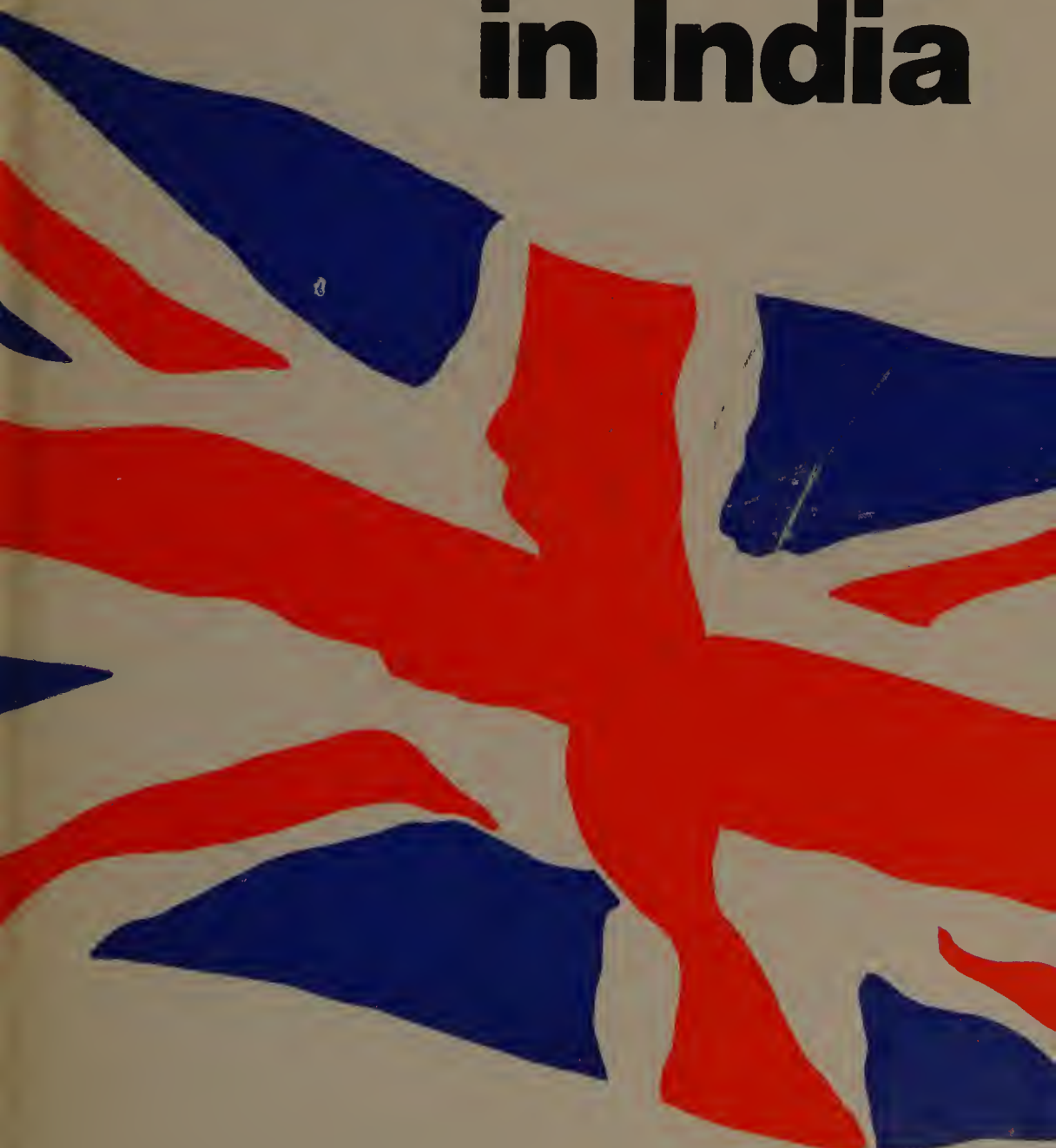


Bradford C. Langenberg

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British Bureaucracy in India

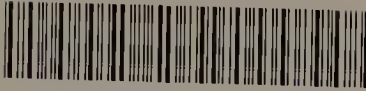


This book examines two key topics hitherto ignored by historians—the self-image of the British I.C.S. and the contribution of British officers to Imperial policies. The human motivations of those involved at all levels of decision-making receive attention, especially Lieutenant-Governors, Members of Council, and Secretaries of various departments. Careful analysis of public and private papers shows that these motivations often were mundane, self-serving and career-oriented. Human factors, not over-arching principles, helped shape British action in India. The historical image of the I.C.S. contrasts sharply with idealized and romantic views of the “steel frame” perpetuated both by laymen and historians.

Concern with status among I.C.S. officers decisively impeded administrative and political reforms. Officials championed the status quo not so much because of ideology but because of the brittle relationship between themselves and various Indian classes. Moreover, aristocratic leaders in England expressed grave doubts about the ability of the I.C.S. to cope effectively with political change and crisis in India, thus adding to the unease and indecisiveness among British officialdom. These stresses ultimately produced distortions within the bureaucracy and provided a little understood backdrop for the hostile confrontation between imperialism and nationalism after 1885.

Spangenberg's insights into the actual operation of government makes the study a benchmark in reassessing the nature of colonial rule in India. It belongs to the library of every individual and institution interested in the making of modern South Asia.

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**BRITISH
BUREAUCRACY IN INDIA**

**Status, Policy and
the I.C.S., in the Late 19th Century**

BRITISH
BUREAUCRACY IN INDIA
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BRADFORD SPANGENBERG



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FOREWORD

Students of South Asia often tend either to ignore or to look down upon research concerning British rule in India. An assumption that the basic structure and processes of the *raj* have received adequate attention accounts in part for this current trend. At least three nineteenth century volumes detailed the operation of Indian government—Chesney's *The System of Administration in India*; Strachey's *India : Its Administration and Progress*, and Chailey's *Administrative Problems of British India*. Complementing these and related books are numerous biographical or romanticized accounts by members of the I.C.S. Until recently, monographs and dissertations on Viceroys or specific administrative decisions appeared each year, thus perpetuating the image of a subject well-trodden and fully understood. The resulting picture follows generally consistent lines—a monolithic bureaucratic system run by a few men at the top or subordinates in the districts., responding to problems and challenges with more or less unanimity and common resolve.

Contemporary tendencies in South Asian historiography also help explain the paucity of research or fresh perspective. Social, political and religious change among South Asians has captured the attention of generations of doctoral candidates and their mentors, who frequently judge administrative history unfashionable or at best left to imperial specialists lacking appropriate language and area training to investigate more crucial indigenous development.

As several prominent scholars such as Peter Reeves and Anthony Low have noted, however, easy assumptions about the nature and consequence of colonial rule in India potentially ignore fundamental issues and decisions that severely affected change among Indians themselves. The research by Bradford Spangenberg underscores the importance of new perspective on how the British governed as well as helping to put to rest the myths and threadbare interpretations that permeate research

and teaching. Basing conclusions on an exhaustive study of documents at several levels of decision-making, Professor Spangenburg presents for the first time the conflicts and dilemmas lying beneath the "steel frame" of the Indian Civil Service. His emphasis on the Government of India as a political system in which decisions were made because of personalities, fears, and conflicts among "schools," provincial orientations, and secretariat officials makes untenable the standard versions of what the British did and why. Spangenburg also throws new light on the transition of the I.C.S. from isolated bureaucrats to politicians responsive to new dangers or potential in a rapidly changing political arena. The resulting evaluation therefore adds not only to our understanding of the men who ruled India, but also stands as a useful case study of the operation of one colonial administration. By questioning long-held interpretations, raising new issues, and throwing open a variety of hitherto unused documents, Professor Spangenburg has put into perspective how a relatively small group of Europeans came to terms with themselves and a foreign culture in a colonial setting.

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N. GERALD BARRIER

PREFACE

Until recently historiography of British bureaucracy in India (often called the Covenanted Civil Service¹ or simply the Indian Civil Service) had been permeated by an aura of romantic mythology. This mythology emerged about the turn of the century as part of the defense against criticism of British imperialism in India. Autobiographical literature by officials themselves (especially the memoirs of John Beames, Robert Carstairs, G. R. Elsmie, and Bampfylde Fuller) often reads more candidly and pungently than the analyses of twentieth century historians. Though recent studies, including those of Sarvepalli Gopal,² F.G. Hutchins,³ and Stanley Wolpert,⁴ have avoided restatements of some traditional myths, yet their cursory or tangential treatment of the I.C.S., has not allowed them to replace the old mythology with a more realistic interpretation. Elizabeth Whitcombe's recently published *Agrarian Conditions in Northern India: the United Provinces under British Rule*, attacks the idea of I.C.S., competence with regard to the crucial problem of land revenue settlement.⁵ I

1. See definition on pp. viii and ix of this preface.
2. Sarvepalli Gopal, *British Policy in India; 1858-1905*. Gopal's valuable study examines this policy almost exclusively through the eyes of the viceroys. Viceregal correspondence provided the focus for his research. The papers of the Government of India are of relatively minor importance in his study.
3. Francis G. Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence*. This is an interesting, but also generalized study, and makes only a limited number of direct references to the I.C.S., some of which require re-examination.
4. Stanley A. Wolpert's *Morley and India; 1906-1910* contains some discussion of British bureaucracy in India, but the chronological focus of his book differs from that of my own study.
5. Elizabeth Whitcombe, *Agrarian Conditions in Northern India; United Provinces under British Rule, 1860-1900*.

have cited this work wherever it corroborates or adds to my own findings.⁶

The two monographs most representative of the romanticized I.C.S., historiography are L. S. S. O'Malley's *The Indian Civil Service; 1601-1930*, and *The Guardians*, the second volume of Philip M. Woodruff's well known study, *The Men Who Ruled India*. O'Malley, who had himself served in the Indian Civil Service for more than two decades, devoted one chapter of his book to the period from 1858 to 1914. In this brief space, he attempted to summarize what he considered to be the greatest achievements of British bureaucracy—implementation of legal codes, establishment of famine relief programs, mitigation of peasant oppression, assistance in the pacification of Burma, and responsibility for the success of irrigation projects in the Punjab. As one who rightly took pride in his Indian career, O'Malley could hardly be expected to speak as a critic of British bureaucracy or to emphasize the problems affecting the administration. Written in an era of Indian nationalist polemics, O'Malley's book has the appearance of an apologia (see especially pp. 202 ff). Achievements are highlighted while deficiencies are ignored. Few, for example, would agree with O'Malley's generalization that British officials in the late nineteenth century had finally secured the land rights of peasants "by agrarian legislation and settlement proceedings."⁷ The most serious limitation of O'Malley's short analysis lies in his failure to study the distinctly human motivations behind the behaviour of British officials. Obviously one should not expect to find a treatment of these themes in the brief narrative account presented by O'Malley.

Philip Mason Woodruff's *The Guardians* contains colourful and valuable biographical portraits of British officials. But government records and viceregal correspondences, indispensable for a thorough understanding of the Indian Civil Service, were not consulted by Woodruff. Furthermore, like O'Malley,

6. See also N.C. Roy's *The Civil Service in India*, of little value to the historian. Historical development is given only cursory treatment, and is, mostly, in the form of structural analysis providing a backdrop for Roy's understanding of contemporary structures.

7. L.S.S. O'Malley, *The Indian Civil Service; 1601-1930*, p. 103.

Woodruff had long been affiliated with the I.C.S.,⁸ and he makes no effort to dissemble the nostalgic sentiments which permeate his account. His appellation for British administrators of the late nineteenth century, "The Guardians," was inspired by Plato's *Republic*. But Woodruff fails to show that the officials themselves made any connection in their own minds between Plato's 'Guardians' and the position they occupied in India. Woodruff acknowledges that the application of this term to the I.C.S., is his own invention.⁹

B.B. Misra's recently published *Administrative History of India, 1834-1947*, makes several notable advancements over these earlier monographs. Most importantly, he has researched widely in the relevant documents and papers, particularly those available in the National Archives of India, and has employed this material to provide an analytical rather than an apologetical study. On the other hand, Misra himself notes that his study "is so broad and its content so varied" that no effort was made to investigate "the extent to which the Indian bureaucracy as a class contributed to policy-making."¹⁰ The present study attempts to probe this dimension, to discover what exactly the character and self-image of British officials were, and to understand the ramifications of these in the areas of administrative operations as well as the imperial policy.

An examination of the government records and viceregal correspondence yields the conclusion that British rulers of India were not, in fact, platonic or idealistic administrators. To begin with, they were not as select or as well educated as has been imagined. Secondly, their responses to the stresses of their Indian exile were essentially human and therefore not often (if ever) based on idealistic or rational principles. British rule in India cannot be understood objectively until the human characteristics and idiosyncracies of British administrators are taken into account. The relation between human realities and the formulation of policy is much more

8. Woodruff served in the I.C.S., from 1928 to 1947.

9. Philip M. Woodruff, *The Guardians*, Vol. II of *The Men Who Ruled India*, p. 96.

10. B.B. Misra, *The Administrative History of India; 1834-1947*, p. 7.

observable than the vague influence of an undefined idealism.

The pre-eminence of the human factor became evident during the initial phase of my research in London. Both among the readily accessible viceregal papers and the less voluminous but highly significant collections of private papers, the I.C.S. obsession with status and promotion could not be ignored. In the private collections, source of the most uninhibited expressions of motivation and sentiment, this driving obsession of British officials is present almost everywhere. While such preoccupations may not be unique to the Indian Civil Service—indeed it is likely to be found in various degrees among all professional and labouring hierarchies—nevertheless this theme and its significant ramifications call for special examination in relation to the dominantly bureaucratic regime of British India. As research progressed, the various levels, types, and degrees of correlation between considerations of status and the formation of imperial policy provided the basic framework for the preparation of this study.

The scope of this study is delimited by a concern for British officials only, or in other words, for the so-called Covenanted Civil Service. Although this body had no separate legal identity apart from the whole of the Indian Civil Service, the phrase “Covenanted Civil Servants” became the distinctive designation for British officials. The term emerged during the administration of Lord Cornwallis in the late eighteenth century as a result of the covenants rendered by the British recruits for the Civil Service with the East India Company. During the first half of the nineteenth century, from 1813, the title was reserved for the graduates of Haileybury. After 1855, it was transferred to the successful candidates of the competitive examinations who replaced Haileybury students in the program of recruitment. This body of men, numbering between 900 and 1000 at any one time, was almost exclusively British. While Indians were not technically excluded from the competition in London, the obstacles to their candidacy were so great that by 1888, for example, only twelve had entered the Covenanted Service. Indians who manned the lower echelons of the administration were called “uncovenanted servants.” After 1892, they belonged to a body called the Subordinate

Civil Service. At the same time, another branch of the administration, called the Provincial Civil Service, was created for Indian employees who were intermediate between the Covenanted Service and the Subordinate Service. As a result of the Public Service Commission of 1886-87, the Government attempted to replace the term Covenanted Service by the phrase "The Civil Service of India." But British officials still found it convenient to speak of themselves as covenanted servants vis-a-vis their Indian subordinates.

Other than the Viceroyalty and the Governorships of Bombay and Madras, covenanted civilians manned almost all the important administrative positions and most of the higher judicial offices. At the top of the executive hierarchy were the Lieutenant-Governors and Chief Commissioners in the provinces of the territory known as "greater Bengal." In all the provinces, including the subordinate presidencies of Madras and Bombay, the chief administrators were aided by secretaries of various departments who also belonged to the covenanted service. There were five of these secretaries in the Government of India and forty-eight who served local governments in various capacities.

Administrative units called districts, approximately 235 in the whole of British India, had traditionally been considered as the core of British administration. The fundamental features of district administration had been inherited from the Mughal apparatus for the collection of revenues.¹¹ These had their genesis during the interregnum of Sher Shah Suri, the Afghan chieftain who defeated Humayun and ruled much of North India from 1539 to 1545. Sher Shah designated groups of villages as Parganas, and these in turn formed larger units called Sarkars, or "revenue districts," each having a chief Shiqqdar or revenue collector and a chief Munsif, the leading judicial officer.¹² The Mughals introduced some modification of titles, for instances "naib diwans" in place of "chief shiqq-dars," and superimposed over the whole system a military veneer, appointing each officer a certain specified rank in a

11. *Ibid.*, p. 638.

12. S.M. Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, p. 139.

military hierarchy of "mansabdars" or commanders.¹³ Though this gave greater cohesiveness to the bureaucracy, nevertheless, the inevitable periods of dynastic crises often weakened the ties between the provinces and the imperial regime. Another weakness was the isolation and autonomy of rural areas where non Muslim village functionaries operated more under the supervision of local landed elites than under the superior bureaucratic officers.

Under the British, the head covenanted administrator in each of the districts was called a Magistrate and Collector in "Regulation Provinces"¹⁴ and a Deputy Commissioner in "Non-Regulation Provinces."¹⁵ Commissioners of Divisions, forty-one in all, had supervision over three or more districts. On the judicial side, covenanted servants held most of the District and Sessions Judgeships (111 in all) and a portion of seats in all the provincial High Courts. Below these, major administrative positions comprised approximately 277 inferior posts (Assistant or Joint Magistracies of three grades) where young civilians gained training and experience. All these positions together with a few miscellaneous appointments, constituted the *cadre* reserved for Covenanted Civil Servants.¹⁶

Though many friends and fellow scholars have lent their assistance or encouragement in the preparation of this study, I will confine my direct thanks to a few and hope that others will realise that I am not ungrateful for their support. I wish to share recognition for whatever may be significant in this book with my professor, Robert I. Crane. I owe special thanks to Professor N.G. Barrier for his careful reading of the manuscript and for his willingness to write the foreword. It

13. Ikram, p. 221; Misra, p. 638.

14. The term "regulation provinces" referred to areas, including Lower Bengal and the N.-W.P., where law was administered in Courts according to legal codes.

15. The term "Non-Regulation Provinces" referred to territories, including Sind, the Punjab, Oudh, Nagpur, and Lower Burma, more primitive or more recently acquired, where legal codes had only partially been developed.

16. See Memorandum on the Indian Civil Service, attached to Despatch of the G. of I., to S. of S., Simla, 1 Nov., 1893, G. of I., Home Dept., Public Branch, A, 56-70, Nov. 1893, 70, N.A.I.

would be impossible to express adequately my appreciation to Miss Dhan Keswani and others of the National Archives of India for their thoughtful and kind assistance. I am grateful for similar aid from Mr. Stanley Sutton (now retired) and his staff at the India Office Library in London. Various institutions including Duke University, the American Institute of Indian Studies, and the American Philosophical Society, have made it financially possible for me to do research in India and in England.

BRADFORD SPANGENBERG

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN FOOTNOTES*

C.P.	— Central Provinces
C.V.P.	— Curzon viceregal papers, India Office Library.
D.V.P.	— Dufferin viceregal papers, I.O.L.
Est.	— Establishments Branch of the Home Department, Government of India
E.V.P.	— Elgin viceregal papers, I.O.L.
G.	— Governor
G. of I.	— Government of India
G.-G.	— Governor-General in Council
H.C.	— Hamilton correspondence, I.O.L.
I.O.L.	— India Office Library
Jud.	— Judicial Branch of the Home Department, Government of India
L.V.P.	— Lansdowne viceregal papers, I.O.L.
L.-G.	— Lieutenant-Governor
Lytton VP.	— Lytton viceregal papers, I.O.L.
N.-W.P.	— North-Western Provinces
Rev.andAg.	— Revenue and Agriculture Branch of the Home Department, Government of India
R.V.P.	— Ripon viceregal papers, British Museum
Sec.	— Secretary
S. of S.	— Secretary of State for India

* Records of the various departments of the Government of India were categorized by letters (A,B,C), usually in accordance with the estimation of their importance. Wherever proceedings are cited in the footnotes without a letter designation, the category "A" should be assumed by the reader.

INTRODUCTION

BRITISH BUREAUCRACY IN INDIA

The end of the nineteenth century may have represented the zenith of British power in India, but paradoxically (largely in response to heightened Indian criticism) it was also a time of increasing verbal defensiveness. Perhaps late Victorians had an "illusion of permanence"¹ about their Indian empire. But strangely they also had a premonition of disaster, not only because of counter-imperial tendencies in England but also because of flagging interest in India among capable English young men. Lord Ripon displayed special apprehension concerning the lower age recruitment scheme introduced by Secretary of State for India, Lord Salisbury, in 1876, noting a comment by one member of the Civil Service Commission that he "look[ed] with some anxiety to the material which we are sending out to India for the Civil Service of the future. . . . I do not think they are what you ought to get."² Ripon corroborated this assessment, and noted his special fears concerning the apparent inability of civilians to maintain independent opinion apart from the narrow prejudices of the Anglo-Indian commercial community. "There is scarcely anything more vital to the maintenance of our rule in India," he opined, "than that our Civil Service should be of men capable of holding their own against the insolent pretensions and the unjust demands of their countrymen in this country."³

The Hamilton-Curzon correspondence is replete with dire warnings of the consequences for British rule if the lack of interest for India could not be curbed among young Englishmen.

1. This is the epigram chosen by Professor Francis G. Hutchins as the title of his book *The Illusion of Permanence; British Imperialism in India*.
2. Professor Markby, Civil Service Commission, quoted in Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 26 April 1884, R.V.P.
3. Ripon to Kimberley, *ibid.*

Curzon's description of the "torpor," "crassness," absence of "initiative," and "worship of the status quo" among civilians made the Secretary of State, Lord George Hamilton, "very apprehensive as regards the future of India."⁴ Hamilton feared that the post-Curzon period, "when the reins of power will be held by a Viceroy of less energy," would likely witness a dangerous decline of British rule, and he considered it inevitable that "the estrangement between the governed and the governing must widen."⁵ With the declining enthusiasm of the civilian officials, there had developed, he thought, an over-reliance on European troops stationed in India. This had given rise to a fortress mentality, preventing civilians from the development of creative relationships with Indian leaders:

I cannot help feeling the truth of the contention that just now India is exploited for the benefit of the Civil Service, and that the statutory rights which they have obtained from long possession of a monopoly of Government in India, and the increasing difficulty of in any way ousting them from their position, or of stirring them up to the activity and the interest in the governed shown by their predecessors, is an increasing danger.⁶

This lament evoked an equally gloomy jeremiad from Curzon. To Hamilton's question about the future of the Raj, Curzon replied that the answer lay in the hands of the civilians, but that unfortunately "with regret, but also I believe truly," there was now an increasing overabundance of civilians who were "indifferent," "incompetent," who "dislike the country and the people," and who had "no taste for [their] work." The decline among officials of "interest in India as India, and in the Indian people as our fellow subjects whom we are called upon to rule" posed the greatest threat, according to Curzon. "In the long run," he concluded, "unless we can arrest this inclination, it must be most injurious, and may one day be fatal, to our dominion in this country."⁷ A later appraisal by Hamilton was equally apocalyptic in tone. For despite an upswing in recruitment from the universities, Hamilton saw "no reliable

4. Curzon to Hamilton, Camp (before May, 1902), H.C.

5. Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 1 May 1902, H.C.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 21 May 1902, H.C.

indications that for the future other Viceroys will be more happily situated” than had Curzon *vis-a-vis* his subordinates :

The wants of India [he lamented] seem to have outgrown and over-weighed the administrative machine we have set up for its government. . . I wish I could see more light in the solution of the trouble and the difficulties which lie ahead in India’s future.⁸

These are not the words of men who confidently envisage the continuous perpetuation of imperial structures. There is little doubt that late Victorians believed British rule *should* continue indefinitely in India; but the alleged erosion of the I.C.S. raised the question as to whether or not it could continue. In private correspondence and in unpublished government documents, every Viceroy during the late quarter of the nineteenth century, especially Lytton, Dufferin, and Curzon, expressed serious concern for alleged grave deficiencies in the I.C.S. Yet they and others of their class often attempted to give the outside world an entirely different impression. Their doubts were confined to the secrecy of private correspondence. Of necessity, the public image of the I.C.S. became increasingly favourable.

Several enlightening examples of this distorted evaluation are cited rather naively in L.S.S. O’Malley’s *The Indian Civil Service* in his effort to support an idealistic interpretation of the I.C.S. Among them, the statement of Lord Dufferin to a French writer gathering information for a publication on Indo-China shows the emergence of an effort by imperial spokesmen to hide their private doubts and to present publicly a highly favourable estimation of the I.C.S. In answer to the writer’s inquiries concerning British officials in India, Dufferin offered the most flattering comments, contrasting sharply to the criticisms in his earlier viceregal correspondence. French readers would likely be impressed by the words of no less a man than Dufferin himself that “there is no Service like it [*i.e.*, the I.C.S.] in the world. For ingenuity, courage, right judgement, disinterested devotion to duty, endurance, open-heartedness, and, at the same time, loyalty to one another and their chiefs, they are, to my knowledge, superior to any other class of Englishman.”⁹

8. Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 8 Oct. 1902, H.C.

9. Quoted from letter of Lord Dufferin to M. Chailley, in L.S.S. O’Malley, *The Indian Civil Service; 1601-1930*, p. 173.

It would be difficult to find a more complete volte-face from earlier opinion than Curzon's comment of 1921 included in the Curzon biography by Lord Ronaldshay and quoted by O'Malley: "In India I was magnificently served. The whole spirit of service there was different. Everyone there was out to do something."¹⁰

Not the least among the protagonists of the emergent mythology were retired covenanted civilians who often presented their views in the form of magazine or journal articles published in England.¹¹ Among civilians, as revealed in this literature, the mythology constituted a defensive mechanism both against the clamour of Indian protest and against aristocratic or anti-imperialist insults often received at home. Civilian writers contrasted the axiomatic "efficiency" of their own Service with the chaos that would supposedly ensue if educated Indians should be given any wider measure of authority. H.E.M. James, formerly of the Bombay commission, published an article typically characterizing the "educated native" as "only an artificial creature."¹² Writing in *Blackwood's Magazine*, C.H.T. Crosthwaite warned of dire consequences should Indians be given wider employment, and claimed it would be impossible "to insure an efficient administration on British lines if the admixture of Asiatics becomes too large."¹³ He compared the "self-sacrifice" and

10. Curzon quoted in the Earl of Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon*, Vol. II, pp. 3f; but in the same book, see pp. 62 ff, e.g., for citations of Curzon's earlier criticisms of the I.C.S.; see O'Malley, *The Indian Civil Service*, p. 174; see also Curzon's article, "The Future of British India," *World's Work*, 9 (Nov., 1904-Apr. 1905), pp. 5589 ff, an article liberally sprinkled with kind words for British administration.
11. Among them, see the following: H.E.M. James, "Reflections on the way Home," *National Review*, 22 (Sept.,-Feb., 1893-94); C.H.T. Crosthwaite, "The New Spirit in India," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 180 (July-Dec., 1906); H.M. Birdwood, "The Civil Administration of British India," *Journal of the Society of Arts*, XLVII (Oct., 27, 1899); Sir William Lee-Warner, "Our Work in India in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the Society of Arts*, XLVIII (Feb., 2, 1900); Walter Scott Seton-Karr, "Consule Planco," *National Review* 26 (Sept.,-Feb., 1895-6).
12. H.E.M. James, "Reflections on the way Home", *National Review*, 22 (Sept.,-Feb., 1893-94), p. 348.
13. Crosthwaite, "The New Spirit in India," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 180 (July-Dec., 1906), p. 410.

“devotion” of British officials to what he regarded as the purely materialistic impulse of “the educated Indians to hold more numerous and higher posts in public service, and to obtain them on more easy terms than the present regulations prescribe.”¹⁴

A most crucial difference between the British and the would-be Indian administrators, according to the British covenanted observers, related to the question of impartiality and fairness. Impartiality, they asserted, was a virtue universally present among British officials but just as equally absent among the Indian upstarts. The religious and social divisions of India, they said, made it impossible for Indians to rule themselves.¹⁵

“It is certain [wrote another former civilian in the *National Review*] that in the event of any local disturbance . . . very little reliance can be placed on native discretion and energy. We must look to the English officers, by whatever title he may be termed, to unite conciliation with firmness and to uphold order. Whether owing to religious or partisan feeling, or to dislike of responsibility, few natives tried by an emergency would command the confidence of the oriental community. . . .”¹⁶

Another fancied attribute of British officials, made all the more conspicuous by its alleged absence among educated Indians, was a vital concern for the masses of the Indian peasantry. Commenting on remarks by a fellow retired civilian, Sir James Westland said “the efforts and sympathies of English officers in India would always be exercised in favour of the vast toiling millions . . .”¹⁷

Several benefits doubtless accrued from these numerous civilian publications. Through constant repetition of certain ideas, civilians minimized any conscious or sub-conscious doubts they may have experienced as to the value of their Indian careers. In addition, publications in England provided good

14. *Ibid.*, p. 412.

15. See all the above-mentioned articles.

16. Walter Scott Seton-Karr, “Consule Planco”, *National Review* 26 (Sept.,-Feb., 1895-96), p. 234.

17. Comment by James Westland on paper by Sir William Lee-Warner, “Our work in India in the Nineteenth Century”, *Journal of the Society of Arts*, Vol. XLVIII (Feb., 2, 1900), p. 229.

public relations material to counter the misgivings of humanitarian and socialistic spokesmen who became increasingly outspoken against imperialism at the turn of the twentieth century. Finally, public reiteration of myths helped to reinforce the civilian self-image of superiority over Indians (especially educated Indians), a belief of evidently increasing importance to civilians with the onslaught of nationalism. They convinced themselves that they, and they alone, could adequately represent the "true" aspirations of India's masses. On the other hand, they constantly impugned the motives of Indian aspirants to high employment: "We govern India in the interests of the vast and mixed multitude who inhabit the continent [wrote Crosthwaite] not for the pleasure of, comparatively speaking, a handful of educated men, or to meet their natural aspirations for place and power." When viewed in the context of the endemic personal and corporate civilian struggles for power and the failure to cope adequately with land revenue problems these claims appear considerably unjustified.

