

I. Yes. But I should preface it by saying that I read your account - your paper written in 1942.

N. Oh, did you? Where did you get that?

I. Its in the Queen Elizabeth House ...

N. Oh, yes. Yes, you've read that?

I. I've read that. I found it very interesting and, as you say, not many people can give evidence on - can give a sort of ...

N. No.

I. Dispassionate view on these riots.

N. Yes.

I. There has been a - what I would call a historical myth which has developed since then.

N. The - well, I - what - has the thing [the tape-recorder] started?

I. Yes.

N. The - in so far as the 1915 Riots are concerned, I was, at that time, in the Customs in Colombo.

I. Yes.

N. And - I forget if there had been any rioting in the city but the first I saw of it was - one morning I'd been round the warehouses as usual, as I was Landing Surveyor, you see. I went round the warehouses and I was just coming out and through that double-gateway, into Commissariat Street, when I met the Deputy Collector, Conroy, and Hancocks, who was the Second Officer(?), or Third, coming down the road. They met me by the gate and they said, 'What's happening here?' And I said, 'Nothing'. And I looked round and I saw a crowd of scores of, I think they were Mohammedans coming up behind me - I hadn't seen them, you see, - yelling. So I thought these were rioters and that they were just on their way out into the town. And I thought, 'Well, must stop them from getting into the town, at all costs'. So I tried to close these gates. And great big wooden gates - well, they hadn't been closed for a hundred years, naturally.

I. Yes, I read your file on that. You have written one in 1937. Customs' file.

N. Oh-ho, really?

I. Yes.

N. Oh, well, I see, well ... You've seen it. Well, I tried - the gates wouldn't close, you see. And then I saw that - I was trying to close one gate - Conroy and Hancocks had walked out towards the crowd through the other gate, you see. Well, Conroy was, if I may say so, one of the stupidest people there was. I mean, a dear man, an Irishman, but he was rather short-sighted and he'd got very thick glasses, and he went blinking away and he walked straight towards the crowds, you see, with Hancocks. So I thought, 'Well, I'm in this too'. So I came through my gate and we all three walked towards this yelling crowd. Well, I don't know, have you ever faced an angry crowd?

I. No, I haven't.

N. Well, don't . I mean, the roar of an angry crowd is something that Kipling describes. A sort of "urgh".

I. Yes.

N. And they'd got a - oh, clubs and bricks ... and stonesets and things and they went 'urgh' and they came. Well, there was nothing we could do. We'd got no force, no power, no police, no anything. So we just stood in front of the crowd and smiled at them, you see. And we said, 'Oh, go away'. And then I saw down - further down the Customs there were some Sinhalese - there were some bullock-carts with Sinhalese drivers. And some of these Mohammedans rushed after them, you see, to assault the carters. And the carters fled and so the - the boatmen then belaboured, if you please, the top of the carts, the cadjan top to the carts. Belaboured like mad, expending their fury, you see, on that. Well, then they started to disperse a bit. And then I saw behind me - there ran some Sinhalese lad, ran behind me and dodged something, fell down and several of these Mohammedan boatmen rushed at him, as he lay on the ground, with clubs. They were going to do him in, you see. So I sprang at him and I - and I strode across him, you see, stood with my legs across him as he lay on the ground. I thought they're going to hit me rather than him. And I pushed these fellows off, you see, as they were trying to - as they were trying to hit him. I pushed them off and like that but then one came up behind me and dealt me - dealt him - this lad on the ground - a blow on the head, with a club. So I thought, 'Well, he's a gonner', you see. So that's that. So its no use [protecting] a corpse so I stepped off him; and he jumped up and ran away. Well, the crowd

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dispersed. So I walked in amongst them and there was - and some of these - I don't know who they were - some men - I can't tell you whether Sinhalese or Mohammedans - were running about over the lighters and the lighter-men knocked them over into the water between the lighters and then tried to knock them on the head with the oars. It was a most fearsome sight seeing these people trying to hit them on the head. Well, we, Conroy and Hancocks and I, we went on, we tried to push the crowd back towards one of the jetties. We could no nothing but smile at them and say, 'go on, go on' and we got them back onto one of the export jetties in the end; good-humouredly and - as a matter of fact , the other two had gone, Conroy had gone - and I went [to the] jetty and Sundaram, the Chief Appraiser, came along. He spoke Tamil which I couldn't speak then and asked him - I asked him to tell the crowd that they must all go back to their boats. And I said, 'Now then, you can't go about with clubs like this'. And I went up to one of the fellows and said, 'Look, give me the club'. And I took the club away from him, gently. I didn't snatch it, took it away gently. I threw it into the harbour, you see, and I took the next man's club and I threw it in the harbour. And they were - then I said to them, 'What do you want? What do you want?' And they said, oh, they wanted water to cook their mid-day meal and that when they'd sent their small podian - you know, podian, small boy - ...

I. Yes.

N. ... to fetch the water that the Sinhalese men were hammering them [the podians], you see. And they couldn't get the water. They wanted water. Well, I know very little Tamil but I was sweating like a pig and - so I took my topee off, I wiped my forehead, you see, which was pouring with sweat and I said, 'Inji mitchum thanni irukkum', which I intended to mean, 'Here's plenty of water here', you see, like that.

I. Yes.

N. And they roared with laughter. They thought it was very funny. Well, they got in a good humour. And so I then said, 'Well, look here, you go back to your boats and send these podians with the buckets along, by themselves, with the buckets', and I said, 'I myself will take them to the stand-pipe and see that no harm comes to them. How's that?' And, 'Mmm, that's alright'. And they pushed off, the podians came with the buckets and I

took them to the standpipe and they filled all their buckets and they went off again, you see. Well, they were all hungry by then. Well, I thought - well, I was rather pleased with myself at this. So I went over then to Kochchikade which is over the other side of the harbour, you see, with some warehouses there and there was nothing going on there. And I went outside and there, outside, I saw a crowd of people looting a boutique. And I couldn't do anything, I was all by myself; but at that moment a colonel of the Artillery - Garrison Artillery - came along, Muskrat-Williams, with a couple of gunners in a car, you see. And I stopped them. I said, 'I don't know where you're going, but if you want something to do', I said, 'look at this looting. You might as well stop this'. So they got out, you see, and they ran towards the looters. This colonel was pointing his revolver at them and the gunners were threatening them with their bayonets, and so on. But the crowd weren't in any way intimidated and they were calling out - one called out to the others, 'Don't run away. They won't shoot. They never do'. Well, these soldiers then went away.

I. Why? Why did they go away?

N. Well, I thought that - I don't know why - they just drifted off.

I. Why didn't they shoot?

N. Well, there was no use in shooting odd people like that. I mean ...

I. Just looters.

N. Well, they were just looting in a casual way. I don't know how it was. They weren't under my orders. They drifted off and I'd no business outside at all, you see. But I was full of life after what happened that morning. So I then thought, 'Well, its a pity if these looters get away with it'. They were carrying sacks of rice out, you see, so I'd got a cane with a knob on it and so I went up to the boutique and I tried - tried to hit somebody, you see, with this knob. I thought I'd knock 'em out and then they'd be arrested and be punished for this, you see. Muddle-headed idea that. Well, the crowd closed round me at once - I was entirely by myself - closed round me and a man then came and threatened me with a rusty knife, in front of my face, you see. 'Don't fight, don't fight'. ' ?? gahanna apah, gahanna apah'. Like this, crowd all round. Well, I couldn't do anything. It was no use

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hitting him and so I just stood there. And at that point the two Customs' officers who came out by the gate, they saw me there and they just pushed their way through the crowd. Quite quietly, they just talked to the coolies, as they always had talked to coolies, I suppose. And they pushed me through the crowd - pushed through the crowd and came up to me and said, 'You'd better come along with us, sir'. I said, 'Right. Thank you very much. I'm very glad to see you'. So we just slowly made our way back and into the Customs' premises. But the - that's a picture of what actually happened there, you see, and I've had orders from my boss, the Principal Collector, that, after that, I was not - I was to stay in the Customs' premises. You see, I wasn't to go and mix up outside. Well, that's really all I saw of the Riots.

I. Yes. But ...

N. Myself.

I. ... since you were in Colombo and moving among officials could I ask you specific questions about Government action during the riots?

N. Yes. Well, I thought I'd better tell you the one or two things which - which are absolute facts, which nobody else now knows and I ought to know. But I mean I'm not trying to get anyone into trouble; I'm only interested in the facts, you see.

I. Yes, I see.

N. The - with regard to the start of them. They started in Kandy, as you know.

I. Yes.

N. And Stace ...

I. I saw - I read the account.

N. ... has given an account of that. Well, my view has always been that they started with some ill-advised action by some youth or other in the crowd in Kandy. I heard Ramanathan say in the Council that it was some youth - that a Mohammedan youth fired at a Sinhalese crowd of Buddhists - but these were all lies, you know - it may be true, [it] may not. But something of that kind happened. That set fire to that crowd. Somebody looted a boutique and if you once get law and order breaking down it goes right through the country,

I. Yes, and ...

N. And that's my view throughout, that all this talk of conspiracy,

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all this result of that Commission they had - Cumberland was in it(?)... They said, 'Oh, yes, undoubtedly, you know, there was conspiracy'. Rot. They're all friends of mine but that is rot. There was looting, rioting and looting in Kandy. A lot of the rioters went home. It spread. It was something to talk of - looting spread all down the railway to Rambukanna and it as people said, 'We were looting and nobody stopped them[sic]' and the looting broke out all over the place. So much so that it spread to Colombo. It was the loot, something for nothing. All this talk about nationalism and so on is all damn nonsense.

I. There was - wouldn't you say there was some religious animosity also?

N. Oh, yes, yes, yes. There always is. I mean, people always hate people of other races, everywhere. I mean, there's a fundamental antagonism between races in - that's another point agreed. But apropos of the looting, here's a small point. I was living in Gregory's road in Colombo at the time and, you know, the boutique keepers all shut their shops and so on so(?) that people couldn't get - buy rice and so in the Customs we seized the rice and we sold it, you see, to people who couldn't get rice anywhere else. So I came home one evening, I said to my boy - he was an Indian boy - in the bungalow. I said, 'By the way, boy, are you having any difficulty about getting rice? Because if so, I can buy some for you from the Customs'. 'Oh, no, master. We've got plenty of rice'. I said, 'Oh, you have, have you'. 'Yes, we've got plenty'. So I said, 'Well, [there wasn't rice for a] day or two'. 'Got a sack of rice'. I said, 'What do you mean - a sack of rice?' I said, 'How did you manage to pay for that?' 'Master not paying, just take it'. 'Oh', I said. I made no more enquiries but he, with others, had joined in the looting. I mean, I wasn't going to enquire into it after that. I mean, damn it all, there was plenty else to do. But it was my own appu.

I. Yes, I see.

N. That was the idea and that was - of course there was feeling. As I said there always is between races, you see. There was - Paul Pieris who was District Judge at Gampola and he wrote a very hot-headed judgment.

I. Hmm.

N. Did you ever know Paul Pieris?

I. Well, I know that he gave biased judgments.

N. Whether it was biased or not I don't know. But Paul ...

I. No, in general.

B. Oh, yes. Well, he - I mean he's - altogether he was a rather ill-balanced person. Well, I have that on the authority of his brother and brother-in-law, so I mean ... He always was. But it was ill-balanced judgment and rather inflamed the Sinhalese,rather. And also, Sinhalese villagers and others - the Sinhalese, you may not believe it, but they're a rather improvident race.

I. Hmm.

N. They're all in debt. And they're in debt to the Mohammedan boutique keepers.

I. Yes.

N. Well, here's an opportunity of looting the Mohammedans, burning their account books, and getting away with it. That's what it was they were after.

I. Regarding the riots, just one small point. In Colombo, the railway workers led many of the - the attacks and the looting in - in some areas.

N. The railway workers?

I. The railway workers. The locomotive work-shop ...

N. They may have. I don't know.

I. And while they might have been inspired by ideas of loot and by religious motives I was wondering whether the smouldering discontent among them, since 1912 when they had struck and when their - very few concessions had been granted to their demands, had anything to do with it?

N. I should doubt it. I should - I doubt it but, I mean, - but then, as you know, the - I'm a great believer - I believe in the casual incident being the cause of big events. Somebody has an attack of liver or is constipated or something and makes a silly order in his office, and you have a revolution and they - the American colonies break away. I mean, its - these things that - they start from the smallest causes, very often. And I'm sure that's what happened.

I. Mmm. Regarding this conspiracy theory ...

N. What's that?

I. This theory of conspiracy and a premeditated rebellion. One

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of their arguments - Bowes for instance and others - they take the fact that these riots broke out ...

N. At the same time in a lot of different places?

I. As a proof of this, when its very circumstantial evidence and can easily be explained by rumour. Don't you think?

N. Oh, yes. The people on that Commission - Cumberland was one, a great friend of mine - ...

I. He was an able man, wasn't he?

N. Oh, very, very able. Cumberland was one and I've forgotten the others. Pagden, that old ass, he - he was another. But certainly if you - in that heated atmosphere, even afterwards, ...

I. Yes.

N. ... if you start opening an enquiry like a Royal Commission you can get evidence of anything.

I. Yes. And the point was that the Moors gave all sorts of exaggerated evidence.

N. Yes. Well, now, that brings me to a point - I haven't noted that. The - I'll take that point. You know that all - quite a lot of magistrates, extra magistrates, were appointed all over Colombo and ...

I. Yes.

N. ... the police, or whoever they were, they arrested people and they had - took them along and they were tried and - and usually convicted and so on, and dealt with at once. Right through the night.

I. Mmm.

N. Hundreds of them. Well, this is a fact.

I. Mmm.

N. The - there's a mosque at Maradana, a Mohammedan mosque. And a whole lot of Mohammedans had gone in there for refuge. Actually for refuge. Well, one day, one evening, some of the younger Mohammedans there, they were strolling about and they saw two or three Sinhalese pass in the road and so they sprang out of the mosque and they hammered these Sinhalese. Just because they were Sinhalese, you see.

I. Yes.

N. They beat them up. Well, they got - they got arrested. These Mohammedans got arrested and they were run in by the police, you see, police - perfectly good evidence. And they were tried by one of these extra magistrates, called F. Marshall - F. Marshall. He heard the evidence, perfectly good Mohammedan - perfectly good Sinhalese evidence, you see, about the way

these Mohammedans had come out and the rest of it. And he convicted the Mohammedans, you see, of rioting, as it was beating them up, and sentenced them to the same imprisonment that all the Sinhalese were getting. Macan Markar, you know who he is?

I. Yes.

N. Well, he took up the case for these Mohammedans. He went to see Stubbs, who was Colonial Secretary at the time. And said, 'this is monstrous'. Stubbs sent for the case and ordered, if you please, that these Mohammedans should be let out of jail.

I. Mmm. And were they?

N. They were. And Stubbs recorded, on the Secretariat papers, 'Mr. Marshall is unfit to hold the scales of justice'.

I. Presumably Stubbs was?

N. Presumably Stubbs was. 'Mr. Marshall is unfit to hold the scales of justice'. Well, I knew Marshall pretty well. One of the nicest fellows you could meet. He told me about this himself, as a matter of fact. He said, 'To be perfectly truthful', he said, 'There was far more evidence, and more trustworthy evidence, against that little gang of Mohammedans, on which I convicted them, than there had been against hundreds of Sinhalese who'd been [convicted], actually far more'. And he was - he was informed that he was unfit - officially informed he was unfit to hold the scales of justice. He had - Marshall took this so to heart that he had a breakdown. He had to go on leave for some months. He afterwards was made - appointed as Police Magistrate somewhere. Just like that blasted Secretariat, you know. A man - he has troubles as a Police Magistrate, they at once send him back again to the same sort of job again. Just like them. Well, they sent him somewhere. Yes, Puttalam was it or Mannar? I've forgotten - as Police Magistrate. And he arrived there to stay with the A.G.A. and all the rest of it. Next day he got into a rickshaw and went to go and take his oaths at the Court. He couldn't go, he couldn't go. He turned the rickshaw round and sent a message to say, "I'm sorry I can't come". He could not face taking the oath. He was medical-boarded out of the Service. Medical-boarded as - oh, I suppose - on mental grounds, and he retired from the whole Service.