All these public exaggerations, whether from the pens of civilians or of higher imperial spokesmen, helped assure the firm establishment of a romantic I.C.S. mythology. They increased in number and degree as the challenge to British rule intensified. Since the thrust of the nationalist challenge struck most directly at the British monopoly of the bureaucracy, it became mandatory for imperialists like Curzon to praise the officials even though their earlier opinion based on immediate observations had been clearly negative and derogatory. The Simon Commission, working under the pressure of a second Gandhian non-cooperation campaign in 1930, produced some typically laudatory conclusions concerning British officials: civilians had been placed in circumstances that "fostered initiative and resource to an extent unknown." British burcauracy, the Commission claimed, had developed highly personalized techniques, based on the special local knowledge of the officials and the "trust of the mass of the population."¹⁸

The appearance of the I.C.S. mythology in American publications suggests another of its functions, namely the defense of British imperialism in the court of world opinion. The famous

18. Simon Commission Report, Vol. I, paras. 307 and 321, cited in O'Malley, p. 172.

journalist E. L. Godkin transmitted the mythology to the American public exactly as conveyed to him by British informants. Writing on "The Condition of Good Colonial Government" in the April 1899 edition of *The Forum*, Godkin spoke of a continuous increase in examination competitors and the resultant "very high standards for admission," completely ignoring both the nature and importance of the 1895 recruitment innovations and also the pessimism of Hamilton and others who privately doubted the efficacy of these innovations to guarantee recruits of proper calibre and enthusiasm.¹⁹ The civilians, he concluded, were "the real pride and glory of England."²⁰ Under their direction and within a period of only fifty years, the English had created in India a "marvellously efficient" bureaucracy.²¹ Godkin's gullibility is a sign of American willingness, perhaps eagerness, to accept favourable evaluations of imperial enterprises at a time when the United States was becoming increasingly involved in its own territorial adventures.

Imperialistically minded Americans employed the I.C.S. mythology inferentially to suggest that British administrative "success" in India could and should be duplicated by Americans in other "underdeveloped" areas. Theodore Roosevelt, at the end of his second term as President in 1909, cited British administration in India as a prime example of overwhelming advancement achieved as a result of white or European rule among "the peoples who dwell in the darker corners of the earth."²²

In India [said Roosevelt] we encounter the most colossal example history affords of the successful administration by men of European blood of a thickly populated region in another continent. . . . It is a greater feat than was performed under the Roman Empire. . . . The successful administration of Indian Empire by the English has been one of the

19. E.L. Godkin, "The Condition of Good Colonial Government," *The Forum* (April, 1899), pp. 190, 203.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. "Roosevelt to give Japan Square Deal; Fair to the Filipinos; Declares America is Leading them Forward toward Self-Government; Praises England's Control of India", *The New York Times*, January 19, 1909.

most notable and most admirable achievements of the white race during the past two centuries. On the whole, it has been for the immeasurable benefit of the natives of India themselves.

Such accomplishments constituted a thorough refutation of "those who denounce [imperial] expansion on moral grounds." It now only remained for America to exercise the same efficient and beneficent leadership in other areas as yet not elevated by the influence of western civilization, especially the Philippines but not excluding other areas as opportunities might arise. Rudyard Kipling had himself urged these attitudes and sentiments on the American nation, when, on the eve of the American takeover in the Philippines, he enjoined them to "take up the white man's burden," in the well known poem bearing that title."²³ America's own imperialist ambitions were reaching a climax simultaneously with the emergence of the I.C.S. mythology; and this surely constituted one of the chief reasons why it became as popular among American historians and observers as among Englishmen.

Yet another pragmatic function of the mythology was the effort to shore up the recruitment programme in England. At least until 1895, the ruling class had considered the programme as largely a failure, and quite obviously their denigration of recruits and officials in India had done little to improve it. By the turn of the century, with pessimism and apprehension concerning the Raj steadily increasing, repentant and somewhat hypocritical aristocrats at length recognized their mistake. In public, at least, they could find a few well chosen words to extol the men who constituted the backbone of the Empire in India. The significance of the mythology for recruitment is indicated in the memoirs of a retired official, Evan Maconochie. Published in 1926, the memoirs compare the post-war anxiety regarding recruitment to the supposed enthusiasm of unnerous candidates in previous generations. In the past, he claims, the I.C.S. had never confronted difficulty in attracting "a substantial share of the brains and character of the country," and it is his plea that "conditions are not so unstable as to prevent the confident candidacy of similar young men in

23. Rudyard Kipling, "Take up the White Man's Burden", *Rudyard Kipling's Verse; Definitive Edition*.

future examinations.”²⁴ There was less and less, ultimately no recognition or memory of the continuous problems confronted by the Civil Service Commissioners throughout the late nineteenth century.

Retired civilians enthusiastically reiterated the popular myth of their imagined exclusive selection in their own publications. H.M. Birdwood, formerly of the Bombay Council, asserted that I.C.S. recruits had certainly been equal in intelligence and performance to those employed in the Home Service. Covenanted Civilians had come from the same background “which meets so completely the requirements of public life in England.”²⁵ The rigorous recruitment policy had been responsible for “the high tone imparted to the civil administration.”²⁶ Birdwood predicted that, in the present and future as in the past, it would be “the best of our British graduates” who would find their way into the ranks of the Indian Service.²⁷ Since past recruitment had presumably secured the “best available material,” civilians believed themselves all the more justified in demanding the exclusion of Indians who, by any measurement, would fail to meet the standards of English universities and public schools.²⁸

As indicated in chapter I of this study, the Home Civil Service had always been far more popular than the I.C.S. among the scholars of the universities. Results of two major age revisions for the competitive examination led the British ruling class practically to despair of devising any system that would attract candidates of the desired calibre. The reforms of 1895, highlighted by the combination of examinations for the I.C.S. and a few of the Home Service posts, brought some

24. Sir Evan Maconochie, *Life in the Indian Civil Service*, pp. 2 f.

25. H.M. Birdwood, “The Civil Administration of British India,” *Journal of the Society of Arts*, XLVII (27 Oct., 1899), p. 878.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Comments by Birdwood on a paper by Sir William Lee-Warner, “Our Work in India,” *Journal of the Society of Arts*, XLVII (Feb., 2, 1900), p. 232; see also H.M. Birdwood, “The Civil Administration of India,” *Journal of the Society of Arts*, XLVII (Oct., 27, 1899), p. 877.

28. Sir Percival Griffiths, *The British Impact on India*, pp. 228 f; see also H. H. Dodwell, *The Indian Empire; 1858-1918*, Vol. VI of *The Cambridge History of India*, pp. 375 f.

superficial improvement; but as recognized by Hamilton, this in itself would not be enough to remove the stigma of Indian service and to infuse the new recruits with the commitment necessary for the continuation of a strong imperial regime. In addition, even the superficial success of the 1895 reforms showed definite signs of weakening and stress under the onslaught of intensified nationalism beginning with the final years of Curzon's viceroyalty.

In actuality, the unpretentious intellectual and social backgrounds of many late nineteenth century recruits had seriously damaged the image of the officials in the eyes of their superiors whose judgments of the I.C.S. were continuously permeated by a negative attitude. This negativism, in turn, further damaged the attractiveness of the Indian Service for many potential recruits. It has been suggested that the British planted the seeds of their own demise in India through the introduction of western education and western liberal ideas. It might be concluded that they also weakened their position by downgrading the very institution they themselves regarded as the backbone of their empire, the Covenanted Civil Service. Even at its height, the Empire displayed serious weakness in its most essential link. By the time the weakness had been admitted, it was already too late to achieve any durable change in the image of the I.C.S. As a consequence, there were men, like Curzon and Hamilton, who privately but candidly expressed doubts as to whether or not the empire itself could be rescued.

It can hardly be questioned that the British will to survive in India suffered erosion because of these doubts, even though the doubts were never publicly expressed. One recent study posits the growth of democracy in England as the only sign of fragility in an empire otherwise characterized by the "self-satisfaction" of its rulers at the end of the nineteenth century.²⁹ Yet it appears that fears concerning the I.C.S. had the effect of blunting the self-satisfaction and of questioning the Empire's continued viability. From the British side, both democratic forces and disinterest in India went hand in hand as elements causing the erosion of British power in India. Declining interest

29. Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence*, p. 196.

in India resulted not so much from distaste for imperial methods and authority, but rather from a much more pragmatic consideration, namely the increasing opportunities for middle class professional employment and comfort at home. It appears from available evidence that young men had gone to India in former generations not primarily because of imperial inclinations and impulses,³⁰ but simply and most often because of the limited alternatives at home. As more opportunities became available in Britain (part of the general cultural phenomenon of increasing industrialization, scientific advances, and democratization) there was less and less impetus to invest one's life in an unknown and stigmatized land. It required extraordinary incentive to lure reluctant men to the examination tables.

Yet the I.C.S. continued to represent the visible presence of the British in India, and it was through its various branches that authority was wielded. Whenever the devolution of administrative power into the hands of Indian recruits was contemplated, the alleged necessity of British pre-eminence in the service took precedence over advantages to be gained by granting positions to educated Indians. Even though accused of inefficiency or incompetence, British officials nevertheless constituted the essence of British power in India. Without them, it appeared difficult if not incredible that one would be able to speak of a British Empire in India. But men at the top became increasingly depressed at the task of operating an empire without the recruitment of men regarded as competent. To Viceroys and Secretaries of State, the dilemma thus posed was as real as the problem of

30. The biographical material discussed in the next chapter does not lend credence to Professor Hutchins' claim that men were attracted to India by "the prospect of aristocratic security at a time when England itself was falling prey to democratic vulgarity." Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence*, p. 199; see also, p. 128. The one prominent source used to support this conclusion is the Stephen-Lytton correspondence where, for example, Stephen wrote that India was "the one sphere in which an Englishman who is neither born in the purple nor minded to flatter mobs, can hope just at present to serve his country to any serious purpose". (See Hutchins, p. 128).

It is notable, however, that in the same correspondence, Stephen said he would not encourage his own son to undertake an Indian career.

Indian nationalism. The alleged incompetence of bureaucrats appeared to late nineteenth century viceroys as an even more imminent threat to the well-being of their Empire than the incipient nationalist movement.³¹

As the gap allegedly widened between the quality of the covenanted civilians and the weight of their responsibilities, the British ruling class developed a highly contradictory attitude toward the I.C.S. While on the one hand ruling aristocrats had less and less respect for the civilians, at the same time the I.C.S. was still regarded as the essential linchpin of Empire. Rulers blamed officials for the rise and strength of the nationalist movement, but they never seriously interfered to change the policies and attitudes so aggravating to educated Indians. Such interference would have constituted a weakening of the British front *vis-a-vis* the nationalists, and furthermore would have required effort that the British ruling class would be reluctant to expend on India. On the one hand, aristocrats had for decades indulged in sharp criticism of the officials, thus lowering the prestige of the I.C.S. and driving away future recruits; then, toward the end of the century, they reversed themselves, at least in public statements, but their statements only thinly covered their true sentiments. Many of the ruling class judged administrative structures in India as inadequate and anachronistic; but at the same time, to preserve the appearance of stability in India, they agreed that reforms should not be imposed from the outside. It was doubtless self-gratifying for the ruling class to think of empire in the abstract, but whenever they came to ponder seriously the recruitment problem or the problem of morale in the bureaucracy, they could hardly have escaped the question of the Empire's continued viability. They cared little enough for Empire to send their own sons or to buttress adequately the men already in India. The British Empire in India appears, in retrospect, somewhat analogous to a mirage, lacking the real substance and vigour of a continuously viable institution.

An understanding of this phenomenon adds another dimension to the history of the dialogue between the British and the

31. See, *e.g.*, Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 26 April 1884, R.V.P; Kimberley, to Dufferin, India Office, 2 May 1886, Dufferin papers, microfilm; Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 8 Oct., 1902, H.C.; Curzon to Hamilton. Viceroy's Camp, Delhi, 26 Oct., 1902, H.C.

nationalist movement. The low prestige of the I.C.S. (as well as democratization) in England implies that imperial structures were beginning to collapse from negative pressures on the British side as well as from attacks of the nationalists. Certainly the nationalists in India were not shadow—boxing when they launched their protests against the Raj. On the other hand, it can be asserted that the British did not (because they could not) marshal their maximum resources to meet the nationalist challenge.³² In this sense, the dialogue between Englishmen and nationalists may be seen in part and paradoxically as a struggle where the parties were actually moving toward the same inevitable result, although in a much more subtle sense than any openly articulated programme of co-operation. At the core of this unconscious element of cooperation were the technological and professional revolutions, with their educational foundations giving birth to the incipient Indian middle classes that at the same time opened new spheres for middle class employment at home. Curzon failed to pursue his own logic concerning the unfeasibility of the empire without requisite talent from Britain. Diminishing interest at home and the educational revolution in India were both in fact pushing India in the direction envisaged by Macaulay several decades earlier, namely the establishment of an independent country with continuing economic and cultural ties to the West, albeit ties considerably more tenuous than Macaulay had desired.

32. This became even more evident with the virtual collapse of the recruitment programme during and after World War I, as discussed, *e.g.*, in a recent article by David Potter, "Manpower Shortage and the End of Colonialism; the Case of the Indian Civil Service", *Modern Asian Studies*, 7, part 1 (January 1973), pp. 47 ff.

1

I.C.S. CAREERS AND THE PROBLEM OF RECRUITMENT (1855-1900)

India may often have been regarded as the brightest jewel in the Imperial Crown of Great Britain, but the lustre of the jewel shone only at a distance. Throughout the late nineteenth century, probably throughout the whole of the Victorian era, any close connection with India appears to have carried a definite stigma in the thinking of the aristocracy.¹ People of that class had a tendency to regard anyone who shipped off to India, no matter how promising or how talented (Viceroys being perhaps the one exception) as somehow inferior and not acceptable in their circles. The prevalence of this attitude had unfortunate effects on attempts of the Government of India to enlist the

1. "The aristocracy" may be defined as those who dominated British political life in the late nineteenth century. These men included the peerage, the landed gentry, and to a lesser extent industrial and commercial dynasties. J.P. Cornford, in his essay titled "The Parliamentary Foundations of the Hotel Cecil," has shown that these groups were dominant among the ruling Conservative Party M.P.'s during the period 1885-1905: Peerage, 99 (14%); Gentry, 179 (25%); Industrial-Commercial dynasties and wealthy entrepreneurs, 154 (22%). Men of the nineteenth century would likely have cited only peers and gentry in their own definition of the aristocracy, but since wealthy industrialists and commercialists had come to play an increasingly important role in political life alongside the landed elements, it would be safe for our purpose to include them in the highest social classification. Available correspondence and other material suggests clearly that all these groups had a strong tendency to think disparagingly both of India and of Englishmen who ruled it. When speaking of the aristocracy's attitude towards the I.C.S., this essay refers specifically to the recorded opinions of spokesmen from these social groups. See J.P. Cornford, "The Parliamentary Foundation of the Hotel Cecil", in *Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain*, ed. Robert Robson, p. 277.

services of promising Englishmen not only for the regular Covenanted Civil Service but also special non-civilian appointments, including the viceroyalty. Efforts to find a successor for Lord Lansdowne, for example, practically arrived at a total impasse.² Lord Elgin, who reluctantly accepted the post, was widely regarded as an unlikely Viceroy, though in some ways he ultimately proved quite capable in his own taciturn way. Many English politicians looked on with astonishment when the brilliant young Curzon, against the advice of most friends and colleagues, accepted the challenge of the viceroyalty with enthusiasm. His decision was widely regarded as a foolish and possibly dangerous diversion from the progress of his political career in England.

Members of the legal and business professions viewed India with as much disfavour and distaste as the politicians. As a result the Government of India found it difficult to enlist English lawyers or fiscal experts for the legal and financial memberships of the Viceroy's Executive Council. The tenure of Sir Fitzjames Stephen as legal member was the exception which proved the rule. Highly rated in England as a skillful lawyer, his career as legal member in India practically demolished any opportunity for advancement when he returned home. His chagrin was colourfully expressed in a letter to Lord Lytton:

I who write have been solemnly told by no less a person than Lord Coleridge that by going to India I had 'flown in the face of my profession and must earn my pardon by much patient humiliation. . . .' It seems to me that a country which treats Indian service in that spirit hardly deserves to have an empire.³

Other less capable lawyers discovered that service as legal member could be a professional cul-de-sac. Such was the unfortunate fate of Sir Alexander Miller, Law Member under Lansdowne and Elgin, who sought unsuccessfully for employment at home and ended up taking a lectureship "in some obscure college in the North of Ireland."⁴ Finding a successor to Miller in India

2. See Sir Mortimer Durand to Lord Lansdowne, Indiki, 8 Oct., 1895, LVP.
3. Sir Fitzjames Stephen to Lord Lytton, London, 28 Oct., 1878, Stephen Correspondence.
4. Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 6 Aug., 1905, H.C.

appeared to be an impossible undertaking. The Secretary of State (Hamilton) tried to persuade Charles Stuart Wortley, M.P., formerly Under-Secretary for Home Affairs, to accept appointment, but he was "not willing to leave England."⁵ Hamilton was reduced to making an offer to one Raleigh, "such a curious taciturn piece of goods that I could not quite make him out."⁶ Similar misgivings attended the selection of Courtenay Ilbert as Legal Member in Ripon's administration. It was thought that Ilbert would perform well, but on the other hand everyone acknowledged that as yet Ilbert was a "nobody" in the legal profession, "that his standing at the Bar is perhaps scarcely sufficient. . . ." Secretary of State Hartington wanted somehow to enhance the prestige of the Legal Membership, but he knew the disdain of London lawyers for the post militated against his wishes.⁷

The disdain for Indian appointments was as great among the business professions. Viceroy's often requested that capable men from home should come out as Financial or Commercial Members of their Council. Curzon was especially adamant on the point. But the Under-Secretary of State for India, Sir Arthur Godley, responded in the words of an anonymous Londoner who had told him, "you won't get anyone in the city to recommend. . . . anyone who isn't a first-rate man, and no first-rate man will take the post."⁸ In short, Indian service of any sort, including the highest echelon positions filled by non-civilians, was widely regarded as an enterprise solely for second-rate minds and middle class citizens.

The lowly image of Indian service was clearly reflected in difficulties of recruiting young men from the desired backgrounds for the I.C.S. Most historians have accepted the notion that Indian careers were highly popular among University students in Great Britain, and that, as a consequence, the competitive examination system, inaugurated as a replacement for the patronage of the East India Company in 1855, guaranteed a superior

5. Hamilton to Elgin, India Office, 24 Oct., 1895, E.V.P.

6. Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 24 Jan., 1899, H.C.

7. Lord Hartington to Lord Ripon, India Office, 24 Feb., 1882, R.V.P.

8. Sir Arthur Godley, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for India to Curzon, India Office, 16 Dec., 1904, C.V.P.

body of highly efficient administrators for British India.⁹ The fact is, however, that the Civil Service Commissioners themselves had voiced dissatisfaction with the calibre of recruits as early as 1858, only four years after the establishment of the competitive system. Their apprehension had resulted precisely from the realization that original anticipations concerning "the number and character of the candidates who would be attracted" had "not yet [been] fully verified."¹⁰ A substantial number of candidates and recruits did not hold B.A. degrees from Oxford or Cambridge, as originally desired, and a surprising portion of the candidates had not attended any university, a phenomenon that became increasingly evident in later competitions.

The problem of attracting candidates from the universities involved the question of the most advantageous age limits for competition. Two objectives lay behind the reduction of the maximum limit in 1859 from 23 to 22: men in their twenty-third year who had already graduated would not likely "be much tempted by the prospect of an appointment which will withdraw him at once from the distinction. . . . he looks for at home."¹¹ By lowering the limit, it might be possible to lure men into the I.C.S., just prior to or immediately after graduation before they were drawn away by more attractive careers at home. Secondly, the year subtracted from the maximum age limit would allow time for the special acquisition of relevant Indian knowledge not provided in the usual university curriculum.¹² The aim of the competitive examination remained "to attract as many candidates as possible amongst those who have graduated at the Universities."¹³ But increasingly the goal was

9. For examples of these assumptions, see the following: Philip Woodruff, *The Guardians*, Vol. II of *The Men Who Ruled India*, p. 79; John Strachey, *The End of Empire*, p. 61; R.J. Moore, *Liberalism and Indian Politics; 1872-1922*, p. 12; L.S.S.O'Malley, *The Indian Civil Service; 1601-1932*, pp. 238-257; William J. Reader, *Professional Men: The Rise of the Professional Classes in Nineteenth Century England*, pp. 93 and 186.

10. Mr. Maitland to Mr. Plowden, Civil Service Commission, 1 Sept., 1858, *Fourth Report of the Civil Service Commissioners* (London, 1859), p. 228.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

12. L.S.S. O'Malley, *The Indian Civil Service*, p. 243 f; and *Fourth Report of the Civil Service Commissioners*, p. 231.

13. *Fourth Report*, p. 232.

forfeited and "the average age [of competitors] very soon fell greatly."¹⁴ Even among those talented university men who came forward in the early years of competition, several "after passing successfully found it more to their advantage to throw-up their Indian prospects and remain at home."¹⁵ The Commissioners tacitly admitted defeat by advocating the further lowering of the maximum age to 21 in 1866 and by inaugurating a two-year study course in Indian subjects for recruits.¹⁶ By 1866, as revealed in the examination results, the competition was failing to attract not only university graduates but even university students.

The rumblings of discontent among the British aristocracy concerning the quality of I.C.S., recruits gained prominent public notice in the mid-1870's. An anonymously written article appearing in the *Edinburgh Review* of April, 1874, condemned the competition system as presently organized.¹⁷ The fact that the article adumbrated the solution later adopted by the Secretary of State, Lord Salisbury, suggests that it may have been officially inspired. The writer's critique reflected the aristocratic opinion that young men of undistinguished social origins and without university training were degrading the I.C.S. If recruits could not be drawn from socially superior classes, then claimed the writer, the government should at least attempt to imbue them with the values and attitudes of the aristocracy though short-term compulsory attendance at the great universities.

In actuality, statistics show that aristocratic representation (*i.e.*, those recruits whose fathers were peers or gentry) had never been notable in the I.C.S., even during the days of the patronage system. As J.S. Mill suggested in 1852, the I.C.S., had always displayed essentially a middle class character.¹⁹ Yet

14. Memorandum by C.J. Lyall, 17 May 1875, in *Papers Relating to the Selection and Training of Candidates for the Indian Civil Service*, p. 422. (hereafter cited as *Papers Relating to the I.C.S.*).

15. *Ibid.*

16. See *Eleventh Report of the Civil Service Commissioners* (London, 1866), p. 225.

17. Article II, *The Edinburgh Review*, CXXXIX (April, 1874), p. 336.

18. (omit),

19. See quotation from testimony of John Stuart Mill before a Parliamentary Committee, quoted in Francis G. Hutchins' *The Illusion of Permanence*, pp. 89 f.

competition had produced the effect of narrowing even further the small representation of the aristocracy; its portion of recruits fell from about 27% in the five years prior to competition to about 10% in the twenty years after 1855.²⁰ This change plus the success of several from the "lower middle classes" or below (about 15% of the total from 1855 to 1874) may have lent some substance to aristocratic fears. Information was occasionally published in England and in India revealing the social standing of recruits in the period from 1860 to 1874 based on the status and/or profession of their fathers:²¹

I.	Recruits from the aristocracy	67	or	10%
	(Fathers were either peers or landed gentry)			
II.	Recruits from the professional middle class	506	or	76%
	Occupation of fathers :			
A.	Army officers (45); Navy officers (3); Civil Service (16); Ambassador (1) ...	65	or	9.8%
B.	Clergymen: Church of England (145); other ministers (39)	184	or	27.5%
C.	Indian Civil Service (47); Colonial Civil Service (7), etc.	57	or	8.5%
D.	The Legal Profession	49	or	7.4%
E.	The Medical Profession	65	or	9.8%
F.	Merchants, Industrialists, Bankers ...	48	or	7.2%
G.	Educators	27	or	4.0%
H.	Architects and Engineers	11	or	1.7%
III.	Recruits from the lower middle classes or lower classes	65	or	14%
A.	Accountants, agents, managers ...	20	or	3.0%
B.	Farmers, surveyors, millers, etc. ...	28	or	4.2%
C.	Printers, druggists, tailors, under- takers, storekeepers, etc. ...	27	or	4.0%
D.	Clerks, stewards, railways workers	6	or	.9%
E.	Not specified	14	or	2.1%
	Total	668		

For the most part, however, apprehensions concerning class

20. J.M. Compton, "Open Competition and the Indian Civil Service, 1854-1876," *The English Historical Review*, 83 (April, 1968), p. 28.

21. See Memoranda and statistics relating to the system of selection and training for the I.C.S., G. of I., Home Department, Public Branch, A, 202-202a, June, 1875, 202a, N.A.I.

origins were often exaggerated by aristocratic spokesmen and were not as telling an indictment of the competitive system as the depressing statistics relating to educational background.

It is unfortunate that the information on social origins was not correlated with educational statistics so that it could be known precisely who had attended a university and whether or not they had completed their degree work. It is nevertheless clear that many of the new middle class candidates and recruits, especially those of the 1860's and 1870's, had never attended any university, and thus according to the critics, would never have obtained the essential characteristics of the English gentleman ruler. The more discriminating spokesmen—those most closely concerned with the competition—including Civil Service Commissioners, the India Office, and Viceroys, “saw a close connection between the scholar and the gentleman,”²¹ and considered it mandatory that the non-aristocratic candidates should have achieved social elevation through some university training, preferably at Oxford or Cambridge, although London University and Scottish degrees appear to have been acceptable.

Table I (p. 22) shows the proportionate decline in university representation among both successful and non-successful candidates between 1855 and 1874.²² Actually the number of university candidates initially rose to a high of 138 in 1861 (23% above the first year's total of 112), but then, in somewhat irregular fashion, it declined to about 62%, falling as low as 52 in 1874. In the meantime, there had been a ten-fold increase in non-university candidates from 22 in the first year of competition to 214 in 1869. Even in the earliest years of competition (1855-58), the success of seventeen Irish students, including young men from Dublin, Belfast, Cork,

21. See statement of Sir Charles Wood quoted in J.M. Compton, “Open Competition and the Indian Civil Service,” *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 83 (April, 1968), p. 270.

22. See *Reports of the Civil Service Commissioners, 1856-1875*. The expanded possibilities for recruitment created by the Mutiny of 1857-58 may have been one of the prime catalysts encouraging middle class families to place their non-university sons in the competition. These young men proved to be formidable competitors; and this, by the 1870's, may have been one of the considerations deterring more sophisticated young men at the universities from the competition.

and Galway universities, was regarded as a dangerous omen.²⁴ Irish universities seemed to rate as low in the estimation of the aristocracy as the establishments of the independent London tutors, commonly called crammers.²⁵

As indicated above, the critics also deplored the limited and decreasing representation of Oxford and Cambridge. The two great universities fell from a position of predominance to one of minimal significance in the competitive programme, while the percentage of positions gained by Irish youth remained relatively high and eventually surpassed that of Oxbridge students:²⁶ (See Table II, p. 23)

Among the total number of competitors, the percentage of Oxford and Cambridge candidates declined from a high of 62% in 1858 to a low of 8.2% by 1874. In 1864, Sir Charles Wood, one of those chiefly responsible for the shift from patronage to competition, "noted with disgust the unsatisfactory type of person he thought was succeeding in the examination."²⁷ On the other hand, many pragmatic, thrifty middle class people doubtlessly questioned the merit of spending a great amount for a son's university education when a shorter, less expensive education at the crammers proved sufficient to gain success at the examination. The more able university students simply declined to compete, and therefore non-university crammers had a more than even chance of success, as was clearly and increasingly demonstrated in the examination results.

The available information is rarely complete enough to show the percentage of recruits who had received baccalaureate or masters degrees before entering the I.C.S. Complete data does exist, however, for the examinations just prior to and immediately after the lowering of the age limit in 1866, clearly indicating that the change had a marked ill-effect on an already bleak situation. In 1866, sixty-two per cent of the recruits held no degrees while in the following year the proportion of non-graduates rose to seventy-nine per cent.²⁸

24. See *Fourth Report of the Civil Service Commissioners*, 1859, p. 339.

25. See J.M. Compton, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

26. See *Reports of the Civil Service Commissioners*, 1859-1872.

27. See statement of Sir Charles Wood quoted in J.M. Compton, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

TABLE I

year of examination	total number of candidates	number of non-university candidates	percentage of non-university candidates	total number of recruits	number of non-university recruits	percentage of non-university recruits
1855	112	22	19.6%	20	1	5%
1856	56	7	12.4%	21	1	5%
1857	60	6	10.0%	12	1	8%
1858	67	7	10.4%	20	0	0
1859	117	24	20.5%	40	2	5%
1860	153	44	28.5%	80	14	17.5%
1861	171	33	19.3%	82	7	8.5%
1862	171	53	30.9%	82	14	17%
1863	189	83	43.9%	62	23	37%
1864	218	97	44.4%	40	17	42.5%
1865	284	154	54.2%	52	14	26.9%
1866	242	157	69%	39	15	38%
1867	279	176	63%	47	20	42%
1869	325	214	65.8%	48	22	46%
1870	332	200	60.2%	38	15	39%
1871	229	144	62%	37	16	43%
1874	206	154	74.7%	40	22	55%

TABLE II

Year	Oxford Uni.	Cambridge Uni.	Scottish Uni. (Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen)	Irish Uni. (Belfast, Dublin, Cork, Galway)	London Uni.	Indian or other foreign Uni.	Non uni.
1858	9 (45%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	6 (30%)	1 (5%)	0	0
1859	12 (30%)	9 (22.5%)	5 (12.5%)	10 (25%)	2 (5%)	0	2 (5%)
1860	14 (17.5%)	19 (23.7%)	7 (8.7%)	18 (22.5%)	7 (8.7%)	1 (1.2%)	14 (17.5%)
1861	20 (24.3%)	15 (18.3%)	10 (12.1%)	23 (28%)	4 (4.9%)	3 (3.7%)	7 (8.5%)
1862	15 (18.3%)	10 (12.1%)	13 (15.8%)	18 (21.9%)	11 (13.4%)	1 (1.2%)	14 (17%)
1863	9 (14.5%)	7 (11.2%)	5 (8%)	12 (19%)	3 (4.8%)	3 (4.8%)	23 (37%)
1866	5 (13%)	5 (13%)	1 (2.5%)	4 (10.2%)	9 (23%)	0	15 (38%)
1867	4 (8.5%)	4 (8.5%)	3 (7%)	8 (17%)	8 (17%)	0	20 (42%)
1870	1 (2.6%)	1 (2.6%)	8 (21%)	7 (18%)	5 (13.9%)	1 (2.6%)	15 (39%)
1871	2 (5.4%)	5 (13%)	4 (10.8%)	8 (21.6%)	1 (2.7%)	1 (2.7%)	16 (43%)

The non-university candidates were often men who had received special instruction at one of the London crammer's. Even university students who planned to enter the I.C.S. competition sometimes found it worthwhile to break their course of study at the University to spend some months at the "crammer's" for special preparation. In 1865, the percentage of successful candidates who had gone to the crammer's was 32.7. By 1874, that figure had risen to 84.2. There was a corresponding increase in the length of time spent at "cramming," the average being six or seven months in 1865 and fifteen to sixteen months in 1874.²⁹

Critics regarded the success of cramming institutions as a major threat to the prestige of the I.C.S. It was commonly assumed that the re-evaluation discussions of 1875 had originated "in complaints against the cramming system."³⁰ The anonymous critic in the *Edinburgh Review* contended that cramming in London without the socially elevating influence of the university atmosphere was "not the way in which the rulers of a nation should be prepared for their great duties, men who are to govern . . . as much by the force of . . . the impalpable qualities which make up the English gentleman, as by mere ability and book-learning."³¹ Whatever the reasons for the rise of the "crammers," their success had a tendency "to defeat the principles upon which the [competitive] system was originally framed," namely that candidates should be graduates of or preparing for graduation from the universities.³²

Several leading Englishmen offered suggestions to counteract the bad effects of the cramming institutions. The Rev. Dr. Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol College, Oxford, thought

28. See Schools and Colleges attended by the candidates selected in 1866 and distinctions obtained by them, G. of I., Home, Public, B, 33-37, 5 Dec., 1868, 34, N.A.I.; also G. of I., Home, Public, B, 323-325, 20 Nov., 1869, 324, N.A.I.