I. This - this point about Stubbs, doesn't it indicate a bias against the Sinhalese and for the Moors?

N. No. Well, it may have taken that form.

I. I mean, not normally but on this occasion after the riots?

N. Oh, yes. Absolutely. Yes, yes, yes.

I. I mean during the riots.

N. Oh, yes, yes, oh, yes. But, I mean, this incident - I mean, I know of it. Marshall told me and somebody else told me about what Stubbs had recorded. But that's the sort of thing that happened but - but as far as Stubbs is concerned you might say that he was so biased. You might say so.

I. What about Denham?[1]

N. Oh, he was the greatest swine I've ever met in my life.

I. Greatest?

N. Swine.

I. Mmm.

N. SWINE, swine. I don't want ...

I. A real line-shooter?

N. What?

I. A line-shooter.

N. Well, I don't want to go into that but - the, the - he was - well, he was a self-seeker of the worst kind. An absolute self-seeker of the worst kind. And, as I say, I - now, when I have insomnia at night, I lay awake thinking of what ...

I. Ha-ha.

N. I do. I mean, we were ...

I. Thinking of Denham?

N. Yes. I mean he - thank God he died - but he was - I don't want to go into detail. And you can think that I'm off my jug, if you like, but I don't mind.

I. No, I was wondering ...

N. He was - he was - he was a self-seeker of the worst kind. He would cheat anybody. He would - yes, well ...

I. As Stace says Chalmers saw through him?

N. Oh, yes. All that. Yes, yes, yes. Yes, everybody saw - that's one of the things that embittered me ...

I. Stubbs didn't see ...

N. ... that everybody saw through Denham, and yet they - nobody told him that he was a swine. They tolerated him. And, I mean, that - I found it very difficult to forgive.

I. Mmm. Coming back to the riots and this conspiracy theory.

N. What, the ...?

I. And this theory of a rebellion.

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1. Denham was Principal Assistant to the Colonial Secretary at this stage.

N. Yes. There was no rebellion.

I. Well, this idea. Another reason for it - for the idea cropping up among some Europeans was that (a) occasionally these mobs shouted, 'British rule ended, Sinhalese rule begun' and (b) ...

N. Did they? In 1915?

I. Yes. So Stace records.

N. Does he?

I. Mmm. And (b) you had these photographs which they[sic] show that certain shops had been marked "සිංහල" (Sinhala) which ...

N. Oh, yes. You've seen those though?

I. Yes.

N. Oh, I stole those. Ha-ha-ha. I pinched them. Yes?

I. These photographs - well, show some sort of local organisation in the sense that certain shops were marked so that they wouldn't be looted.

N. Yes, yes. Well, it was known at that time - there's no doubt - it was known that the Sinhalese had got the bit in their teeth. There's no doubt about that. Oh, yes. And that they - and they were looting the Moorish boutiques. And, therefore, people concerned put up 'සිංහල' (Sinhala) in - on the boutiques. Oh, yes. Yes, there was a great deal of feeling against the - between the two communitites. There's no doubt about that. And the - also Turkey had just come into the war. You know that point?

I. Yes.

N. Yes. At that moment. Oh, yes. And mind you there's a good deal of feeling now.

I. Agreed. But I was wondering about these riots. Not that I believe that it was a rebellion but just to try and give some sort of basis for their ideas. There is also the question of who instigated them locally. Didn't some people leave Colombo and go out into the country and instigate each village as they went along?

N. That was the story.

I. Mmm.

N. It may be true but I very much doubt it.

I. Mmm. And I notice, when you sent that list of questions to Pakeman, you asked one question whether anybody had evidence of Buddhist priests having a hand in it. Pakeman ...

N. I sent?

I. Yes. In the 1940's. This is in your file.

N. Oh, I see.

I. Pakeman was undertaking this inquiry. And you suggested one of the questions should be about whether the Buddhist priests had anything ...

N. Yes, I see. I daresay. Yes?

I. And do you know - do you have any idea whether Buddhist priests had a hand in it?

N. No. The - this is the point I was going to come to. By the way my throat is giving out, we ... My boss, Bowes, said I was not to - I was to stay in the Customs, you see. So ...

I. Yes.

N. Well, I did so. But at night ...

I. Yes.

N. I think - well, I put on my C.L.I. uniform and went round to Military Headquarters, you see, the Echelon Barracks, to see if I could do anything - if I could - give any help to anybody, you see. I mean, that's one's instinct, if there's trouble one goes to help. And I - Andrews, the C.L.I. adjutant, one day when I was round there, he said, 'Look here, here's a job'. He said, 'We've had half a dozen calls from a Buddhist temple, at so and so'. Somewhere - I've forgotten - Warikawatte(?) or something ... 'To say that there have been attacks, by a mob of Moors. And we've sent some people up there several times but they can't see a sign of a Moorman anywhere'. He said, 'We've just had another panic-stricken message'. He said, 'Take - take some of - three or four of these C.P.R.C. fellows' - you see, I was an officer - 'and go up there. And', he said, 'if you don't see anything', he said, 'you'd better put it across these bloody Sinhalese', you see. I mean, ringing up continually like that. It was getting too thick. So I went up to this temple and I banged at the thing and all the rest of it. There wasn't a sign of a Moorman anywhere in the streets, anywhere around. We went by car there - we went all the way round. No sign of anybody at all. But the - there were a whole lot of Buddhists. You know, the Sinhalese in the temple and they were all armed with sticks and clubs and they'd got a pile of stones there ready - defensive doubtless. But there wasn't a sign of anyone. I thought, well, I don't even know now - it was at night - which part of Colombo it was. But I - there were some narrow streets there and - with verandahs, up some steps and verandahs along them. So I told these men to go along each side to see if there was a crowd hiding

in these verandahs, you see. And I went up them. Not a sign. There were just a few people with their heads lying on the - asleep on the ground, you know, with their heads covered all with cloths. And they were really asleep. And I said, 'Make them all go indoors. Clear them all indoors'. And I didn't want people hanging about. I said, 'Tell all these people they've got to get inside'. But there wasn't a sign of any rioting at all. And ...

I. What - I mean ...

N. I doubt - there may have been people going out from Colombo to stir them up but I doubt it.

I. Mmm. What sort of support was there in the villages? Do you think many of the villagers - you know in the Western Province - do you think that the majority of the villagers joined in - in these attacks on the mosques and Muslims and looting?

N. I can't tell you. I can't tell you. The - I wasn't in charge there but I know - do you know whom I mean by Sir James Obeyesekere?

I. Yes.

N. J.P. Obeyesekere. Sir James Obeyesekere. A Maha Mudaliar now, I think. Well, he was the mudaliyar of Siyane Korale East, when I was A.G.A. afterwards. And he was very, very bitter at the way in which various villager people, including one registrar, had been punished for alleged - for alleged complicity in the rioting and things. And I think one registrar was actually tried and sentenced to death and ?? it, I think. And I know Obeyesekere felt very - so strongly that I couldn't - one couldn't stir the surface, you see. And he - it was he - really was bitter against my boss Fraser, who had been G.A. then. And - I couldn't tell you really. I'm not hiding it. But I just don't know.

I. Mmm. According to Macan Markar, of course - I've seen an official letter of his to the Government ...

N. You've seen what?

I. An official letter to Government written at that time. This is in the command papers. He went round the districts and met Moors and he names people and a lot of them are headmen and registrars and officials.

N. Yes.

I. He names people who led the - either participated or led in the attacks. But this is a biased source, you see. How far is it correct?

N. Yes. Well, I can't - I can't give you any - I can't give you any - anything certain about that. I should - I'm not hiding it. I mean, I just don't know.

I. I know. I didn't think you would. I was just trying it. What about Government's policy? Now ...

N. Oh, you're on this policy stuff again.

I. They declared martial law. I can see why they had to have martial law, but didn't Chalmers know something aboutMalcolm's personality?

N. About Malcolm - who?

I. About Brigadier-General Malcolm.

N. Yes.

I. I mean, looking at the man I should have thought that the Governor would have second thoughts about giving him - in ...

N. That man personally, you mean?

I. Yes.

N. Yes. Well, I can tell you quite a bit about that. I made some notes, I don't know if I - the - I probably lost them. Oh, yes. My boss, Bowes, you see, knew Chalmers fairly well.

I. Yes.

N. And Chalmers had told Bowes - Chalmers was a very pompous fellow. We used to call him "Son of Dorothy", because he came from Wadham and Wadham was founded by Thomas and Dorothy Wadham, you see?

I. Oh, I see.

N. And we always used to call him "Dorothy". He used to say, 'If ever you wish to see me, ring up my staff and say you're coming to lunch'. And Bowes did occasionally, you see. Well, Bowes had to see him about something just after he - after he'd handed over the riot business to Malcolm. And Bowes used to be very, very - I was a youngster, you see, I was only then - I'd only been out six years - Bowes had been out - what? 25 was it?

I. Yes.

N. But Bowes used to talk very freely to me, as a matter of fact, in the office. He used to send for me, you see. He never asked me to sit down. I used to stand there for two hours on end, you see, without being asked - I mean ... He came - he told me that Chalmers said to him one day - he said, 'The silly(?) old man'. He said, 'He's marvellous, you know, the way he talks. And', he said, 'he said, "I've told the General I've handed over this business to you. You will deal with it. I am only here to support you"'.

I. Mmm. Yes.

N. That's what Chalmers told Bowes, who told me. 'I've handed this business over to you. I'm only here to support you'. Well, you ought to know, in the view of a good many people, Malcolm was a very, very queer fish.

I. Well, my father thought he was a bit dotty.

N. Oh, yes. Quite, quite. I mean, there were all sorts of stories about him. However ... The - now this is, this is the thing that - as I say I - I was the greatest ... You see, I feel that if you want the - you ask me what happened at so and so, so and so, opinion so and so. If I merely tell you, as my opinion, or I simply say so and so happened, I mean, there's no validity behind that.

I. Yes, I agree.

N. You see?

I. I quite see that.

N. Whereas if I can tell you that Bowes - Bowes told me that Chalmers said so and so, you see, well, there, I mean, that's fact, you see.

I. Yes.

N. Well, now, Chalmers' Private Secretary was Southorn. You know, who was afterwards Governor of the Gambia and so on. Well, I mean, he was an old friend of mine. And, I mean, we lived in the same chummery together and they - he and his wife got engaged in my house and ?? . Well, years after the whole business, years after - I don't know how many years - 10 or more years - Southorn told me that while this business was on, just after Malcolm had taken charge, Malcolm sent to Queens House once, to the Governor, "Herewith for your information, certain orders which I propose to issue". Well, now, this is - this is really rather dynamite. "Certain orders which I propose to issue". And there followed a set of orders that he was proposing to issue to the patrols that were going out into the country. Well, I'm not going to go any - give you any detail but they were pretty fierce. One moment. They were pretty fierce. I mean, taking hostages and that sort of thing, you see.

I. Yes.

N. If there was - if any trees were felled across the roads, if any culverts were interfered with and so on, the idea was that they were to go and take hostages, you see, and the rest of it.

And then it said that after - after all rioting had ceased less severe measures may be adopted, such as and then so and so. I won't tell you what those were - Southorn told me this and I said, 'Well, my dear Will', - I used to call him Will for Tom - 'what did you do anyhow?' 'Oh,', he said, 'I', he said, 'I didn't know what to do', he said, 'If I'd shown them to old Chalmers, he'd have had a fit. And I didn't want there to be a row between him and Malcolm'. And it appeared that Malcolm had not in fact issued these orders. 'So', he said, 'I locked them up in the Queen's House safe and', he said, 'as far as I know, they're still there'.

I. But Malcolm - his orders didn't go out?

N. I don't think they went out.

I. But according to my father, on one occasion - I don't know specifically when - but he had given orders, "Take no prisoners".

N. Malcolm had?

I. Yes.

N. Well, now, I'm coming to another thing. I mean, those orders were - were pretty fierce but I was just, as a matter of fact, - and those were locked up by Southorn in the Queen's House safe.

I. At what stage was this? Was it early on in the riots or later on?

N. I can't tell you. It was, I daresay, after a week or two, something of that sort. I imagine. But - and there they are still. But incidentally may I point out that - that Southorn took a very considerable, personal risk.

I. Mmm. Yes.

N. I mean, in the interests of humanity. .... Well, now, the - after the riots had been going on for a bit of time in Colombo, they had what everybody knows as the Battle of the Pettah.

I. Yes.

N. All the available troops, even the bodyguard, the Governor's bodyguard, were mobilised on a racquet court, which was - oh, where those Chalmers Granaries are now, you know, those rice stores. And I wasn't there because Bowes wouldn't let me go on that sort of show but ... Well, but I was told the following by E.R. Williams who was a very senior man and - he was the second man in the firm of Julius and Creasy, you know, the lawyers. Well, this again I'm - its rather dynamite. He told - he and I used to row together in a four regularly every week, you see, rowing club on the lake. Well, he told

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me - he said, he said - he was a very serious citizen was this fellow, older than I was but - and he said, he said, 'This show, the Battle of the Pettah, the other day', he said, 'was a curious business'. He said, 'All the officers were called together and they were given instructions by - I don't know who it was - who said they were the orders of the - of the officer commanding the troops. And they were that we were to divide up the Pettah into sections, and a platoon or a squad, or whatever it was, was to go through each section. Go to search every house. If a house is locked up and you can't get in you're to break in, search the house, confiscate any weapons you've found and if anyone resists or runs away, they are to be shot. If anyone resists or runs away they're to be shot and to be left there lying'. Well, the officer in charge of the crowd where - E.R. Williams was an ordinary rifleman - was a man called David Scott of Lewis Brown & Co., I think. And he came back and he said, 'These are the orders, these are the orders I've got - just received and I'm to pass on to you'. And - he was a merchant, you see - 'pass on to you', and he gave the orders. He stopped, he said, 'You won't do anything so bloody silly'.

I. Mmm.

N. Again risking his commission. 'Oh, yes', he said, 'You won't do anything so bloody silly'.

I. Yes.

N. He said, 'You'll go and search the houses and you'll confiscate weapons and the rest of it. But', he said, 'you won't behave like that'. Well, now, that is - that is an actual - that is a fact, you see. Old Malcolm was absolutely bloodthirsty.

I. One gets the impression that he is treating this like a battle on the Western Front.

N. Oh, yes, yes, yes, of course, quite. Or as - Boer War. He was in the Boer War.

I. Oh, I see.

N. Well, that's what old Williams told me about ... Well, now, - oh, yes, there's just a further one point I want to make that - you see, at that time, most of the young Europeans had gone to the war. But a certain number were left - like me - had been refused permission to go to the war, you see. Government wouldn't let me go because I got tied up with price ships

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and control of trade and heaven knows what else, you see, and they said, 'Well, you'd better stay here and do this; you've got to', and, I mean, I applied for permission to go and they said no. Well, similarly, there was an idea that trade still had to carry on, you see, so that quite a lot of fellows, comparatively young fellows in the Fort and the planting world, some of them, they stayed, you see, to carry on. Well, they all felt - we all felt, I suppose, that we were rather out of it. And some of these youngsters who hadn't any idea of responsibility, public affairs and this sort of thing, they felt, well, here's a bit of a scrap anyhow.

I. And ...

N. And I think they - some of them let their blood-thirsty instincts get control of them.

I. A sort of war-fever?

N. A sort of war-fever. Yes, I think, that was - that would probably be so.

I. And also with regard to Government action, didn't you feel - well, from what you have written it appears that Government was influenced often by - by rumours spread by very influential people at the top like Van Cuylenburg and ...

N. Now, this is the one point that I've just got noted here.

I. Yes.

N. This creature Denham whom, as I say, I dislike intensely - I don't know where I came across him at that time - I always avoided him if I could. But he told me ...

I. Denham?

N. Denham, yes. He told me - at that time, you see, Denham was - was, I think, was P.A.C.S. at the time. And he told me, he said, 'Well, Government knows what its doing'. He said, 'There's a proctor', - I couldn't remember his name. Now, I think, you say Van Cuylenburg?