29. G. of I., Home, Public, A, 202-202 a, June, 1875, 202a, N.A.I.

30. Luttman-Johnson, Memorandum on the I.C.S., in *Papers Relating to the I.C.S.*, p. 407.

31. Article II, *Edinburgh Review*, CXXXIX (April, 1874), p. 337.

32. C. L. Tupper to the Secretary to Government of Punjab, 24 July 1875, in *Papers Relating to the I.C.S.*, p. 282.

that conditions in the University were presently more advantageous than they had been in 1854 for the matriculation of successful I.C.S., candidates. Religious restrictions on entrance had been removed, and training in law and political economy had been added to the curriculum. Therefore university residence, following success in the competitive examination, would now be a feasible and socially desirable requirement:

If the selected candidates could be brought to Oxford and Cambridge, the service would greatly gain in popularity and in prestige. It would be much more attractive both to young men and their parents. The name of a university degree and education would counterbalance the objections to India which are generally felt by those who have no Indian connections.³³

Lord Salisbury's reforms made university attendance compulsory for two years, a period not sufficient for the attainment of a degree. The reforms also included a striking innovation preferred by few others. Contrary to the wishes of several that the age limit "should have the widest limits consistent with the requirements of the Indian service" in order to attract the highest number of "well-qualified candidates,"³⁴ Salisbury lowered the maximum limit to nineteen.³⁵ His motivation was clearly the desire to attract the best possible young men directly from the public schools before they could reconsider their future while at the university. Lowering the age, it was hoped, would effectively eliminate tendency of "cramming," and "youths of ability, education, and position were to replace those 'socially unfit' persons, whom [the crammer's] cunning had helped to beat their rivals in the past."³⁶ Educated Indians thought the age modification had

33. Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol College, Oxford, to the Secretary of State for India, 27 Dec., 1874, in *Papers Relating to the I.C.S.*, p. 12; see also George Phear, Vice-Chancellor of the University, Cambridge, to Secretary of State for India, 15 Dec., 1874, *Papers Relating to the I.C.S.*, p. 8.

34. Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol College, to S. of S., 27 Dec., 1874, *Papers Relating to the I.C.S.*, p. 11.

35. O'Malley, *The Indian Civil Service*, p. 245.

36. "The Old Reproach", letter to editor by Henry Palin Gurney, London, 17 March 1892, *The Oxford Magazine*, X (23 March 1892), p. 271.

been introduced primarily to place a restriction on the recruitment of Indians who would find it practically impossible to prepare for the examinations before the age of twenty.³⁷ But the record indicates that this must have been purely a secondary (though perhaps not unhappy) consideration in Salisbury's thinking.

Salisbury's reforms came under heavy criticism within only a few years of their adoption. Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol College, outlined the difficulties in a letter to Lord Ripon, then Viceroy.³⁸ Contrary to the hope that "the lower age would give a choice of the best students from the public schools," Jowett remarked that "The best boys from the public schools have very rarely competed for the I.C.S.; and the present class of candidates are not at all superior, if equal in natural ability to those of the years since."³⁹ Furthermore, the lower age limits had not excluded the undesirable candidates who had relied on the "crammers" for their education:

. . . considerably more than half the successful candidates during the last four years have been pupils of [the crammers].

. . . The evil which it sought to remedy has been increased; since the candidates, unless they live with their parents at home are exposed to the temptations of London at an earlier age.⁴⁰

Ripon agreed with Jowett, and urged the Secretary of State to restore the *status quo ante*, not only to improve the quality of recruits, but also to mollify educated Indians excluded from competition by Salisbury's reform.⁴¹

Despite the widespread fears concerning recruitment, the India Office refused to raise the age limit, and the troublesome

37. Hira Lal Singh, *Problems and Policies of the British in India, 1885-1898*, p. 28.

38. Jowett to Ripon, undated (Oct.,-Nov., 1882), in G. of I., Home, Public, A, 86-92, Oct., 1883, N.A.I.

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ibid.*

41. Ripon to Hartington, Calcutta, 4 Dec., 1882, RVP.; for comments of others who believed the I.C.S., was losing ground under Salisbury's regulations, see the Earl of Northbrook to Ripon, Stratton, 29 Dec., 1882, R.V.P.; note by E. Baring, 6 Aug., 1883, in G. of I., Home, Public, A, 86-92, Oct., 1883.

age question was not debated again until the Public Service Commission began its work in 1886. Then it was unavoidable simply because the commission was directed to examine primarily the grievances of the Indian educated class. Testimony gathered by the commission from all sides indicated that raising the age limit would be the only non-controversial concession to Indian candidates. The willingness of covenanted officials to support this change was based, not on their concern for Indian candidates, but rather on the motion that a higher limit would help attract better young men in England.⁴² Charles Elliott, on the other hand, Public Works Member of the Viceroy's Council, took a dim view of the proposed alteration and sought to retain Salisbury's regulation: "I don't see any reason," he testified, "for considering that it is the lowering of the age in 1876 that brought in these shady candidates [of recent years]. I fear India has lost its charm for first-rate men, and that the later you put the age, the fewer good men you could catch."⁴³

In October, 1889, following the unanimous recommendation of the Public Service Commission, the Secretary of State announced that the upper limit for competition would be returned to age twenty-three. This was accompanied by an indication that the test papers would be altered so as to encourage young men reading for degree examinations "to walk straight into the Indian Civil Service examination room and compete on perfectly equal terms with any equally able man who might have been specially prepared."⁴⁴ These alterations were calculated to curb if not to eliminate the success of older "crammed" candidates who "could not after selection be induced (as they now are) to go to a university."⁴⁵

Within a short time, however, it was evident that the modification had been unsuccessful in attracting the number and

42. Note by W.C. Bennett, Secretary to Government, N.-W.P., *Proceedings of the Public Service Commission*, 1886-87, Vol. II, p. 9.

43. Sir C.A. Elliott, Public Works Member of the Viceroy's Council, to Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Simla, 3 May 1888, D.V.P.

44. Sir A. Godley, Under-Sec. of State for India, to Mr. Couthorpe, Civil Service Commissioner, India Office, 23 Aug., 1889, Godley Papers, I.O.L.

45. Godley to Benjamin Jowett, India Office, 13 March, 1889, Godley Papers.

quality of candidates desired by the India Office. It was true that Sir A. Godley, Lord Lansdowne, and others indicated tentative satisfaction on the basis of the examination results of 1892 and 1893,⁴⁶ but their optimism was superficial and short-lived. It failed to take account of factors belying their exaggerated notions of I.C.S. rejuvenation. There had indeed been a reversal of the pre-1876 decline of university recruits (*see* following Table),⁴⁷ but the excessively low number of competitors under the new scheme revealed an enigmatic countermanding weakness. The number of men competing for each vacancy decreased from 4.9 in 1889 (under the old age limits) to 2.1 in the

I.C.S. recruitment under the higher age limits, 1892-94

Year	Total no. of recruits	Oxford Uni.	Camb. Uni.	Scottish Uni.	Irish Uni.	London Uni.	Indian & other foreign Uni.	Non Uni.
1892	32	18	7	1	1	2	0	0
1893	54	37	11	0	0	6	0	0
1894	60	33	13	0	6	8	0	0

first year of the new scheme and to a low ebb of 1.9 in 1893, the nadir of recruitment was from 1872 to 1905. The following Table shows the numerical pattern of recruitment during the entire period.⁴⁸

46. Godley to Lord Lansdowne, India Office, 3 Nov., 1893, L.V.P; Lansdowne to Godley, Viceroy's Camp, Mysore, 17 Nov., 1892, Godley Papers.
47. There is a curious discrepancy between the number of appointments offered by the India Office and the actual number of recruits from 1892 and 1893. This may indicate that the Commissioners refused to appoint the full compliment of recruits from among the small number of competitors. This discrepancy can be seen by comparing the *Reports of the Civil Service Commissioners* for the relevant years with the appointees listed in the files of the G. of I. or publicized by the *Oxford Magazine*, *See* "The Recent Examination for the Civil Service of India", *Oxford Magazine*, XI (26 Oct., 1892), pp. 22 ff; G. of I., Home, Est., A, Jan., 1895, 26-33, G. of I., Home, Est., A, Jan., 1896, 113-120.
48. *See Reports of the Civil Service Commissioners (1872-1905)*; *see also* A. Mackenzie, Sec. to G. of I. in the Home Dept., to H. W. Primrose, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Simla, 27 Sept., 1883, R.V.P.

Year of competition	Total number of candidates	Number of appointments offered	Number of Competitors for each appointment
1872	199	36	5.5
1873	203	35	5.8
1874	206	38	5.4
1875	195	37	5.2
1876	201	31	6.5
1877	202	31	6.5
1878	134	13	10.3
1879	174	28	6.2
1880	182	27	6.7
1881	?	32	?
1882	140	40	3.5
1883	?	?	?
1884	185	38	4.9
1885	211	41	5.1
1886	219	54	4.0
1887	206	46	4.5
1888	246	47	5.2
1889	241	49	4.9
1890	214	46	4.7
1891	154	49	3.1
1892	95	46	2.1
1893	124	65	1.9
1894	131	61	2.1
1895	?	66	?
1896	209	60	3.4
1897	252	66	3.8
1898	195	63	3.0
1899	226	56	4.0
1900	221	52	4.2
1901	210	51	4.1
1902	210	54	3.9
1903	185	51	3.6
1904	187	50	3.7
1905	154	49	3.1

The *Oxford Magazine* commented despairingly on the alarming decline under the new regulations:

There is an epigram of Lord Dalhousie that 'a member of the Civil Service in England is a clerk, a member of the Civil Service in India may be a procounsel.' The curious thing is that while the vacancies in the clerkships are few in number and of doubtful occurrence, they are eagerly sought after and are attained only by men of quite the first rank in University distinctions; the possible procounselships seem almost to go a-begging.⁴⁹

A novelty introduced in 1895 superficially reversed the unpopularity of the I.C.S. competition, but the novelty was in reality a gimmick which provided no substantial resolution to the recruitment problem. In January 1895, competition for the Indian Service was combined with examinations for first class clerkships in the Home Civil Service. Using the Home Service as the magnet, the India Office hoped to attract a larger number of promising university men to a consideration of an Indian career. The former system had practically eliminated the "foremost scholars," because they hesitated to compete in an examination which "led only to India." But hopefully, under the new programme, so many first-rate scholars would be lured by the Home Service that an appreciable portion of the overflow would naturally fall to the I.C.S.

The ablest men [the *Oxford Magazine* editorialized] will gain the highest places and will have their choice; those who have hoped for a choice but who do not stand high enough to obtain it will to a great extent acquiesce in what is left them [*i.e.*, India]; they will probably think twice before they throw up the certainty of a career offered to them.⁵⁰

The following Table shows the seemingly favorable results produced by the new programme.^{50a} While university men continued

49. *Oxford Magazine*, XI (15 Feb., 1893), p. 218.

50. "The Home Civil Service," *Oxford Magazine*, XIII (7 Nov., 1894), p. 59.

50a. Figures for the previous years (1895-1898) are not cited because of disparities in the official records between the total number of the men recruited and the sum of the men chosen from the various institutions. Nevertheless, the statistics for these years clearly indicate the firm establishment of the pattern revealed in the more reliable data of 1899 and subsequent years.

to dominate the competition, there was also an approximate one-third increase in the total number of competitors.⁵¹ Curzon viewed the upturn as the one healthy omen in the midst of an otherwise bleak bureaucratic scenario.⁵² Hamilton, however, refused to mask the superficiality of the new programme, and candidly disavowed Curzon's spark of optimism. "There are no reliable indications," wrote Hamilton, "that for the future other Viceroys will be more happily situated."⁵³

The I.C.S. Competitive Examination (1899-1906)

Year	Total no. of candidates	Appt's. offered	candidates for each	Oxford Uni.	Camb. Uni.	Scotch Uni.	Irish Uni.	London Uni.	Indian or other foreign Uni.	Non. Uni.
1899	226	56	4.0	28	18	4	4	0	0	2
1900	221	52	4.3	24	9	13	6	0	0	0
1905	154	49	3.1	18	17	10	3	0	0	1
1906	166	61	2.7	38	13	3	5	0	1	1

The upturn is in itself ironically a measure of I.C.S. unpopularity since it clearly revealed that the magnetism of the Home Service was the only meaningful reason for the new volume of candidates. This would also suggest something less than spirited commitment on the part of many who failed to make the Home Service and who took "what was left them." The chart appears to indicate that by 1905 even the lure of the Home Service could not prevent a noticeable lag in I.C.S. recruitment.

In announcing results of the first combined examination of 1895, the Civil Service Commissioners revealed that only four

51. See the following: *Forty-first Report of Her Majesty's Civil Service Commissioners* (London, 1897), pp. xi, iii and v ff; *Forty-fifth Report of His Majesty's Civil Service Commissioners* (London, 1901), pp. iv ff; *Forty-sixth Report of the Civil Service Commissioners* (London, 1902) p. iv; *Forty-eighth Report of the Civil Service Commissioners* (London, 1904), p. iv; *Fiftieth Report of the Civil Service Commissioners* (London, 1906), *Fifty-first Report of the Civil Service Commissioners* (London, 1906), p. iv.

52. Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 21 May 1902, H.C.

53. Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 8 Oct., 1902, H.C.

of the seventy vacancies were positions in the Home Service. Three of these four were obtained by men who had signed to compete only for the Home Service, and these three had taken second, third, and fourth places in the examination results. Many other candidates, unwilling to serve in India and competing only for the Home Service, ranked high in the list; but their names remained unpublished due to the small number of home vacancies. The importance of keeping the two examinations together became increasingly evident by the turn of the century. In 1899, forty-nine (18.5%) of the 264 candidates competing for any one or all three of the services (Home, Indian, or Eastern Cadetships) signified interest only in the I.C.S. By 1905, the proportion had slipped to 22 (10.8%) of the 202 candidates. Recruitment thus limped along until its back was finally broken by the First World War and by rising disillusionment with the Indian political scene. In 1924, with a temporary suspension of recruitment for the Home Service, only three Englishmen were recruited for the I.C.S. This debacle, according to the Secretary of State, had resulted not only from "lessened attraction of the I.C.S." but also from "temporary suspension of recruitment for the Home Civil Service."⁵⁴

The relatively superficial character of renewed university interest in the I.C.S. competition after 1895 would be further understood by an examination of social trends in England during the late nineteenth century. It is notable that university pre-eminence in competition began as soon as the age limit returned to 23, and did not await the reform of 1895. If this fact be combined with the dearth of candidates in those same (years 1892-94), the conclusion is reached that practically all those of the social classes and proper age aspiring for the I.C.S. during the last decade of the century would almost automatically have attended a university. Whereas before they had been content with the crammers, they now obviously regarded university education as a desideratum for professional status and careers. Perception of this development by the ruling class had doubtless played an important role in raising the age

54. S. of S. to Viceroy, London, 18 Jan., 1924, G. of I., Home, Est., A, 1924, 130.

limits in 1892. The fact is that the amazing growth of the middle class professions in nineteenth century England had been accompanied by rising expectations with regard to the social status of their practitioners.⁵⁵ According to Kitson Clark, the increasing identification of the professions with "gentlemanly" status had begun in the nineteenth century with educated members of the clergy and had spread gradually to include members of the legal profession. By the end of the century, this phenomenon had incorporated an indeterminate number of other professions. This metamorphosis of the English professional "gentleman" suggests that any of the newly emerging professional men might likewise presume to be gentlemen if they had first passed through the traditional portals of the English gentry, namely an education in the classics at Oxford or Cambridge. "If . . . professional men were to be men of liberality of mind with the status of gentlemen, they should accept a general education before they turned to their more professional training. This order of events," says Clark, "seems to have commended itself to men of high professional standing."⁵⁶ It became increasingly fashionable during the nineteenth century for young men of professional parentage or professional aspirations (usually the two were synonymous) to attend Oxford or Cambridge for three or four years, "not for any direct professional training, but rather as a highly desirable finishing school . . ."⁵⁷

Though the universities throughout the nineteenth century tended to ignore or pay scant attention to the new professions, nevertheless the professional classes deferentially continued to view the universities as the *sin qua non* for the attainment of pre-eminence and power in the nineteenth century. Reader asserts that the professionals were still captivated by the image

55. William Reader, *Professional Men; the Rise of the Professional Classes in Nineteenth-Century England*, p. 211. According to Reader, the number of professional people in England numbered 16 million in 1841, 26 million in 1881, and 36 million in 1911.

56. G. Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England*, p. 264, Clark notes of a swift climb at Oxford and Cambridge after 1860, "the number of freshmen for instance admitted each year at Cambridge increasing from 400 in the 1850's to 800 in 1880."

57. Reader, p. 197.

and glamour of the old landed establishment. Their aspiration, he says, "was to get as close as they could to the pattern set by the landed gentry, or what they imagined the pattern to be."⁵⁸ The craving of British Indian bureaucrats for knight-hoods and other trappings of royal and ruling class favour clearly reflects this obsession. Overall, concludes Reader, "there was no country in Europe where the professions so thoroughly showed the outlook of the upper class as in England."⁵⁹

Thus it was the metamorphosis of the English gentleman and not any increase in the popularity of the I.C.S. which accounted for the renewed representation of university men among the recruits of 1892-94. During the initial phase of the new recruitment scheme (1892-94), the relative unpopularity of the I.C.S. revealed itself, not in the absence of university recruits, but rather in the paucity of candidates. The additional reforms of 1895 finally provided the semblance of respectability to the I.C.S. recruitment, but Hamilton at least questioned the genuineness of this respectability. Even the 1895 gimmick failed to rescue recruitment from serious relapse after 1905.

Among the factors helping to explain the relative unpopularity of the I.C.S. during the late nineteenth century, perhaps the negative attitude of the English ruling aristocracy towards the competition recruits was most important. The aristocracy regarded the competitive system as a failure, and often accused the successful candidates of being intellectually and socially inferior. Distrust and dislike of the 'competition' civilians permeated the highest level of British society and the royal family. Prince of Wales came away from India in 1875 "with a strong impression that the competitive system [was] a failure,"⁶² and this opinion had apparently become a truism among the royalty by the end of the century. Lord George Hamilton told Curzon that the Queen's "dislike of the Civil Service is growing,

58. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

60. (omit)

61. (omit)

62. Lytton to the Queen, Suez, 25 March 1875, Lytton V.P., I.O.L.

and is serious. I know it is fostered not only by her entourage, but by the Royal family generally.”⁶³

Hence the derogatory evaluations of the I.C.S. recorded by every Viceroy of the late nineteenth century reflected not only their own individual observations but also (and perhaps more directly) the universal judgment of the social class to which they belonged. Lytton, who wrote the most unkind remarks about covenanted civilians, confided to his close friend Sir Fitzjames Stephen that he had formed “the lowest estimate of the ability of these men [*i.e.*, covenanted civilians].”⁶⁴ Stephen replied with the amazing statement that “your greatest difficulty in India will be having to do first-rate work with 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th rate tools.”⁶⁵ With others of his social class, Stephen apprehended that increasing numbers of the competition men among the higher ranks of the service would weaken its efficiency and competence, since “19 civilians in 20 [were] the most common place and the least dignified of 2nd the and 3rd class Englishmen.”⁶⁶

Other Viceroys, including Ripon, Dufferin, Lansdowne, and Elgin were more temperate in their choice of words to describe the officials, but all arrived at the same conclusion. Lord Dufferin’s loudest complaints against the civilians were recorded in letters to Lord Kimberley, the Secretary of State in whom Dufferin seemed to have most confidence.

... there seems to me at this moment to be a great dearth of talent throughout India, at all events in the higher ranks. My Council is certainly weak ... Nor is the stratum below much richer ... the administration of such a huge machine as this we want dozens and dozens of first class men. Indeed when I consider the heavy responsibilities attaching to my officers, and the enormous areas over which they extend, I often stand aghast at the spectacle.⁶⁷

63. Hamilton to Curzon, Deal Castle, 31 Aug. 1899, H.C.

64. Lytton to Stephen, Simla, 29 May 1877, Stephen Correspondence.

65. Stephen to Lytton, London, 15 March 1876; see also Stephen to Lytton, London, 24 June 1876, Stephen Correspondence.

66. Stephen to Lytton, London, 7 May 1876, Stephen Correspondence.

67. Dufferin to Kimberley, Simla, 26 April 1886, D.V.P.; also Dufferin to Kimberley, Simla, 24 Aug. 1886, D.V.P.

C.H.T. Crosthwaite, the man whom Dufferin finally selected as Bernard's successor in Barma, was described as a "very commonplace little chap."⁶⁸ Lord Lansdowne used almost identical words to those of Dufferin in describing the condition of the Civil Service. While searching assiduously to find a suitable political resident for the Court of the Nizam of Hyderabad, Lansdowne told Lord Cross, "there is an extraordinary dearth at this moment of really first-rate men available for such a post."⁶⁹ Similarly, in seeking a successor to Sir S. Bayley, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Lansdowne complained that "the area of choice is limited, and there are very few good men available."⁷⁰

Hamilton, while Secretary of State, agreed with Lord Elgin that "giants now-a-days are not easily to be found in the Civil Service. . . . You get fewer bad bargains, and fewer geniuses."⁷¹ As for the India Council at home, composed largely of retired civilians, Hamilton was "struck by the inferiority of those now in authority."⁷² Like others of his class, Hamilton thought that, among the reasons operating to degrade the service, "the general application of open competition to public offices" was an important factor.⁷³

Curzon followed closely behind Lytton in the frequency and intensity of acrimonious remarks levelled against the I.C.S. He frequently complained about the "mediocrity of my official surroundings".⁷⁴ His superior officer in London, the Secretary of State, regretted "that your lot in India has hit upon an epoch of weak men in high places."⁷⁵ Like their predecessors, both Hamilton and Curzon displayed their aristocratic bias in agreeing that "low" social origins could explain the inferiority

68. Dufferin to Viscount Cross, Simla, 3 Sept., 1886, D.V.P.

69. Lansdowne to Cross, Calcutta, 2 April 1889, L.V.P.

70. Lansdowne to Cross, Simla, 23 Sept., 1890, L.V.P.

71. Hamilton to Elgin, India Office, 1 April 1898, E.V.P.

72. Hamilton to Elgin, India Office, 26 Sept., 1895, E.V.P.

73. *ibid.*

74. Curzon to Hamilton, Calcutta, 6 March 1902, H.C.

75. Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 2 April 1901, H.C.; see also Curzon to Hamilton, Calcutta, 14 March 1901, H.C.; see also Curzon to Hamilton, Assam, 11 March 1900, C.V.P; see also Leonard Mosley, Curzon: *The End of an Epoch*, p. 93.

of the civilians.⁷⁶ Whatever the relative merits and abilities of the covenanted civilians of the late nineteenth century may have been, it is clear that the English aristocracy was unanimous in passing a negative judgment. The truth or falseness of this sentiment cannot be determined here, but the many expressions of it clearly constituted an adverse influence on prospective candidates.

Even highly ranked covenanted civilians joined the chorus of critics, perhaps in an effort to convince themselves if not the aristocracy that they did not fall under the unfavourable generalizations of their superiors. In searching for an official to appoint as Vice-Chancellor for Calcutta University in 1896, Sir Alexander Mackenzie (who had risen to the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal) complained of the weakness of the present "civil service men for the most part."⁷⁷ Sir A.P. MacDonnell, practically the only civilian ever to receive the praise and approbation of Lord Curzon, made a similar comment while serving as acting Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in 1893:

I am greatly struck since I came to Bengal with the deterioration in the calibre of the men at the head of affairs and in charge of districts. They have not the grasp of things nor the strength and spirit of their predecessors. There are a few good men; but too few. The rest are young and many mediocre.⁷⁸

Certain administrative procedures of Viceroys and Secretaries of State helped to perpetuate and to augment a negative image of the I.C.S. All important posts in the Viceroy's Executive Council, aside from the military and legal memberships, were legally open to appointment of covenanted civilians. But on numerous occasions, Viceroys hesitated to appoint a civilian subordinate rather than a competent outsider from England. Ripon, Dufferin, Curzon and Minto all protested the selection of civilians for the Financial Membership, since it was commonly

76. Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 27 July 1900, H.C., see also Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 15 Nov., 1900, H.C.

77. Sir A. Mackenzie, L.-G. of Bengal, to Lord Elgin, Belvedere Calcutta, 14 Dec., 1896, E.V.P.

78. A.P. MacDonnell to Lansdowne, Darjeeling, 29 Oct., 1893. MacDonnell Papers, the Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

thought impossible "to find any man in this country who has the smallest grasp of economical principles."⁷⁹ Ripon reluctantly settled for the appointment of a retired civilian, Auckland Colvin, as successor to Evelyn Baring in the Finance position. Baring, himself an outsider, shared the distrust of the civilians,⁸⁰ and concurred in Ripon's opinion that there was not one "in the Indian Civil Service fit for the post."⁸¹ Dufferin felt the same reluctance to appoint a civilian Financial Member. No civilian, he thought, had the requisite qualifications, not even Charles Elliott⁸² whom Dufferin acknowledged as the most likely candidate among the civilians. The highest recommendation offered for Elliott's candidacy was the fear that unless he were appointed, he would likely "not . . . care to stay in India."⁸³ Discounting the rumour that he intended to send George Campbell, a retired civilian ("I have far too great regard for you to send him to you"), Cross admitted his inability in finding any willing English candidates.⁸⁴ Dufferin ultimately acquiesced in the appointment of David Barbour, formerly civilian Chief Secretary in the Finance Department.⁸⁵ Curzon envisaged a reform of the Executive Council which would practically have eliminated civilians from most of the important positions.

On rare occasions, for example the appointment of Evelyn Baring as Finance Member during the administration of Lord Ripon, notable non-official candidates from England might offer themselves for high offices in India. But there were two factors which often frustrated the attempts of Viceroys to clear their Councils of "inept" civilians: The first was the widespread reluctance of successful or promising British politicians or businessmen to accept service in India; and the second was the statutory provision in the Government of India calling for the appointment to the Executive Council of at least three civilians

79. Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 23 April 1883, R.V.P.

80. See Ripon to Hartington, Barrackpore, 27 Feb., 1881, R.V.P.

81. Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 23 April 1883, R.V.P.

82. Charles Elliott was, at that time, Chairman of the Retrenchment Commission, established to suggest economies in the G. of I.

83. Dufferin to Cross, Simla, 10 Spt. 1886, D.V.P.

84. Cross to Dufferin, India Office, 29 Oct. 1886, D.V.P.

85. Dufferin to Cross, Calcutta, 25 Jan. 1887, D.V.P.

having a minimum of ten years' service each in India.⁸⁶ As a consequence, both Curzon and Minto failed to achieve the renovation of the Council along lines they regarded as necessary for the welfare of the Government.

The British ruling class often saddled the competition civilians with the primary responsibility for the growing animosity of Indians against Europeans. In light of the tenacious hold maintained by covenanted civilians over the higher echelons of the service and the effectiveness of civilian protest in preventing the expanded entrance of Indians into higher posts, the accusation was not entirely unjustified. But it was the peculiar characteristic of the aristocratic criticism that this monopolistic attitude of the officials should be regarded as a specific result of the competitive system and the "lowly" social origins of the competitive recruits. Somehow the opinion became embedded in the minds of the aristocracy that the days of the patronage system, prior to 1855, had been the halcyon era of the I.C.S. Lytton bemoaned what he called "the crystallized official formality towards natives of the highest class, and [he continued] it is really a wonder that our rule is not more unpopular than it is." His diagnosis of the problem is a clear indication of the aristocracy's opinion of the civilians:

I fear it [*i.e.*, danger to British rule] is aggravated by the results of the present covenanted system. Our competition wallahs are certainly not deficient in ability, [this remark is contrary to his confidential correspondence with Stephen], but they all appear to regard the public service as their personal prey, to look upon their life and work in India as a disagreeable condition of the emoluments attached to them, and to deem the interests of the Empire altogether secondary to their own. I am told by the older generation that formerly this was not the pervading spirit of the Indian public service.⁸⁷

Hamilton also linked the problems of empire to the disenchantment with India and the avoidance of an Indian career among

84. Morley to Minto, India Office, 1 April 1910, Morley Collection, I.O.L.

85. Lytton to Marquis of Salisbury, Simla, 28 Sept., 1876, Lytton, V.P.

young men of promise in England.⁸⁸ According to Curzon, men with a "high sense of duty and an interest in the people were declining in the Service," while "dislike" for India had been increasing in inverse proportion.⁸⁹

Viceroy's commonly regarded covenanted civilians as the root of stagnation and inflexibility within the Government of India. Curzon asserted that all his viceregal bureaucratic reforms had to be drawn up single-handedly and implemented in the face of persistent inertia among the officials. Hamilton wondered whether civilians in high positions had not lost "that vigour and originality which alone can produce change . . ."⁹⁰ Both Morley and Minto spoke disparagingly of civilians for their failure to make an accommodation to Indian political developments. Morley likened their inflexibility to life in a "balloon;"⁹¹ he was "so sick," he said, "of the wooden-headedness of the mere bureaucrat,"⁹² and he concluded that "castiron bureaucracy can't go on for ever . . ."⁹³ The citation of these critical statements does not, of course, indicate that they are true *ipso facto*. Their inclusion at this point simply helps to show the negative attitude of the aristocracy, clearly a primary factor in explaining the inferior rating of the I.C.S. among most young men at the universities.