I. Well, the way you described him and from what Mr. W.D. - W.A. De Silva mentions I should think its Van Cuylenburg.

N. It wouldn't have been the - I don't think it was the one who owned the Independent?

I. No, its the one who was a - he was in the Legislative Council.

N. Yes. Well, anyhow, I wouldn't be sure. I can't remember who it was. But I know Denham said, 'Oh, well, Government is in a very strong position because there's a proctor, who's a proctor of all leading Sinhalese families. He knows all their

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family secrets. And all about their private lives and everything about them. And he is giving us - he is giving us the dope, you see. About all their aspirations and their foibles and everything else and all their ways and he knows all about them. And he's coming and giving the whole thing away to Government '. And I said, 'Oh, yes'. Well, now, when I was round at the military headquarters one night, probably that night I've told you, there was a fellow of that type. I don't know. Not the one I knew ?? But he was with his chair drawn up alongside ...

INTERRUPTION

N. He'd got his chair drawn up alongside Andrews.

I. Yes.

N. And he was whispering in his ear and whispering in his ear.

I. Was he a Burgher?

N. I think he was - I wouldn't be sure. I wouldn't be sure whether he was a Burgher or whether he wasn't. He was much the same colour you are.

I. Hmm.

N. Which is - you know, might be a Burgher or not - you know the ...

I. Yes, it could be.

N. It could be. But I couldn't really - I could see the man's face now. And I assumed that this was the man that Denham had told me about. But he was whispering, whispering, whispering ... Now, just to finish, you mentioned Dr. W.A. De Silva whom I knew very well. Dear man. And he said to me once, afterwards. He said, 'You know, Government were quite right to lock me up. Quite right'. He said, 'On the information they had, they couldn't do anything else'. He said, 'They weren't to know the information was all false'.

I. Yes. And also he does mention a letter, a scare letter as they call it, from the Arch - the Catholic Archbishop. But I don't know what - what exactly ...

N. Where - where does this - where's W.A. De Silva said these things?

I. Its what you have recorded in 1923 of what W.A. De Silva told you.

N. Oh, is that it?

I. Yes.

N. What did I do with it?

I. Its there. In - in your file.

N. In my file?

I. Yes.

N. Well, I would like to see it.

I. Same point you made about W.A. De Silva saying, "that Government could do nothing but lock me up".

N. Oh, I see. Oh, well, I'm sorry I ... repeating myself.

I. No, its - its ...

N. Its forty years ago.

I. Yes, as ... Ha-ha-ha! And also what about these Colombo police, would you agree that they didn't have the training or the backbone or ... ?

N. Who?

I. The Colombo police. They didn't have the training or the backbone to deal with this sort of thing when it ... ?

N. Oh. The - the - full-stop, new paragraph. Dealing with riots is a most difficult, a most difficult job.

I. Yes.

N. A most difficult job. I was discussing these riots with a - with a colonel who was dining here - at a(?) dinner-party or something. I can't - his wife were dining - I can't remember who it was, or what he was colonel of. But we were talking about riots and he said - well, he was saying how - how difficult it was to deal with riots. And I remember his face. He said, 'If you shoot the wrong people', he said, 'you won't live it down in a hundred years'. That's - he'd had some experience of them in Bombay. And he said, 'If you shoot the wrong people', he said, 'you won't live it down in a hundred years'. And he said that the - in Bombay at some stage once, years before, the police or the military had got out of hand. In a crisis with every excuse. And he said they were still talking about it. And that's what happens, you see, there's - just a further point, important. The - I mean we, if you know what I mean by we, we had always been very polite and kind to the Sinhalese, you see, and told them what fine fellows they were. You know?

I. Mmm.

N. ... ?? ... As somebody said to me afterwards, he said, 'We've been telling them for so long what fine fellows they are that they now believe it to be true'. Hee-hee-hee. You see what I mean?

I. Yes.

N. We thought we'd been very kind. And all this business about British justice and nobody getting punished unless there was proper evidence, and God knows what else, and a long enquiry. And that sort of thing. Well, when they found, as for example Victoria Bridge - when 'Monkey' Moore[1] - has that been in the file?

I. No.

N. The man who was afterwards Governor. He was a magistrate there.

I. Yes.

N. Well, there he was the magistrate on Victoria Bridge and after warning, warning, warning the crowd and the rest of it, he said, 'Well, I shall have to fire. They won't disperse'. And so he stepped back and the military opened fire. There were only a few rounds and four people were killed and about twelve, you know - about twelve, you know, wounded. But the - that crowd melted away at once. But the shock to that crowd was something appalling. I mean, they had no idea that anyone could be punished unless they'd been properly arrested and taken before a magistrate.

I. Mmm.

N. And they'd got - the crowds had got the notion that as long as they were big enough it'd be quite impossible to arrest them all,you see, and you couldn't get proper evidence. And, therefore, they were reasonably safe. And, I think, the shock to them to find that it was possible to deal with them without the procedure of the courts was - I mean, the bottom fell out their world. At least there's a great deal in that.

I. Yes. Regarding the police there has been a lot of criticism for - levelled at the Colombo police for not shooting fairly early on. You see, they were - they took some time to deal firmly with the riots. But when I look at Fraser's account of the riots - the official account of the first two days, there's a great deal of confusion. And, well, there's a lack of cohesion in the police. But one can quite understand why, faced with this new situation, people were not willing to shoot into a - into a sort of amorphous mob.

N. Quite. Well, now, what does Stace say in Kandy.

I. Mmm.

N. Various people said to him, 'Why don't you shoot?' And he said, 'Shoot? They're not doing anything at the moment'.

I. Mmm.

N. Its true they had been but ...?? perfectly peaceful. No, the - I think its the soldiers who say that when you're faced with a riot beginning ...

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1. Henry Monck-Mason Moore. For Moore's description of the incident see the final chapter of H.A.J. Hulugalle's, British Governors of Ceylon, (Colombo, 1963), p. 213.

I. Yes.

N. If you take serious action at once and shoot, you stop the whole riot. Afterwards you're tried for your life.

I. Yes.

N. "Why did you shoot at the riot?" "Oh". "What happened?" "It was a boutique looted". "Do you shoot people just because they steal?" You're for it, you see. There wasn't a riot. But of course not, you stopped the ruddy thing. Well, if on the other hand, you don't shoot ...

I. It gets out of hand?

N. The whole thing gets out of hand. And the Government turns round and says, 'Why didn't you take serious action?' Just as you said at first, at Kandy, you see. So whatever you do, you're wrong. And there's a great deal of truth in that.

I. But on the other hand, not so much regarding Colombo, but in Kandy wouldn't you say that Vaughan was rather a weak man?

N. Oh, Vaughan was an awful ass anyhow. But I've got no evidence myself that he mishandled the riots. He may have done. He probably would. I mean, he was my G.A. in Anuradhapura, and God I had a time of it. He was a - yes, he was a worthless ... And Tranquil, the policeman, he was a feeble sort of person. But I don't believe - I don't know that ...

I. Well, in Colombo, both Fraser and Daniel were quite able men.

N. Oh, yes.

I. And ...

N. Well, you see, the - I met the Deputy Inspector General of Police, whose name escapes me at the moment. He left long afterwards. I met him ...

I. Ferguson?

N. Umm?

I. Ferguson?

N. No, no, no. He was before your time. I've forgotten him. I met him somewhere in the Fort a day or two after the rioting and I said to him, 'Is there any precedent for all this? Have you ever had anything like this?' And he said, 'Never'. And he said, 'There's never been anything like this before'. He said, 'This is an entirely new situation'. And there were certain obvious mistakes made.

I. Like?

N. The rioting occurred first in Kandy and then started to spread down the railway.

I. Yes?

N. To Rambukkana. Well, dear Dowbiggin, who was Inspector General of Police, you see, who had never had to deal with these things before ... Very able man, you see. I mean, he was well-liked. Mind you, picture the situation. Just a bit of rioting in Kandy and some looting starting down the railway. So - nothing else. Dowbiggin said, 'Well, I'm going to stop this damn nonsense', you see. Well, he got a special train out, engine or something, and he pushed all up the railway to deal with this.

I. And it broke out behind his back.

I. It broke out, in Colombo, behind his back.

I. But ...

N. One moment. Just - and he wasn't there. The second man there, was Daniel. Now it was a day or two after the riots started. The Customs Officer, Beruwela, rang up the office. Rang up Bowes, I suppose, to say that there was a large crowd of Moors or ... - I've forgotten which you see - were advancing on the Customs at Beruwela and they were going to loot it. There wasn't anything there to loot, anyhow, except for some salt but that was the story. And would they - we do something about it, you see, reporting this. So when there was a crisis I usually used to get stuck with it. So Bowes sent for me. Banged his bell and said, 'Look here, so and so'. And he said, 'Ring up the - ring up Dowbiggin. Ring up Dowbiggin and - and find out what the Police are doing. If they've any information about what's happening'. So I rang up Police Headquarters. 'May I speak to Mr. Dowbiggin?' 'Oh, he's gone up the railway to Rambukkana', you see. 'Oh', I said, 'well, the ...', I said. 'Well, the next man', I said, 'Can I speak to Mr. Daniel'.

I. Well, Daniel was away.

N. He said, 'Daniel's down at the Pettah, dealing with some trouble down at the Pettah'. So I said, 'Well, who's the next man?' He said, 'Oh, Mr. W.C. King'. So I said, 'Well, can I speak to him?' 'Oh, no. He's had to go to hospital 'cause his arm was cut open by a knife in the Pettah'. Those were the - one, two, three, those were the top four people. The Head-quarter people, all gone.

I. Yes. I agree to an extent with your point. But (a) on behalf of Dowbiggin I think - I read Chalmer's despatch and he ordered Dowbiggin to go to Kandy. It was an official order from Chalmers.

N. Was it? I daresay it was, yes.

I. And (b) its true that you rang up the Headquarters and found no-one but - and I think there was a lack of, well, planning which meant that there was no-one at Headquarters to direct matters. But I have read Fraser's account, which deals with the first and second day, and Fraser - you see, because Dowbiggin was away - Fraser took complete charge.

N. Oh, did he?

I. You see, he didn't go to the province. But he left the province "to look after itself", as he put it. And he said he dealt with Colombo. And working with Daniel.

N. Oh, yes.

I. And - and they seem to have, well, taken as many measures as ...

N. Yes. I can see.

I. ... as possible.

N. Yes. Well, you see, I - I'm only telling you what I happen to know, you see.

I. Yes.

N. But there's a further point. I told you in a letter, I think, about the only time I thought I've seen your father operating. Now ...

I. Yes.

N. I was very struck by that . The ...

I. Why?

N. Oh, at the - there was some dividing up of the C.L.I. and the rest of it into patrols, or something. And to certain areas and a Police Magistrate was allocated to each area. The Police couldn't fire - the soldiers couldn't come into - couldn't take action unless - except on the orders of a Magistrate.

I. They couldn't fire without ...?

N. Couldn't fire without the order of a Magistrate. Couldn't use force, without the order of a Magistrate. Therefore to each area there were - a magistrate was allocated, you see. And I went round. I wasn't allowed - Bowes wouldn't let me go out to these shows - but I went round to see what was happening. It was Victoria Park where the people had been divided up, you see, and there were the Magistrates there ... And a certain area - I've forgotten which - was allocated to this platoon, or whatever it was, C.L.I. And Mr.Roberts was the Magistrate for that. And the, oh, officer - I've forgotten who it was - in charge of this platoon went up to your father

and said, 'What are your orders, sir?' And he said, 'I shall be in the Orient Club. And if you want me, send for me there. Good evening'. Hee-hee. And turned round and walked off.

I. But shouldn't he have gone with the platoon?

N. No, no.

I. Why not?

N. Well, he had much better to sit at the end of a telephone, playing bridge or whatever he cared to do, at the Orient Club. There he was safe and sound, with a car I've no doubt and everything ready and the - this platoon would have split up, you see, ...

I. Yes, I see.

N. ... all over the place and so on. I mean, this business of careering about is no good at all. The - there's a book written called the "Green Curb" many years ago. Oh, long before the First War. About military operations. And there the officer commanding the whole of an army during a crucial battle, he's at the back of his headquarters fishing. He - on the ground he says, 'I can't be bothered with details and that sort of thing. If there's a decision its got - I've got to have an absolutely clear mind and I've got staff officers and the rest of it to collect the facts and they'll come and bring them to me here'. You see? Well, the same with your father. I mean, he wasn't going to go rushing about all over the place. He could - well, I don't know, his car might have been punctured, anything. He simply said, 'I shall be there at the Orient Club. And if I'm wanted that's where I shall be. Well, good evening '. And it struck me then that - that there - how wise that was. Whether they ever sent for him or not I don't know but ...

I. Well, he did go ...

N. Have you got my point that Dowbiggin ought to have had somebody at the end of that telephone?

I. Yes, I see. Yes, I ...

N. I know that ...

I. Yes, I see. I quite see that point.

N. And afterwards when we used to have practices of the riot scheme, you know...

I. Mmm.

N. The protection of Colombo, in case of riots. I was in charge of an area.

I. Yes.

N. The Fort and the Pettah. Both of them once and then after the Fort, and the rest of it. I was in charge of them. And I made my dispositions, such as they were, and I was at the end of a telephone. And I said to everyone concerned, 'You'll do this, you'll do that', you know, and I said, 'I shall never leave this telephone, throughout the whole of the proceedings. And you'll always know where to find me if you want orders'.

I. Mmm. Turning to another sphere, the thing that interests me is these general court-martials, as distinct from these drum-head ones on the field. You know the general ...

N. Oh, well, may I justsay aside. That'll all part of - Malcolm - I haven't dealt with that point - but Malcolm was a curious creature. He - he thought ... As you said, he did rather regard the thing as being something rather like the Western Front or the Boer War, you see. But mind you it was pretty serious.

I. Mmm. Agreed.

N. It was serious as I said. And nobody had - there was no pre-cedent for dealing with that sort of thing. And if - if they hadn't been pretty violent there may - the result might have been very, very much worse. But those - those court-martials were - were pretty fierce, I think. Pretty fierce. And ...

I. Which ones? The ones on the spot?

N. All of them?

I. Or all of them?

N. The court-martials. I mean, when I say all of them I mean general.

I. Yes.

N. I mean, those as soldiers were utterly unfitted. Utterly un-fitted for hearing evidence and that sort of thing. They were good fellows. They were honest fellows but it wasn't their line of country.

I. And they didn't know the people?

N. Oh, no, of course, they didn't know the people. But they did their best. And to be perfectly frank I remember one of them, a fairly senior man, saying, 'Oh, these damn things'. He said, 'They go on and on, and on and on, and on with this evidence and I want to tell them, "Shut up, I want to finish the case"'. I mean, that's what he said to me, you see. Mind you, the - oh, another point on that - a rather important point I think.

There was a planter, an old planter, with white hair. I think his name was Thornton Pett. Its just come back to me.

I. Mmm.

N. And old planter in the Kalutara District, who had years before been the Quarter Master of the C.P.R.C.[1] And when rioting broke out in the Kalutara District this dear old thing put on his uniform and he came into Kalutara and he got hold of the Police - I don't know who it was there, who was officer at all - however he got hold of the Police and said, 'Bring the rioters before me. I shall deal with them'. And so the Police arrested various people who'd been rioting in Kalutara. And this dear old thing he sat down, in the resthouse, and he solemnly tried these people. And he spoke, I think, Sinhalese quite well himself. And he covered sheets and sheets and sheets with evidence, you see. Sheets and sheets of it. It went on all day and into the night and the next day and on; without any authority from anybody whatever. And he gave the most careful trial in each case for these people and where he felt they had been rioting he said, 'Yes, well, I convict you. And I sentence you to five, six,ten lashes'. And he had them tied up to coconut trees in the compound of the resthouse and duly beaten by somebody. I don't know by whom. And he said, 'Now, don't you do that again'. And he went on and he did all this. And when it was all over - I don't know how long it took - he sent - he sent his proceedings into the General, "for favour of confirmation" Well, he'd no authority to hold a court-martial. He'd no authority to do anything whatever. And the General and his crowd hadn't the foggiest idea what to do. I think they sent them to Anton Bertram, the Attorney-General. I think they filed it. Well, now, that man had no authority to do anything. He held these long enquiries. He had the people tied up to coconut trees and beaten. There's never been any complaint whatever. Never was in the Kalutara District for what he did. Never any complaint.

I. Yes ...

N. They felt they'd had a fair - they felt they'd had a fair - a fair trial.

I. Mmm. If I may make a point you - in your, in your memorandum - memoranda of 1942 you said that - you say that most of these general court-martials were fair because - the ones where they condemned people to death - well, because they were reviewed by senior Civil Servants and sent up to the Governor.

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1. Ceylon Planters Rifle Corps.

N. Oh, yes, yes, yes. I'd forgotten all this. Because, mind you, it is a long time ago.

I. But that seems slightly contradictory to your statement that they were pretty fierce?

N. Ah, well, I'm speaking now what I remember now, you see.

I. Yes.

N. My impression looking back is that - that they were pretty fierce. But now you mention it I think they were, a lot of them anyhow, were revised by some senior Civil Servant. Yes.

I. Agreed.

N. I'd forgotten that.

I. I think that - I mean, there's no doubt that the intentions were good and ....

N. Of course they were.

I. ... and that on many occasions justice was done. But the point is that these are military men who are trying the cases. They don't know the people. They don't know about their, well, skill and ability in perjuring themselves.

N. Yes, right.

I. And they would not have been taking into consideration the fact that many Moors, who were the leading witnesses often, were trying to get back on their own enemies.

N. Oh, quite, quite. Yes, quite, quite.

I. So in this sense, while the evidence might have led them to a certain conclusion, the evidence might well be false evidence.

N. Don't I know it. I sat on a military - nothing to do with the riots at all. I sat on a military, what they call, enquiry. Its a preliminary to a court-martial. On the ?? I think it was a C.L.I. officer. I've forgotten at the moment exactly which the C.L.I. officer was. Here, it was nothing to do with my part of(?) the show(?). But I was on - I wish somebody else had gone on it. And I sat. But the suggestion was that this officer had hit somebody with a cane or done something, you see. And the object of the enquiry was to find out whether there was a <u>prima facie</u> case to send before court-martial, you see. Well, I heard all the evidence there was to be heard - I think in Galle or somewhere I don't know. And I think there was some other - was it one of the Sansoni's sitting with me? I've forgotten. Anyhow we - there was all the evidence, you see, for the prosecution. Enough to hang anybody twice. Well, my job was to collect the evidence. Not to express any opinion

on it whatever. Only to collect the evidence. Well, I knew, if I'd sent this in - you see, these wretched soldiers on top, you see, they would have tried this wretched fellow and that's all. So contrary to all the military instructions I said, 'All this evidence points to the fact that so and so, so and so, but', I said, 'in my firm opinion, knowing the country and so on, its all false. I don't believe any of it'. And I said, 'That'll be the end of that'. But it was. But if it had gone in the ordinary military fashion, you see, whoever it was would have been for it, I've no doubt. I've forgotten who the man was.

I. Mr. Strong believed that - you see, in these court-martials hearsay was admitted and he says that the law of evidence just went by the board.

N. Oh, yes, I've no doubt it did. Oh, yes, yes, quite. Expect so. I expect so.

I. Do you know Armand de Sousa?

N. I've only spoken to him on the telephone.

I. Oh! Editor of the Morning Leader.

N. Yes, yes, yes. He - I forget - I think I got him to give evidence for the Headman's Commission.

I. Oh, yes. You mentioned his name. What sort of man was he?

N. Oh, well, he was supposed - I mean, the Civil Service was supposed to think - he was - he was the worst man in the world.

I. Ha-ha-ha.

N. I found him very pleasant and I think he was. The Morning Leader was a - was a trifle unscrupulous. You of course - before your day.

I. Yes.

N. In those days, you see, the morning papers all attacked the wretched Civil Servants. All out. Any sort of - any sort of misrepresentation that they could possibly do, was done. But I know in one case, I heard that he was going to - he was going to attack one of my <u>mudaliyars</u> in the Western Province. And I rang him up. I didn't know him. But I rang him up. 'This is Newnham speaking'. I said, 'I gather so and so, so and so, and that you're going - you're going for Mudaliyar Samarakody about something?'. He said, 'Yes. He said, 'I'm going to crucify him tomorrow morning'. So I said, 'Well, you're entitled to, of course, if you want to. But', I said, 'as a matter of fact, he's a very worthy old gentlemean. He's going

to be - he's retiring very soon and ...' Oh, yes, it was because Samarakody was said to be about to retire in order to stand for the Council.

I. Oh, I see.

N. That was it. I said so and so, so and so. And I said, 'After all, why shouldn't he?' And I said, 'He's had very meritorial service and', I said,'I've always found him very, very helpful. And so I rang you up to say that if you're going to pick on anybody you might pick on somebody who was inefficient, you know. Because', I said, 'this is a particularly efficient man'. And he said, 'Well, Mr. Newnham', he said, 'if you say anyone's efficient', he said, 'he must be because you don't ordinarily take that line'. I said, 'Well, ...' He said, 'Alright, I'll let him off this time'. Well, that was pretty good of him.

I. Mmm. Turning from the 1915 Riots to just the period preceeding that , would you say that in the 1900's, the first part of the century, there was - there were, well, there was much cynicism in the ...?

N. Much what?

I. Cynicism in the Civil Service. Cynicism towards political change and the people?

N. Oh, you mean not cynicism quite, but ... Oh, I think, the general view was that there were just a few - may I(?) correct you - that there were just a few people like Senanayake and Jayatilaka and a few others, who ...

I. Wanted?

N. Oh, yes, who wanted political change and that sort of thing, and that the main body of the people didn't. Which is true. Main body of people didn't. They - they were ...

I. Would you say that the Government Agents and Headmen represented the main body of the people better than these middle-class leaders?

N. Oh, that's what Clifford said. Oh, yes. That is - that was true. I think that - I still think that was true. The - the people were, in fact, stirred up. As in India. You remember the - who was it in India, when it was appointed(?) ... Was it the Secretary-of-State, Montague who said it was the duty of somebody or other to rouse the - to rouse the voiceless masses of India out of their pathetic contentment. They ought to be stirred up, so he said.

I. Yes. But also its a question of the masses having very - very limited horizons. And being inarticulate. Isn't it? Is it so much content - well, it may be content, but its a content flowing from a very limited outlook.

N. Oh, yes, all that. Yes, yes. The - mind you, I think, as I told you before, the Government of Ceylon was always lacking in drive. And, I think, I also told you that Fraser got Ordinance 19 of 1915 passed ...

I. Yes.

N. Well, I think it was ... No, no.

INTERRUPTION

N. That wasn't the one, it was the other one. Yes it was. That was the one I think. Anyhow the Ordinance I'm talking about is the one which provided for urban district councils.

I. Yes, I ...

N. He - he wanted that passed in order to give the people in the districts some share in the - experience in Government. And he couldn't get Government to do it.

I. In this connection what do you think of Stace's point - Stace's criticism about the arrogance?

N. About?

I. Arrogance.

N. Yes. The ...

I. I mean, he's not levelling it at the officials alone but at unofficials too.

N. Oh, yes, quite. The - as a matter of fact with his permission I gave his - oh, no, it was his article. Did you see his article in the Yale Gazette?

I. Yes, that ...

N. Well, he sent it to me and I sent it to Bowes. And Bowes absolutely spat blood on it, of all things. And he sent me a long screed. I then sent it on to Mark Young. Said that Bowes had spat blood over it and Mark Young sent it back and said, 'I don't wonder. It would have lit up anybody far less inflammable than Bowes'. Yes, the - I think I should agree with Stace as ...

I. And the very way that Bowes reacts is also an indication.

N. No. No, but Bowes... No, Bowes was - well, say, not only able but he was also clever. Bowes' point was, really, that - even Harding A. Cameron - he quoted him - dealing with the chenas and so on, had always pointed out to the people that

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they must not burn down the jungle because it was their jungle being preserved for them. It belonged to them, not the Government. "It belonged to you ..." But - and I put the point to you that last century the - there was far more intercourse between the Ceylonese and the Europeans than there was this century. What caused the change I can't say but ...

I. Well, more European women, more recreation and ...

N. Yes, I suppose ...

I. ... cars and ...

N. Yes, something of that kind. But Bowes pointed out to me and ... Yes, there was an insensitivity. For instance, when the Donoughmore - was it the Donoughmore crowd? - invented the Executive Committees and so on and these ...

I. Donoughmore. Yes.

N. Yes. And I was turned on as Secretary to Batuwantudawe and so on, you know. Well, I was very careful, you see. I had to attend the meetings of the Executive Committee and the rest of it - and the rest of it. I was, well, naturally very polite to them and called everybody 'Sir', and that sort of thing. And saw their chairs were in the right place and they were all sitting down before I did, and all that sort of business, you see. Well, Tyrrell was then Chief Secretary or Deputy Chief Secretary or whatever ... I mean, he - they,he had the right to attend these meetings ...

I. Mmm. Yes.

N. Well, he used to come in smoking a large cigar, you see, puffing it all over the place. Well, one doesn't do that sort of thing.

I. And wasn't he a sort who was inclined to be a bit stuffy?

N. He?

I. Stand on his dignity?

N. Oh, he was - I guess he was - he was a very insensitive sort of person. I didn't care for the fellow much. He - nor did Strong as a matter of fact. We all regarded him as a - he ought never to have been put in that job, as Chief Secretary. I think his wife jogged him into it. You see, he was a gentleman. And Reid, who the Donoughmore people wanted put in, was not. And(?) between ?? - that damned thing [the tape-recorder]...

I. No, but ...

N. I mean Reid was a ...

I. But Reid would have got on better, wouldn't he, with the politicians?

N. Oh, yes. Very much. And Reid - Reid was so upset that he resigned on that. But, oh, it was Mrs. Tyrrell as she then was. She told me in Nuwara Eliya that she went to see Graeme - Graeme Thomson, when he arrived, and "she understood, you know, that Reid was going to put in". And she went to see Graeme Thomson and said, 'Why should he be put over Graeme's head'.[1] You know, well, 'yak-yak-yak'. She told me about it; she told me.

I. I didn't know that the Donoughmore people wanted Reid?

N. Wait a minute. It was - yes, the Donoughmore.

I. Did they suggest Reid's name?

N. Yes. He went home on the same ship with them so they couldn't get away from the blighter.

I. Oh, I see.

N. The - they did suggest him.

I. Yes.

N. That was - I'd forgotten everything, the dates and things but ...

I. 1931-32.

N. Yes, that's it. Yes, yes, that was it. Oh, yes. And I know Reid talking to me once he said, "Well, I think its pretty well known that the Donoughmore people wanted me to be Chief Secretary ....' Oh, Reid would be a very able person but he was - he was not in the same social class, you see, as Tyrrell. And Tyrrell - like Alexander - was another of these people, you see, who ...

I. Yes. Oh, he was like Alexander? Old school?

N. Yes. Well, when Alexander got his C.M.G. - I used to play golf with Wilfred Woods, you know, who was his, you see ... I used to play golf with him a lot and the day after the [announcement], Wilfred Woods [said], 'Woof, woof, woof', he said, 'Well, I'm jolly glad that old E.B's got his C.M.G.' He said, 'He must have got it for being the complete sahib. There can't have been any other conceivable reason'. Hee-hee-hee. I thought it was rather nice. And Alexander was a dear old thing but ...

I. Pardon?

N. He was a dear thing but, I mean, he was - he was not in any sense able. And Tyrrell was utterly insensitive and ...

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1. Graeme was also her husband's Christian name.

I. Mmm. Yes, you ...

N. I mean, Tyrrell wouldn't - refused to put in Saravanamuttu as Rubber Controller, on the grounds, you see, that he'd have to deal with the European merchants and the European planters, and the rest of it. You must have a European for dealing with these people, and the rest of it. And luckily Senanayake hung out. And insisted and got him in. And in the end they - they all - the whole lot of them ate out of Saravanamuttu's hand.

I. Pardon? Oh, I see.

N. They all ate out of his hand. They said he was the finest person there ever was. And he was. But I mean that was just like Tyrrell, you see.

I. But I should have thought that the arrogance was more noticeable at - in the early part of the century. And I don't know whether Clifford was such a man? Stace seems to think so but I don't know?

N. Oh, well, the - the ... Well, we shall go on for ever like this. I don't know that its worth pursuing. I don't know whether you think it is? You see, we - I met quite a number of Indians at Oxford. I was hoping to get into the Indian Civil, you see, and so I rather cultivated some of these Indians, you see. I mean, I was very glad to meet them and so on but I wanted to learn some thing about it all. I got on very well with them. I was one of the first members I think of the India Society or whatever its called. And that was that. Well, one of them came and stayed with me and so on, in my home. Well, when I got out to Ceylon there was this curious gap between the Civil Service, which was then almost entirely European, and the - the clerks. And it embarrassed me very much.

I. You felt segregated did you?

N. Oh, yes, yes. And I didn't know where I was. And of course I dropped bricks. I mean, I was taken to the kachcheri by Seymour, you see, and he said, 'I'll take you round the departments and I'll introduce various people to you'. And I said, 'Oh, tell me this, Seymour'. I said, 'Do I shake hands with them or do I not? I want to know'. 'Oh', he said, 'I'll tell you, I'll give you the tip when to shake hands'. You see, 'I'll give you the tip'. Well, I forget what happened. Then we went to the shroff's office after this, you see. And

we got to the shroff's office and there was a dear old man with a cloth and bare feet and so on, you see, with a long grey beard who held out his hand like that to me, you see. So I thought, 'Well, that's a pretty good indication'. So I shook it warmly. This was a peon who wanted the keys. Hee-hee-hee. Well, of course, that story went all round. Hee-hee-hee. It's true. Well, I did feel - I did feel that there was this segregation. But, I mean, that - it was like a game of cricket. It was no use - I've told you before. The administration was like a game of cricket. There were things one did and things one didn't do and there was no use quarrelling with the rules. Not when you were young.

I. Yes, you couldn't. I mean you would be squashed.

N. Oh, quite. The - there was one thing I wanted to talk to you about. That was Goonesinha.

I. Oh, yes. What sort of chap was he?

N. I've made some notes about him somewhere. Hang on. Goonesinha. I think its worth recording that - I knew nothing about Goonesinha except that I vaguely knew that he was - he'd caused some trouble among labour here and there. I don't know what it was. It was when I was Mayor.

I. Yes.

N. I'd - I don't know that I'd ever met him. But one heard that this here's a labour leader and, you know, bound to cause trouble. Have I told you this story?

I. No, you haven't.

N. Well, the Municipal Engineer came to me one day in the office and showed me a pamphlet. A printed pamphlet which said that that afternoon at five o'clock or half-past five, in a certain school in Maradana, there would be a meeting. This was signed by Goonesinha. There would be a meeting of all the municipal employees. The labourers, all the municipal labourers, to consider their grievances. And Mr. A.E. Goonesinha was in the chair, you see, at half-past five .... So poor old Ingram was very upset. He said, 'You know we'll have a lot of trouble over this. We've never had any trouble - we've never had Goonesinha in the show before now'. So I said, 'Oh, leave it to me'. So I didn't say a word to anybody at all except to old Joseph, the Secretary. I consulted him. I said, 'Look here, Joseph, so and so. Don't tell anyone in the world but I propose to attend this meeting'. 'Oh', he said

'You can't do that'. I said, 'Why?' 'Oh', he said 'there's no precedence for it. You don't know what'll happen'. I said, 'No, no. That's why I want to be there', I said. I said, 'Do you see any serious reason why I shouldn't attend?' Well he thought, "mmmmmmmm". Anyhow - meeting at half-past five. I got hold of the municipal car and driver and - just after five o'clock I said, 'Drive to such and such a school at Maradana'. So I got there about quarter-past five, this school, you see. And it was absolutely full of coolies. So I got out. I strode through the hall, up on to the platform. And as I went I heard the coolies, 'Oh, chairman dorai, chairman, ooh, chairman'. Well, I went in and on the platform. There were two or three chairs around, nobody else there. I took a chair and I plumped it down in front of the platform and I sat down and smiled at the crowd. And when Goonesinha arrived, just before half-past five, you see, he came in with one or two henchmen. And he walked up the hall. I got up and I held - and I said, 'Oh', I said, 'Come in Mr, Goonesinha, come in. Come and join me. And come and sit down'. Well, of course, he was astounded to see me. I said, 'Come - I'm so glad you've come. Come in'. Well, he didn't know where he was quite, you see, so - so I said, 'Oh, I - I wanted to come to the meeting and find out what your - what's it all about. Fair enough?' So he said, 'Well, may I address the meeting?' I said, 'Yes. But', I said, 'say what you like. Don't ...' Well, he got up and addressed them all. He said, 'I should like to welcome you to the meeting'. I said, 'Right do. Certainly'. So he got up and he made a very flowery address of welcome to me. I mean, to the meeting. So that was received with applause so I said, 'Now then, I want to address them'. I said, 'Will you interpret?'. I got up and I said, 'I came' - I said, 'I read the notice of the meeting and', I said, 'it was usual to ask me as Mayor to all the important functions in Colombo and I got no invitation. So I read it again and I saw it was a meeting of the workers. And then, of course, I ... - I am a worker. I work harder than any of you people do anyhow so I've come as a right. And I'm very glad to be here'. I said, 'I've only signed two petitions in my life, both asking for an increase of pay. So I know exactly what you feel like'. Loud applause. I said, 'In both cases, my request was refused so I know what you will feel like when you get my answer to you'.