Covenanted civilians recognized the low status they occupied in the eyes of the aristocracy. Their bitterness emerged on occasion in the form of revealing sarcasm. One civilian commented cynically on the exclusion of covenanted civilians from some of the London celebrations of Victoria's Jubilee.⁹⁴ Another wrote of the girls in English ball-rooms who "frequently forget their dances with gentlemen whom they have

88. Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 1 May 1902, H.C.

89. Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 21 May 1902, H.C. An interesting corroborative opinion appeared in a letter from Sirdar Sir Atar Singh, Chief of Bhadaur, to H. Babington Smith, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Ludhiana, 22 June 1894, Mac Donnell papers.

90. Hamilton to Curzon, Deal Castle, 27 Aug., 1902, H.C.

91. Morley to Minto, India Office, 10 Sept., 1908, Morley papers.

92. Morley to Minto, India Office, 21 May 1908, Morley papers.

93. Morley to Minto, India Office, 6 June 1906, Morley papers.

94. C.H.T. Crosthwaite to C.P. Ilbert, Edinburgh, 13 May 1886, Ilbert papers, I.O.L.

discovered to be Indian officials on furlough.”⁹⁵ In his autobiographical book titled *The Little World of an Indian District Officer*, Robert Carstairs condemned strongly the haughty demeanour of British politicians who disregarded the efforts and achievements of “humble . . . Indian administrators.”⁹⁶ The autobiographies of Evan Maconochie and Sir Michael O’Dwyer indicate that civilian candidates recruited under Salisbury’s regulations after 1876 were treated disdainfully and snobbishly by their peers at Oxford during their probationary period. “My own tutor,” wrote Maconochie, “concealed with complete success any interest that he may have had in my progress.”⁹⁷ O’Dwyer found the atmosphere at Oxford to be definitely non-congenial to the youthful recruits: “the tone [at Oxford] was rather ‘highbrow’ and cliquy, [and] there was a tendency . . . to regard us as birds of passage.”⁹⁸ It would have been unnatural for young men either of promise and/or of high social standing to consider seriously a career so lightly regarded by the universities and so generally downgraded by the wider community of the aristocracy. Paradoxically, spokesmen for the aristocracy professed aspirations to improve I.C.S. recruitment, but their continual denigration of the covenanted civilians had exactly the opposite effect. It is unlikely therefore that any standard of recruitment for the I.C.S., no matter how stringent or successful, would have met with the approbation of the English aristocracy. Except for those motivated by particular circumstances, perhaps parental influence, few would choose voluntarily to be associated with an institution whose representatives were constantly the object of ridicule in the higher circles of English society.

The restricted possibilities of a career in England, rather than the attractiveness of an Indian career, tended to determine candidacy for the I.C.S., a conclusion to be drawn from the few available autobiographical case histories. Rivett-Carnac, a

95. *The Bengal Civil Service; a Chapter of Indian Experiences*, p. 104. [written anonymously]

96. Robert Carstairs, *The Little World of an Indian District Officer*, p. 4.

97. Evan Maconochie, *Life in the Indian Civil Service*, p. 13.

98. Sir Michael O’Dwyer, *India as I Knew It*, pp. 20 and 23; see also Lord Wenlock, Governor of Madras, to Lansdowne, Guindy, 4 March 1893, LVP.

product of the last term class at Haileybury in 1858, recalled that his family had some connections with Lord Palmerston; and he had therefore hoped to obtain a career in the diplomatic corps. But against his wishes, he was forced by his father to take second best and to enter Haileybury.⁹⁹ As "the younger son of a youngest son," Rivett-Carnac was "obliged to seek his fortune in the East."¹⁰⁰ The chief value of the Indian Empire, in Carnac's thinking, was its adaptation "to the necessities of cadets of old families, like my own, whose progeny is numerous, and whose pedigrees are much longer than their purses."¹⁰¹ G.R. Elsmie, a Punjab official, had initially declined an appointment to Haileybury, but later acquiesced in the prudent opinion of his family that "it was my duty to overcome my prejudice and to adopt an Indian career."¹⁰² H.J.S. Cotton, a noted competition wallah, was likewise the victim of patriarchal coercion:

I confess [wrote Cotton] that my own thoughts had never led me in that direction [*i.e.*, an I.C.S. career]. It is true that we were emphatically an Anglo-Indian family. My great grandfather had traded in the East. . . My grandfather had entered the service long before the days of Haileybury, but my father was a typical Haileybury man. I had uncles and cousins by the dozen who had served in the Indian Civil Service or in the Indian Army. . . and yet I had never looked on the I.C.S. as a career. My thoughts were all wrapped up in the pleasure and prospects and ambition of a life at home.¹⁰³

John Beames, son of an Anglican Clergyman, and later an official in the Bengal Service, wrote perhaps the only account of enthusiastic entry into the I.C.S. Beames recalled, however, that his father informed him of his nomination to Haileybury

99. J.H. Rivett-Carnac, *Many Memories of Life in India, at Home, and Abroad*, pp. 12 ff.

100. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

101. *Ibid.*, p. 377.

102. G.R. Elsmie, *Thirty-five Years in the Punjab, 1858-1893*, p. 2. Philip Hutchins, another Haileybury graduate, had planned to attend a university; but like Elsmie was apparently compelled by his parents to enter the I.C.S. See Philip Hutchins, *An Indian Career, 1858-1908*, p. 3.

103. Sir H.J.S. Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories*, pp. 37 f.

with regret, and only because the opportunities for professional employment in England were limited. His father "had looked forward to a successful career at the Bar forme . . . but he could not advise me to refuse so splendid a prospect if my health would stand the climate."¹⁰⁴ English parents had to be on the lookout for openings that would suit both their pocketbooks and their class standing. Failing of any vocational interests in India among the highest social echelons in England, the "middle classes"¹⁰⁵ provided the bulk of the competitors for the Covenant Civil Service.

The widening spheres of professional employment available in England towards the end of the nineteenth century constitute therefore yet another factor helping to account for the rapid decline of competitors during the early 1890's. It was widely recognized that "the most promising students at Oxford or Cambridge, or even at the Scotch universities", had not presented themselves as I.C.S. candidates because "the attractions of the Bar, Medicine, the Church, and literature, in this country are stronger even than those of the splendid prizes offered in a distant and unhealthy country."¹⁰⁶

Lack of deference and recognition for Indian honours in England is still another indication of the lackluster character of Indian careers. W.W. Hunter, the most noted among the I.C.S. scholars of the nineteenth century, tried desperately but unsuccessfully to obtain a K.C.B. in place of a proffered Knighthood in the Star of India, which he regarded as insufficient reward. The Queen expressed dismay at the discontentment among Indian civilians in this matter, and said she regarded the K.C.S.I. to be as valuable as knighthoods in the English order. But her words changed nothing. The inferiority of Indian honours was tacitly acknowledged by everyone in English society.

Aside from the attitude of the aristocracy, other factors help explain the relatively low prestige of the I.C.S., particularly

104. John Beames, *Memoirs of a Bengal Civilian*, pp. 60 f.

105. Sir Bampfylde Fuller, *Studies of Indian Life and Sentiment*, p. 94.

106. Article in the *Daily Telegraph*, London, 30 June 1875, quoted in "Opinions of the Press on the Report of the Debate on the I.C.S. in the House of Commons of June 29, "G. of I., Home, Public, A, 192, Feb., 1876, N.A.I.

the alleged injustices borne by covenanted civilians. Yet even in relation to these civilian grievances the aristocracy played an important role. British political leaders consistently brushed aside the complaints of officials, and reacted finally only in desperation when the adverse conditions appeared to have serious effect on recruitment. Political leaders often contended that civilians were already receiving too many benefits, and naturally felt that the lowly social and educational background of many officials justified the disregard to their complaints. In this way, the aristocracy usually exacerbated the outcries. If they had attempted to ameliorate these grievances at an earlier point, the pessimism of officials in India might not have spread so widely among potential I.C.S. candidates in Great Britain. From about 1870 through 1890 there were numerous complaints from covenanted civilians that the highly publicized advantages of an Indian career had been largely vitiated by stagnation in promotion.¹⁰⁷ Sir Lepel Griffin, a retired civilian, charged in 1887 that retarded promotion had lowered civilian salaries by about 30 to 40 per cent below what had been expected by recruits of earlier decades.¹⁰⁸ Knowledge of this fact, he said, was already having injurious effect on current recruitment. T.J. Chichele Plowden, of the Bengal Civil Service, wrote during the climax of the protest that promotion stagnation was often discussed in the universities and public schools, and had done "more than anything else" to keep capable youths from the competitive exams.¹⁰⁹

A belief prevailed among civilians that stagnation was largely the result of a conspiracy between old guard patronage officials and their friends in the military establishment. Under the Haileybury system, though military men had been able to work their way into civilian employment through patronage,

107. R.M. King, Deputy Commissioner, Fyzabad, to the Officiating Sec. to the Chief Commissioner, Oudh, 5 July 1875, in *Papers Relating to the I.C.S.*, p. 333. *The Bengal Civil Service; a Chapter of Indian Experiences*, p. 24; see also references in John Beames, *Memoirs of a Bengal Civilian*, and many others.

108. Sir Lepel Griffin, *Asiatic Quarterly Review* (1887), p. 263; see also Minute by the Governor of Bombay, in *Papers Relating to the I.C.S.*, pp. 74 f; and many other references.

109. Memorandum by T. J. Chichele Plowden, 8 June 1875, in *Papers Relating to the I.C.S.*, p. 442.

“they had only that share which the Civil Service could well spare”.¹¹⁰ The 1857 Mutiny had allowed old patronage officials to replace lost civilian officials with friends and relatives from the military. The overabundance of career soldiers with permanent claims on the civilian branch of government was a continuing block to the advance of regularly recruited civilians.¹¹¹ Whether or not these complaints had validity, many both in and outside the I.C.S., believed that they had exercised an injurious effect on recruitment.

Officials credited the employment of Indians in covenanted posts as still another threat to I.C.S. recruitment. Many civilians objected to the Statutory Rules established by Lord Lytton in 1879 whereby specially chosen Indians could be appointed without examination to posts ordinarily reserved for covenanted civilians. T. D. Mackenzie, a Chief Secretary in the Bombay Government, told the Public Service Commission of 1887 that the entrance of “Statutory Civilians . . . by side ways” had undoubtedly dampened the enthusiasm of many potential English candidates. Many witnesses warned the Commission against facilitating the candidacy of Indian youths. Further modifications would damage irreparably the remaining vestiges of I.C.S. reputation in the eyes of “high class [young] men” in England.¹¹²

The falling value of the rupee and the correlative decrease in the English value of an Indian salary also affected recruitment adversely. A comparison of I.C.S. salaries with those of comparable positions elsewhere indicates that Indian salaries must have remained the most powerful lure for I.C.S. candidates. A chart drawn up by the Home Department of the Government of India in 1882 placed salaries of chief secretaries, Revenue Board members, and Judges of the Indian High Courts side by side with salaries of similar positions in England. In most cases, the former equalled and often surpassed the latter.

110. R.M. King to the Officiating Sec. to the Chief Commissioner, Oudh, 5 July 1875, in *Papers Relating to the I.C.S.*, p. 333.

111. *Ibid.*, p. 333; a further discussion of this problem will appear in Chapter II.

112. Note of T.C. Mackenzie, Acting Chief Sec. in the Revenue, Financial, and General Deptt., Bombay, *Proceedings of the Public Service Commission*, Vol. IV. Section IV, p. 80.

Chief secretaries in India received salaries in a range between £2800 up to £4000 while their counterparts in England never received higher than £2500. Membership on one of the Boards of Revenue in India brought more than £3000 yearly; comparable positions in England allegedly commanded no more than a maximum of £2000 per year. Chief Justices of the High Courts in India received salaries equal to any members of the higher English judiciary, except the Lord Chancellor. Most district judges in India obtained higher wages than any of the country court judges in England.¹¹³

This survey, however, did not take into account the escalating loss in the exchange value of Indian salaries caused by weakness of the rupee. Wallace Mackee, Assistant Magistrate and Collector of Jessore, drew up a comparison between salaries of Bengal civilians in 1874 and 1884, indicating a considerable loss to civilians:¹¹⁴

Table showing the salary of Lower Provinces (Bengal) Civilians in 1874 and 1884, taking into account the effect of the declining exchange value of the rupee.

Heading under which the comparison has been made	on January 1, 1874	on January 1, 1884
1. Number of officers drawing less than £1000 <i>per annum</i>	86	87
2. Number drawing from £1000 to less than £2000	49	48
3. Number drawing from £2000 to less than £3000	45	56
4. Number drawing from £3000 to less than £4000	33	7
5. Number drawing from £4000 to less than £5000	4	9

113. Note by T.C. Hope, 16 Nov. 188, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 106-155, June 1882, 139, N.A.I.

114. Memorial of Andrew Wallace Mackee, Assistant Magistrate and Collector, Jessore, 13 June 1884, in a file of memorials of complaint from members of the Civil Service of the Lower Provinces, Bengal, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 103-141, June 1885, 120.

6. Number drawing from £5000 to £6000	7	0
Total number drawing less than £3000	180	191
Total number drawing £3000 and upwards	44	16

(In making the Table, Mackee figured on the basis of an exchange rate of 2 shillings per rupee in 1874 and 1 shilling and 8 pence in 1884.)

Aside from the depression of the rupee, the difficulty to save for the future had been increased by rising expense of travel, by higher educational fees for children in England, and by other expenses. Whereas Thomas Macaulay believed that civilians could save £30,000 in the course of their careers, by 1873 the average savings for most civilians did not amount to more than £3000.¹¹⁵ The declining value of the rupee considerably worsened the situation. In the decade from 1876 to 1885, the remittance rate had slipped from two shillings down to one shilling, seven pence per rupee.¹¹⁶ By 1892, a rupee was worth less than one shilling, four pence.¹¹⁷ In the period from 1876 to 1893, covenanted civilians continued to flood the government with petitions reminding Viceroys and Secretaries of State that officials had entered the I.C.S. believing they would be able to remit their savings at the rate of two shillings per rupee. The petitions repeatedly accused the Government of India of failure to fulfil expectations held out to them by the Civil Service Commissioners. Many regretted their choice of career, and contended they would have obtained a relatively higher status and salary at home.¹¹⁸ Some requested they be allowed to retire

115. G.R. Elsmie, *Thirty-Five Years in the Punjab; 1858-1893*, p. 186.

116. See, e.g., Memorial of E.J. Barton, Magistrate and Collector of Jessore, 30 June 1884, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 103-141, June 1885, 127, N.A.I.

117. See, e.g., J.S.C. Davis, Bengal Civil Service, "Oxford and the Indian Civil Service", *Oxford Magazine*, X (2 March, 1892), p. 208.

118. See memorials in G. of I., Home, Public, A, 103-141, June 1885, N.A.I.

on a proportionate pension.¹¹⁹ Several noted that failure to grant concessions would have further unfavourable consequences for the recruitment of future covenanted civilians.¹²⁰

London authorities pleaded economy as the reason for their procrastination in responding to the civilian protest.¹²¹ But clearly the long delay and the last minute compromise announced in 1893 were yet further signs that the government had little respect or concern for the "second rate" men who administered the Indian Empire. During the height of the controversy, Lord Cross not only ignored the pleas of the officials but even proposed sizable reductions in I.C.S. furlough allowances.¹²² A. P. MacDonnell, at that time Home Secretary, epitomized I.C.S. reaction with his assertion that "if it were usual to prefix maxims to Despatches, the present Despatch [on furloughs] from the Secretary of State might be appropriately headed 'from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.'¹²³ The civilian outcry forced Lord Cross to retract his new furlough regulations,¹²⁴ but he continued to delay action on the rupee remittance question. It remained for recruitment debacle of the early 1890's to produce action from London authorities towards the amelioration of civilian grievances. Officials were granted permission to remit not more than half of their salaries at the rate of one shilling, six pence per rupee subject to a maximum limit of £1000 per year.¹²⁵ This arrange-

119. Memorial of Henry James, Magistrate and Collector, Rungpore, 26 June 1884, *Ibid.*, 124.

120. See, *e.g.*, Memorial of Frederick Beatson Taylor, Officiating Joint Magistrate, 20 July 1883, *Ibid.*, 133: "[It is] in cumbent on the Indian Government to offer some corresponding advantages of a pecuniary nature [to balance the detractions], if it wishes to enlist good men for its service". See also F.J. Lys, "The Indian Civil Service and the Universities", *Fortnightly Review*, 59 (January-June, 1893), pp. 525 ff.

121. Financial Despatch to India, 91, 15 March 1877, G. of I., Home, Public, B, 242-243, July 1877, 242, N.A.I.

122. Financial Despatch to India, 101, 31 March 1887, G. of I., Home, Public, B, 73-75, Sept., 1887, 74, N.A.I.

123. Note by A.P. MacDonnell, Home Sec., 28 May 1887, in *Ibid.*

124. Financial Despatch from India, 187, 23 July 1887, *Ibid.*, 75.

125. Resolution of the Government of India, 18 Aug., 1893, enclosure to Financial Despatch from India, 312, *Financial Letters from India*, Vol. 178, 1893, I.O.L.

ment not only fell short of the requested two shilling ratio, but also failed to establish any special compensation for the heavier losses borne by the older officials. The Viceroy, Lord Elgin, tried to impress the Secretary of State with his conviction that highly placed senior civilians, such as Lieutenant-Governors or Members of the Viceroy's Council, should receive an exchange bonus as recognition for long and illustrious service.¹²⁶ But the Secretary of State refused to budge, and Elgin finally acquiesced, acknowledging that "it is no use saying anything more."¹²⁷ Civilians therefore assumed, with justification, that the Secretary of State had acted more in desperation to reverse the ebbing tide of recruitment than to make up for the injustices suffered by officials already in service.¹²⁸

The lateness and stinginess of government action in 1893, together with the continued operation of other adverse influences produced a growing tendency among civilians to leave India at an early date to look for profitable employment at home. Sir Steuart Bayley revealed that his resignation as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal (the most prestigious civilian position) in 1890, well in advance of his normal retirement schedule, had been precipitated by the rupee crisis and his subsequent inability to save any funds during the whole of his Indian career.¹²⁹ He returned home to assume the less prominent position of political secretary at the India Office. Others, among them H.J.S. Cotton and Alexander Mackenzie, tried less successfully to exchange their underpaid Indian burdens for the comforts and security of King Charles Street. The Under-Secretary of State for India, Sir A. Godley, was so bothered by discontented civilians on furlough seeking London employment that he decided to refuse almost all interviews with them.

Statistical evidence shows conclusively that covenanted civilians in general during the late nineteenth century had a

126. Elgin to Hamilton, Simla, 28 July 1896, E.V.P.; see also Elgin to Hamilton, Simla, 1 June 1897, E.V.P.

127. Elgin to Hamilton, Simla, 5 May 1898, E.V.P.

128. D.R. Lyall to Col. J.C. Ardagh, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Calcutta, 29 Aug., 1892, E.V.P.

129. Hamilton to Elgin, India Office, 9 July 1896, E.V.P.; see also Col. J.C. Ardagh, Private Sec. to Viceroy, to Lansdowne, Carlsbad, 7 June 1892, L.V.P.

tendency to leave India as soon as possible, well before the thirty-five-year mandatory retirement date. Civil Service regulations allowed men to retire with a pension of £1000 yearly after twenty-five years' membership in the I.C.S., if they had "rendered twenty-one years" of active service.¹³⁰ Only sixteen of twenty-five men recruited in 1875 remained in India beyond the twenty-five year period. Among those who had entered the service in 1877, the proportion was reduced to six out of twenty-five. Many retired or resigned even before the expiration of the twenty-five year period, and only a small percentage (16% of the 1870 recruits, 8% of the 1875 recruits, none of the 1877 recruits, 6% of the 1880 recruits, and 28% of the 1885 recruits) remained in India for the maximum thirty-five year tenure.¹³¹ The Government of India in fact found it necessary to regulate resignations and retirements more closely by stipulating that future recruits must agree not to resign their positions without the sanction of the Government.¹³² Secretary of State Hamilton confessed the problem of retaining able men in the service when answering Curzon's complaint about the paucity of good writers in the secretariats: ". . . are the men who can write to be found in the Service? I am afraid that men who can write and are conscious of this aptitude are disposed, as soon as they can attain their maximum pension, to come home, and supplement their income by work in London."¹³³

By the mid 1870's there had of course been a great metamorphosis in the conditions relating to employment in the Indian service. The Suez Canal, telegraphic communication, and improved steam transportation had brought England within easier reach of India. This caused civilians to think of India less as a permanent home than their predecessors of former years had done. Officials spent more time on furlough in England, and they looked forward to the time when their Indian exile would at last be terminated permanently. Many of them agreed with

130. Civil Service Regulations *The India List for 1896* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1896), p. 210.

131. See relevant volumes of the *India List*.

132. Right Hon'ble H.H. Fowler, Sec. of State for India, to the G.-G. of India in Council, India Office, 18 Oct., 1894, G. of I., Home. Est., A, 14-15, Feb., 1895, 14, N.A.I.,

133. Hamilton to Curzon, Dalkeith, N.B., 14 Jan., 1903, H.C.

C.H.T. Crosthwaite "that the best thing to do in India is to save money and clear out as quickly as possible."¹³⁴

But saving money was a serious problem for civilians, particularly for those with families to educate back in England. And without a sizeable purse, retirement in England for the covenanted civilians was, as Crosthwaite realized, "a poor ending."¹³⁵ If the civilians retired at the end of the twenty-five years' service, he would be returning to England just at a time when his peers at home were reaching the height of their professional careers. It was unlikely, according to Sir Fitzjames Stephen, that the average official would be able to find creditable employment upon his return home. This problem, thought Stephen, needed as much or more attention than salary adjustments in seeking remedies for the recruitment problem. "It is a dismal work," he told Lytton, "to be laid on the shelf at [Cheltenham?] or some such place at fifty, yet that and nothing better is the net result of all average Indian careers."¹³⁶ Retirement for the Indian civilian, according to Crosthwaite, was a "complete descent, and you might as well be a retired thinker as a retired civilian without money."¹³⁷ So regardless how much one may have wished to "clear out," the bleak retirement prospects for the average civilian must have made him think twice before relinquishing an assured position in India for the insecurity of England where he is unwanted and unsung in the higher echelons of society.

Finally, there were the expected "built-in" disadvantages of an Indian career. A youth contemplating candidacy for the service could hardly avoid unpleasant thoughts about the health hazards and the unfavourable climate in which he would probably be compelled to live. There was also the practical certainty that at some point in one's career, if not for long periods of times, one would be separated from wife and children, depending on

134. C.H.T. Crosthwaite to Ilbert, Edinburgh, May 1886, Ilbert papers; see also Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 9 Feb., 1900, H.C.; Hamilton accuses civilians of looking upon India primarily as "a place from which to abstract rupees."

135. Crosthwaite to Ilbert, Edinburgh, May 1886.

136. Stephen to Lytton, Knebworth, 21 May 1876, Stephen correspondence.

137. Crosthwaite to Ilbert, Edinburgh, May 1886, Ilbert papers.

their health and educational plans. H.J.S. Cotton wrote in his memoirs: "It is this family dissolution and the domestic anxiety following from it that are the most painful accompaniments of an Indian life."¹³⁸ C.H.T. Crosthwaite, planning his return to India from furlough, wrote to C.P. Ilbert that his heart sank whenever he thought "of the partings there must soon be Nothing but poverty", he added, "makes me do it again."¹³⁹

The thought of cultural and social displacement was still another obvious barrier to an Indian career. At Haileybury the prevalent attitude appears to have been the repression of thoughts about any unpleasantness of India. John Beames recalled that there was little discussion of India at Haileybury, other than an occasional reference to its heat and the fact that it was inhabited by "niggers."¹⁴⁰ "In those days at least," wrote Cotton, "there was a disillusionment about India which it was necessary to live through."¹⁴¹ Most, like Cotton, apparently overcame the shock. But for most there remained the lingering regrets which, as in the case of J.H. Rivett-Carnac, made it impossible for them "ever [to] take quite kindly to India."¹⁴² There was something impenetrable and enigmatic about India for the average civilian. He was indeed an outsider who almost always found it impossible to break through the wall separating him from Indian culture. Robert Carstairs tried to catalogue some of the perplexities confronted by the British officials, and then summed them all up by saying: "But why go on? We lived in the midst of mystery."¹⁴³

One significant standard by which to measure the relative unpopularity of the I.C.S. is the expectation of those who inaugurated the competitive system: As soon as they realized their expectations would remain unmet, there developed a critical view of the competition wallah. This, added to the natural tendency of old patronage officials to view their new colleagues with suspicion and apprehension, triggered a chain reaction of anti-competition sentiment that soon became widespread, if not

138. H.J.S. Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories*, p. 125.

139. Crosthwaite to Ilbert, Edinburgh, 17 Aug., 1886, Ilbert papers.

140. John Beames, *Memoirs of a Bengal Civilian*.

141. Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories*, p. 56.

142. J. H. Rivett-Carnac, *Many Memories of Life in India*, p. 23.

143. Robert Carstairs, *The Little World*, p. 103.

universal, among the aristocracy in England. The increasing number of non-university men who entered the service in the post-mutiny years (1860-63), in part because of the expanded compensatory recruitment (see footnote 23), did nothing to help the low profile of the I.C.S. While it would be difficult to document the precise succession of stimuli and responses in the growth of an anti-I.C.S. attitude, it was hardly accidental that declining popularity followed closely the rising volume of criticism. While the early examination results were disappointing to many, the expressions of this produced even less promising results in succeeding years. In his own recent analysis of the earliest competition period (1864-76), J.M. Compton notes the "uncongenial" position of the recruits as revealed in unkind satire and caricature that became noticeably prevalent in the early 1860's: "The class to which he belonged was constantly assailed in the newspapers as socially and physically incompetent. He was cleverly caricatured in the widely read *The Competition Wallah*" (by G.O. Trevelyan).¹⁴⁴

Then, to the undertone of aristocratic negativism, there were gradually added a number of serious complaints by the civilians. In most cases, the ruling class did little or nothing to eliminate the supposed injustices or to provide remedies. Their relative inaction was a sign of their true sentiments. After more than ten years of agitation by civilians, the Secretary of State reluctantly announced in 1876 that officials affected by stagnation in promotion would be given compensation allowances.¹⁴⁵ Later, after another long period of civilian protest, the Secretary of State in 1893 finally established special remittance allowances to counteract the decline of the rupee. But in both cases, the remedial action was undertaken at a late date and indicated more a desire to stem the severe recruitment lag at home than to aid officials already in India. The compensation allowances of 1876 were initiated almost simultaneously with a new law in pessimism concerning recruitment, and the same could be said

144. J.M. Compton, "Open Competition and the Indian Civil Service, 1854-1876," *op. cit.*, p. 272; see also G.O. Trevelyan, *The Competition Wallah*, pp. 10. ff.

145. S. of S. for India to His Ex'cy the Right Hon. the G-G. of India in Council, India Office, London, 13 July 1876, G. of I., 223-280, Home Public, A, Sept., 1877, 247, N.A.I.

of the remittance allowances of 1893. At the same time that they persistently hesitated to ameliorate civilian grievances, the political leaders in England increased the volume of criticism against the I.C.S. Thus even Salisbury's dramatic recruitment reforms of 1876, contrary to one recent speculation,¹⁴⁶ effected no noticeable improvement.

In truth, recruitment for the I.C.S., very early fell into a negative syndrome from which, for the various reasons outlined, it could never really lift itself. The improvement effected by the changes of 1895 were superficial in character and short-lived. An important element in the creation of the negative syndrome was the arrogance of an irresponsible and basically unconcerned aristocracy an aristocracy that showed no more concern for the men who ruled India than for the Empire itself. As a consequence, while from the start not as successful as had been anticipated, the I.C.S., failed to maintain even the relative level of attraction for promising university students reflected during approximately the first eight years of competition recruitment.

146. See Compton, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

PROMOTION IN THE I.C.S. AND PROBLEMS OF ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY

The rapidity of transfers in administrative appointments helped perpetuate confusion, misunderstanding, and the sense of “mystery” about their surroundings pervasive among civilian officials. Civilians were much more highly conscious of their image among colleagues than among the people they ruled. They were constantly exerting pressures to obtain promotion or transfer to higher posts and more favourable locations. These pressures, together with the liberalized furlough and leave rules adopted in 1868, practically vitiated the possibility of prolonged service in any one position. This, in turn, intensified the problem of commanding the loyalties of Indian subordinates who by nature disobeyed the directions of European officers whenever they conflicted with the whims of the local landlords.¹

The host of memorials addressed to the Government of India from disaffected civilians in every Presidency and province of India between 1870 and 1890 belies the statement of one author that the average civilian did “not want transfer or promotion;” that he wanted “to stay where he [was].”² Civilians viewed their labour in India as a sacrifice to be rewarded by good salaries and accelerated promotion, not as an impersonal performance of duties as seen in Max Weber’s ideal bureaucracy. The advertisements and promises of the Civil Service Commissioners provided reinforcement to their claims. Some civilians had seen the advertisements tacked on bulletin boards of their colleges. Others, like James R. Maconochie,

1. See, e.g., Whitcombe, *Agrarian Conditions*, pp. 19 and 213.
2. Philip Woodruff, *The Guardians*, Vol. I of *The Men Who Ruled India*, p. 182.

had seen alluring announcements in the *London Times*:

[These announcements] showed the salaries and positions for the time being of the early selected candidates, and an authoritative commentary pointed out the probability of industry and merit securing for themselves an early and prominent career of usefulness and power.³

Maconochie claimed his present status was "very much beneath what before entering the employ of the Indian Government he was authoritatively led to expect." Another memorialist, Herbert Charles Fanshawe of the Punjab Commission, cited *Fourth Report of the Civil Service Commissioners* as justification for his protest. There he had found such phrases as "study advancement", "infinite opportunities", "dignity, honour, and influence of position" as being descriptive of service in India. None of his "reasonable hopes" based on these promises had been fulfilled.⁴ Civilians wrote literally hundreds of memorials like this during the late nineteenth century.