Hee-hee-hee. They hooted with laughter. They thought this was damn funny, you see. And so then I said, 'But, now then, I'm going now. But', I said, 'form your union, elect committee and', I said, 'formulate exactly what you want and send a deputation along to see me. And I shall be very glad to see you'. I never heard another - and I walked out and said, 'Good-bye'. I never heard another word about it. That was the end of that.

I. Did you find Goonesinha a reasonable man?

N. Very reasonable. But I mean - after that he used to ask me to their annual rally in Victoria Park where they had sports and they had a visitors' race. I ran in the visitors' race and I won it. I won the shaving-glass which I used every day for years and years afterwards. And I went to some other function of theirs. Somewhere in the Pettah. I don't know what it was. A meeting - I don't know what it was. And I made a speech which I - got rather heavily ragged because I said that - well, they were a labour party. He'd started off at a Labour Party meeting as a Labour candidate(?) and all the rest of it and I said, 'You're going to have elections here, sooner or later, in this country. And', I said, 'you may have a Labour Government, may have a very different one. But', I said, 'I hope you understand this that the Civil Service is here to serve the government of the day. And', I said, 'we shall serve Labour Government, yours or some other government or the British Government with equal faithfulness. I mean, just - just as - whoever gives us the orders will get our faithful service'. This was reported in the paper, you see. I got rather heavily ragged. They said, 'Do you mean to say you'd take orders from Goonesinha?' And I said, 'Of course, if he's Prime Minister, I'll have to. So will you'. But I got on very well with him after that. He - and when I joined the Chamber of Commerce - resigned and joined Chamber of Commerce they made me the Chairman of the Employers' Federation - Mercantile Employers' Federation - and I had to negotiate with Goonesinha.

I. 1929 was that? Just before the Donoughmore?

N. Well, it was ...

I. Hayley's time?

N. No, I joined the ..., '39.

I. Oh, I see.

N. 1939. And I had to negotiate on behalf of the mercantile people, you see, with Goonesinha. I always found him very good indeed. He stuck to his point. And he always kept his word. If he gave his word he stuck to it. Other people found the same. And he never - as far as we knew he never had anything to do with the communists.

I. No, he didn't. But that was a - that was a partly personal and partly ideological battle.

N. Yes. But I mean why did it start long before we heard about N.M. Perera and people like that? When Goonesinha started it would have been very easy for him in those days, you see, to have licked up the communists way - way back in the 19 - in the early 1920's.

I. Yes.

N. But no. He stood on his own feet. And - oh, I always found him very good. I would like to meet him again. Well, now, you near the end of your [spool]?

I. Yes, that's fine so ...

INTERRUPTION

I. Mr. Davidson - he made the point that, well, he and the other British were out to bring some sort of good government ...

N. Yes.

I. ... but what you think is good government may be anathema to ...

N. Yes, exactly.

I. ... to another...

N. Quite right.

I. ... people, you see, and in this sense self-government is better than good government because - well, I ...

N. You mean ...

I. ... mean,- its an argument to support this popular cliche that self-government is better than good government.

N. Yes. You mean he thought that the people of the country ought to have appreciated that our government was a good one?

I. No, he didn't say that. He said that one of the aims, I mean, one of the sort of vague intentions of the British, was to bring good government.

N. Yes.

I. But their way of thinking was different from the people's way of thinking ...

N. Yes.

I. ... and because of that what they thought was good may not have been - appeared as good to the people.

Well, this was a matter of travesty of justice. And I pointed all this out to the Government Agent.

I. What were you then?

N. I was an Office Assistant. I hadn't been out over a year. Just over a year. But, oh, no, the old wheels went round and round and round and just went on. As a matter of fact I - the mudaliyars, the ratemahatmayas sent in what are called illicit clearing reports, you see ...

I. Yes.

N. ..., you know, to say how much to clear. These were then - the current thing was that they were then sent straight away. Plaints were made out, one on each. Then they were sent to the court, the head clerk, on to the summons to issue. Summons to issue went to the fiscal, went to the fiscal round to the headman.

I. Yes.

N. And in due course these wretched villagers had to come in, walking 30, 40 miles each way, to the court, and if it got on to twelve o'clock, half-past twelve the - De Saram used to - he'd simply say, 'Case postponed'.

I. Hmm.

N. He wasn't going to work in the afternoon, so it was postponed for another month and then they'd come back. And in the end then a whole bunch of these illicit clearings came in and I wrote on the top of each the amount of the fine. What De Saram would have given. I wrote the amount of the fine on each top, you see. Just what he would have given and I sent them back to the mudaliyar, to the ratemahatmaya, and I said, 'The amount of the fine is - of the compensation - or whatever its called. I've endorsed on each plaint'. I said, 'If the people care to pay that and save themselves coming in, just collect the money and send it in and that would be the end of it'. Well, unfortunately, the Government Agent was on circuit and the ratemahatmaya showed him this and said, 'Is this your order?' And he said, 'Oh, no. Oh, no'. As a matter of fact he ticked me off like hell and said, 'Oh, no, its to go through normally'. Not only that, but the Government Agent who was perfectly straight forward, he said, 'You see, the Land Settlement Department use these cases as evidence. If they plead guilty to clearing the chena that means that they admit the crime claimed - they admit its not private land.'

I. Mmm. But ...

N. Yes, I see. Yes, well, that's perfectly right. We - we thought that what we were trying to do was obviously right ...

I. Yes, that's right. He says its not obviously right.

N. ... - obviously right and proper and that sort of thing, you see, and - couldn't understand why people were so silly that they couldn't understand it. But nobody ever explained it to us. We might have in the course of time realised it. For example, take this chena cultivation which is another matter about which I know very little, but readily every year the people of the villages, North-Central Province, they all - they cut down their chenas without permit or in excess of the permit. They always did and then they were - it was reported and they were run in - and they were brought all the way to Anuradhapura - and they were run in and fined and then they were duly found guilty and they were fined and that was that, Now, I pointed this out to the Government Agent. I said, 'You know, these people don't connect - don't regard that fine as a punishment for clearing their chena'.

I. Its a payment?

N. No, its a happening.

I. Oh, I see.

N. Just like a drought or the paddy fly. Its one of the ills of life. Yes, they - they - it is just ...

I. <u>Karma</u>?

N. <u>Karma.</u> Yes. <u>Karma</u>, and what got my goat was this - that there again you've got to be very careful - at my time at Anuradhapura the magistrate was a local man and - well, as I say - he's dead, I think his son - but he was a bit of a - but he was - always had to finish his job well before lunch and if possible get drunk by lunchtime. And he simply shoved through the cases anyhow he could, yelling at the people if they didn't plead guilty and browbeating them, you see, and er - he had to be finished by lunchtime; and he was just a drunkard, you see, and these chena cases were always the same, they ... I've seen dozens of them. This was the proceedings: 'GG, K says one acre, 10 Rs.' The first G meant "I've explained the charge to the accused who says, 'I am guilty'". The second G meant "I find the accused guilty". K says one acre, meant "the <u>korale</u> says the clearing was actually one acre and not the five acres in the plaint". Fine, 10 Rs. "G.G.K. 10 Rs."

N. But I said, 'Do you mean to say, sir, that that you are going to regard as evidence?...?'

I. But the point is in the North-Central Province no-one was claiming it as private anyway. They were cultivating chena because they had to cultivate it.

N. Oh, quite. Oh, quite that. But I'm only indicating that - how stupid our - and Vaughan was a nice kind person, very well, but utterly, utterly stupid.

I. Don't you think that on this chena question in the Dry Zone, don't you think the Government orders were far too strict?

N. Oh, yes, I mean ... But Strong will tell you all about that. I've no opinions about it.

I. What do you think of Freeman?

N. Oh, he was dear thing, yes. But the villagers, in the end, they twisted him all round. They used to laugh at him behind his back, you know.

I. Uhuh.

N. They'd put him up to - to - when after he'd retired - they'd put him up to represent them to - to whoever was G.A. and they'd turn round and laugh behind their hands.

I. Umm.

N. Oh, he was - he was ...

I. Same with Sandys, I think?

N. Oh, probably. Here's a good story. I think it was Freeman. I've forgotten who the Office Assistant was. But I think it was Freeman's Office Assistant over at Jaffna. There was some problem, I've forgotten what. And Freeman drafted a letter to the Government setting out the problem - problems on the - setting it all up, and the last paragraph ... The whole letter led up to the course of action that should be taken. But Freeman in the last paragraph - you know the story?

I. No, I don't.

N. In the last paragraph he suggested something quite different - utterly different. So the Office Assistant thought? 'Oh, the old man's gone dotty', - so he took the letter back to Freeman and said, 'Excuse me, sir, but ... I mean, its quite obvious surely from what you've set out here that the course, the right course of action would be so and so, so and so, and so and so'. He said, 'Isn't that the thing to suggest?' Freeman said, 'Oh, no, no, no, it wouldn't do'. 'But sir ...'

I. Its contradictory, isn't it?

N. What?

I. Did he say that it was contradictory?

N. No, he said - he said that, 'It leads up to what you say, I agree. But', he said, 'that's obvious', he said, 'If I put that in the letter, sure as fate, Government will turn it down'.

I. Oh, I see.

N. He said, 'They'll find some reason to turn it down'. He said, 'If I send it in with this final paragraph, which is obviously ridiculous', he said, 'these bright boys in the Secretariat will say, "That silly old fool, Freeman, he's done it again. He can't even see the right thing to do is so and so". And they'll write back and tell me to do what I really want to do'. That's ... I won't tell you who it was, but it was one of his Office Assistants told me that.

I. So he's quite a wise old bird.

N. Yes, quite.

I. I heard that in a similar story with regard to an appointment in the 1930's, when a G.A. put the man he wanted No. 2 knowing that the State Council will turn his first - first recommendation down. And sure enough they did.

N. Well, the ... When I was - I was the first Commissioner of Local Government, you see. It was a new department entirely. 1940, '39? No, wait a ... When was it that blessed thing came in? No - 30'. 1930?

I. 1930.

N. I was Commissioner of Local Government and I was also Secretary to that Batuwantudawe. And the Government Agents were asked to recommend people for nomination, you see, to Urban District Councils and things and the rest of it. And that creature, G.K.W. Perera, who was one of the worst people - I mean, he always fought against the G.A's nominees and he said once, he said, 'Its perfectly clear that the G.A's will only nominate people who'll do as they think. Who will come running for them and the rest of it. So that anyone nominated by a G.A. should be automatically out'. But there was a case - did you ever know Batuwantudawe?

I. No.

N. Dear old thing, oh, such a nice old man; and as lazy as be damned.

I. Uh-uh.

N. But I used to put things up to him, you see, and he said to me once, 'You know, Mr. Newnham', he said, 'this is all gone wrong'. He said, 'I find that I'm approving everything that you suggest.

And', he said, 'everybody will say that I'm in your pocket', - and so on. And I said, 'Don't you understand, sir, that in matters of administration, 99 times out of a 100, there's only one thing to do, only one thing to do. That's all'. I said, 'Its bound to be, whoever it is. As long as we're honest, its only - there's only one thing to do'. And he said, 'Oh, I see, that's it'. I said, 'Yes', I said, 'You - if you disagree with everything I put up, you'll find sooner or later you'll be in the ruddy soup'. And, of course, it was so. But he didn't understand that. But he - he was an awful muddler and ...

I. Not able? Incompetent?

N. Oh, yes. Well, yes, he was incompetent. He didn't try. I went - as a matter of fact I went to Senanayake, who was the strong man of the show at the time. I went to him once and I said to him, 'Look here', - I knew Senanayake very well and I went to him once and I said, 'Look here, I want to talk to you confidentially about - about Batuwantudawe'. I said, 'He won't do any work'. I said, 'He doesn't read anything I put up to him. He simply approves everything. He doesn't - he takes no interest in anything whatsoever, and', I said, 'I'm afraid that there will be a breakdown'. I said, 'Some of the members of his Committee will probably turn and rend him, and there'll be trouble'. I said, 'As I'm telling you', I said, 'is it possible for you to try and induce him to stand up to his job?' I mean, I wanted, you know, him to stand up to his job. And he said, 'You know', he said, 'nobody can do that'. He said, 'He's an absolute muddler'. He said, 'At one time he was Chairman of the Buddhist and Theosophical Society' - was it? Or ...

I. Yes, must have been something like that.

N. .... He said, 'He was Chairman of that'. And he said, 'The accounts of that he got into the most awful mess and I was told that they were in a shocking mess and I thought, 'Oh, dear, oh, dear. We can't have a scandal, you see', he said. 'So I took them all over and I put an accountant on them to sort them out because I was - I was afraid that old Batu, in sheer muddle, had probably been spending them himself. But', he said 'believe it or not', he said 'when they were sorted out, it turned out that - exactly the opposite was the case, that he'd spent a lot of his money on the Theosophical Society. But he didn't know it'. He said, 'It could quite well have been the other way round'. That's Senanayake's story.

I. I see.

N. But we did - I did what I could to prop him up, you see.

I. Turning back to the earlier period, what sort of association was this Ceylon National Association? You know, James Pieris and the crowd?

N. I really - I was too young to have much to do with that. The - there was a story - I don't know if it is true - that Senanayake paid for the education at Jaggers, at Jesus College of D.B. Jayatilaka; that he sent him to England and had him educated there, in order to use him politically afterwards. I don't know if that story is - I heard that, what? - 40 years ago.

I. And going back a decade further, in the 1920's you got this change instituted by Manning. You know, they had this legislative council in which the unofficials outnumbered the officials. Can you remember that? Just before Donoughmore.

N. What?

I. The unofficial element outnumbered the official.

N. Yes.

I. Was Government hamstrung as a result?

N. Were they hampered?

I. Yes, hampered.

N. Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

I. Did you find a lot of - for instance, in the field, did you find a lot of political interference?

N. Oh, well, Strong's told you about all that.

I. Yes. Strong has told me about his case but I ...

N. Forrester Obeyesekere? Well, I also did the field so to say then. This was - you see, I was - from 1924 to '30, you see, I was - yes, I was Mayor - I was - I was as I told ...

I. Independent person?

N. I said I was a foreign and perhaps friendly power.

I. Agreed.

N. I mean, I was - I had my own troubles. I mean, ...

I. In the municipal ...?

N. You wouldn't believe the way some of those councillors behaved.

I. What did they do?

N. Well, I mean, they'd get up and they'd curse me to blazes in the council meetings.

I. Did you feel it was simply a spirit of factious opposition?

N. Yes, that was a lot(?) ...

I. I mean, this is a Government. They're Europeans. We must oppose

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them. Was that it?

N. That was largely it. But I put them all in the cart by starting off by saying - I said, 'I announce my policy. Nobody's had a policy before'. I said, 'I've got a policy which is save the slums and save the children. I want to clear away some of these slums and to stop this dreadful infant mortality'. And I said, 'Those are my policies that ...' Well, they couldn't very well object to them.

I. No, they couldn't.

N. They were furious.

I. About this political interference. What about the period earlier when - earlier period when you were A.G.A., Negombo and Colombo? Did you find any trouble then?

N. I don't remember anything about them at all.

I. I think it developed gradually and it was more in the 1920's. Of course .... - Fletcher. Fletcher was not popular because - did he listen to this - these ...?