While pressures from individuals caused endless annoyance for Viceroys (discussed in chapter five), group pressures were equally significant because they often produced concessions having long-range debilitating effects upon administrative efficiency. The measures adopted to placate organized civilian unrest cost the Government of India a considerable sum of money in the form of compensation allowances for slowness of promotion. Moreover, organized disaffection hastened the introduction of furlough rules in 1868 which unexpectedly and rather drastically curtailed the effectiveness of British administration. These allowed men to take furlough more often, under more favourable conditions, and at shorter intervals than previously. This, in turn, precipitated frequent transfers and subsequently caused impairment of continuity in administration. Recognition of the error came too late to introduce necessary revisions without augmenting the complaints of civilians and decreasing the attractions of the I.C.S., for potential recruits at home. The deficiencies were perpetuated without

3. Petition of James R. Maconochie, Officiating Deputy Commissioner of Gujarat, Gujarat, 19 March 1885, G. of I., Home, Public, A 69-125, May 1886, 102, N.A.I.

4. Memorial of Herbert Charles Fanshawe, 13 May 1885, in *Ibid.*, 120.

alteration for over three decades. Curzon then introduced some minor changes, but on his own admission they only touched the periphery of the problem.

Organized civilian remonstrance, beginning as early as 1863 in the North-Western Provinces, eventually spread to every province of British India. Junior civilians, according to the N.-W.P. protest, had not received the benefits of promotion stipulated in the I.C.S., regulations, especially rules established in 1856. Among other provisions, these maintained that "in each of the grades of Deputy Commissioner and of Assistant Commissioner [in the Punjab] there shall be, as nearly as practicable, an equal number of civilians and of military or uncovenanted officers, and that vacancies in future shall be so filled up as to gradually bring about this proportion."⁵ This provision, claimed the memorialists, had so often been overlooked that in the Punjab only 30 of 97 men in the class of Deputy and Assistant Commissioners were covenanted civilians. In Oudh, the proportion of civilian to military and uncovenanted officers was 8 to 27.

The first wave of civilian agitation reached its apex in the North-Western Provinces during the years 1873-75. A strong memorial was addressed to the Secretary of State in the fall of 1873, an *ad hoc* committee of civilians headed by A. Cotterell Tupp was formed, and Robert Lowe, M.P., agreed to bring civilian grievances before the House of Commons. In the same year, the Government of India admitted that "the contention of the memorialists is in the main borne out by facts," and it announced an intention "to arrange with the different administrations a systematic rule of procedure, whereby the preferential claims of civilians shall be brought forward . . ."⁶

E.C. Bayley, Home Member, proposed to examine the question whether N.-W.P. salaries averaged "less than can be considered a fair remuneration for men of their social position and intellectual calibre." Even admitting the disadvantages

5. C.F. Edmonstone, Esq., Sec. to G. of I., Foreign Dept., to Chief Commissioner of the Punjab, Fort William, 29 Aug., 1856, Appendix A in N.-W.P. Memorial of 1863, G. of I., Home, Public, A. 223-280, Sept., 1877, 225, N.A.I.

6. The G. of I., to the S. of S., Simla, 30 Oct., 1873, G. of I. Home, Public, A, 223-280, Sept., 1877, 225, N.A.I.

of an Indian career compared to one at home Bayley estimated that "Indian salaries are regulated on a scale more liberal than English by some 300 or 400 per cent." According to Bayley, Engineer officers in India offered the best comparison to covenanted civilians in terms of ability and hardships. Engineers of thirty or thirty-five years "receive [d] almost precisely the same average pay as the civilians in the N.-W. of fourteen years' service." In every instance subsequently Bayley found a balance in favour of covenanted civilians and he would not admit that "they have any solid grievance."⁷

But more significant than any merit of grievances was their effect, because, said Bayley, they have "given rise to a . . . feeling of discontent and despondency, which . . . probably somewhat impairs the efficiency of the service I therefore, . . . desirability of affording some relief to the N.-W.P. civilians is apparent."⁸ Moreover, as the Home Secretary had suggested, the general calibre of the civil service was threatened because "the present state of things is telling heavily against the standard of competition at home." Similarly, the Viceroy asserted that "prospects of advancement of civil servants in India should be sufficient to encourage good men to compete."⁹

The Governor-General in Council had already appointed a committee, including Sir W. Muir, President, Sir Alexander Arbuthnot, Ashley Eden, T. C. Hope, and James Westland, Secretary, to consider "the nature of the remedy which it may be possible and proper to apply to such grievances as may be established."¹⁰ The committee was also authorized to decide whether the position of civilians in the Punjab and Oudh required rectification, and was asked to formulate proposals for the regulation of annual recruitment for each province. The report of the committee, dated 24 January 1876, observed that the excess recruitment of 1861-63 had been based on an estimation of civilians required to fill all reserved posts in regulation

7. Note by E. C. Bayley, Public, Member, 2 Sept., 1875, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 192, Feb., 1876.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Note by Northcote, 13 Sept., 1875, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 202-202a, June 1875, N.A.I.

10. Resolution of the Government of India, Simla, 20 Oct., 1875, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 103-105, Oct., 1875.

provinces and half, as required after 1856, in non-regulation areas. The estimation had been faulty since "the fixed proportion of non-regulation appointments was not actually officered from the Civil Service."¹¹ Considering the "threat" to the "efficiency of the administration," the Secretary of State finally conceded the necessity of remedial action in July, 1876. He was willing to grant retirement on pension, but only to civilians who, although not fulfilling the regular requirement for pension, had nevertheless been members of the I.C.S. for twenty years. He favoured the idea of increasing district appointments in the N.-W.P., and grudgingly consented to compensation allowances on the scale suggested by the civilian committee, but for a period of five years only.¹²

Though these concessions were often ineffective (*e.g.*, the creation of a second level collectorate caused bitterness because it automatically lowered acting allowances), yet the partial success of the grievance campaign encouraged civilians of other provinces to follow suit. The Government extended the compensation allowances to Oudh civilians in September 1877¹³ and to the Central Provinces in November 1877.¹⁴ Incentive for retirement in the form of proportionate pensions was offered to Madras civilians in 1880.¹⁵ A committee of Punjab officials, appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in 1876 to investigate stagnation, found that many of their colleagues had gone more than six years beyond the acceptable limit without promotion.¹⁶ The situation was somewhat clouded, however, by the fact that many who had relatively low substantive appointments were

11. Report of the committee on grievances of N.-W.P. civilians, Calcutta, 24 Jan. 1876, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 223-280, Sept., 1877, 239, N.A.I.
12. S. of S. to G.-G. in Council, India Office, London, 13 July 1876, G. of I., 223-280, Home, Public, Sept., 1877, 247, N.A.I.
13. S. of S. to G.-G. in Council, India Office, 31 Oct., 1877, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 334, Dec., 1877, N.A.I.
14. Note by A.P. Howell, 25 Sept., 1877, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 153-154, Nov., 1877; see also G. of I. to S. of S., 8 Nov., 1877, in *ibid.*, 154.
15. Extract from proceedings of the G. of I. in the Dept. of Finance and Commerce, Simla, 26 April 1884, G. of I., Home Public, A, 241-253, May 1884, 251, N.A. I.
16. Note by the Assistant Sec. of the Home Dept., G. of I., 31. Jan., 1877, G. of I., Home Public, A, 223-280, Sept., 1877, N.A.I.

on the other hand “habitually officiating in the Rs. 700 grade.”¹⁷ In fact it was often not clear whether civilians complained about their actual state in officiating appointments, or whether they objected to their substantive posts. At any rate, the Secretary of State refused the Punjab application for compensation allowances and responded only to the extent of saying that higher Punjab appointments should be preserved exclusively for men of that commission.¹⁸

One of the seemingly incidental but ultimately most detrimental concessions granted to civilians during these years of protest was the liberalized furlough plan. Initial concessions, previously announced in 1853 and 1855, allowed civilians to take sick leave in Europe “with retention of appointment and half salary (limited to £ 1,000 at maximum) for a period not exceeding two years, as well as leave on private affairs for six months, also with retention of appointment and half salary.”¹⁹ By 1867, civilians were complaining about the alleged inadequacy of these earlier modifications.²⁰ The committee appointed to handle this new grievance recommended a further extension of potential leave time and further liberalization of the conditions under which furlough could be taken without loss of appointment. The committee believed that “the system of acting appointments, the natural result of the retention of office by absentees, would act beneficially for the public service.”²¹ In 1868, the Secretary of State extended total potential furlough time with retention of office from three to six and one half years, and also “dispense[d] with the condition of sickness for the retention of appointments.”²² The date of the announcement brings to mind immediately the opening of the Suez Canal in the following year. Taken together, these

17. Joint Report of messers R.E. Egerton, W.M. Young, and C.O. Tupper of Punjab Commission, in *Ibid.*, 275.

18. Despatch from S. of S. to G.-G. in Council, India Office, 2 Aug., 1877 (Public Despatch 83, 1877), in *Ibid.*

19. S. of S. to G. of I., India Office, London, 10 Feb., 1871, G. of I, Home, Public, A, 111-114, 24 June 1871, 113, N.A.I.

20. Duke of Argyll, S. of S., to G.-G. in Council, India Office, London 9 March 1871, G. of I., Home, Public, 111-114, 24 June 1871 112.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*

two events proved a bonanza for tired and irritated civilians anxious to enjoy a holiday in England.

The budgetary expenses for furlough allowances rose from £58,900 in 1866-67 to £123,033 in 1869-70; but more significantly, the number of men on furlough and leave had increased so rapidly that "the acting officers now nearly equal [ed] those employed on the duties of their substantive appointments."²³ The Secretary of State questioned "whether the privileges of leave have not been extended in a degree which is injurious to good Government in India, and detrimental to the service as a body."²⁴ The mobility of civilians and the decrease among them of sustained employment compared unfavourably, he thought, with the "devotion" of their predecessors "whose interest was in their work, and [who] looked for the rewards of retirement at home only at the end of a long career."²⁵ The permanent incumbent in any office would ordinarily be able to fulfil the duties of his office more effectively than a substitute. The increasingly numerous and long interruptions in an official's career, he concluded, "cannot but aggravate an evil which goes to the root of our rule in India;" they would lessen "the confidence, respect, and affection of the Natives."²⁶

Argyll's analysis, however, exposed only the visible tenth of the glacially dimensioned inconveniences created by the new regulations. He neglected to consider the immense tangle of transfers multiplied geometrically in proportion to the increase of furloughs. Continuity of administration had been impaired not only by the large increase in furloughs, but also because men could afterwards return to the same position they had previously held. If, for example, a civilian were to resume his substantive appointment after a year's or three months' leave, then the Government would become involved in an endless chain of transfers attempting to relocate his substitute. The pressure to find a comparable position for the acting man, so as to avoid any semblance of demotion or disapproval, further complicated the tangle.

23. *Ibid.* (as folio 20.)

24. S. of S. to G.-G. in Council, 9 March 1871, in *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*

Argyll's suggestion of March 1871 that the leave regulations should now be tightened met with a *non-possumus* reply from India. In a Financial Despatch from India, dated 23 May 1871, the Viceroy and his Council took exception to Argyll's proposed modifications as being "more severe than any regulations that have been in force since the privilege of furlough with allowances was first granted."²⁷ Open debate on the subject in India would raise a storm of protest "injurious to the public service," they said, and they insisted on maintenance of the 1868 regulations. Ample provision for vacation in Europe was imperative if the image of an Indian career as "an unbroken exile" was to be erased from the minds of "the particular classes from which it was desirable to recruit" covenanted civilians. The Council discounted any alleged debilitating influence of the 1868 rules, and naively predicted that:

Inasmuch as, when once the new rules are in full operation, it may certainly be expected that there will be but little variation from time to time in the number of officers absent, the great majority of acting officers can ordinarily never be disturbed, but will have as complete and permanent an interest in their offices as if they held them substantively. The practical effect of this rule will be, we believe, entirely to change the character of acting appointments which will become for the most part as permanent as if they were substantive appointments.

Their optimism was increasingly discredited during succeeding years as one Viceroy after another condemned a system judged, for example, by Curzon, "to be destructive to the continuity of our administration in India, injurious to the officers themselves, and detrimental to the close relations that should subsist between them and the people."²⁸

The new furlough rules continued in operation well over a decade before the Government of India gave any inkling of their deleterious effect. The admission came only after several years of exhaustive investigation involving a wide gamut of I.C.S. difficulties, including recruitment, promotion stagnation,

27. G. of I., Finance Dept., to Duke of Argyll, S. of S., Simla, 23 May 1871, in *Ibid.*, 112.

28. Curzon to Havelock, Sandhurst, Woodburn, Young, Fryer, Ibbetson, and Cotton, Simla, 24 April 1899, C.V.P.

and salary expectations. The complex web of furloughs and officiating appointments came under scrutiny in the context of attempts to achieve steady and adequate promotion through universal gradation of positions and salaries. Results of the investigation were largely inconsequential because most of the suggested remedies impinged uncomfortably on some of the cherished organizational prejudices of the Covenanted Civil Service.

An initial investigative committee, appointed by the Viceroy in 1876, made some effort to establish regular numerical limits for recruitment, but no conclusive agreement was reached. A second civilian committee, appointed in 1879 and working on the Government standard that covenanted civilians ought to obtain a substantive "cadre"²⁹ appointment with a salary of over Rs. 500 per month by the end of seven years' service, concluded that 210 subordinate civilian trainees would be required to maintain supply for the 525 higher positions in the Bengal Provinces. A proper rate of recruitment would include the enlistment of thirty-one men for three successive years and thirty-two men every fourth year.³⁰ These figures engendered much note writing about the meaning of "cadre" and whether or not it should be raised to a higher salary level so as to secure a more rapid rate of promotion to the higher and more desirable appointments.³¹ In this phase, it was finally concluded that 675 officials (including 153 men in subordinate training positions) were required to maintain 482 *cadre* offices in the Bengal Provinces.

29. The covenanted *cadre* as defined by the Government in 1879, would include all officials with salaries over Rs. 500 per month. The offices included in this *cadre* are listed in Appendix A.
30. Report of the committee to examine the question of the number of indents necessary, 8 Feb., 1879, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 106-155, June 1882, N.A.I.
31. G.H.M. Batten, Financial Dept. Sec., suggested that the word "cadre" had only arbitrary meaning and that more adequate promotion rates might be guaranteed by fixing its *terminus a quo* at a relatively high rate of salary, specifically Rs. 1000 per month. The number of required recruits fixed upon during this phase of the debate more or less followed Batten's calculations. See the following: Note by G.H.M. Batten, 2 May 1879, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 106-155, June 1882, N.A.I.; and note by Charles Bernard, Home Sec., 24 March 1880, in *Ibid.*

Objections of the provincial governments to these figures initiated a new phase in the dispute.³² Several, including the heads of Government in the N.-W.P., the Punjab, Central Provinces, and Assam, thought the narrow and excessively high limits of the so-called "cadre" appointments (*i.e.*, higher appointments at Rs. 800 per month to be reached within seven years of service) would dangerously diminish the number of covenanted civilians serving in their provinces. In this scheme, administrative efficiency, it was thought, had been sacrificed for the sake of pacifying civilians. With the observation of the Home Secretary, Charles Grant, that "this question has now been under discussion for several years,"³³ the file now passed to the new Financial Secretary, T.C. Hope, who began his own restudy of the problem early in 1881. Hope desired to eliminate discontentment, but not at the cost of adequate British representation in the I.C.S.; the desired goal could only be reached through a universal gradation of appointments to guarantee promotion to higher salaries at regular intervals regardless of the actual number of higher appointments that might be available. An added advantage of this reform would be an augmented efficiency made possible through elimination of acting allowances and hence of the transfer, or any confusion with regard to the furlough.

Gradation of positions and equalization of salaries would not be overly difficult, thought Hope, because he ascertained that in all the provinces there were five distinguishable steps of promotion in the executive line of service, despite the provincial variations in salaries and titles. From the first stage, essentially a "training" period (two years in Hope's scheme), the young civilian passed to the third class of assistantships, (also two years). Two more grades of assistantships, variously called Jt: Magistracies, Assistant Commissionerships, or the like, ordinarily constituted the next stages of advancement and covered a time span of about eight years according to Hope's

32. Draft Resolution by Charles Bernard in Home, Revenue, and Agriculture Dept., 17 May 1880, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 106-155, June 1882, 110, N.A.I.

33. Note by Charles Grant, Sec. to Home Dept., 28 March 1881, in *ibid.*

scheme. Finally, one reached the highest echelon of regular executive appointments, the category of Commissioners and Magistrates. The achievement of a consensus among the provincial governments regarding salaries for these grades would not be difficult, according to Hope.³⁴ A similar scheme might also be formulated for the judicial branch.

In order to complete the gradation and equalization, however, one further modification of the existing system was mandatory, namely the abolition of acting allowances, officiating appointments, and all the relating salary computations. Since an acting salary was the total of one's substantive pay plus two-thirds the difference between it and the standard pay of one's officiating position, an immense variety of salaries had developed for any single type of appointment. Hope's predecessor, G. H. M. Batten, had strongly advocated ending the distinction between substantive and officiating classifications which he regarded as "artificial."³⁵ Hope denounced the officiating status with equal conviction:

Owing to the operation of the furlough rules and other causes, these rules [apropos of officiating allowances] have a most extended application. Everybody is acting for everybody else. In the Bengal Service on the first of October last, only 56 out of 163 officers were doing duty in their own substantive posts.³⁶

Hope appended an example of the labyrinthian confusion implicit in the system of officiating appointments. It was an announcement, issued by an Under-Secretary of the Government of Bengal, detailing the transfers proliferating from the alteration of one official's status. One of several paragraphs in the announcement read as follows:

On the forenoon of the 25th October, Mr. C.A. Samuells rejoined his appointment in the first grade on being relieved of the Rajshahye Magistracy by Mr. Grimley.

34. T.C. Hope, Finance Dept. Sec., "The Covenanted and Uncovenanted Civil Services, their strength, organization, pay, and recruitment," 16 Nov., 1881, 139, in *Ibid.*
35. Note by G.H.M. Batten, 2 May 1879, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 106-155, June 1882.
36. Note by T.C. Hope, 16 Nov., 1881, G. of I., Home, Public, A, *Ibid.*

To make room for Mr. Samuells in the first grade, Mr. Taylor reverted to the second grade and Mr. Faulder to the position of a fully passed Assistant Magistrate and Collector. As, however, Mr. Grierson made over charge of his duties as an Officiating Joint Magistrate and Deputy Collector of the first grade at Madhubani on the afternoon of the 27th idem, to join his appointment as Officiating Inspector of Schools, Behar Circle, Mr. Taylor and Mr. Faulder again acted temporarily in the first and second grades respectively from the 28th.³⁷

To eliminate this confusion, Hope suggested the adoption of proposals put forward previously by General Strachey. Acting allowances and appointments should automatically be ended by returning to the regulations in force before 1868 wherein no distinction existed between substantive and acting appointments. Whoever held an appointment was its substantive incumbent as long as he remained on it. Moreover, according to Strachey's scheme, the disadvantage inherent in the pre-1868 system for those taking furlough or leave (notably the possible loss of status) would be removed. By a simple gradation of offices, men would lose nothing because of furlough, even though they might not be able to resume precisely the position they had left. Wherever assigned on their return, they would still serve in the same grade and on the same salary they had attained before their departure. Moreover, Hope believed that if salaries were strictly categorized to correspond with four stages of advancement, then no one could complain of unfairness. Although one might temporarily suffer setback if he were forced to return to a lower grade upon return from leave of a senior official, still the temporary disadvantage would be overbalanced by his inevitable advance as prescribed by the gradation system.³⁸

Based on Hope's analysis, a Despatch to the Secretary of State, dated 18, December 1881, proposed "to fix. . . the annual recruitment at 48.38 officers of whom 37.32 will be civilians

37. H.M. Kisch, Under-Sec. to Government of Bengal, to Accountant General of Bengal, 17 Dec., 1880, appendix, D, to Note of T.C. Hope, *Ibid.*

38. Note by T.C. Hope, *Ibid.*

reeruted in England." As determined by actuarial calculations, this number would maintain a service of 767 men to fill coveted posts in the Bengal Presidency.³⁹ Recruitment figures were to be re-examined quinquennially. Furthermore, in final admission of the errors and miscalculations of 1868, the Government planned "to regrade the emoluments of both the executive and judicial branches of the service in the several provinces in such a manner as to ensure regular promotion, and the approximate equalization of the rates of pay attached in different Provinces to the performance of similar duties, [and] to abolish acting allowances."⁴⁰

While the Secretary of State approved all these proposals, both of the latter met either with rejection or with only minimal support on the part of the local governments, and eventually had to be abandoned.⁴¹ This was unfortunate, not only because acting allowances were a headache to the Government but because they were symptomatic of the much more vexing problem of frequent transfers which would have been at least partially corrected by the implementation of Hope's scheme. Basic to the gradation plan was the principle that although men on furlough would retain their salary and rank, they would not ordinarily return to their former position, thus displacing their successor.

In the end, therefore, Hope's gradation scheme met with a fate similar to that of Argyll's attempt at reform. While the rate of recruitment proposed by Hope was generally accepted by the provincial governments, the more important aspects of his scheme were considered impractical and disadvantageous for civilians. Sir George Couper, Lieutenant-Governor of the N.-W.P., said he would welcome regradation, but only "if it is possible to do away with the acting allowance code by redistributing the number and cost of appointments among a fixed number of grades without causing in the long run the smallest loss to a single individual."⁴² Charles Elliott warned against any attempt to introduce a new gradation without making

39. G. of I. to S. of S., Fort William, 19 Dec., 1881, *Ibid.*, 140½.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Hope's recruitment figure was to be employed in the future.

42. Precis of replies to circular letter dated 27 Oct., 1882, Aug., 1884, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 119-129, Jan., 1885, N.A.I.

special temporary arrangements to prevent loss to substantive incumbents on the existing scale. In order to avoid disappointment to men presently officiating at levels to which they expected substantive promotion, Elliott suggested they be paid the full salary originally anticipated if given advancement within a year's time after the new rules came into effect. The Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces opposed the gradation plan because he adamantly resisted the idea that an official on furlough "should retain no lien on his appointment, but only on one of no less pay." Such an alteration would be "prejudicial" to the interests of civilians and would diminish their enthusiasm for "hearty and cheerful work."⁴³

The merit of the proposed reforms seemed indisputable. But wherever the introduction of reforms for promotion of governmental efficiency conflicted with entrenched interests of civilians, reforms ordinarily suffered eclipse. The fact was that the existing system of officiating appointments and acting allowances had come to form such a major part of civilian expectations since 1868 that its abandonment, as realized by Provincial Governments, would have caused an uproar in the ranks of the service where, already, there was unrest due to the alleged lag in promotion. Civilians regarded officiating appointments as a means of gaining a foothold in higher appointments. "It is in comparatively rare instances," said James Westland, "that it [*i.e.*, substantive promotion] causes any change of position or responsibility, while the advancement which it gives in salary is not nearly so great as that already obtained by the officiating promotion."⁴⁴ Officiating appointments might seem, superficially, to be less attractive because less stable. But the relative security implicit in them is indicated in the Government's statement that "the practice has been to place an officer returning not only in as good *substantive*, but in as good an *officiating* appointment equal to that which he held when last on duty. . . ."⁴⁵ Once elevated to an acting

43. *Ibid.*

44. Note by James Westland, Sec. of Committee appointed to consider alleged grievances of the N.-W.P. Civilians, 22 Nov., 1875, G. of I., Home Public, 223-280, Sept., 1877, N.A.I.

45. G. of I. (Finance Dept.) to S. of S., Simla, 23 May 1871, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 111-114, 24 June 1871, 112.

position (at least those in the ordinary run of appointments, below the level of secretariats and Councils), a civilian was unlikely to suffer demotion. If removed from an officiating post in the regular line of executive positions for the sake of a returning man, a civilian was ordinarily placed in a similar post elsewhere.⁴⁶ If one had been forced to leave a coveted secretariat post for the same reason, it might be more difficult to obtain an equivalent appointment; but with luck an acting term in the secretariat would provide an entree to the substantive appointment when it became vacant. "The great object of everyone," wrote Herman Kisch to his family, "is always to hold an officiating appointment" for "both as regards rank and pay it is an advantage. . . ."⁴⁷

As indicated in the criticisms of Provincial Governments, a revocation of officiating appointments would inevitably have an unsettling effect on the minds of civilians. Although this might have been irrational, still the provincial governments knew that the immediate possibility of losing officiating allowances would appear as a dire threat to most civilians. It is also evident that some discontent would be produced by a rigid classification of civilians in grades without intermediate stages to facilitate at least the appearance of more rapid promotion.

Perhaps the most objectionable aspect of Hope's plan was its failure to preserve the lien on appointments for men on furlough. Officials became possessive of certain appointments. Men in Secretariat posts—crucial way stations in advancement to the higher executive posts of both provincial and central governments—would especially be placed in jeopardy by taking leave. Indeed, when the Government of India had advanced a similar reform in 1872 as one possible concession to the Secretary of State, it was abandoned under the unanimous protests of

46. See, *e.g.*, Beames, *Memoirs*, p. 274: "Ravenshaw came back.... We had hoped that he would not return, and I had rather set my heart on being made permanent Commissioner of Orissa.... Sir Ashley Eden, the L.-G. who had succeeded Temple, thought I had been too long in Orissa, and at the beginning of 1878 transferred me as Commissioner and Judge to Chittagong."

47. Kisch to his sister, Chittagong, 4 April 1875; Kisch to his brother, 24 March 1877.

provincial governments and some high officials in the Government of India.⁴⁸ Despite reassurances that the government would not ordinarily be compelled to shift reactivated officials, even the possibility of this was viewed with disfavour. S.C. Bayley, then Home Secretary, asserted that the proposed change would “practically destroy one of the great advantages of the furlough rules,”⁴⁹ an advantage emphasized by Herman Kisch when he gained tenure as Postmaster General of Bengal: “I shall retain a lien on my appointment whenever I go on leave.”⁵⁰ The proposals would be particularly harmful to men serving in prominent posts outside the regular line of district work. While men serving in the districts might be transferred with relative fairness, men forced to relinquish secretariat or high executive posts would undeniably be mistreated. After all, they had been chosen supposedly on merit, and therefore thought they deserved special consideration. It was well known, too, that men aspiring for permanent appointments as leading administrators or secretaries usually waited to take furlough until after their appointments had been confirmed. Then they could leave without compunction, knowing their posts were secure. Moreover, several provincial administrators agreed that insecurity of tenure for absentees “would. . . open the door to undeniable intrigue and exercise of interest on behalf of the *locum tenens*.” They considered it “of the first importance to exclude even the semblance of these things, if the morale of our service is to be kept up.”⁵¹ Hope’s failure to take account of these extraordinary appointments was an insuperable defect since men chosen for them were taken directly from district employment.

Faced with the multiple exceptions to Hope’s scheme, and recognizing that its facile answers masked a plethora of difficulties, the majority of officials in the Government of India

48. Note by P. Gangooly, Assistant Sec., Home Dept., G. of I., on the minute from the Finance Dept., concerning proposed amendment of Covenanted Civil Service Leave Code, 1 Oct., 1872, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 118-119, Nov., 1872, N.A.I.

49. Note by P. Gangooly, *Ibid*.

50. Kisch to his mother, Calcutta, 15 Dec., 1885.

51. Note by H.L.D. (either a Sec. or a Member of Council), 10 Oct., 1872, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 118-119, Nov., 1872.

recommended they either be forgotten or postponed, except for the section concerning recruitment. The Secretary of State's reply, dated 29 October 1885, noted simply, without any sign of disapproval, that the gradation scheme had been abandoned.⁵² He thus allowed the perpetuation of the officiating appointments and acting allowances, with the parasitic counterparts of frequent transfers and inefficient administration.

While Hope aimed for a total renovation of the civil service structure, the current Viceroy, Lord Ripon, attempted to attack the problem of transfers more directly to gain some immediate improvements. Mild directives, issued in 1882, urged that wherever possible a returning incumbent "in the regular line of district administration should. . . be posted to such actually vacant office as might be suited to his rank and pay, and that, in determining where he would be posted, the only consideration. . . should be the question how his services could best be utilized with the least possible disturbance of existing arrangements."⁵³ These directives were completely devoid of any legal sanction, and the Government admitted that "the measures taken. . . have not been effective in keeping the number of transfers of the district staff within reasonable limits."⁵⁴

As a result, the cancer of frequent transfers continued to sap the vitality of British administration. While Viceroys continued in the forefront of protest against this evil, even civilians, in moments of candor, admitted the unfortunate ramifications of the existing system. Bampfylde Fuller regretted the "deplorable frequency" of transfers, and claimed they nullified the potential advantage of so-called oriental loyalty: "It is exceptional [he wrote] that a man should remain four years in a district, and it happens not infrequently that the people find their interests committed to a stranger two or three

52. S. of S. to G.-G. in Council (Public Despatch, 106, 1885), India Office, 29 Oct., 1885, G. of I., Home, Public, A. 86-97, Feb., 1886, 86, N.A.I.

53. For a brief summary of these proceedings see Despatch 64, 1900 from G. of I. to S. of S., Simla, 25 Oct., 1900, Judicial and Political Letters from India, Vol. 27, 2090, 1900, I.O.L.

54. *Ibid.*

times in the course of a year."⁵⁵ The case of Robert Carstairs, who when appointed to Serampore discovered he was "the fourth sub-divisional officer within a year,"⁵⁶ was not atypical. A chart prepared by the Government of India in 1900 indicated the number of times during the previous years [*i.e.*, 1898-99] that the charge of districts had changed:⁵⁷

Number of Districts which underwent the change :

Province	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		time times							
Madras	2	4	8	4	4				
Bombay	1	3	2	10	2	1	2	1	1
Bengal	3	19	11	8	1	3			
N.-W.P. and Oudh	2	5	16	8	8	8			
Punjab		3	5	8	6	4	3	2	
Central Provinces	1	3	7	1	1	4			1
Assam		4	2	1	3	2			
TOTAL	11	48	61	49	27	23	6	5	2

Debilitating results were bound to follow such a rapid turnover; and the fact that British officials came to districts with little or no knowledge of local conflicts and problems inevitably multiplied the bad effects of the system. "Official experience," wrote Fuller, "is limited by the frequent transfers of officers and their early retirement from service."⁵⁸ Henry Beveridge, chief critic of his fellow covenanted colleagues, surmised that "frequent changes of officers have been the

55. Fuller, *Studies of Indian Life*, p. 351; see also, *e.g.*, O'Dwyer, *India as I Knew It*, p. 51: Speaking of Gujranwala, O'Dwyer writes: "There was at headquarters the usual official hierarchy; a Deputy-Commissioner, who was changed two or three times a year to the great detriment of the district administration."