N. Oh, well, Fletcher used to - thought he could - thought he could be more clever than the Ceylonese, you see. That was the idea. He used to - he used to - oh, but Strong's told you all about that so we will .... The municipal councillors - there was a man, R.L. Pereira - you've probably heard about him. He was a leading lawyer. And he'd get up and say the most outrageous things. That was simply because the man was essentially a swine. I mean, he did it in court. Does Sir Thomas Garvin mean anything to you?

I. No.

N. He was a judge. He ought to have been Chief Justice. That was Tyrrell again who stopped that. He was an awful nice fellow. He was knighted in the end. I think Sir Forrester Garvin, they called him. But he told me - I was talking about R.L. Pereira. He said, 'Oh, yes', he said, 'I've got a way of dealing with R.L. Pereira'. That was when Garvin was Solicitor General. He said, 'If he's opposing me in court', he said, 'right at the beginning of the show', he said, 'I say something or another which I know will get well under his guard and get him - get under his skin. And he then goes straight up in the air and behaves in the most outrageous fashion and', he said, 'I sit down and say, "No, no, my Lord, sorry I can't carry on"'. He-he-he-he. And R.L. Pereira would get more and more furious

until finally the bench ticked him off, you see, and said that if he didn't behave himself he'd be turned out. And they brought him .... Well, I couldn't do that. But I'll give you one case. I won't tell you who it was. It was one councillor .... When I came in, you see, they were all there. They were all ready - I would come in onto the bench and everybody would stand up and I'd bow, you see, and we'd sit down. And there was one councillor who always used to give me such a friendly little smile; the sort of person - who gave a friendly little smile as I sat down. I thought, 'Alright, so he's sometimes beastly', but I thought,'Oh, well, he's a nice fellow'. At the very - after I ceased to be Mayor, Stace I think took over; the very next meeting this man got up and delivered the most outrageous attack upon me, absolutely outrageous attack on me. Stace said to me - told me about it - said, 'Did you - had you got a down on him, had a row with him?' I said, 'On the contrary', I said, 'we're rather friendly'. He said, 'Oh, well, he was most virulent in his attack upon you'. 'So', I said, ' ....'

I. Yes, I see.

N. How could you cope with that sort of thing?

I. Hmm. Did you - did you know Mr. Tambimuttu - E.R. Tambimuttu?

N. Who?

I. Tambimuttu.

N. Oh, yes, I've met him.

I. What sort of a chap was he?

N. Oh, he was absolutely crooked. I mean, ...

I. He was a proctor wasn't he?

N. He was very clever. But ahem ...!

I. How did you personally get on with the leading politicians? The Senanayakes and ...?

N. Oh, very well indeed. Senanayake was always very good to me. He wanted me to be the Director of Agriculture, at one time. He said - when I was - finished - Relief Distress. He said - he came - he asked me to come and see him. I think he came to see me at ... and he said, 'Look here, Mr. Newnham, will you be my Director of Agriculture?' I said, 'What! Me! Not my line of country. I don't know anything about it - don't want to'. 'Oh', he said, 'I was very glad(?) We've made a mess of it. I want somebody to clear it up'. I looked at him and I thought. So I said, 'Well, lookhere', I said, 'I will,

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provided I can have six months leave first which is due to me as ...' He said, 'Hooray, hooray'. And he did a dance, he skipped about. He said, 'Hooray, hooray'. And he was awfully nice and so I went into Tyrrell. He took me into - went to Tyrrell. Oh, I've told you that ...

I. No, you didn't.

N. Went in to - Tyrrell was Chief Secretary and he said, 'Mr. Newnham said ...'

I. This was after the malarial business?

N. Yes.

I. Couldn't have been Tyrrell. It must have been Wedderburn.

N. Oh, this was Tyrrell, this occasion(?) Because I went in there and ... Senanayake says, 'Mr. Newnham, I'm very glad to say, has said he's willing to become Director of Agriculture for me but he wants six months leave first'. 'Well, he can't have it', says Tyrrell. So Senanayake looked at him and said, 'I beg your pardon'. He said, 'He can't have it'. He said, 'He must - he must realise that leave is a matter of grace, not a matter of right, and he can't have it'. So Senanayake looked at Tyrrell. He said, 'Do you understand, Mr. Tyrrell, that an officer who starts with a grievance under me is no good to me'. He said, 'I'm not going to have a Head of a Department starting off with a grievance at not having got the leave which is due to him, which he thinks he ought to have and which he ought to have'. He said, 'I wouldn't employ him'. Well, I mean, that's pretty good. As a matter of fact I discovered then, quite by chance - I dined at Queen's House that night - sitting next to Stubbs, and Stubbs said to me, 'When are you going to start to till the soil?' I said, 'Well, I don't know sir'. I said, 'I hear a rumour today that there's somebody coming from the West Indies to ...' 'Oh, yes', says Stubbs. He said, 'At the end of the year I've arranged for a fellow to come from the West Indies to take over the job'.

I. Gretton?

N. Uh? I don't know who it was. I said, 'Oh, thank you very much sir'. I said, 'Then the answer to your question is never'. I said, 'I'm not going to act for anybody'.

I. I was asking about how you got on with the politicians because this is a rather personal question. Because I know that the Civil Service - well, many Civil Servants were rather appalled

when Wedderburn and the Governor passed you over and chose Wodeman as Deputy Chief Secretary.

N. Oh, what about it? Many Civil Servants what?

I. They were rather appalled that they passed you over and chose Wodeman. And I know that Wedderburn or someone said that you didn't get on with the politicians when ...

N. Ha-ha.

I. When another Civil Servant has told me that he didn't think that was true at all.

N. Oh, that's rather funny. Curiously enough I had a letter ask me about that from Australia, this last mail, this last week.

I. Who was it?

N. Oh, well, he was a Master Attendant.

I. Oh, I see.

N. You wouldn't know him. He said, 'I've often wanted to ask you'. I thought to myself, 'Oh, well, I'll write and tell you the facts!' I never - I never beat the red carpet as you say. I mean, I never looked out for my own hair. I always did the job as I did in accordance with my lights, to the best I could, regardless absolutely of its affect on me personally. And if Government were annoyed I used to say, 'Well, that shows its good - I made ...'

I. No. You see, Government doesn't come out of it well. It shows a rather stuffy, old shirt attitude, you see.

N. Yes, what I was going to say was this. That I never aimed at promotion at all. I mean, I did my job to the best ... regardless of its affect on me, you see. And - but just towards the end there was a question of a vacancy. It was when Tyrrell retired, I think. And Wedderburn was going up, you see, and then there was a vacancy as [Chief Secretary's] Deputy. Well, that was a chance. Whoever was Deputy would go up. So I thought to myself, 'Well, I'm now going - this is the one chance in my life and I ought to do something'. And I went - actually saw Stubbs who was very nice and charming, and said, 'Ah, well, I'll think over all you said and that'll be that'. Well, then, I knew the matter would go to the Public ...

I. Service Commission.

N. Public Service Commission, consisting of three people. Well,

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there was a man I knew, who was in touch with all those people, and I went to him. I said, 'Look here. This is the first time in my life when I've ever done anything for my own hair, for myself'. I said, 'Can you, by any chance, find out how those Public Service people are going to vote?' And he did. Or he said - he told me afterwards, 'Yes', he said, 'Huxham', he said - who was my boss as in the Customs. He said, 'Huxham's going to vote for you. Wedderburn says he's going to vote for Wodeman because he wants a quiet life. And Howard' - who was the Legal Secretary - 'says, "Well, after all, its a Deputy to Wedderburn that's being appointed", so he said, "he wants Wodeman so I'll follow him"'. Well, that's what this man said he had from ... Wedderburn on the ground he wanted a quiet life. I mean, that's - that's the nearest I can tell you. But, I mean, - I say - there were other reasons maybe. I mean, I'm not saying I was competent but ... You say there were some Civil Servants who - who ...?

I. Well, they knew that you had - they - Leach and Davidson and all - they were surprised. Well, they were not ... Well, they felt that since you had taken on Government as Chairman of Municipal Council - I mean, they were not surprised in the way that Government reacted. But they felt that you should have been chosen, you see.

N. I see, yes. That - there was some other point there but ... Oh, yes. This is a very personal thing but I couldn't help - I couldn't help being amused. You see, little Wodeman, who was quite a nice little fellow - have you met him?

I. No, I haven't.

N. He's not worth consulting, I can assure you. But half do(?) He was a quiet little fellow, he was rather the Dyson type. But he - he was alright. But he was made Deputy and later was made Chief Secretary. Well, he's the only Chief Secretary in the history of Ceylon who was never knighted. He was not knighted and indeed was sacked.

I. But that was Layton, wasn't it?

N. That was Layton, yes, yes. But I mean it - as a matter of fact he - it was Layton who did the sacking. And he - he - as I say, he was the only one who was never knighted so, I mean, I felt that ... I gave a wry smile but that was it. But mind you, there's a great deal to be said for Wodeman. But he was utterly lacking in imagination. Utterly, utterly lacking in imagination. And ...

I. Well, he doesn't seem to have been very popular with the other Civil Servants.

N. Wasn't he? Oh ...

I. I think it was his manners.

N. Oh, I don't think anyone had respect for him. I mean ... well ... I always liked Guy. We used to call each other Guy and Hubert. Always have, you see. We were in the same year. In point of fact he bumped me earlier than that. But that's another long story. But he did pass over me for about a few months. He passed the first exam before I did. Because Slater told me that they weren't going to fill up these vacancies for a long time. So I was in the Customs. So I applied myself to rewriting the Customs' Manual and all that sort of thing. You see, I worked very, very hard at that. And then suddenly Slatersaid, 'You'd better hurry up and get through your Tamil because we're going to ... I said, 'Well, ...' Well, meanwhile it was too late. And so he went over me for a few months.

I. Well, I haven't asked you a lot ...

END OF INTERVIEW

Confidential and Unrecorded Information provided by Mr. Newnham, 24 December 1965. *

Clifford's intermittent insanity: his Private Secretaries, Strong and Worsley were in an awkward spot. They were ready to inform the Colonial Office. Clifford's doctor was willing to give the necessary certificate. But Murchiston Fletcher refused to do anything.

Obviously Newnham and Strong both considered Sandys a dim-wit.

Dyson 'A clerk' though a very 'nice fellow'.

Davidson Highly 'quarrelsome'.

Rennie and Leigh-Clare and Collins were obviously not thought very brilliant.

Vaughan was one of his first G.A's. Considered in poor light.

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

Extract from letter dated 8 January 1965 from Mr. H.E. Newnham to Mr. Smith. (Mr. Newnham had been asked to read the section from Prof. Stace's autobiography and comment on it.)

I would venture to confirm about everything Stace has said. In particular the almost total absence of any attempt in our early days to teach us what our job was or how to do it. Heussler emphasises this.[1] We were given a chair and a desk and were expected to carry on. For example during the Christmas holidays in 1909, without any warning, I found myself in charge of the Western (the most important) Province, the only European (i.e. administrative) officer left in the capital, Colombo, for provincial purposes. My seniors had not told me they were going away, or where.

I also agree that there was a notable lack of purpose or drive or objective. I often asked as did Aristotle "What is the end or object of this activity?" No answer. Administration seemed to be a sort of game, like cricket, with its own esoteric rules, and just as futile and useless.

I would however venture to interpret somewhat differently the results of this. It is quite true that there was a great reluctance to surrender "power", control, etc., but, in my view, not for reasons of "imperialism", so far as Ceylon was concerned. Ceylon was then the Senior Crown Colony. Its Governor had reached the summit of his ambitions and had nothing to look forward to except the hope of a quiet life. His Colonial Secretary was hoping for a junior Governorship, and his chances depended on the good will and recommendation of the Governor which in turn depended on his not being disturbed. Similarly below the Colonial Secretary were a number of "bright" young men whose chances of promotion to higher posts in other colonies might depend largely in not disturbing the Colonial Secretary. So if the Civil Service or Public Services were so bold as to suggest any "forward" policy or activity, the order thereon would be "Nil at present" or, if pressed, "For God's sake, shut up and go and play golf."

Thus the "reluctance" to encourage political "advance" was due, in my view not to imperialism but to mere laziness. As the Simon Commission in India said, it was so much easier for the Civil Servant to do a job well himself than to try to teach an Indian to do it badly.

Personally I should agree with Hugh Clifford that the British Empire was one of the most powerful influences for good that the world has seen, but Stace disagrees. I would, with great respect,

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1. Robert Heussler, Yesterday's Rulers.

suggest that he, perhaps, does not give enough credit for the law and order and justice between man and man that "we" established. It has already been largely lost, and I get sad letters from old subordinates lamenting the loss of the old days, and they are not wholly intended to flatter.

But please believe that I have great admiration for what Stace has written. It is fortunate that the Colonial Administration has had the benefit of his recorded views and experiences in Ceylon. He was a rather unique Civil Servant. Primarily a philosopher whose writings while he was in Ceylon carried such weight that Princeton snapped him up as soon as he was available, he nonetheless held a number of important posts in Ceylon with distinction.

H.E. Newnham to H.A.J. Hulugalle, 9 June 1965.

As I was in the Ceylon Civil Service from 1909 to 1939 and thereafter in Ceylon till 1945 I was personally aware of much that did not find a place in public pronouncements, and my intimate friends in the Service naturally told me more. I thought that such information shed valuable light on the causes and reasons for what happened and was done, so I typed some "notes" without thinking out what I should do with them. They are far from suitable for publication as they are. I don't want them to fall into the hands of some gossip writer who might pick out a few extracts for an abusive or "scare" article. They are perhaps more "background material" but even so they lack "authority" unless attributed to some one (and I am reluctant publicly to admit authority until I am dead: I am 79) and unless I reveal the names of these quoted by official initials. So I don't know what to do with the dashed thing.

So I send it to you in case you care to make any use of it at your discretion, but please don't embroil me with the governments of Ceylon or the U.K. (I imagine that they are both now quite uninterested in these old matters.)

I propose to send a copy to Ludowyk as he was kind enough to show interest, and shall probably send another copy to the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Queen Elizabeth House, 21/22 St. Giles, Oxford where I have deposited all my Ceylon papers, copies of my diary as A.G.A., Colombo, of reports and memoranda of all sorts. The similar Institute at London University, 27 Russell Square, London W.C.1 is also collecting original papers about Ceylon and there W.T. Stace has deposited the Ceylon part of his autobiography which contains much of interest about the Governors whose Private Secretary he was.

I have always been irked by the lack of communication between those running the country and those writing about it. For example, a small instance. D.R. Wijewardene and I were quite good friends when we were mobilized in the C.L.I. together around 1916. A bit later he went sour on me. When I was the first Secretary of the Local Govt. Board around 1922 I did all I could to get Urban Councils established and their work publicized. I asked the Board to let me send the minutes of their meetings to the Press. The UNOFFICIAL members, Dr. W.A. de Silva, H.A.P. Sandrasekera, K. Balasingham, insisted that they should see them first, and THEY cut out some items in spite of my protests. When the Daily News noticed the omissions they started a campaign against ME, saying that I was trying to keep the proceedings hush hush, which showed that I was the last person to be the Secretary etc., etc.! ...

P.S. I am myself now quite incapable of making anything of these notes.

P.P.S. If they are of no use to you, you might be so kind as to return them some time, by sea mail.

P.P.P.S. On third reading they seem to me to be mere tittle tattle. But they ARE true and perhaps illustrative of the characters of those mentioned.

Notes made by Newnham on reading 'British Governors of Ceylon': by H.A.J. Hulugalle: 1963. Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, Lake House, Colombo.

As Governors were kept aloof from the public and were surrounded by a Staff personally dependent on them for promotion, their personalities were largely obscured from view and consequently attracted legends without much real basis. In the interests of accuracy these notes have been compiled as objectively as possible from personal experience, from what senior civil servants recounted as their experience and from what personal friends with whom he lived and whom he knew well told him of their own knowledge. It is hoped to record the authority of what is recounted in an appendix.

Page 2. It is submitted that the benefits of British rule went far beyond mere law and order. It gave the people a sense of real justice in administration between man and man entirely free from corruption except at the lowest levels, and an appreciation of truth and decency in public and private affairs, reflected in a high standard of public opinion. This can usefully be compared with conditions by, say, 1965 when allegations, indeed flat statements, of corruption in high places are made in public speeches and in the Press without any serious attempt to refute or investigate them. They are taken for granted. The Reports of the Auditor General expose scandal after scandal, year after year, and no one seems to take any notice.