56. Robert Carstairs, *The Little World*, p. 62; see also pp. 185 ff.

57. The G. of I. to S. of S., Simla 25 Oct., 1900 (Public Despatch, 64, 1900), in Judicial and Political Letters from India, Vol 27, 2090, I.O.L.

58. Fuller, *Studies of Indian Life*, p. 322.

greatest obstacle to improvement" in the administration of Bengal.⁵⁹ He concluded that "the inherent difficulties of the matter are too great to admit of the hope that they will ever be overcome so long as the administration [of India] is in the hands of foreigners."⁶⁰

Covenanted civilians rarely spent enough time in any one place to deal effectively with the problems at hand. In Bengal, according to Charles Bernard (Secretary to the Government of Bengal under George Campbell), settlement of disputes among estates and zemindaries by officials was often precluded by government rules to abstain from "inquiry into rural affairs of all kinds."⁶¹ But the problem had been further compounded by the frequent transfers which prevented the collection and maintenance of reliable property data. Perhaps Bernard exaggerated when he wrote to a friend that "no one knows anything of his district."⁶² But nevertheless this is an amazing observation, and raises the question of the extent to which the British actually ruled Bengal. British officials appear in reality as the uninformed, transient servants of established indigenous elites. The reticence of estate holders and fear on the part of intimidated minorities, as pictured for example by Robert Carstairs, evidently made it difficult for ignorant short-term officials to keep affairs in order. "You would hardly believe it," wrote Bernard, "but in one district when the survey came there were 23 whole pergunnahs which could not be found. They had been annexed by the neighbouring big estate-holders, and the people could not, or would not, give information about them."⁶³ Official claims concerning accuracy of settlement operations in the N.-W.P. have recently been refuted by Elizabeth Whitcombe. The settlement of Muzzfarnagar, for instance, began in 1861 and continued during its initial phase until 1867, during which time there had been at least three major changes in district personnel. In 1868, the

59. Beveridge, *The District of Backerganj*, pp. 383 ff.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 383 ff.

61. C.E. Bernard, Chief Sec. to Government of Bengal, to G. R. Elsmie, Calcutta, 9 Aug., 1872, in Elsmie, *Thirty-five Years in the Punjab*, p. 168.

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*

Lieutenant-Governor rejected the whole of these initial proceedings, and the settlement started anew under yet another Collector. "This [new operation] was still in progress at the end of 1873."⁶⁴ Beneath the impressive facade of the British Raj, local native elites seem often to have ruled *de facto* while the civilians came and went with such rapidity that it was often impossible for them to ferret out injustices let alone to comprehend and remedy them.

The correspondence of every Viceroy from Ripon to Curzon testifies to their apprehensions concerning this dilemma. Ripon cited it as one of the circumstances necessitating development of responsible local governments manned by Indians of the rising educated classes.

You must doubtless have heard many complaints [he wrote to the Secretary of State] of the frequent changes of District Officers, of the way in which Civilians are always leaving their districts and running home, and of the consequent decay of that intimate acquaintance with the wants and feelings of the people under their charge which marked the Indian Civil Servants of former days.⁶⁵

Given the growing facility of ocean travel, Ripon saw no possibility of reversing this trend, and so the logical conclusion seemed to be the devolution of a greater share of administrative responsibilities on Indians themselves. Whatever degree of success may have attended Ripon's local self-government scheme, it was not sufficient to erase the fears of his successors who continued to inveigh against transfers. Lord Lansdowne expressed "strong objections to the practice which finds a good deal of favour in the Indian service of perpetually moving the pieces upon the official chess board."⁶⁶ The most aggravating instance of civilian transiency confronted by Lansdowne and Elgin was the rapid turnover in the Chief Commissionership of Burma, a position requiring maximum effort to eradicate guerilla warfare.⁶⁷ Yet none of the viceroys between Ripon and Curzon

64. Whitecombe, *Agrarian Conditions in Northern India*, p. 130.

65. Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 10 July 1883, R.V.P.

66. Lansdowne to Cross, Simla, 18 Oct., 1890, L.V.P.

67. Lansdowne to Godley, 9 Dec., 1893, Godley papers; see also Elgin to Hamilton, Camp, Jeypore, 19 Nov., 1896, E.V.P.

attempted to revive the question of reform, dormant since the demise of Hope's proposals.

The impetuous Curzon, however, could rarely remain complacent about any problem. Hamilton encouraged him to press forward with reform recalling the judgment of a military expert who believed that "acting appointments were ruining the civil and military appointments in India." "If you can suggest a remedy," he told Curzon, "you will have done real good service to Indian administration."⁶⁹ The results of Curzon's efforts were however negligible.

Curzon ascertained one of the chief causes for the problem in the service regulation allowing officials to accumulate privilege leave (that is, leave of one month's duration on full pay available annually) up to three months. Ease and speed of travel had made it practical for covenanted civilians to take advantage of this provision in order to take vacation in England without loss of pay. For the month of July, 1900, it was discovered that 38 of 59 civilians on privilege leave planned to be absent for the full three months period.⁷⁰ One month's absence would permit a subordinate official at the same district headquarters to fill in temporarily. But a three-month leave usually made such an arrangement impractical, and thus transfers multiplied.⁷¹ Further transfers would follow if an official returning from privilege leave should decide, as he was permitted to do, to apply for a year's furlough after only three months duty in his office. Curzon's first intention was in effect to abolish the practice of accumulating three-month leave by withdrawing the right to collect full salary on such occasions. The provincial governments gave a hostile reception to this proposal. Although admitting the evils of transfers, all the chief administrators expressed sentiments similar to those of H.J.S. Cotton who considered any curtailment of the benefits of privilege leave "out of the question."⁷²

69. Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 18 May 1899, H.C.

70. G. of I. to S. of S., Simla, 25 Oct., 1900 (Public Despatch 64 of 1900).

71. See, *e.g.*, D.C.O. Ibbetson, Chief Commissioner of Central Provinces, to Curzon, Pachmari, C.P., 1 May 1899, C.V.P.

72. H.J.S. Cotton, Chief Commissioner of Assam, to Curzon, Shillong, 5 May 1899, C.V.P.

Sir John Woodburn, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, told Curzon that since the fall in the value of the rupee, privilege leave on full pay for three-months had become more and more important to civilians who preferred to go home on full pay than on half salary available during regular furlough.⁷³

Yet on the basis of letters from D.C.J. Ibbetson, Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces⁷⁴ and Sir Mackworth Young, Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab,⁷⁵ Curzon decided there was one small loophole which could be tightened without provoking agitation among civilians. Curzon and his Council recommended that Article 891 of the Civil Service Regulations, permitting men to take furlough only three months after their return from privilege leave, should be eliminated. There was some objection by local governments to the imposition of an interval longer than twelve months in place of the existing three months' rule. The Government of India, preferred an 18-month interval: "The object being to check the frequency of transfers, it is evident that the longer the interval the greater should be the effect in securing the object."⁷⁶

Curzon candidly confessed that this minor alteration was insufficient. His original proposal would have involved a "positive curtailment of existing privileges,"⁷⁷ he told Hamilton. In revealing his disappointment to the Secretary of State, Curzon wrote:

I do not myself think that our proposals will be final remedy. In my judgment, a more drastic cautery requires to be applied. But in recommending it I should not be able to carry with me either the Departments of Government or the backing of the Service. . . . As long as the

73. Sir J. Woodburn, L.-G. of Bengal, to Curzon, Darjeeling, 4 May 1899, C.V.P.

74. D.C.J. Ibbetson to Curzon, Pachmari, 1 May 1899: "But I think that a man who has had his three months [privilege leave] should be bound to serve on for, say, 18 months after his return before he takes any furlough or leave except under circumstances of urgency."

75. Sir W. Mackworth Young, L.-G. of Punjab, to Curzon, Lahore, 9 May 1899, C.V.P.: "A man should not be entitled to long leave of any kind within a considerable period of his return from a previous long leave."

76. G. of I. to S. of S. (Public Despatch 54, 1900), Simla, 25 Oct., 1900.

77. Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 12 Sept., 1900, H.C.

eye of every man in India is turned towards England, and he jumps at every opportunity of leaving his work and going home, so long will administration continue to suffer, and to suffer in increasing ratio.⁷⁸

Thus a problem productive of immeasurable difficulties for administration continued essentially unabated.

The mobility malady affected both the top and the bottom of the Government hierarchy. In despairing of any solid solution of the Bengal rent problem, Ripon pointed to Kimberley's possible replacement as Secretary of State as a sign of the weakness at the heart of the Government apparatus: "... your remark that by the time you get some insight into them [land revenue questions] you will probably be turned out of office is very discouraging, and it shows the enormous difficulty of carrying out any real reforms in India under the present system by which that country is governed."⁷⁹ Ripon also alluded to his own forthcoming retirement and the appointment of Lord Dufferin, noting cynically that "the dreary round has to be begun again, profiting only to those consummate masters of the art of 'how not to do it', who compose the India Council."⁸⁰ Largely by virtue of this functional idiosyncrasy, the Government of India, in the words of Lord Curzon, became a giant mechanism for doing nothing, possessing the semblance of power, but unable to use its authority in any effective manner.

Rapidity of transfers seems retrospectively and ironically to have facilitated the myth of imperial effectiveness. As long as men moved rapidly from one district to another, there was less chance of their becoming disillusioned with the inability of government to understand or to deal effectively with the complex problem in any one local area. The frenzy of transfers had the effect of helping to hide the fragility of the Empire.

The opening of the Suez Canal exacerbated the dilemma of rapid mobility. Some believed that improvement in other aspects of communication, including especially the telegraph, had also curbed effectiveness and industry of district officials. Hamilton spoke of a conversation with "old Sir George Clerk. . . the

78. Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 12 Sept., 1900, H.C.

79. Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 3 Oct., 1884, R.V.P.

80. *Ibid.*

last of the great Indian civilians" warning that spread of the telegraphic system in India had diminished the acquaintance of officers with their districts.⁸¹ This points to another paradox of British rule in India at the so-called apotheosis of its power, namely that as officials became more sophisticated in technological professionalization, the less they knew or were forced to know about the people they ruled. Absence of local knowledge diminished the possibility of enforcing even the moderate land reforms enacted by the Government of India during the late nineteenth century.⁸² While it claimed to speak as the voice of the silent masses, British bureaucracy failed both in determination and application to secure the requisite reforms. Under the impact of the mobility syndrome, administration became largely a stagnant holding action.

Indeed, the mobility syndrome was another symptom of the weakening grip of the British Raj, demonstrative of disenchantment with the Empire among men who constantly lamented their exile in India and who found the more advanced means of transportation to be a tempting and irresistible means of escape. The type of young man recruited for service in India had grown somewhat weary of the Empire. Promotions, furloughs, and salaries were practically the only incentives to keep them engaged in the imperial enterprise.

81. Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 5 April 1900, H.C.

82. The fate of the Punjab Alienation of Land Bill, as discussed by Prof. Barrier, was one chief example of this breakdown; See Barrier, pp. 82 ff.

3

PROVINCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND PROBLEMS OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM (1876-1902)

Pre-occupation with status engendered a divisive provincialism within British Indian bureaucracy, yet another obstacle to the impersonal efficiency so often glibly attributed to the I.C.S. One of the most important human ingredients composing the self-image of the Covenanted Civilians was a phenomenon conveniently called "provincial consciousness." A civilian's provincial affiliation was a point of immediate identification *vis-a-vis* officials from other areas, and was one of the chief determinants of one's relative prestige and status. Such consciousness constituted a type of vertical stratification whose lines often became insuperable obstructions, dividing the civilians of one province from those in another. A chief feature of inter-provincial rivalry was the contest to obtain prestigious positions in the Government of India. Throughout the late nineteenth century this competitiveness jeopardized and often obviated the achievement of significant administrative reforms.

Though provincialism precluded efficiency and effectiveness in the Indian bureaucracy, it nevertheless had its own subtle dividends, both for India and for the British Raj. Continuous controversies blunted whatever autocratic pretensions may have been cherished by officials in the supreme government. This fitted in perfectly well with the realities of British rule, since exercise of such pretensions would only have engendered a more persistent and inclusive resistance from the most influential classes of Indian society, not just the relatively small number of educated Indians. Such persistent and well-financed resistance would very likely have preempted the development of a rational sophisticated nationalism which in time played a crucial role in the development of India's democratic institutions.

In bringing resistance to the surface, direct and unchallenged autocratic command from the centre would have inevitably exposed what Lytton called the "artificial"¹ character of the Raj. By precluding experimentation with despotic bureaucracy, provincialism provided an unwitting accommodation to the artificiality of empire. Seen from another perspective, it might also be said that provincialism was a symptom of artificiality in the British Raj, an artificiality patently evident in the Government's cautious avoidance of any head-on clash either with its own refractory officials or with those local elites, who by default of government initiative, wielded the substance of power in their own localities. Another dividend of provincialism was its integral system of checks and balances, allowing London authorities to control Indian affairs more easily and without dramatic or perhaps disastrous interventionism.^{1a}

A dominant characteristic of provincial consciousness was the attitude of superiority among the Bengal civilians, particularly those appointed to the Lower Provinces of Bengal.^{1b} Among the northern provinces, Lower Bengal, especially Calcutta and its environs, was the most prominent British possession in India throughout the late nineteenth century. The remaining territories of the Bengal Presidency included the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, the Punjab, Assam, the Central Provinces, and eventually Burma, arranged in the approximate order of the status held by their covenanted officials. The leading administrators of the Government of India rated the commissions of Bombay and Madras civilians as inferior to those of the "Bengal Presidency," excepting Burma

1. Lytton to Sir R. Temple, Moolton, 30 Nov., 1876, L.V.P.
- 1a. See a further discussion of this issue at the end of this chapter.
- 1b. Administratively, British India had been divided into three parts called presidencies: Bengal, Bombay and Madras. Unlike the other presidencies, Bengal's territorial appendages were so numerous that it had been split into several provinces, both "regulation" and "non-regulation," all having their own civilian chiefs. In time, the term "Bengal Presidency" became largely irrelevant, because the presidency had lost its identity as a single unit. All the covenanted civilians in the provinces of northern India continued to belong, however, to the "Bengal Commission." For a full discussion of these issues see C.P. Ilbert, *The Government of India*.

and the Central Provinces. These latter two, because of special detractions, usually received the least promising of the annual civilian recruits from London.

Throughout most of the late nineteenth century, civilian recruits were appointed to the various provincial commissions on the basis of their preference and their performance in the competitive examination.² Bengal attracted the greatest number of candidates, "while Bombay and Madras were perforce content with recruits from the bottom of the list."³ W.W. Hunter, who obtained superior rating in the competitive examination of 1861, chose Lower Bengal because of the "belief that civilians attached to that Province were under the eye of the Supreme Government, and therefore enjoyed greater opportunities of showing their mettle."⁴ "The Civilian of Lower Bengal," wrote Rivett-Carnac, "had for generations ruled the roost throughout the whole service. He was credited with having no small contempt for civilians in other provinces, and most utter detestation of those in non-Regulation Provinces like Nagpore [*i.e.*, the Central Provinces]."⁵

Calcutta, the centre of the Lower Provinces, was both the political and social capital of British India. The elite of British officialdom, including the Viceroy, his entourage, and the highest administrators of Bengal, lived there from mid-November through March. During these months, the city provided the setting for the most notable social and cultural events of British India. Its exclusive social clubs, its theatres where travelling operatic and theatrical companies performed, and its ballrooms seemed like oases to the socially and culturally starved inhabitants of small dusty towns in the interior. Return to Calcutta was the desire of most Bengal civilians exiled in mofussil posts. Henry Cotton recalled that Calcutta was "a very agreeable change after our up-country life."⁶

2. Francis Henry Skrine, *Life of Sir William Wilson Hunter*, p. 43.

3. *Ibid.*; also see the following: Letters of Herman Kisch to relatives in England, dated 11 Oct., 1874, 10 July 1874, in correspondence of Herman Kisch, I.O.L.; see also H.J.S. Cotton, Chief Sec. to the Government of Bengal, to Col. J. C. Ardagh, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Calcutta, 10 Feb., 1893, L.V.P.

4. Skrine, *Life of Sir William Wilson Hunter*, p. 43.

5. J.H. Rivett-Carnac, *Many Memories*, pp. 222 f.

6. H.J.S. Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories*, p. 100; see also Fitzpatrick to Ilbert, Camp, Nagpore, 16 July 1886, Ilbert papers.

But more important than social advantages, official appointments in Calcutta usually meant promotion, often to a prized secretariat position or to some other post that might provide entree to the most coveted positions both in Bengal and in the Government of India. The superior prestige of the Lower Bengal cadre rested on two factors: first, the greater number of higher paying positions available to it than to other commissions, and secondly, the higher proportion of positions in the Government of India held by its members. In 1879, *e.g.*, 71 of 100 posts in Lower Bengal had salaries over Rs. 1,000 per month, whereas the corresponding figures for the North-Western Provinces were 59 of 100, and for the Punjab, 58 of 100. Lower Bengal, with seventeen fewer officials than the North-Western Provinces in regular cadre appointments, nonetheless could boast 43 "prize appointments", that is, appointments carrying a salary of at least Rs. 2,500 per month; the North-Western Provinces had only 36 comparable appointments. Other cadres, including those of the remaining northern provinces and of the minor presidencies were less favourably endowed.⁸ As for positions in the central government, Lower Bengal officials again were most privileged. They held ten of these posts, only one less than the number granted the N.-W.P. cadre with its considerably larger membership.⁹ Here again, Bombay and Madras trailed far behind. The following table (p.83) shows the dominance of Bengal men in some of the highest posts of the Government of India during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.*

Animosity towards civilians of Lower Bengal was strongest in the subordinate presidencies. Civilians in other provinces of northern India, while not as favourably situated as those in Lower Bengal, had comparatively greater chances of appointment to the Government of India than the men of Bombay

7. See, *e.g.*, Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories*, p. 100.

8. Report of the Committee on Grievances of N.-W.P. Civilians, 8 Feb., 1879, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 106-155, June 1882.

9. *Ibid.*

*Most of the major positions are included in this table, except the Public Works Membership, the Public Works Secretaryship, and the Secretaryship of the Legislative Department. Data is presented only in relation to continuous stretches of time for which the author has complete information.

TABLE

Position	Total number of office holders (not including "acting" appointments)	Bengal Lower Provinces	N.-W.P. Punjab	Bombay Commission	Madras Commission	Non-civilian
1. Secretary of Home Department (1876-1900)	7	5	2	0	0	0
2. Home Member of Viceroy's Council (1875-1900)	10	4	1	2	1	2
3. Finance Secretary (1881-1899)	4	3	0	0	1	0
4. Finance member (1876-1899)	5	3	1	0	0	1
5. Foreign Secretary**	5	3	0	2	0	0
6. Revenue*** and Agriculture Secretary	3	0	2	1	0	0
TOTALS	34	18	6	5	2	2

**The Viceroy himself was head of the foreign Department; the Secretary was thus the highest civilian official in the Department.

***The Revenue and Agriculture Secretary worked under the supervision of the Home Department.

and Madras. They were all members of the Bengal commission, completely subordinate to the Government of India and therefore more closely affiliated with the Viceroy who selected appointees for the central government. There was some discontent among Bengal civilians appointed to Burma and the Central Provinces because they were rarely chosen for these billets. But the relative inferiority of men in those provinces justified their exclusion by the Government of India.

Since Lieutenant-Governors and Chief Commissioners of Bengal "Presidency" Provinces held their positions directly under the Viceroy's patronage, their subordinates usually hesitated to express hostility against the centre. Moreover, most of the Bengal cadres held enough positions in the central government to provide incentive for cooperation. But Madras and Bombay officials were accountable to Governors who in many respects remained independent of the Viceroy and who were usually complete strangers to the mysteries of the Raj. Governors often took the side of their close associates against the "oppressive" and remote Government of India. Consequently Bombay and Madras civilians had leverage to vent their hostility against the supreme government and the Bengal civilians who largely monopolized it: local protagonists for Bombay or Madras had often reached the highest positions in their presidency, namely seats in the Governor's Executive Council. Their official careers were usually too far advanced to leave room for higher appointments in the Government of India. Shut off from further advancement, they could argue without compunction and behave like the local princes of the Holy Roman Empire. The proliferation of disputes between the centre and the subordinate presidencies was also partly the fault of Bengal civilians in the central government who failed to understand the history and policies of the minor presidencies. They repeatedly attempted to foist alien ideas upon their colleagues in Madras and Bombay.¹⁰ Lord Lytton warned against the arrogance of central officials when he counseled Richard Temple, formerly of Bengal but recently appointed as Governor

10. See Lytton's warning against the dictatorial tendencies of central officials in his letter to Sir Richard Temple, Moolton, 30 Nov., 1876, Lytton V.P.

of Bombay, to assume a moderate attitude toward his new subordinates.¹¹

Yet the Bengal commission held no absolute monopoly of appointments in the Government of India; and younger civilians of Bombay and Madras were never completely devoid of aspirations in the direction of Calcutta and Simla. Men previously bound to the parochial bailiwick of a minor presidency thus gladly accepted appointment as secretaries or Members of Council in the Government of India. Occasionally the Government of India could use these aspirations to advantage in its disputes with Bombay and Madras. Properly qualified aspirants could be cultivated as allies of the centre as they saw the distant vision of the highest appointments dangled before them. The Ripon administration, for example, used J.B. Peile of Bombay effectively in introducing the local self-government programme initially rejected by that Province. So, although Bombay and Madras officials generally gave the appearance of dislike and mistrust of the central government, nevertheless as individuals, they hoped for the remote possibility of obtaining a prestigious position in Calcutta. Since 1860, the Viceroys had chosen at least one official from either of the subordinate presidencies to assume one of three seats on their Council in an effort to allay suspicions and to avoid jealousies. This practice had, continued with the rotation of the appointment between the commissions of Madras and Bombay.

Viceroys repeatedly protested against this custom. It restricted their field of choice for their closest advisers. In 1879, Lord Lytton was astounded to find that he would be forced to select a new Home Member for his Council from a group of 79 Bombay civilians, while in Bengal at least 334 men were technically qualified.¹² Lytton told the Secretary of State that he would "really find it impossible to submit to you the name of a single Bombay civilian whose selection to succeed Sir A. Arbuthnot would, so far as I can judge, give the smallest accession of strength to my Council, or help to myself at

11. Lytton to Sir R. Temple, Moolton, 30 Nov., 1876, Lytton V.P.

12. Any covenanted civilian, having served ten years in India, was legally qualified. Lytton to Cranbrook, Simla, 22 Sept., 1879, Lytton V.P.

the present moment.”¹³ But the limited perquisites of the minor presidencies could be violated only at the cost of more inter-governmental controversy; as a result, Lytton’s successor, Lord Ripon, finally chose J. G. Gibbs from Bombay as the new chief of the Home Department. In similar circumstances, Secretary of State, Hamilton encouraged Lord Curzon “to stamp out the idea that these Presidencies have an inalienable claim on one Member in your Council.”¹⁴ He considered it improbable that either Bombay or Madras could provide a competent Home Member, and he saw no reason why Curzon should sacrifice the Public Works Membership simply to oblige discontented officials.¹⁵ But failing to obtain the services of a professional man from England for Public Works, and seeing the necessity to satisfy the minor presidencies, Curzon finally selected Arundel of Madras to succeed Sir A. Trevor.¹⁶

In short, the Government of India frequently discredited the abilities of minor presidency officials. Lord Lytton had at first condemned this patronizing attitude,¹⁷ but in time he also became a vocal critic of these men. Lord Dufferin, commenting on Madras officials, wrote acidly that “they seem to me a most inferior lot in that part of the world.”¹⁸ Curzon expressed alarm at the incompetence he found in Madras, and Col. Robertson, his military advisor, rated the efficiency of the Madras Government as “lower than that of any other.”¹⁹ Charles A. Elliott, a leading Bengal man, regarded the Council and Secretariat of Bombay as “lamentably weak.”²⁰ The observations of casual observers from England appeared to confirm these opinions. A correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, for example, touring India during the famine of

13. Lytton to Cranbrook, Simla, 22 Sept., 1879, Lytton V.P.

14. Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 8 Oct., 1902, H.C.; see also, Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 15 Nov., 1900, H.C.

15. Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 8 Oct., 1902, H.C.

16. Curzon to Lord Ampthill, Camp, Nepal, 10 April 1901, C.V.P.

17. Lytton to Salisbury, Rawul Pindce, 21 Nov., 1879, Lytton V.P.

18. Dufferin to Kimberley, Simla, 2 July 1886, D.V.P.

19. Curzon to Hamilton, Viceroy’s Camp, 5 Dec., 1900, H.C.

20. C.A. Elliott, President of the Finance Commission, to Dufferin, Calcutta, 14 Nov., 1886, D.V.P.; see also, e.g., Hunter to his wife, Poona, 10 Oct., 1869, in Skrine, *Life of W.W. Hunter*, p. 176.

1900, compared Bombay civilians unfavourably with those he had met in the Punjab. The former, he claimed, "appeared to know little or nothing of the actual circumstances, holdings, assessments, fortunes, or identity of the people in the district to which they belonged."²¹

Although ordinarily guaranteed at least one seat in the Viceroy's council, Madras and Bombay civilians still complained they were discriminated against in relation to other 'prize appointments' (e.g., secretariat posts, chief commissionerships, and the more prominent political residencies) under the Government of India. In 1871, several members of the Bombay service petitioned the supreme government protesting the supposed injustice:

. . .in practice [they concluded], these appointments are never filled by Members of the Bombay Civil Service; . . .your Memorialists regard this exclusion as a grievance and discouragement to the Service to which they belong.²²

Madras memorialists complained of a similar bias of the supreme government against them.²³ Lord Havelock, Governor of Madras under Curzon, complained that in the few instances when Madras civilians had been selected for "comparatively junior posts" in the Government of India, they were seldom elevated with their peers to the more important billets, "but on approaching the point at which preferment may be looked for, are sent back to Madras."²⁴

Ambitious civilians in the subordinate presidencies often submitted special requests for high central appointments. William Wedderburn, a Judge of the Bombay High Court, complained of his current work, and "wished to know whether there was any chance of his being appointed to the [Viceroy's]

21. Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 9 May 1900, H.C.

22. Memorial from certain members of the Bombay Civil Service concerning the exclusion of members of their service from appointments under the Government of India, 31 Jan., 1871, G. of I., Home, Public, B proceedings, 87, 18 Feb., 1871, N.A.I.

23. The Memorial of W.G. Underwood, Assistant to the Collector and Magistrate of Malabar, 5 Feb., 1880, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 44-73, April 1881, 65, N.A.I.

24. Lord Havelock to Curzon, Madras, 11 Feb., 1900, C.V.P.

Legislative Council." Only rarely, however, did these persistent efforts secure any response from the Government of India. The appointment of W. Lee-Warner of Bombay to the Residency at Mysore was one of the few exceptions to the rule. The Viceroy, however, questioned the merits of the appointment, and regarded it a grudging compensation for Lee-Warner's failure to be selected Foreign Secretary of the Government of India.²⁵ As elsewhere in the supreme government, there was a bias in the Foreign Department against the intrusion of men outside Bengal.

Aside from the problem of finding capable men in Bombay or Madras for positions in Calcutta, Viceroys confronted the added nuisance of soothing the tempers of Bengal men in the few cases where outsiders were appointed. The selection of Phillip Hutchins of Madras as Home Member in 1888 brought down on the Viceroy the wrath of Alexander Mackenzie, a Bengal official and Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces. Since only one civilian currently sat on the Council, Mackenzie asserted that the man selected should by rights be a Bengal civilian. After all, while Bombay and Madras had their own executive councils for worthy civilians, Bengal, though larger and more important, had none. Mackenzie concluded that "it [was] absolutely *unfair* from a service point of view that they [Madras and Bombay] should share alike with Bengal in Council appointments." The supervision of civil administration, thought Mackenzie, ought naturally to be a preserve of Bengal officials.²⁶

Whatever the justification of Bombay and Madras complaints against discrimination on the part of the supreme government, doubtless, the men of the minor presidencies were relatively inferior administrators. They had consistently entered the service at or near the bottom of the competitive and probationary examination lists.

25. See, *e.g.*, W. Lee-Warner, Sec. to Government of Bombay, Political Dept., to Col. J.C. Ardagh, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Poona, 5 Aug., 1891, L.V.P; see also Lord Harris, G. of Bombay to Elgin, 11 March 1894, E.V.P.

26. A. Mackenzie, Chief Commissioner of the C.P., to Sir D. Mackenzie Wallace, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Chief Commissioner's Camp, 16 Sept., 1888, D.V.P.

The non-regulation provinces of Burma and of the Central Provinces, both part of the Bengal territories, suffered a similar fate. Prominent Bengal civilians appointed to serve as Chief Commissioners of the Central Provinces, a position usually considered as a halfway house to a Lieutenant-Governorship, always spoke disparagingly of their subordinates. C.H.T. Crosthwaite, appointed to the post by Lord Ripon, reported that men of the Central Provinces were "very weak both in numbers and in quality, and much of my time is taken up in trying to fit square men into round holes" ²⁷ C.P. officials returned these compliments with chronic discontentment. Faced with the prospect of a severe famine in 1896, C.J. Lyall, Chief Commissioner, wrote apprehensively that "we run the risk of losing our ablest men through discontent with their position." ²⁸

Until 1878, Assam suffered a definite disadvantage in attracting covenanted civilians. Pay scales were not impressive, and higher appointments for men of ambition and talent were scarce. S.C. Bayley, while Chief Commissioner, tried to find ways of preventing the discontentment of Bengal men doomed to serve in his cadre. He suggested that they be allowed to return to Lower Bengal after five years' residence in Assam and that their reassignment in the Lower Provinces should be "an appointment equivalent to that held by the average of [their] contemporaries." ²⁹ The implementation of this scheme brought an end to pervasive unrest among Assam officials. Lord Elgin's Government acknowledged in 1899, however, that Bayley's modifications were "open to serious objection" because they permitted and promoted rapid mobility from province to province. ³⁰

In 1892, the Secretary of State attempted to redress this provincial imbalance created by allowing superior recruits the

27. C.H.T. Crosthwaite to C.P. Ilbert, Nagpur, 28 March 1885, Ilbert papers.

28. C.J. Lyall, Chief Commissioner, C.P., to Elgin, Nagpur, 2 Feb., 1896, E.V.P.

29. Memorandum by the Officiating Chief Commissioner of Assam, Shillong, 17 July 1878, G. of I., Home, Est., A, 115-117, N.A.I.

30. G. of I. in the Finance and Commerce Dept., Est. Branch, to S. of S., Simla, 31 Aug, 1899 (Finance Despatch 310 of 1899), G. of I., Home, Est., A, Sept., 1899, 6-14, N.A.I.

pick of the field while leaving "year after year the candidates in the lowest places" to the "less desirable Provinces." He introduced a regulation dividing recruits "into four groups according to the order in which they stood, each to choose so long as a choice remained, one of the appointment allotted to that group."³¹ Obviously this innovation would foster better government in the less favoured provinces. But the scheme proved unworkable in the face of protests from recruits. John Hennell, one of the Civil Service Commissioners, decried the injustice of making candidates 8, 16, and 24 take undesirable assignments while numbers 9, 17, and 25 could practically go wherever they wished.³² Lord Kimberley, the new Secretary of State, allowed Cross' system a further trial in 1893, but then he announced alterations tantamount to the reinstatement of previous regulations. The essential consideration was to prevent loss of popularity for the I.C.S., "in the eyes of intending candidates."³³ No further efforts were made to correct this flaw in the assignment of recruits.

As the better candidates continued to fill the civilian ranks in the Bengal provinces, so Bengal retained its hegemony of coveted positions in the Government of India. There was, however, a gradual but perceptible decrease in the prestige of the Lower Province cadre as compared with that of the other northern provinces, namely those in the North-West and of the Punjab. In 1898, Elgin told Hamilton that the exclusion of Lower Bengal civilians from high appointments was due to "a deficiency of really good men at the top there lately."³⁴ Under Curzon, who believed that officials of Lower Bengal "are seldom good enough to make Lieutenant-Governor themselves," two civilians were imported from elsewhere to govern the provinces.³⁵ As for the Home Secretaryship, Curzon noted that "in

31. Note by the Under-Sec. in the Home Dept., 12 Dec., 1893, G. of I., Home, Est., A, 93-98, N.A.I.

32. John Hennell, Civil Service Commission, to the Under-Sec. of State for India, Civil Service Commission, 26 Sept., 1892, in *Ibid.*, 94.

33. G. of I., Home Department, to S. of S., Calcutta, 24 Jan., 1894 (Public Despatch 4, 1894), in *Ibid.*, 98.

34. Elgin to Hamilton, Simla, 7 Sept., 1898, E.V.P.

35. Curzon to Lord Ampthill, G. of Madras, Camp, Barisal, 24 Feb., 1904, C.V.P.

recent years” the Bengal monopoly had been ended.³⁶ Several observers concluded that the more promising recent recruits had eschewed Bengal in favour of other northern provinces in order to avoid the increasingly unpleasant Bengali political agitation. Sir J. Woodburn, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal at the turn of the century, commented drearily that “the glories of the Bengal Service have departed.”³⁷

Since exclusion from high appointments in the Government of India was considered as a slight “throughout the less eligible provinces,”³⁸ it was in some respects unfortunate that some routine system for rectifying the alleged injustice had never been established. Bombay and Madras officials naturally resented being categorized as inferior. A statement by C. B. Pritchard, member of the Viceroy’s Council from Bombay, is indicative of their refusal to accept placidly the insults of their Bengal colleagues:

I don’t think it is safe to predicate that Northern India . . . possesses the *best* men. Northern India and Bengal certainly possess the *best known* men, because those provinces furnish nearly the whole of the men who are advanced and put into high places by Government of India. This arises from the fact that the Government of India rightly employs men that it knows, but it does not necessarily follow that the men of Madras and Bombay are inferior to those serving in the provinces immediately under the Government of India.³⁹

Provincial stratification inevitably engendered an attitude of defensiveness among officials of the minor presidencies; among Bengal civilians in the bureaucracy of the supreme government, on the other hand, it encouraged a certain pomposity and aggressiveness. It inevitably created constant irritation between the Government of India and the subordinate presidencies. Leading officials of Bombay and Madras continually misunderstood or misinterpreted the directives of the central government. On the

36. Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 2 July 1902, H.C.

37. Woodburn to Curzon, Belvedere, 19 July 1900, C.V.P.

38. Note by Sir C.B. Pritchard, Public Works Member of Council, 3 July 1894, G. of I., Home, Est., A, 97-100, July 1894, N.A.I.

39. *Ibid.*

least provocation, communication between the governments became acrimonious or perhaps lapsed into silence. Moreover, in the eyes of the central government, non-conformity with central policy was rarely regarded as intelligent dissent based on principles, but always rather as another sign of provincial incompetency.⁴⁰ Inevitably, problems remained unsolved, emergencies were handled inadequately.

Few policies requiring cooperation between the centre and the minor presidencies could be formulated or implemented in a spirit of mutual forbearance.⁴¹ The recurrence of famines provided the most tragic occasions for breakdowns in inter-governmental relations during the late nineteenth century. Attempts by the centre to promote administrative reforms in the minor presidencies (often in order to correct the deficiencies manifested during famine relief operations) heightened the level of tension and conflict. None of the proposals advanced by the Government of India accomplished any substantial or notable alterations of the *status quo*. The fact that breakdowns and crises continued to occur without the establishment of agencies or power in the Government of India to bring about change is indicative of the minimal initiative exercised by the centre as well as the artificial character of the Raj and the inability or unwillingness of London to super-impose any reform from outside.

Even before the famine of 1876-77, Lord Lytton had already encountered the acerbities of provincial consciousness in the form of disputes regarding revenue policy and frontier administration in Bombay.⁴² He feared that the "English in India constitute a house dangerously divided against itself,"⁴³ and told the Secretary of State that "relations between the Bombay Government and the Supreme Government have now reached a pitch of mutual irritation, which I think deplorable."⁴⁴ Lytton had

40. See, e.g., M.E. Grant Duff, G. of Madras, to Lord Ripon, Government House, Madras, 4 Feb., 1882, R.V.P.

41. See, e.g., Skrine, *W.W. Hunter*, p. 248; Rivett-Carnac, *Many Memories*, p. 196.

42. See Lytton to Salisbury, Bombay, 8 April 1876, Lytton V.P. These problems are partially discussed in an article by I.F.S. Copland, "The Baroda Crisis of 1873-77; a Study in Governmental Rivalry," *Modern Asian Studies*, II (April, 1968), pp. 97-123.

43. Lytton to Salisbury, Bombay, 8 April 1876, Lytton V.P.

44. Lytton to Salisbury, Calcutta, 20 April 1876, Lytton V.P.

perceptively observed that both "sides [*i.e.*, Bombay and the centre] are probably more or less to blame."⁴⁵ The Government of India had treated Bombay "with unusual and unwise discourtesy." But Bombay, in turn, had responded with gross indiscretion. Better relations should begin, he believed, with greater sensitivity on the part of the central bureaucracy. But misunderstandings engendered by the famine crisis completely vitiated his hopes for improvement. The combination of mutual mistrust and of the urgency to find immediate relief for famine stricken areas resulted in the accentuation of provincial sensitivities.

A crucial stage in the conflict developed as Lytton was leaving Simla at the end of the fall season in 1876. Having delegated famine responsibilities to his Council "because [he said] I could not personally conduct such a correspondence on the march, and also because their experience in such matters was much greater than my own," Lytton soon discovered that the civilian controversy had drastically impaired the search for remedial measures. "The correspondence between the two governments," wrote Lytton, "then threatened to become not only acrimonious but also more and more misleading, whilst necessary operations were brought by it almost to a standstill."⁴⁶ Arriving in Bombay, Lytton received news of a despatch recently sent there by Henry Norman, *pro tempore* President of the Viceroy's Council, reprimanding Bombay for deviation in the famine policy. The despatch had "thrown the Government of that Presidency into a paroxysm of resentment."⁴⁷

Despite Lytton's efforts at conciliation, resentments continued to smoulder, and Bombay retaliated with a resolution of its own condemning the Council's despatch. According to Lytton, the Resolution was "a gross outrage on the commonest decencies of good faith, good feeling, and good taste."⁴⁸ He complained of spending "the whole of my time during the last ten days" in pacifying his Council before constructive action could be pursued.⁴⁹ He hoped the appointment of Richard Temple,

45. Lytton to Salisbury, Calcutta, 20 April 1876, Lytton V.P.

46. Lytton to Sir Louis Mallet, Benares, 11 Jan., 1877, Lytton V.P.

47. Lytton to Salisbury, Calcutta, 2 Feb., 1877, Lytton V.P.

48. Lytton to Major-General Sir Henry Norman, Calcutta, 31 Jan., 1877, Lytton V.P.

49. Lytton to Salisbury, Calcutta, 2 Feb., 1877, Lytton V.P.

previously Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, as the new Bombay Governor would bring that province into line. "The more I see of India," he concluded, "the more it strikes me that the only serious danger we have to fear lies in the wretched personal susceptibilities, the petty spirit, local jealousy, and deficient loyalty of our own authorities."⁵⁰

The debacle of 1876 was repeated during the famines of 1897 and 1899. In 1897, the Viceroy, Lord Elgin, confronted numerous controversies among the provincial representatives on the Central Committee of the Indian Famine Fund. H.E.M. James of the Bombay Service, appointed as Vice-Chairman and Secretary of the Committee, was constantly at loggerheads with Bengal representatives who reportedly demanded an unfair share of the financial resources for use in their provinces.⁵¹ Sir Francis Maclean, Committee Chairman and Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, finally succeeded in restoring relative calm; but he confessed "it had been no easy task to induce the boiling waters of Bengal to assimilate with the sands of Sind."⁵²

With the resurgence of famine during the early years of Curzon's administration, relations between Bombay and the centre again collapsed. In 1899, Curzon offered Bombay the aid of the central government to help combat famine by means of any special *ad hoc* agencies or committee deemed necessary. Bombay resisted the interference of the supreme government, and according to the centre continued to persevere in policies inadequate to the problems. Curzon, like Lytton, located the source of the difficulty in the attitudes of the civilians. The Governor of Bombay, he said, was new to India and had unfortunately fallen completely into the "hands of his Councillors:"⁵³

Hence the various injudicious Resolutions that have lately emanated from Bombay . . . [The Governor] himself is only anxious to do the right thing. But he is very hard

50. Lytton to Sir Bartle Frere, Calcutta, 2 March 1877, Lytton V.P.

51. Elgin to Hamilton, Simla, 22 June 1897, E.V.P.

52. Sir Francis Maclean, Chief Justice, High Court, Calcutta, 15 May, 1897, E.V.P.

53. Curzon to Hamilton, Naldera, 13 June 1900, H.C.

pressed by his advisors, who are not, in my opinion, very wise men . . . ⁵⁴

Variations of provincial land revenue policies played an important role in this newest impasse. Different approaches to the land revenue question constituted a cardinal feature of the provincial ethos attached to the various civilian commissions.⁵⁵ Curzon and his immediate subordinates linked the malfunctions of Bombay famine relief to defective revenue policies there. Bengal officials in the Government of India had been indoctrinated in revenue systems (primarily the zamindari system of Lower Bengal) entirely different from those of the subordinate presidencies, and had always looked upon revenue policies in the minor presidencies as aberrations from orthodox doctrine. The major flaw in the Bombay system, according to the supreme government, was its rigid severity of collection even in times of distress.⁵⁶ Curzon claimed that the Bombay secretariat's refusal to mitigate its traditional policy was the primary reason for the crisis of 1899.⁵⁷ Curzon concluded that Northcote, the Governor, was "not strong enough to hold his own against his two Councillors, who are, of course, veteran partisans of the Bombay system, and are no doubt very much affronted at the unceremonious manner in which it has been impugned."⁵⁸

The controversy continued early in 1901 during an investigation of the Bombay famine headed by a prominent Bengal official, Sir A.P. MacDonnell, currently Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces. According to the Governor of Bombay, MacDonnell had violated his pledge to avoid criticism of Bombay's revenue system, and had further provoked the Bombay officials with his high-handed treatment of those appearing as witnesses.⁵⁹ Curzon, however, regarded the Bombay system as outmoded, and continued to support MacDonnell strongly. He expressed shock at the candid testimony of one Bombay official who, "when asked for his unreserved views,

54. Curzon to Hamilton, Naldera, 13 June 1900, H.C.

55. See, e.g., Maconochie, *Life in the I.C.S.*, p. 99.

56. See W.W. Hunter, *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. IV, p. 449.

57. Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 11 July 1900, H.C.

58. Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 20 June 1900, H.C.

59. See Northcote to Curzon, Bombay, 3 Feb., 1901, C.V.P.; and Northcote to Curzon, Bombay, 14 Feb., 1901, C.V.P.

answered somewhat to the effect that he knew his duty to, or his place in, the Bombay administration.”⁶⁰ He feared that “the rule of secretariat in Bombay is more rampant than ever.”⁶¹

The MacDonnell Commission judged the Bombay yearly assessments too high, urged “a more sustained policy of suspensions in ordinary years and remission in famine years,” and impugned Bombay’s land-tenure policy as “unknown, or repudiated, in every other part of India.” The policy, said the Report, had produced “a scale of agricultural indebtedness so serious that legislative action must, without delay, be undertaken.”⁶² In response, Northcote reported willingness among his advisors to prepare reform legislation for the consideration of the supreme legislative council.⁶³ But Curzon remained dissatisfied with the proposed alterations, and approved them finally only because Bombay, in Curzon’s words, had “held a pistol at our heads.”⁶⁴ Most importantly, the Bombay bill made no provision for revenue suspension in emergencies. Curzon surmised that Bombay would continue its customary policy of revenue stringency until “the end of time,” due to the refusal of its officials to acquiesce in constructive suggestions offered by their rivals in Calcutta and Simla.⁶⁵

Perhaps the quintessential example of administrative reform sabotaged by inter-governmental conflict was the failure of Madras to readjust its districts in accordance with demands of the centre. This controversy, beginning in the spring of 1877 as a result once again of problems in famine relief, continued for more than a decade and ended in admission of virtually total defeat by the central government. Lytton viewed the Board of Revenue in Madras as an obstacle delaying the reference of crucial famine problems to the Madras Council.⁶⁶ Furthermore, following a personal visit to Madras, he complained of pervasive malfunctioning in its administration and

60. Curzon to Northcote, Calcutta, 19 Feb., 1901, C.V.P.

61. Curzon to Hamilton, Calcutta, 21 Feb., 1901, H.C.

62. Curzon to Hamilton, Viceroy’s Camp, Bareilly, 22 April 1901, C.V.P.

63. Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 14 Aug., 1901, H.C.

64. Curzon to Hamilton, 21 Aug., 1901, H.C.

65. Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 16 July 1902, H.C.

66. Lytton to Salisbury, Lucknow, 5 April 1877, Lytton V.P.

recommended the fission of the excessively large Madras districts into more manageable units.⁶⁷ Increase of expense in the new districts was to be avoided by the gradation of district salaries so that the current uniform salary rate would be replaced by smaller salaries varying according to the size of the districts. Lack of supervision in the districts would be rectified by replacing the anomalous Board of Revenue with Commissioners.⁶⁸

In the first stage of the conflict, Madras agreed to the necessity of reform, but refused to lower the salaries of any new collectors and rejected the abolition of the unwieldy, but locally prestigious, Revenue Board.⁶⁹ The refusal came despite assurances that current appointees would not lose salary and that future appointees would have salaries equivalent to those of corresponding positions elsewhere in British India. This led to a complete impasse, and the Government of India was "unable to obtain any report" on the possible implementation of its suggestions.⁷⁰ In the second stage, the Madras officials linked their obstinacy to the universal complaint against promotion-stagnation voiced by all covenanted civilians. In Madras, they claimed, relief could only be afforded by the creation of "really new appointments, that is to say by appointments which increase the aggregate emoluments of the Service."⁷¹ The third stage, beginning in October of 1881, brought temporary relief through the sub-division of the specially troublesome Bellary District, but saw no further pliancy on the part of Madras despite strong admonitions from the centre.⁷² Madras expressed willingness to grade the judicial branch, but the centre insisted that creation of new districts

67. Lytton to Salisbury, Bangalore, 9 Sept., 1877, Lytton V.P.

68. Lytton to the Duke of Buckingham, G. of Madras, Calcutta, 20 Dec., 1877, Lytton V.P.

69. Note in the Home Dept. by Assist. Sec., 27 Nov., 1884, in G. of I., Home, Public, A, 119-129, Jan., 1885, N.A.I.

70. *Ibid.*

71. G. Stokes, Honorary Sec. to the Civil Service Committee of Madras, "An Examination of the Position as Regards Past and Future Promotion. . . of the Madras Civil Service," 27 Nov., 1879, G. of I. Home, Public, A, 44-73, April 1881, 58, N.A.I.

72. G. of I. to Madras, 13 Oct., 1881, cited in note by Assist. Sec., Home Dept., 29 Nov., 1884, in *Ibid.*

must bring with it the gradation of the executive offices as well. This phase ended with total silence on the part of Madras, not broken until more than a year later.

The next move, initiated by Madras, was a suggestion for the total abandonment of any and all reforms. In September 1884, after more than six years of debate, during which Madras had often itself confessed the need for new districts, the Governor and his Council now argued weakly that the existing districts were geographically more suitable than any of the proposed alternatives. They insisted that financial burden for the inauguration of new districts, especially for the construction of new buildings, would be exorbitant. From the alleged impracticality of new districts, Madras then deduced its argument against gradation of salaries. The more onerous duties incumbent upon Madras Collectors because of the size of districts as compared to those, say, in Bengal, made it unfair that some of them should receive the reduced rate of Rs. 1,800 per month. In fact, Madras went so far as to request that two posts recently established on that scale, in connection with the sub-division of Bellary district, should now be abolished.⁷³

Commenting on this latest turn in the discussion, the Finance Member of the Viceroy's Council, David Barbour, wrote that "the action of Madras as regards the creation of new districts is extraordinary. Having in the first instance proposed these districts, the Madras Government now turns round and proposes to abandon them rather than submit to any gradation on pay."⁷⁴ Mackenzie thought the attitude of the Madras Government had been "perverse and obstructive to a degree of which that Government alone is capable." "The fact is," he added, "that the Madras Government will sacrifice any improvement in administration to meet the demands of its officers in the matter of salaries."⁷⁵

73. H.E. Stokes, Sec. to Government of Madras, to G. of I., 13 Sept., 1884, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 119-129, Jan., 1885, N.A.I.

74. Note by David Barbour, Finance Member, 29 Oct., 1884, in *Ibid.*

75. Note by Alexander Mackenzie, Home Sec., 29 Nov., 1884, in *Ibid.*

The controversy now entered its last agonizing round. Another year of correspondence and discussion on the issue produced yet another file totalling 167 pages of print. As in other cases, clarity in discussion was impeded by the fact that many administrative positions had since traded hands. Auckland Colvin, the new Finance Member, *e. g.*, admitted that some aspects of the question were "not very clear to me."⁷⁶ This time, Madras made some semblance of compliance with requests of the Government of India, but its scheme was so hedged by reservations and exceptions that little would have been accomplished. Gradation of salaries, for example, was to be circumvented by the granting of special allowances "to the heaviest districts and courts."⁷⁷ At long last, officials at the centre acknowledged the absurdity of the situation. In the summer of 1887, during another tedious passage of the file through the central departments, a general consensus for total abandonment of the reform proposals gathered momentum. On the fourth of October, 1887, the Government of India informed Madras that the whole scheme for "regrading the Madras Civil Service and creating three new districts" had been indefinitely postponed. The moratorium amounted to a recognition of defeat on the part of the supreme government.

Proposed alterations of provincial boundaries created yet another arena for the destructive display of provincial sensitivities. The most important among the suggested alterations involved the transfer of Sind from Bombay to the Punjab in order to provide better coordination of frontier defences. Both Lytton and Dufferin supported the proposal; but neither could overcome the hostility of Bombay officials who insisted that they should be compensated for the loss of Sind by the transfer of the Central Provinces to the Bombay Presidency. Lansdowne wanted to avoid conflict with Bombay, and completely shelved the transfer scheme in May of 1889.⁷⁸

76. Note by A, Colvin, Finance Member, 27 July 1887, G. of I., Home Public, A, 229-242, Oct., 1887, N.A.I.

77. H.E. Stockes, Acting Chief Sec. to the Government of Madras, to Sec. to G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., 26 Nov., 1886, in G. of I., Home, Public, A., 229-242, Oct., 1887, 229, N.A.I.

78. See Lytton to Lord Northbrook, Nandgaon, 10 April 1876, Lytton V.P.; Dufferin to Lord Cross, Camp Lucknow, 10 April 1888, D.V.P.;
(Continued on next page)

While civilian officials and Governors constituted the *dramatis personae* of the struggle to coordinate administrative policies, it was the structure of government that provided the stage and the backdrops for the various acts of the drama. The Governors of Bombay and Madras were English peers or politicians appointed from outside the regular civilian cadre of the presidential commissions, and remained somewhat independent of the Viceroy. They carried on direct correspondence with the Secretary of State, while all government work in the northern provinces was routed through the central government. They both had their own executive councils, and both continued to command their own military forces. Legislative Councils, taken from Bombay and Madras by the Charter Revision of 1833, were restored by the India Councils Act of 1861.⁷⁹ Governors of Bombay held patronage over several of the political appointments to local princely states. All these factors helped to promote or at least to facilitate disruption in inter-governmental relationships. If the governors had been appointed from within the presidential commission, then the leading administrators and hence the leading candidates for the governorships would have been much more eager to please the Viceroy and his government. They would have been much less prone to use their positions on the local councils and in the secretariats as vantage points against their Bengal colleagues in the central government. The *sine qua non* of improved relationships would therefore have been the renovation of the presidential structure *per se*, not simply the censure of dissident individual officers in the Bombay and Madras Councils or Secretariats. These men would have no particular incentive towards cooperation or reform unless, in return, they were given some real hope for more elevated employment both within their own provinces and on the level of the supreme government. Lord Elgin recognized this when he recommended a reform to the Secretary of State in 1898: “. . . it is not so

(Continued from the last page)

Dufferin to Cross, Simla, 18 May 1888, DVP; Note by A.P. MacDonnell, Home Sec., 6 Sept., 1888, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 288, June 1889, N.A.I.; Note by Lansdowne, “Transfer of Sind from Bombay to Punjab.” 10 May 1889, in *Ibid.*

79. See B.B. Misra, *The Administrative History of India; 1834-1947*, p. 33.

much a question of men," he wrote, "as a system that is accountable for the inconvenience of which we have both complained." His formula for change postulated the downgrading of the Bombay and Madras governorships to the same status as Lieutenant-Governors of Bengal provinces. Lieutenant-Governors in the northern provinces were "directly and personally responsible to the Government of India without the . . . obstruction or domination of a Council."⁸⁰

Every Viceroy of the late nineteenth century desired reform of the presidential structure, but their various proposals never came to fruition. Here again the failure of reform resulted at least in part from the pressures of vested interests in Bombay and Madras. In addition, presidency governorships remained important compensatory appointments for British politicians who could not be conveniently fitted into appropriate positions at home. In 1886, Robert Bourke, a leading member of the Conservative Party, formerly under-secretary of Foreign Affairs (1874-80, 1885), and a staunch supporter of Lord Salisbury, was given the Madras governorship primarily because Salisbury had been importuned by the Randolph Churchill faction and thus had been unable to find enough cabinet posts for his own friends.⁸¹

Lytton regarded the presidential system as a political anachronism, a hold over from the early days of the trading empire. He wanted to "uproot if possible, or at least cut down, the irrepressible local jealousy of the Supreme Government. . . in the Bombay Council and Secretariat."⁸² Resistance by Madras officials to the supreme government's guidance during the famine of 1877 further diminished Lytton's faith in the governorships. He regretted the display among Madras officials of "an unconscious tendency . . . to stimulate, rather than allay, the unavoidable antagonisms incidental to such a situation."⁸³ According to Lytton, relationships with Madras

80. Elgin to Hamilton, Simla, 27 Oct., 1898, E.V.P.

81. See J.P. Cornford, "The Parliamentary Foundations of the Hotel Cecil." *op. cit.*, p. 292.

82. Lytton to Salisbury, Simla, 28 Sept., 1876, Lytton V.P.

83. Lytton to the Duke of Buckingham, G. of Madras, Simla, 12 May 1877, Lytton V.P.

continued to deteriorate until they had "practically ceased to exist."

It is absolutely hopeless to get the Madras Government to do anything right or reasonable that, for the last year, I have resigned myself to the recognition of Madras as a country which does not belong to India, and over which the Government of India cannot exercise the smallest influence or accept the smallest responsibility. For all practical purposes it is to us a foreign state, abominably ill-governed.⁸⁴

Lytton's *alter ego* in London, Sir Fitzjames Stephen, recommended the creation of Lieutenant-Governorships for Madras and Bombay. Since these appointments would automatically be part of the Viceroy's patronage, this change would help promote inter-governmental cohesion in two significant ways. Firstly, the appointees would be handpicked for their loyalty, hopefully, a guarantee of their willingness to cooperate with the central government. Secondly, officials in Bombay and Madras who might themselves aspire to the new Lieutenant-Governorships would realize that their advancement depended upon their support of policies advocated by the Government of India. In this system, civilians would clearly be less prone to oppose the government of India from motives of personal envy. Stephen advised against the proposal of "levelling up and making all the Lieutenant-Governors Governors." That would be contrary both to economy and to common sense.⁸⁵

Whatever might be done, Lytton realized that reforms must be introduced gradually. He had determined to begin with the military branch, and by the summer of 1879 had slated the abolition of the Madras and Bombay military commands. This was to be only a prelude to the far more important and difficult renovation of the civil administration. After reforming the armies, he intended "to open upon the two Presidency Governments the batteries I am now preparing for their demolition."⁸⁶ The Afghan crisis, however, precluded the implementation not

84. Lytton to Cranbrook, Calcutta, 8 Jan., 1880, Lytton V.P.

85. Stephen to Lytton, Cornwall Gardens, London, 27 Aug., 1879, Stephen Correspondence.

86. Lytton to Stephen, Simla, 16 Aug., 1879, *Ibid.*

only of the military but also of the civilian features of Lytton's proposals.

Lord Ripon began consideration of reform shortly after his arrival in India. At Ripon's request, C.U. Aitchison, Home Member of the Viceroy's Council, wrote a memorandum which proposed to curb the autonomous behaviour of the minor presidencies by disallowing their privilege of direct correspondence with the Secretary of State.⁸⁷ On the advice of the Financial Member, Ripon believed the government should go even further and follow Lytton's plan to terminate the minor presidential military commands. Baring had noted that Bombay officials "seemed to me a great deal more anxious to fight the Bengal army than the enemy." "*Esprit de corps* is all very well," added Ripon, "but when it gets to that length it has gone a little to far."⁸⁸ His most bitter invective was recorded in a letter to the Secretary of State on January 20, 1882:

Is it a satisfactory result of the present system that it has generated a bastard *esprit de corps* which makes it a "point of honour" with local Governments and local Armies to deny their defects as if they were victories, or their worst failure as if they were triumphs, and to take as their leading principle of action a sleepless jealousy of "Bengal," whereby they mean the Government of India?⁸⁹

Ripon stopped short of trying to eliminate the governorships in Madras and Bombay because he initially believed that English politics appointed to these posts could judge provincial jealousies more objectively than could the men from within service. Subsequent battles with refractory and independent minded governors of both the minor presidencies influenced him to change this opinion.⁹⁰ But the refusal of Gladstone's government to approach Parliament "with any Indian proposal," let alone one so delicate as elimination of patronage governorships, destroyed Ripon's move for reform. In 1883, frustrated by

87. Memorandum by Hon'ble C.U. Aitchison, 7 Sept., 1880, enclosure in Aitchison to Ripon, Simla, 7 Sept., 1880, R.V.P.

88. Ripon to Hartington, Simla, 28 April 1881, R.V.P.

89. Ripon to Hartington, Calcutta, 20 Jan., 1882, R.V.P.

90. Ripon to Hartington, Simla, 16 June 1882, R.V.P., Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 29 Aug., 1884, R.V.P.

Gladstone's inaction, Ripon told the Secretary of State that he personally could no longer be considered responsible for the malfunctioning of the existing system.⁹¹ Thus structures helping to perpetuate the problems remained unaltered. Hamilton told Lord Elgin in 1898 that, much as he would like, he nevertheless would never attempt to propose reforms that would not be accepted in Parliament.⁹²

Predictably, Curzon resurrected the proposal to demote Bombay and Madras to Lieutenant-Governorships soon after his assumption of the Viceroyalty in 1899.⁹³ Appointment of Lieutenant-Governors from within the ranks of the covenanted civilians would bring an end, he thought, to the "absurd hostility and suspicion between Bombay, Madras and ourselves."⁹⁴ But Hamilton brushed aside Curzon's appeal, basing his decision on the alleged desirability of preventing the complete monopolization of government posts by bureaucrats whose experience had been restricted to Indian service. An outsider, he argued, could more quickly discover and expose the deficiencies of a minor presidency government. This is precisely where his argument fails to convince, for he knew that the experience of every Viceroy had been exactly the opposite.

Rather than becoming champions of reform, imported governors had, time and again, acquiesced in the parochial vision and jealousies of their subordinates; or at least they had been incapable of rising above local bias. C.M. Rivaz, Home Member of Curzon's Council, quickly saw the fallacy of Hamilton's statement: "The present system in Madras and Bombay," he wrote, "is a direct incentive to a studied attitude of insubordination, both active and passive, on the part of those local governments towards the Government of India"⁹⁵ Curzon occasionally returned to the subject in an attempt to dissuade the Secretary of State, but to no avail.⁹⁶ The most he could achieve

91. Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 21 May 1883, R.V.P.