Were the "rebellions" of 1817 and 1848 really against foreign rule and not merely inter-faction struggles?

Page 5. During this century the Governors were mostly old tired men in their last job, merely wanting a quiet life. The future of their Colonial Secretaries depended on their ensuring this and so obtaining recommendations for promotion for themselves. And so with the youngsters in the local Secretariat. "Nil at present" as Chalmers was so fond of minuting on the files. Caldecott once remarked to me, "I wonder why X has never been made a Governor". I replied, "Can you, or any one, point to anything he has ever done?" "Precisely", said C. "That is why he should make a good Governor". Later he did become a Governor of an Island. (Curiously, and sadly, he is to be buried today.)

Pages 39 and 47. In the days of Governor Barnes and later Ceylon needed development and there was any amount of land lying waste. The

convention, an excellent one, that public servants should not trade was not yet in vogue. When they did so, they were regarded as doing a public service, besides profiting themselves. Around 1925 I saw behind Endane estate in the Ratnapura district ranges of hills covered with scrub jungle, being abandoned coffee estates that no one still had a use for. At the time the early estates were opened their lands were NOT consciously pinched from villagers. They were either bought or derelict.

Page 47. Around 1923 the Surveyor General told me of the very highly confidential "Barnes Claim". I understood that in his time certain land in or near Nuwara Eliya was sold at about 50 cents an acre (perhaps the current market price) to the A.D.C. or other Staff of Barnes: that they and their heirs had "slept on" their claim having little or no idea that the land was of any apreciable[sic] value: that this had come to the notice of Government who had kept the matter secret and had given the Surveyor General or Conservator of Forests orders that some one should be sent to the land regularly once a year to cut down timber and otherwise exercise Crown Rights and that careful record should be kept thereof so that after 33 1/3 years of such exercise of Crown Rights without interferences the Crown should be able to claim the land and thus extinguish the ill-advised sale.

Some papers about this or some similar transaction by Barnes came to Governor Anderson who was so enraged that he ordered the portrait of Barnes to be removed from the Queen's House ballroom and hung in the lavatory. This was done, as his Private Secretary who did it for him told me.

Page 81. Doubtless Torrington was an incompetent fool. But the tradition in his family (with which I was at one time connected by marriage) related that Queen Victoria was so angry at the way he was sacked that she made him permanent Lord in Waiting, not having to resign with a change of Govt.

Page 114. I have a letter of 1873 from Gregory to the then A.G.A. Nuwara Eliya (who was later my father-in-law) about the sale of the potato crop of Queen's Cottage. He was worried at the offer of £40 when he had expected £60!

Page 128. I don't know if Sir Solomon is accurate about Gordon and the "exclusive" club in Colombo. Stubbs tried it on with three quite admirable Ceylonese (Judge Loos was one) and went about it so clumsily that he raised a stink unnecessarily by threatening to rag the lease. I forget the end of it. That was the Golf Club. Caldecott had some success with the Colombo Club.

Page 142. West Ridgeway. The efficient and accurate C.R. Cumberland who as P.A.C.S. worked closely with W.R. told me that he could get the guts out of a file more quickly than any one he knew. He had a great reputation for efficiency and personality. There was a story that he attended a Planters Association dinner at the Queen's, Kandy

when it was expected that his policy about some railway would be hotly attacked. After the dinner the planters took the horses out of his carriage and themselves dragged it back to the pavilion.

The agitation against the Waste Lands Ordinance (which did NOT rob the villages of their land) was based on the rage of the out-station proctors who had been buying up unsound and false claims to land by villagers and reselling them at huge profits to planters. Page 150. THIS IS WHERE I REACHED CEYLON!!! McCallum. The story was that when he was Governor of Natal some Africans were convicted of treason and condemned to death. Some appeal was made to the Secretary of State who cabled an order to defer the hangings pending further inquiry. It was stated that the Governor had the hangings carried out at once and then cabled that the order had arrived too late. Keir Hardie kicked up a row about this in the House of Commons, calling McCallum a "murderer". Some time later Keir Hardie came to Ceylon on a tour and McCallum refused to receive him at Queen's House, giving as his reason what Hardie had called him. It is alleged that in his Memoirs Hardie described his visit to Ceylon, telling that his travel agents had provided him with a most efficient and helpful personal servant, who saw to his comfort during his stay. This servant was a C.I.D. policeman planted by the Superintendent of Police who was reading all his letters and reporting all his sayings and doings and contacts.

Conversely, McCallum went on circuit to the Chilaw district with his Private Secretary, Hedgeland. They stayed a night at the Chilaw Rest House. Hedgeland awoke in the early hours and saw that there was a light on the verandah. He went to investigate and saw on a table the Governor's official despatch box standing open and the Governor's "dear old" Queen's House peon, spectacles on nose, and long white beard on chin, going through the papers therein.

They were a cheerful bunch, McCallum bluffing his way along in the "Come and have a drink" spirit. He was liable to put a precipitate foot into trouble, and the resourceful Hugh Clifford at times had to extricate him. They thus had little liking for each other. Their P.A.C.S. told me that he took some tricky papers to Clifford who said, "You's better take this over to Q.H. and see what that bloody butcher thinks about it". McCallum's reaction was to say, "What does that damned Papist think? Never trust a damned papist". It must have been fun: all in good part.

Hedgeland told me that their car (early days of motoring around 1911) broke down between Bibile and Batticaloa. Till some one rescued them they sat in it singing "We are but little children weak". Page 156. Chalmers was a man of no special origin. By sheer brain, vanity, bluff and pomposity he had climbed to the top of the British Civil Service, wherein he was known as "The Treasury Butler".

Before his arrival Col. Biddulph brought out two stories about him. As Permanent Secretary to the Treasury he had to be in attendance at meetings of the House of Commons Committee on the Public Accounts. He would take a seat at the foot of the table at the opposite end from the Chairman, sitting sideways to the table reading the Times newspaper, and paying no attention to what was going on. If information was wanted from him, the Chairman would call out "Sir Robert" a couple of times, and perhaps cough loudly. At last Chalmers would slowly put down his paper, turn round and say in a tone of condescending patience "Yes? What is it?" And they stood for it!

It was his duty to attend the Chancellor of the Exchequer during important debates in the House of Commons, and to sit in the space on the floor reserved for senior officials on duty under the gallery. For this he needed a permit. One day a policeman asked to see his permit. Chalmers replied, "How long have you been on duty in this House?" "A week", said the Policeman. Replied Chalmers, "Then I will forgive you, just this once", and swept in.

He passed first in the Civil Service examination, and had this recorded in Who's Who. When his Private Secretary asked him if he was surprised when the results were published, he replied, "Indeed I was. I was surprised that the second man was as close to me as he was".

More than once he said that his colleagues in the Treasury had condoled with him "On having to associate with such intellectually inferior persons as Colonial Governors".

His last Private Secretary, W.T. Stace, has recorded an authoritative description of him in the Ceylon section of his autobiography which he has deposited with the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London University, 277 Russell Square, London, W.C.1.

It was always understood that he had a difference of opinion with either Lloyd George or Bonar Law after a very hard time over the People's Budget etc. and took what he regarded as an easy way out. It is not likely that Ceylon attracted him, nor did he seem to make contact with its scholars. He cracked classical jokes with Anton Bertram and Stubbs. His language could be, as it were, seafaring. Stubbs told me of a conference with him and Bertram about the introduction of the Riot Damages Bill into the Leg. Co. Bertram asked if H.E. was prepared to make any concessions. H.E. replied "Before I make any concessions I will see the Leg. Co. collectively and individually b- - - d". On his way out the saintly Anton Bertram said to the P.S., "I haven't heard such language since I was at Cambridge".

A banker told me that he used the same phrase to a deputation from the Chamber of Commerce.

He was emotionally incapable of using the telephone. He only

tried once during the riots in 1915, and had to give it up in a sort of tantrum like a child. He was intolerant of files and made his P.S. tell him what was in them. When Mike Stevenson, later his son-in-law, was his P.S. (a most capable officer) he spent some hours mastering and precising a large and important file and took it to Chalmers who was lying in a long chair on the upper verandah. Mike was in the throes of the complexities of the file when Chalmers touched his arm and said, "Mike, come and sit in this chair by me. You see the long arm of that tree. It tends to obstruct my view of the sea. Tell me. Should I have the whole arm cut off, or shall I have just six feet cut off the end?" That was the end of that file.

This is not the place to tell of the more delicate features of the dealing with the Riots of 1915. Suffice it to say here that Chalmers handed them over to the O.C. Troops who was well known as rather eccentric. The orders that reached the actual men on patrol (untrained volunteers and Punjabis who spoke no English) were probably rather vague, perhaps merely, "Go and DO something". Few knew the legal implications of martial law. One officer, (a volunteer, it is true and a Ceylonese) said to me, "It means that the man in Khaki can do what he likes". Some of the orders issued were just suppressed, e.g. some by a Civil Servant and some by a merchant Town Guard officer, who took the risk of so doing on the ground that they obviously could not be defended.

Chalmer's recall was NOT due to his handling of the Riots, as Stace who saw all the correspondence, confidential and other, has averred. He was really and urgently needed at the Treasury to help in tackling the financial problems arising from the War. Thereafter he was sent to Ireland as Chief Secretary which was hardly the job for one believed unable to deal with civil disturbances.

In official matters he could be quite hard hearted to all seeming, but in private he could be most kindly. His unknown charities were many. He felt deeply having to confirm the death sentence on that young Sinhalese from the Pettah and knew a father's anguish having lost his two sons in the War. When a young Police Officer slipped up badly his instinct was to punish severely and give him another chance. He decided that dismissal was necessary but took great trouble to get him appointed to a similar post in another colony where in fact he did brilliantly. He is now dead.

Anderson had been Permanent Under Secretary at the Colonial Office (I think) and it had fallen to him to frame the replies to questions in the House of Commons about the Riots to be answered by ?Bonar Law. When he reached Ceylon he found that things were not as had been represented to the C.O. and appointed two Commissions to inquire. He was in a quandary. Already a sick man (he was soon

dead) he had a great shock. It was clearly most distasteful to have publicly to expose inaccurate reports and so cause another rumpus. After all the Ceylon Riots were of small account amid the crises of the 1914-18 War. The U.K. Government had much else to attend to. They had rewarded the Governor with a G.C.M.G. and the O.C. Troops with a C.B. (Chalmers saw to that) and that was designed to end the matter. So the untrained and public spirited Volunteers were inevitably punished for doing badly a job for which they are [sic] quite unsuited and which should never have been thrust on them. In fact Anderson died before he could take further action which he had in mind.

Manning: had been employed as a soldier to carry out the evacuation of an area of East Africa which for some time had been considered as "under British Influence". This involved the abandonment of "the friendly tribes" who had gone nap on backing our policy. Consequently they were massacred by the tribes who had been their enemies. So much is I believe known history. Some one who had been there or had access to those who had, told me that Manning carried out his orders (which must have been most distasteful) with great tact in that he managed to prevent newspaper reporters from reaching the "front" and reporting the unpleasant facts. What did come out (after some probing) was that the Camel Corps, a local force, had to cover the evacuation and was wiped out. The British officer commanding them declined to leave before the end, and was wiped out with the last section of his men. His name was Caulfield, and there was an appropriate stink about it in the Press.

On a lighter note. In Manning's Headquarter Mess, (near the coast I imagine) was a pet goat which was allowed to wander round at large. A Sapper cousin of mine who served in those parts told me that a highly important code message arrived for Manning from Aden during one night. It was decoded, acknowledged as understood and put beside his breakfast plate. Before he had read it the goat ate it. No copies had been kept and a repeat of the message could hardly be called for as its clear receipt had been acknowledged.

One who worked closely with him told me that he was "like most soldiers in civil jobs, unable to bring an overwhelming force to bear on opposition and consequently afraid of it, not knowing what to do". On the other hand when the Legislative Council had been persistently abusive for some time, he collected the facts about the usual false allegations, called a meeting at Queen's House and ticked them all off roundly. They took it. H.A.P. Sandrasekera, K.C. who had just been elected told me about it most amusingly. "I was a new boy, and didn't know that it would be like that. It was like being sent for by Warden Stone of St. Thomas'. I was thankful to get out of the room without being caned".

I was surprised to read of his "tact, kindliness and fair-mindedness", though others might have noticed those qualities. The

praise of Lady M. also surprised me. I and others found her ill-tempered and tactless at times. I was one of the two official witnesses at their wedding carried out by J.G. Fraser, G.A.W.P. as Provincial Register (my boss) and not by the R.G. I was also hauled in as an extra A.D.C. during the visit of the Prince of Wales. I wrote a memorandum of my experiences for the P.A.C.S. to be filed as a warning that no Civil Servant should be so employed again.

Clifford: was the only Governor during my 36 years for whom I, and I think many others, felt both respect and some degree of affection. Armand de Souza's crack about him when he was Colonial Secretary and a trifle overpowering is worthy of record. "He was helping to govern Malaya at an age when he would have been better employed at a good secondary school". He did reach the Straits Settlements at about the age of 16 and lived a very strenous[sic], vigorous, hard and responsible life. He made himself fluent in the language and wrote a number of descriptive books. He was a true extrovert with enough real intellectual ability to be able to stifle much opposition. His official minutes were lengthy and full of great good sense and valid thought nourished by his long experience.

But for many years the malady that finally laid him low was at work. Just before he came to Ceylon as Governor I met in London a Civil Servant from Nigeria who told me of his condition there. In Ceylon he was subject to intermittent attacks of mental instability, and his transfer to Malaya, a life-long ambition, seemed to make them worse. Finally he was lured away from there by being told that his wife was desperately ill and had to be sent home in charge of a doctor and nurse. To be with her he threw up the job he had lived for. In the end he was in a home where he spent his time writing writing furiously, filling his room with sheets of foolscap of no value, and there he died.

The trend of political evolution in Ceylon was not his metier. He wrote a vast despatch about it, and that seemed to choke the works at a difficult time. But he did try to achieve something in administration. He prepared scheme for a huge colonization project in the Kalutara district, too large for his lethargic successors to push through and too lacking in vote catching for the local politicians.

He was unfortunate in his subordinates. His Colonial Secretary[1] came from Hongkong and ended with rather premature retirement from Trinidad: not a suitable partner. The local Civil Service was a bit weak at the top at that time. The outstanding man was Wilfred Woods of great ability and charm who had come from elsewhere and ended as Colonial Treasurer and then Financial Secretary. The Governors tended to lean heavily on him in all matters not only financial, till he was overworked and became rather overbearing.

1. Murchison Fletcher.

Stanley: was a Jew originally named Solomons. Eton, Balliol and diplomatic experience had given him a habit of being intensely English. At once he read the lessons in the Garrison Church, the only Governor to do so in 36 years. (Chalmers attended that church in the Governor's pew, and when they reached the Te Deum nudged his P.S. and pointed to the words "Govern them and lift them up for ever".)

He married an Africaner wife of outstanding beauty with amber eyes, Miss Cloete, who was always smartly dressed without any ostentation. She was quite devoid of charm, unlike her sister Mary who had the charm without the beauty. She did her job most diligently. During the 1939-45 War she looked after her grand-children so that their parents could do War work. Perhaps at times she was a bit tactless. At a Queen's House dance I was told by the A.D.C. to ask her for a dance. I did so and danced. Hardly had the music stopped than she turned to the A.D.C. and said loudly "Laurence who else have I got to dance with?"

A colleague who often had to attend meetings of the Executive Council said that Stanley used to fall asleep thereat. His head would slowly roll round clock-wise until it came to rest and he was gone. Then it would slowly roll round anti-clockwise until he woke up.

I think it was Stanley who was instructed by the Secretary of State to give his views on some published suggestions for the reform of the constitution. After collecting the opinions of the Executive Council he told his office, i.e. the Secretariat, "to draft something". This they did and submitted the result. After some weeks it came back with amendments and an added paragraph in H.E. own handwriting which was illegible, with orders to retype. This was done, but the added paragraph was now legible but quite unintelligible. So a query in pencil was put against it. Back the thing came with more amendments for retyping but with the un-intelligible paragraph unchanged. The end I have forgotten, but the official explanation of the delay was that H.E. was giving long and anxious consideration to the serious etc.etc.

The Executive Council could be, and often was, a very futile body. I had to attend it several times, mostly about the alteration of the constitution of the Colombo Municipal Council. I was tired of giving my views. They would never arrive at any decision. At last a whole-time Legal Draftsman, Dyer Ball, a very good fellow, was imported from Hongkong, and after a long and quite indecisive discussion that lasted till lunch-time when every one was hungry, if not thirsty also, the Governor said, "Very well, Mr. Dyer Ball, will you please draft something" and the meeting ended. On our way out D.B. said to me, "I know nothing about this. I hope that you will help me". I replied, "My dear D.B., forgive my saying it,

but you can go to hell. I am not on the Ex. Co. and am not entitled to make decisions or paid to do so. Nor am I a Legal Draftsman. This is your headache not mine". The poor fellow was dead within a year.

Graeme Thomson: was a very sick man when he arrived as Governor. I was in attendance on the Jetty when he landed and was most perturbed by his demeanour during the salute of guns. My mind flew to the nearest ambulance and the quickest way of summoning it. However he hung on.

He must have been very bored by the comparative unimportant matters with which he had to deal in Ceylon after having been Head of the Transport Division of the Admiralty, etc., during the 1914-18 War. He told Bowes that from time to time he had been called without notice to a meeting of the War Cabinet and asked a complicated question to which an accurate reply could NOT be given without detailed investigation. But he soon realized that they wanted an immediate and definite answer. So he gave them one and hoped for the best. For instance they suddenly asked him how long it would take to transport three divisions from Marseilles to? Salonica? Every ship was already fully engaged on an urgent voyage and they were spread over the world. It would be necessary first to know what divisions, how much and what transport and guns etc., and when. Then ships all over the world would have to be diverted and unloaded, and so on. However he gave an answer and hoped for the best, which in fact happened. He never heard of it again.

How enlightening was an article in Blackwood in Dec. 1918 by Major Genl. Sir C.E. Caldwell who after attending several meetings of the War Cabinet recorded, "It seemed to consist of a collection of very intelligent old men, anxious to do the right thing, who after a considerable amount of discussion arrived at either the wrong or no decision". I quoted this to Tyrrell about Ex. Co. He did not appear terribly amused.

Thomson told one of his Staff round the camp fire on a shooting trip that on Churchill's orders as First Lord of the Admiralty he had arranged to collect shipping at Marseilles to convey X divisions to Gallipoli. It was a big task. Churchill then went on inspection in France. In his absence Lord Fisher, First Sea Lord, walked into Thomson's room and asked, "What is all this ---- nonsense about collecting shipping in Marseilles? Disperse it at once. It won't be needed there". Thomson explained that it was on direct orders from the First Lord, and, knowing politicians, wrote down the instruction to disperse and asked Fisher to initial it, which he did. Thomson carefully kept that paper and produced it when Churchill on his return blew up. Churchill stormed that Thomson had no right to cancel his orders without his authority. Thomson replied that he had to assume that so important an order from Fisher had Churchill's

approval. Churchill did not agree and told Thomson to submit his explanation in writing, clearly with a view to the sack. He did so, and heard no more of it.

There has been much public discussion about the failure to send reinforcements to Gallipoli (of which Ian Hammilton so bitterly complained) but I have nowhere seen this explanation.

Stubbs: It was said that his Father the Bishop of Oxford married his cook, and that the son inherited the brains of one and the manners of the other. The wife of his house master at Radley told me that she always remembered him as the only boy in the school who had never taken his cap off to her.

I am reluctant to record anything here about Stubbs and the Riots of 1915. It fell to him to report on them to the Secretary of State after Chalmers' recall. He read part of one dispatch to Bowes who came back to the Customs where I was working under him and told me about it. On the voyage to England on the Osterley in 1918 (?19) I asked Stubbs the reason for Anderson's famous dispatch on the Riots. He replied that he was suffering from "Paranoia" of which he had several symptoms. Later when dining with W.E.V. de Roy in a discussion about the Riots I produced this information as a piece of authoritative fact. A quiet voice at the end of the table remarked, "I was his doctor. I attended him during all his last illness, and was present at his death. I saw NO sign of paranoia". It was Dr. Van Twist! [sic] That blew Stubbs' story sky high.

As to the statement that Stubbs organized essential exports, he had little to do with them. Alnutt did the tea. All plumbago and rubber permits were organized in the U.K. and came through me. The Customs were the only public department connected with trade, but for some reason which we in that Department could never understand Stubbs himself undertook the purchase of coconut oil and copra for the U.K. Ministry of Food, a task that we could have done in our stride, being on the best of terms with the merchants with entire mutual trust. (In fact we were reading all their cables sent us by the Censor.) There is no need here to recount some of the curiosities of those transactions.

H.E. Newnham - H.A.J. Hulugalle, 28 July 1965.

"Uneasy partnership, Govt. and Council". [Municipal Council] The relationship was consistently misrepresented. Stace says that I used to describe the Govt. as a foreign and perhaps friendly power, and that was true. The notion that the Govt. in some secret manner was controlling the Council was false. They appointed the Chairman, and then left him to sink or swim. They never ATTEMPTED to give me any instructions or influence me in any way at any time, even on first appointment. I am sure that the same applied to T. Reid. When Hugh Clifford came as Govr., I knew that he was a dominating personality, so I took an early opportunity of telling him my views of my position. I said that, within the law, it was my opinion that Govt. was not entitled to give me any orders and that if it tried to do so it was my duty to decline to accept them, adding that all the Govt. could do would be to transfer me to some other job. Clifford replied that I had stated the principle correctly but somewhat crudely: that if the Govt. tried to interfere I should, most respectfully, ask it to reconsider its action: if it declined to do so, I should, very respectfully, ask to be relieved of the job!!

From memory the only matters on which Govt. approval was required were legislation, bylaws, acquisition of land, and the amount of the annual grant for trunk roads in the City, the voluntary grant in lieu of rates on Govt. property (on which they always tried to do us down. Our Assessor was much more efficient than theirs): perhaps the fixing of the annual rate, but they never even commented on it.

There was a false idea that the Chairman could control the Council by his casting vote. Nonsense. Annually I published the facts. The nominated members by no means always voted with the Chairman. IF the voting wasequal some one HAD to use a casting vote as the Speaker of the House of Commons does. Every year I published an analysis of the voting to refute the lie.

So we went our own way quite regardless of what the Govt. thought or wanted. It was easy so to do, for the Heads of Departments were, in general, abler than their Govt. counterparts, and in most respects we were ahead of the Govt.: e.g. Child Welfare, Drainage, Road maintenance and its methods, Assessments, Public Health (Marshall Phillip), methods of accounting. This of course irritated the Govt., and I was probably lacking in tact. But I had to keep the Council on my side as far as possible, and baiting the Govt. was a useful gambit. Indeed when Graeme Thomson was Govr. and accepted my invitation to be shown round the City I told him that the greatest handicap in my work had been the attitude of the Govt. That shook him. One knew that this policy did not help one's own official future, but that did not matter.

It was however a tradition that the Chairman was a jackal, running dog, or whatnot of the Imperialists, though those terms had not then been invented. So some of the Councillors naturally opposed anything he proposed. As my policy was, "Clear the slums and save the children" they were rather snookered. However R.L. Perera, whose inhibitions were less than those of some, did once remark, "This preoccupation with the poor is being overdone". And it took little excuse for some to work themselves up. One expedient was to get a Councillor to propose some measure I had thought of, so that he could get the credit. When the Committee for markets, etc., led by H.L. de Mel opposed my suggestions for the Slave Island market, I lost some patience and said, "Very well. Turn it down. I don't care a hoot. Its your City not mine". De Mel (whose family private market would be hit) retorted, "What do you mean? You MUST care". I repeated that my job was to suggest, theirs to decide. The decisions were immaterial to me. They were all shocked and unanimously approved the proposal. Sorry to be prolix, but the point is important.

This is to be added to the letters sent earlier

H.E. Newnham - H.A.J. Hulugalle, 29 July 1965.

Notes continued. NAMES. We started a playground at Mutwal near the Fishery Harbour. The small son of a family I was interested in used to be taken to play there by his parents on the ayah's day off. To please the child who was called Alexander I wanted so to name the playground. I told the Council they should perpetuate the name of the late Chairman, E.B. Alexander, a noted sportsman. They agreed, and the child was delighted.

Royal Visitors. The Town Hall was being built when I took over. It had no provision whatever for a public hall but a large room on the first floor for a central record room. I preferred that each dept. should keep its own records, and told the Secretary's record-keeper to submit to me the oldest files 50 at a time. I found that very many were of mere passing value and destroyed them. In one I discovered the reply to an address of welcome signed by Prince George (later King George V) and his brother when they visited Col. as midshipmen in H.M.S. ?Bacchante. In another was one signed by the Duke of Connaught. I took them both out, had them framed and hung in the Chairman's room. When I had reduced the records to essentials I reported to the Council that the large record room was no longer needed and might be turned into a Public Hall. This was done, and very useful it has been.

On assuming duties in Aug. 1924 I naturally, as a new broom, began clearing things up. The Workshops in Darley Road were very cluttered and I ordered a spring cleaning, as it were. It was reported to me that in one corner was found a large heap of ornamental cast-iron work of unknown origin and of no use. So I had it dumped at sea by a dredger. Later when going through the old files I saw one about a memorial cast-iron bandstand bought by public subscription in honour of Queen Victoria and erected at some road junction (? opposite the Eye Hospital). Years later the road was widened or the like and the bandstand was moved for later re-erection. Apparently it was stored at the Workshops, not on the inventory, and entirely forgotten.

In my time the King and Queen of the Belgians visited Ceylon unofficially. I was asked to attend on their arrival at a temporary landing place as the Passenger Jetty was under repair. I was there, but the landing was a bit unhappy. The Govr. Clifford had told the P.C.C. to ring Queen's House when the Royal party left their ship. Something went wrong, and Clifford in full rig and a tearing rage came almost at a run to do the first honours, which had already been done by me in his absence. When they left, from the Passenger Jetty, Clifford was upcountry. I did the necessary and the King was gutturally affable. When they had embarked Pine of the Times of Ceylon asked me if H.M. had left any message. I replied, "No,

my dear Pine, he hasn't, but he shall. Take this down ---". So I dictated an appropriate message, "On behalf of the Queen and myself I wish to let the citizens of Colombo know how much -----". When I had returned to my office I rang the other papers and recited the message to them. As it then seemed a bit rash, I rang Queen's House and told the A.D.C. that if a message had been left with them he had better suppress it as I had produced a better one. None had been left, luckily. It was prominently printed that evening and people said, "Have you seen that gracious message from ? It was just like royalty. They never forget those little courtesies that give so much pleasure".

Gandhi came just when Stace had taken over from me, and the Council invited him to address them, expecting some fiery stuff as he was then raising hell in India. He had got hold of my administration report in which I had told of my efforts to improve the milk supply. This caught his eye, and he addressed them on the excellent work thereat being done by their Chairman, and asked why they had not given him better support. Not quite what they expected. Stace told me this.

The Prince of Wales in 1922, the Crown Prince of Germany in 1910, the King of Saxony, the Duke of Gloucester (twice) all visited Colombo, but I don't think that any of them had truck with the Mun. Council. As it was the capital and the Govr. was resident there, he did all the honours. I tried to bring the Muny[the Municipal Council] more into the public picture e.g. by arranging for H.M.S. Effingham to invite the Councillors aboard for a drink and a tour of the ship. My wife and I took some 20 German naval cadets on a tour of the City and gave them tea in the Town Hall.

Town Planning. So far as I know the first efforts were made under Reid because an Engineer, Kilminster, had made it his hobby. He prepared a plan for the whole of the City and a copy of it was exhibited in the Ceylon Pavilion at the Wembley Exhibition in 1924. It was never followed to my knowledge but it roused planning consciousness. (Unfortunately K. spent so much time on this that his normal work suffered. Hence the reported "loss" of road metal at quarries, nervous breakdown of K & his retirement after a medical board, and departure to the U.K. just before I took over. (The "loss" was merely a paper one.) Housing was in the fore front of my "policy" and that conditioned most of the planning in my time, but we got the City "zoned".

Port. I think that the Port was within the statuory boundaries of the City but the Govt. absolutely declined to pay any rates for it. Yet they imported plague rats through it (declining to fumigate the lighters in those days) and let them loose into the Govt. rice stores (Chalmers Granaries). The Muny. had then to catch the rats and cope with the plague. I went to see the League of Nations Pub. Health folk in Geneva about it, but they wouldn't play!

H.E. Newnham - H.A.J. Hulugalle, 4 September, 1965.

C.S. Vaughan (who made history be being G.A., Kandy around May 1915 when "the riots" blazed up there and, I believe, remained within the Residency in sure and certain hope that some one else would do something about them) was my G.A. in Apurs [Anuradhapura] in 1911 and showed me a typescript of the whole, or perhaps of the then unpublished part, of Knox' Ceylon which he had obtained from the Bodleian Library in Oxford, made at his expense. After his death his brother-in-lay[sic], G.K. Thornhill, late S.G., told me that he found it unloved and, I think, donated it to what is now called the Royal Commonwealth Society (which you have now joined). It MAY be fuller than the Ceylon Historical Journal's reprint of the 1911 edition which you mention.

The following for your W.P.B.[waste paper basket] or file on Ceylon Governors.

CALDECOTT When he was appointed but had not arrived the intelligent wife of an intelligent planter in Malaya, a friend of my sister, said to her:- "Tell Hubert that C. is very charming and an excellent after-dinner speaker but he should never trust him". In fact he did let me down three times, one I have forgotten, one did not matter in the end, one was serious. But he was always quite personally pleasant to me. When I was with the Chamber of Commerce I was intimately concerned with the changes in the constitution of Ceylon and the need to try to safeguard the interests of the merchants and European public servants and others from possible looting. Doubtless I discussed all this freely with him. It was much later that I discovered that he was working even then closely with D.S.Senanayake and allowing him to interfere in and influence public affairs, e.g. appointments, far beyond his rights. Indeed to our dismay it was clear from their start that the Soulbury circus was bent on implementing Senanayake's constitution secretly concocted by Jennings! Caldecott was evidently in this plot. I am not now saying that the conclusion was wrong, at least as long as one like Sen., strong, impartial and honest (so far as a politician can be!) was P.M.

C. came to Ceylon determined to stop that ridiculous social cleavage between the racial groups which did not exist in the 1870's or 80's (according to my first father-in-law) or in the 1890's according to Bowes. On arrival, or before, he announced that that he could not use the Colombo Club unless he could take Ceylonese friends there. He won that. He and his wife invited more Ceylonese to dine at the Queen's House that had been usual. That did not go down so smoothly, nor did it in Nuwara Eliya where I was told that the upcountry Europeans refrained from calling at Queen's Cottage and tended to boycott it and the C's. This was during the war when

the nerves of many were overwrought. Lady C. went into the Joseph Fraser Nursing Home "for a rest". As we knew the Staff very well, it was clear that she had, or was on the verge of, a nervous breakdown. Later she went to N'Eliya and had a "personal attendant". Then one Easter we heard that she had been found one night lying dead below an open window of Queen's Cottage. I was in N.E. at the time and attended the very sad funeral, a tale in itself. (It was postponed from hour to hour because the coffin was being brought from Colombo, the hearse broke down twice and the military had to send a lorry.)

No one has ever suggested it to me, but in my view Lady C. paid with her life for her desire to bring the communities together. Only those who have had to endure it can realise the distress that such a social boycott can cause in a foreign country to a public figure.

So I suggest that somewhere some time (in your next edition?) some tribute might be paid to what she did for child welfare, etc. etc. AND towards a start in communal harmony. Indeed the probable cause of her death might well be stated.

A.R.Slater once C.C.S. and P.A.C.S.(around 1909-11) became Govr. in West Africa where he had to enforce very unpopular measures of economy around 1930. He told a mutual friend of ours that he found he could stand the general abuse and misrepresentation, but what really upset him was* being hissed by the European congregation when he was reading the lessons in the cathedral in Accra. After that he became Gov. of Jamaica and finally died in a mental home. As I have already recorded two of my predecessors as Mayor of Colombo, Byrde and Macleod, had mental breakdowns and were medically boarded out of the Service on mental grounds.

We too had our martyrs!!

* How cruel can compatriots be?