92. Hamilton to Elgin, India Office, 16 Nov., 1898, E.V.P.

93. Curzon to Hamilton Simla, 24 May 1899, C.V.P.

94. C.M. Rivaz, Member of Viceroy's Council, to W.R. Lawrence, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Simla, 8 July 1899, C.V.P.

95. C.M. Rivaz, Member of Viceroy's Council, to W.R. Lawrence, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Simla, 8 July 1899, C.V.P.

96. See, e.g., Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 12 Sept., 1900, H.C.; Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 28 May 1902, H.C.

was the admission from Hamilton, while seeking a successor to Governor Northcote of Bombay in 1902, that "a really strong man in the Civil Service" would be preferable to an outsider whose mind was *tabula rasa* concerning the idiosyncracies of British bureaucracy in India.⁹⁷

As long as nothing was done to reform the presidency system, provincial consciousness was allowed full play, and the effectiveness of British rule, both from the centre and in the minor presidencies, was impaired accordingly. The unrelenting operation of the system testifies not so much to its merits but rather to the surprisingly minimal authority exercised by the central government. It is clear that without the obstruction of provincial consciousness the British might have attempted and perhaps have accomplished much more than they actually did in the late nineteenth century.

On the other hand, as suggested earlier, the refusal of London authorities to reform the system of inter-governmental relationships had the partially beneficial effect, whether intentional or unintentional, of building a fabric of checks and balances within the executive departments of the Indian Government. While handicapped and frustrated viceroys of the late nineteenth century all sought reform of this defective system, Secretaries of State time and again responded unfavourably to their schemes for reform. In large part, this appears to have resulted from a reluctance to take any Indian proposals into the House of Commons.⁹⁸ But the recurring invectives against over-centralization in the Hamilton's correspondence with Curzon suggest perhaps other reasons for maintenance of the *status quo*.⁹⁹ Secretaries of State preferred a large measure of decentralization that would serve as a *de facto* obstacle to over zealousness in the supreme government. A highly centralized government in India might forge a stronger unity among civilians than could be

97. Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 30 Oct., 1902, H.C.

98. In the House of Commons, a vocal minority among the Liberal M.P.'s had the habit of embarrassing the G. of I. whenever given the opportunity. A Chief example of this was the resolution for "simultaneous examinations" to be held in India as well as England for entrance to the I.C.S. passed by the Liberal Parliament of 1893.

99. See, *e.g.*, Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 5 Sept., 1900, H.C.

managed with facility by the authorities in London. The existence of such fears (even if subconscious) is reflected in the hostility of men in the India Office to the excessive authoritarianism of Curzon.¹⁰⁰ It became increasingly painful to men in London to accept the notion that anyone, including Curzon, should present an implacable front by and for the Government of India against them. Retaining the presidency system therefore had the effect, objectively, of keeping the Indian government manageable from London. In addition, and ironically, the inaction resulting from the frustrations of provincialism spared both the Government of India and the India Office the embarrassment of failure inevitably resulting from overly ambitious or universal initiatives for change or reform, either of their own administration or of Indian Society.

100. See, *e.g.*, S. Gopal, *British Policy in India, 1858-1905*, pp. 291 and 294.

INTERSERVICE RIVALRIES : CAUSES AND EFFECTS

“Provincial consciousness” formed a vertical stratification in the Covenanted Civil Service cadre, tending to alienate the civilians of one Presidency from those in another. In addition, there existed a horizontal stratification cutting across provincial boundaries and affecting the character of the Covenanted Service within each province. Aside from provincial affiliation, an official’s status or prestige was also measured according to his branch of service or the function he performed. Degrees of prestige relating to functional structuring were complex. Secretariat posts were generally more highly coveted than district administrative posts; but both types had their own hierarchical structure. For example, lower echelon secretariat posts would rank below Divisional Commissionerships and, perhaps, first class Collectorships. However, Chief Secretaryships in the Government of India or of various provincial departments were more highly prized than district executive assignments on any level. Under favourable circumstances, the secretariats offered the most promising gateway to the highest executive posts, both in the provincial and supreme governments. Securing a secretariat post at the appropriate point in one’s career was a crucial step in advancement beyond the common level of achievement in the executive branch of service.

The highest echelon of employment in the executive branch included Lieutenant-Governorships, memberships in the Councils of the Viceroys and Governors, and one or two secretariat positions in the Central Government. In addition to high salaries these positions also carried “the privilege of residing at hill stations during the hot season.”¹ The summer capital of the

1. J.S.C. Davis, “Oxford and the Indian Civil Service,” *The Oxford Magazine*, X (2 March 1892), p. 207.

supreme government at Simla was a welcome escape from the heat of the plains from April through October. Until the construction of the small guage railroad from Kalka to Simla, early in the twentieth century, access to Simla was limited. The British elite retired there in splendid and rustic isolation, "very far from the rest of the world including India."² During Dufferin's tenure, a mansion was constructed for the Viceroy on an isolated part of the ridge at Simla that could rival any finest country home in England. The second echelon of civilians, including higher officials of provincial governments, enjoyed similar retreats in their own summer capitals, Darjeeling in Bengal and Naini Tal in the N.-W.P. All these luxuries and privileges inevitably promoted jealousy among officials on lower levels.

In terms of status and prestige, secretariat positions were more or less intermediate between the average district appointments and the higher executive posts.³ Beyond the importance as a way station to the highest positions, secretariats were prestigious because the pen wielded immense power in the British Indian bureaucracy. Secretaries to governments were pivotal figures in formulation of the policy. Their written proposals usually provided guidelines for the ensuing deliberations of the highest executive officials. While the greatest prestige of a department fell naturally on the Member of Council who headed it, often the bulk of the work, particularly in the preparation of notes, fell to the Secretary. Articulate writing was a premium commodity, much sought after by the various governments.

Secretariats in fact became the objects of suspicion among the lower or less esteemed echelons. This became particularly true in the provinces of greater Bengal where the Lieutenant Governors had no Executive Councils and where, as a consequence, the Secretaries were the only intermediate authorities between the top and the bottom of the administrative hierarchy. Elgin regretted the bitterness among local officials who, he claimed,

2: Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 13 April 1899, H.C.

3: On the prestige of secretariat posts, both provincial and central, see *e.g.*, the following: letters of Herman Kisch, 25 Feb., 1879, 25 April 1879, 4 Feb., 1880, 25 June 1881, 1 Jan., 1884; Rivett Carnac, *Many Memories*, p. 58; Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories*, p. 186.

often received communications “not always so conciliatory as they might be.”⁴ District officials often thought their knowledge and opinions about local conditions had been sacrificed to the caprice of poorly informed autocrats in the secretariats.⁵

The growing pervasiveness of secretariat authority was a phenomenon peculiar to the latter part of the nineteenth century. It ran counter to the older patriarchal image of the self-sufficient local district officer; necessarily a more self-reliant man in earlier decades if for no other reason than the fact that communications then had been relatively primitive. Authority of a secretariate constituted a corollary to the increasing mobility and unrest among district officials after 1870; it likely also helped to promote that unrest and mobility. W.W. Hunter discussed this phenomenon in his essay “The India of the Queen,” first published in 1887:

The district officers (he wrote) now complain that their duties are being narrowed to writing reports, and to carrying out the orders of the Government thereon. The commissioner or high local officials, intermediate between the collectors and the Government, lament that they have become mere post-offices for transmission of these documents. . . . Meanwhile, the *personnel* of the Provincial Governments has been strengthened in proportion to their increased duties. Where one chief secretary sufficed, three separate secretariats, each with a complete staff, now fence round a Lieutenant-Governor. A new race of beings, called heads of departments, director generals and inspector generals, who existed only in rudimentary form under the Company, firmly enforce the control which the secretariats initiate.⁶

H.J.S. Cotton speaks in his memoirs of the patriarchal authority of district officials as suffering an inevitable, though lamentable decline in “an environment where changes (were) becoming rapid”.⁷ As writers of reports and recorders of information, district officers had no time to investigate or to solve chronic

4. Elgin to Hamilton, Simla, 11 Aug., 1896, E.V.P.

5. O'Dwyer, *India as I the new It*, p. 28; Beames, *Memoirs of a Bengal Civilian*, p. 184.

6. W.W. Hunter, *The India of the Queen and other Essays*, p. 17.

7. Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories*, p. 77.

rural problems such as indebtedness of judicial fraud. Whitcombe quotes from the experience of one N.-W.P. Collector, C.J.O.' Donnell, whose confinement to his office and resulting ignorance of his rural constituency led him to claim that "there is in fact no real revenue administration."^{7a}

Concern about the status of the district officer appears, in retrospect, as yet another symptom of growing apprehension about the empire itself. This is evident in the way observers often articulated their concern, namely, that in former years strong district officers symbolized a strong imperial government. They had been the bedrock of imperial invincibility. The alleged debility of their late nineteenth century counterparts therefore inevitably implied that the Empire itself had lost its true inner vitality. This nostalgic, wistful, recollection of earlier heroic Collectors and Magistrates⁸ says as much or more about the "climate of opinion" concerning the Empire in the late nineteenth century as it does about the actual deterioration of district government.

As to the substance of these fears, it is paradoxical that advanced communications had done more than any other force to produce this deterioration. While the spread of the telegraph might be presumed to have advanced the unity of the empire, in actuality the ensuing increase of tension between downgraded district men and arrogant secretaries had an opposite effect within the bureaucracy. To the degree that district jobs seemed increasingly to be thankless drudgery when compared to the power and comfort of secretariat posts, inevitably it appeared less worthwhile for district men to be creative and active administrators. The hostility of district officials against secretariat men lessened the spirit of unity, purpose, and commitment among the various components of the I.C.S. Lee-Warner of the Bombay Service summarized the pathos of the situation in an article written for *Cornhill Magazine* in 1901: "There is no solidarity in the service, but rather a tendency to cleavage

7a. C.J. O'Donnell, *Our Land Revenue Policy in Northern India*, quoted in Whitcomb, p. 237; see also Whitcomb, p. 238.

8. See also statements of Hamilton and Curzon quoted in Chapter III.

between the judicial and executive officers, and between the secretaries and the district official's.'⁹

Early resignations, mobility, and countless petitions are clear signs of disaffection among district officials. It would be impossible, complained one petitioner, for higher officials to realize "the bitterness or the disappointed expectations of the rank and file of the service, or see in a true light the hopelessness of their prospects."¹⁰ Perhaps the most colorful exposition of discontent among district men *vis-a-vis* the secretaries comes from a covenanted servant who spent almost the whole of his career in rather obscure district posts. Robert Carstairs, of the Bengal Service, pictures himself as an innovative individualist who had been repeatedly thwarted by "the opposition of higher authorities" who either modified his ideas beyond recognition or hid them away in the files.¹¹ He had been specially proud of his "Boards of Guardians," plan, particularly since it was viewed with favour by Lord Ripon as possible model for his own local self-government program. Yet when he had finally submitted this scheme for review by the Lower Bengal secretaries the proposals—

met with the fate of so many schemes submitted to the tender mercies of the clerks up aloft. I never saw them again, nor was asked to explain them, nor was allowed to answer objections or Criticisms. They were duly pecked to pieces. . . . and went into the museum where such things are kept as interesting dried specimens.¹²

The embittered Carstairs devoted an entire chapter of his memoirs to the evils of what he called "the Departmental Mind." "To such a mind any new proposal not originating with the department was likely to be wrong. . . ."¹³ In the departmental mind Carstairs saw evidence of an arrogant intolerance that would never allow a subordinate to think for himself.

9. William Lee-Warner, "The Indian Civil Service", *The Cornhill Magazine*, New Series, XI (July-Dec., 1901), p. 324.

10. Memorial of Alexander MacMillan, Joint Magistrate and Assistant Collector at Allahabad, to S. of S., 23 Feb., 1884, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 241-253, May 1884, 244, N.A.I.

11. Carstairs, *The Little World*, p. 74.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

The highest officials recognized the dangers inherent in the resentment festering among the rank and file of executive officers. Opinions were occasionally voiced that some of the disaffection might be overcome by granting greater recognition to district officials in the form of honors from the Queen:

The ordinary executive officers (wrote C.H.T. Crosthwaite) feel that they have no chance of distinction, work they ever so hard and well. They consider that the only chance of receiving recognition is to be found in Simla, or in some employment directly under the Government of India. A few honors given to the line would have a very good effect.¹⁴

But honors for rank and file officers continued to be few in number. Men in the secretariats always had the greatest advantages. Nothing was done to alter the increasing impressiveness of the secretariats as against the seeming drudgery and insignificance of district chores.¹⁵

Yet status stratification in the executive branch proved far less troublesome than the tension between the executive and judicial branches of the service. Functional structuring allowed free expression of hostilities between the executive and the judiciary than would have been possible among different segments of the executive branch. In 1873, the Government of Bengal instituted a policy forcing officials after ten years of service to choose irrevocably between service in the executive or the judicial branches. The N.-W.P., adopted the same scheme in 1878. From that point, officers holding judicial posts gradually lost the remnants of prestige enjoyed by the more prominent judges of the former generation. Feelings of resentment

14. C.H.T. Crosthwaite, L.-G. of N.-W.P. to Lansdowne, Naini Tal, 5 Sept., 1893, L.V.P; see also Curzon to Hamilton, 13 April 1899, H.C. "I propose to make a special point in this year's (honors) list and indeed in later ones, of rewarding men who have not attained to the prize of the Secretariat, and whose work in the Mofusal or in other walks of life is too often left. . . unsung."

15. The images of these two branches survive the British period and have remained to trouble the Indian bureaucracy after independence. They have prevented the establishment of what the Delhi *Statesman*, calls a "socialist pattern of society in the Civil Service." *Statesman*, 26 Aug., 1964.

tively arose among judges against the pretensions of their colleagues in the executive branch. The High Court Judges, at least one third of whom were covenanted civilians, had gained the highest positions attainable in their branch of service. They had nothing to lose by giving vent to their hostility against the executive side. Open conflicts between these two arms of administration were both numerous and vexatious in the late nineteenth century. On the other hand, most district executive civilians realized the expediency of repressing their hostilities towards superior officers of their own branch. Promotions and salary increases were at stake. Carstairs implies this explanation for the subservience of his colleagues in district administration:

Many officials are ambitious; many are so much in the power of the superior that they feel they dare not provoke him to anger. To all such, the temptation to suppress their own intelligence and become mere instruments of others is very great, when subservience passes for loyalty.¹⁶

The hostilities and rivalries between the executive and judicial cadres in Bengal developed intensively after the separation of the two branches in 1873,¹⁷ although the possibilities for this had always been latent in the relative unpopularity of most judicial posts. However, it is a mistake to contend that the immediate impulse for development of separate lines of promotion came from a desire to insure "better training and greater experience to the judges who presided over the District Courts.¹⁸ Though insufficient training of the judiciary had long been regretted, the actual genesis of the separate promotion scheme lay in the plan of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, G. Campbell, to improve the efficiency of the executive, not the judicial, machinery of his province. Campbell argued that the burden of administration rested on the shoulders of executive officers. He proposed to improve their efficiency by raising salaries, especially of those men in larger districts, making the tenure of officers "more permanent. . . than hitherto."¹⁹

16. Carstairs, *The Little World.*, p. 317.

17. N.C. Roy, *The Civil Service in India*, p. 183.

18. *Ibid.*

19. H.L. Dampier, Sec. to Government of Bengal, General Dept., to E.C. Bayley, Sec. to the G. of I., 11 May 1872, G. of I., Home, Public, 401, 13 May 1872, N. A. I.

Continuity of administration could only be secured, he claimed, by stopping the elevation of Magistrate-Collectors to the more highly paid position of a District Judge "as soon as their services and seniority entitle them to such promotion".²⁰ Campbell proposed that every official be required, after a specified term of service, to select one branch of service for the remainder of his time in India. "The Lieutenant-Governor," wrote the Secretary of the Bengal Government, "would. . . simply make the two classes of appointments parallel and coordinate."²¹ Campbell also demanded the revision of salary scales for Magistrate-Collectors as a necessity of improved district administration. On the existing scale a top grade District Judge could receive 30,000 rupees per year while the most highly paid collectors received only Rs. 23,000. Since many Magistrate-Collectors held only officiating appointments, their average salary was in fact even lower. "The Lieutenant-Governor feels certain," concluded the Bengal secretary, "that the Government of India will admit that if we are to expect the Bengal District Officers to occupy a position at all corresponding to that of District Officers in other parts of India, it is a most trying and pressing necessity that their allowances should be raised."²²

The supreme government granted provisional approval of the parallel promotion scheme with the stipulation that no overall additional expenditure should be incurred.²³ In calculating economies to offset the rise in executive administrative salaries, the Government of Bengal decided on the reduction of wages for District Judges. Whereas men with substantive salaries of 700 rupees per month had previously officiated as second grade District Judges on a total salary of 1900 rupees, now they would receive only 1,566 rupees. On the other hand the comparable salaries for acting Magistrate-Collectors would rise from Rs. 1,232 to Rs. 1,432 per month.²⁴

The loud protests of the Calcutta High Court Judges against

20. *Ibid.*, para 7.

21. *Ibid.*, para 8.

22. *Ibid.*, para 11.

23. Note by J. S. (Sec. to Viceroy ?), 14 May 1872, in *ibid.*

24. Note by T.J.C. Plowden, Under-Sec., Home Dept., 3 June 1873, G. of I. Home, Judicial, A, 111-120, Feb., 1874, N.A.I.

these changes presaged decades of harmful controversy between the chief executive and judicial authorities in Bengal.

In reality [claimed the High Court Judges] this was a plan for reducing at a stroke the salaries of eleven or twelve District Judges from Rs. 2,500 to 2,000 and those of three Additional Judges from Rs. 2,166 to the same rate of Rs. 2,000 in order that some Collector-Magistrates may receive salaries of Rs. 2,250 and the remainder (*for the present*) Rs. 1800 a month.²⁵

The parenthetical phrase was a direct quotation from the Government notification, and the Judges saw in it a hint of still further humiliation for judicial officials. The justices charged that Lieutenant-Governor had avoided consulting with them concerning the new measures. They noted that despite the unattractive "sedentary" character of a judicial career, judgeships had nonetheless been accepted in the past by a few of better quality civilians, but only "because the grade of District Judge afforded the largest class of appointment to which they could reasonably look with a fairly sufficient salary attached." The distant prospect of a seat in the High Court would not in itself provide sufficient incentive for a young civilian to enter the judiciary under the new scheme. In Bengal there were only five of these positions, and they obviously did not compare favourably with "the prizes of the Executive and political branches of the service."

The Judges also took offence at some of the less significant features of the plan, for example the relegation of the judicial officers to "an inferior place in the Civil List." Before Campbell's time, Judges had appeared in the second place on the Civil List after Commissioners, but before Magistrate Collectors.²⁶ Still, this petty insult might have been swallowed if the judges had retained "the higher pay and held unquestioned seniority in age and service."²⁷

Approximately a week following the protest by the judges, Lieutenant-Governor Campbell sent a rejoinder to the Govern-

25. W.M. Souttar, Registrar of the High Court of Judicature at Fort William in Bengal, to the Sec. to the G. of I., Home Dept., 26 May 1873, in *ibid.*, 111, N.A.I.

26. Note in Home Dept. by Plowden, 3 June 1873, *ibid.*, para. 7.

27. Souttar to the Sec. to the G. of I., Home Dept., 26 May 1873.

ment of India. For the first time in the dispute over the new policy, Campbell wrote of the "inferiority of the judicial branch in support of his policy"²⁸.

The Lieutenant-Governor nevertheless saw the wisdom of attempting to pacify the Justices. He arranged to exempt those officials who had been promoted from first-class Magistrates to acting Judgeships from any reductions which could bring their salaries below the level of their current incomes.²⁹ Campbell derided the opinion of the justices that only inferior men would in future enlist in the judicial branch.

It was only at this point that Campbell introduced the alleged deficiencies of professional judicial training as a consideration in the Bengal dispute. The Justices had admitted that under the old system officials had been recruited for judicial service "whether possessed of judicial ability or not."³⁰ Campbell contended this was one of the best possible arguments to support the new system. By deciding to serve permanently in the judicial branch at an early point in their careers, young men would gain a better introduction to their responsibilities. The old system, according to the Lieutenant-Governor, with its highly paid judges, had been reduced to a method of compensating older officials who could not aspire to get higher executive employment.³¹ Early assignment to judicial duties would produce more capable judges. They would no longer be the unhappy official residue remaining after everyone else had obtained superior executive posts.

The central government, composed mostly of officials who had always served in the executive branch, strongly supported the Lieutenant-Governor against the High Court.³² Following a trial period of four years, the system of separate parallel promotion, together with the new salary scale received final and enthusiastic confirmation by the new Secretary of State.³³

28. Charles Bernard, Officiating Sec. to the Government of Bengal, General Dept., to the Sec. to the G. of I., Home Dept., Darjeeling, 6 June 1873, *ibid.*, 112, para. 2.

29. *Ibid.*, para. 3.

30. *Ibid.*, para. 6.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Note by A.C. Lyall, Home Sec., 13 June 1873, in same file.

33. S. of S. to G.-G. in Council, date (?) after May 1877, G. of I., Home, Judicial, 13 Aug., 1877, N.A.I.

Gradually the lines of separation between the two branches became much more tightly drawn. New regulations, announced by Lord Northcote in 1875, enjoined a "close" observance of the separation; and stated that "every covenanted officer serving under the Government of Bengal. . . be called upon at some period between his tenth and twelfth years of service to elect one or other branch."³⁴ The centre asked Bengal to compile a yearly list of the choices together with a report of each official's assignment. No official could henceforth be transferred from one branch to the other "without the previous sanction of the Governor-General in Council." After 1878, special provision was also made in the North-Western Provinces for the grant of personal allowances to officials who might be adversely affected by this system of parallel promotion.³⁵

The difficulty of attracting capable civilians to the judiciary worsened considerably as a result of separate and parallel promotion. In 1886, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir Rivers Thompson, noted the prevailing opinion that "the Judicial Service is an inferior service." Since the separation of the two branches, it had become a popular cliché to say that "such and such a person is good enough for the Judicial branch."³⁶ Alexander Miller, Legal Member of the Viceroy's Council under Lansdowne, spoke of the inferiority and deficiencies of civilian Judicial officials as reason for their replacement by Indian appointees. "One of the worst phenomena of the existing system," he said, "is that the best men prefer, naturally enough, the executive side, which holds out the prospect of far greater number of the most desirable posts."³⁷ The mavericks

34. Arthur Howell, Officiating Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., to Sec. to the Government of Bengal, General Dept., Fort William, 11 Dec., 1875, G. of I., Home, Public A, 74, Dec., 1875, N.A.I.

35. See. *e.g.*, Chief Sec. to Government of the N.-W.P. and Oudh, to Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., Naini Tal, 15 June 1886, G. of I., Home, Public, 75-83, April 1887, 75, para. 9, N. A. I.; on allowances for N.-W.P. men *see*, S. of S. to G-G. in Council, India Office, 4 May 1882 (Public Despatch 54 of 1882), G. of I., Home, Public, 164, June 1882, N.A.I.

36. Sir Rivers Thompson, L.-G. of Bengal, to D. Mackenzie Wallace, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Darjeeling, 19 April 1886, D.V.P.

37. Note by A.E. Miller, Law Member, 23 Oct., 1893, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 56-70, Nov., 1893, N.A.I.

and accents of the I.C.S., were usually found in the judiciary. Sir Auckland Colvin, Lieutenant-Governor of the N.-W.P., spoke of an errant judge as being "like a good many more [who have] no aptitude either for the Bench, or for the administrative work," but who were placed on the Bench as the lesser of two evils.³⁸

As years passed, covenanted judicial vacancies became increasingly difficult to fill. In 1892, the Government of Bengal found it necessary to compel a civilian to enter the judiciary against his wishes. In a public resolution announcing this decision, the officiating Secretary of the Bengal Government wrote as follows:

The Lieutenant-Governor observes that, if the choice made by these [three] officers were approved, there would be, in the four consecutive years [from 1888 to 1891]. . . seventeen officers electing the Executive branch, while the number of officers electing the Judicial would come to only four. The proportion of officers choosing the Executive line appears to Sir Charles Elliott to be far too large.³⁹

The Deputy Home Secretary of the supreme government applauded the Lieutenant-Governor's action as the only way to correct an increasingly embarrassing situation.⁴⁰ Similar problems had emerged in the N.-W.P. where, according to government spokesmen, "the result of the scheme of 1878 has unquestionably been to depress the judicial branch below the executive."⁴¹ The Lieutenant-Governor asked the centre to readjust salaries on a simple seniority basis, regardless of the branch of service, in order to attain the goal of parallel promotion that "officers in both branches should be much on the

38. Sir Auckland Colvin, L.-G. of N.-W.P., to Lansdowne, Naini Tal, 30 June 1892, L.V.P.

39. Resolution, Appointment Dept. of the Government of Bengal, Calcutta, 6 Jan., 1892, G. of I., Home, Jud., B, 247-248, Jan., 1892, 247, N.A.I.; see also C.W. Bolton, Chief Sec. to the Government of Bengal, to the Sec. to the G. of I., Home Dept., Calcutta, 13 Feb., 1899, G. of I., Home, Jud., A. 760-762, March 1890, 760, and remainder of file, N.A.I.

40. Note by Deputy Sec., Home Dept., 16 Jan., 1892, in *ibid.*

41. Chief Sec. to Government, N.-W.P. and Oudh, to Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., Naini Tal, 15 June 1886, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 75-83, April 1887, 75, para. 9, N.A.I.

same footing."⁴² Over a period of eight years, only eight civilians out of sixty in the N.-W.P. had signified a preference for the judiciary.

The proposal of seniority salary failed to gain support in the Government of India, despite the admission of the Financial Department that emoluments of the judiciary had suffered considerably in comparison with those of the executive line. In calculating salaries of men in both branches beginning at the fourteenth year of service, the Finance Secretary found that covenanted judicial employees fell considerably behind until the twenty-third year of service, after which, until the thirtieth year; they averaged about the same as executive men. From then on, to the thirty-fifth year, with fewer men for a comparison, executive salaries averaged 2,000 rupees per month higher due to the large salaries drawn by older men serving in the highest executive posts. Westland concluded "that the prospects of the Judicial line are, in point of salary, throughout inferior to those of the Executive branch."⁴³

The Home Department, however, objected that the N.-W.P. proposals would transgress the ruling of Lord Hartington, previously Secretary of State, prohibiting gradation of the service on the basis of personal salaries.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the Deputy Home Secretary found that a seniority scale would actually jeopardize the welfare of judges whose income in their current officiating capacities was significantly higher than they would receive under the N.-W.P. proposals. According to seniority ratings, these men, presently receiving Rs. 2,333 per month, would lose benefits of an acting salary and fall below the executive men who, at best, got only Rs. 2,250 per month. Most revealing was the Secretary's open prejudice against the judicial branch, an attitude deeply affecting his treatment of the issues :

The men in the Judicial line have become Judges as a rule either because they were not thought fit to be Execu-

42. Chief Sec. to Government, N.-W.P. and Oudh, to Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., Naini Tal, 15 June 1886, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 75-83, April 1887, 75, para. 2, N.A.I.

43. Note by James Westland, Chief Sec. of the Finance Dept., G. of I., 11 Feb., 1887. in *ibid.*

44. Note by J.P. Hewett, Deputy Sec., Home Dept., 5 March 1887, in *ibid.*

tive officers, or because they have chosen the line themselves. It is unfortunately equally well known in official and non-official circles in the N.-W.P. that the judicial Bench does not carry the confidence of the public it would, I venture to think, be very undesirable to reward it at the expense of the executive branch. . . .⁴⁵

While this discussion was still in progress, some unexpected retirements provided limited alleviation for the judicial branch, and subsequently the Lieutenant-Governor expressed willingness to drop his proposals.⁴⁶

The relief provided by these retirements was ephemeral, and in 1894 the N.-W.P. Government reiterated its complaints, suggesting remedies similar to those formerly p r o p o s e d.⁴⁷ C.H.T. Crosthwaite, currently Lieutenant-Governor, sent a personal plea to the Home Member, lamenting that "we are getting weak and inexperienced men as Judges, and as in many cases they are forced into the judicial line where they start with a bias against the government and the executive."⁴⁸ The present course, he said would provoke a devastating attack on the weakness of the judiciary which, in turn, might "result in the separation of the judicial appointments from the service." Indian barristers and pleaders might assume the judicial functions, it would then be "impossible to maintain order."⁴⁹ Crosthwaite's seniority salary plan called for an end to separate promotion and the amalgamation of civilians into three grades, the first carrying a salary of Rs. 2,250 per month, the second Rs. 1,833, and the third Rs. 1,666. Officers would receive promotion "according to seniority without reference to the branch in which they

45. Note by Hewett, 21 Oct., 1886, in *ibid.*

46. See A. P. MacDonnell, Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., to Chief Sec. to Government of N.-W.P. and Oudh, Simla, 11 April 1887, in *ibid.*, 83.

47. M.J.D. LaTouche, Chief Sec. to Government, N.-W.P. and Oudh, to the Sec. to the G. of I., Home Dept., Allahabad, 9 Jan., 1894, G. of I., Home, East., A, 75-91, July 1894, 75, N.A.I.

48. Demi-official letter from C.H.T. Crosthwaite, L.-G. of N.-W.P., to MacDonnell, Home Member, L.-G.'s Camp, N.-W.P., 22 March 1894, in *ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*

might be employed.”⁵⁰ Judicial appointments, higher than those incorporated in the amalgamated list, would include the two top grades of judges, with incomes of Rs. 3,000 and Rs. 2,500 respectively, open to men already holding judicial posts. It was hoped that these appointments, together with the High Court Justiceships and a few miscellaneous posts carrying high emoluments, would provide adequate incentive to civilians for taking up the higher judicial service.

The Home Secretary thought that the Government of India should give its assent to Crosthwaite’s plan, but the opposition to Home Member, Mr. MacDonnell, won the day, MacDonnell insisted on maintenance of the demarcation between the executive and judicial officials inherent in parallel promotion. “There is a growing objection in the public mind,” he wrote, “to the arbitrary exercise of control by the executive over the judiciary.” The transfer of an official from the judiciary to the executive might be criticized by the public as an arbitrary action to silence and weaken the bench.⁵¹ MacDonnell also recalled the ruling that salaries should be attached only to offices, not to individuals arranged in grades according to seniority. It was MacDonnell’s viewpoint that prevailed in the official letter rejecting the N.-W.P. proposals.

Several factors, other than separate and parallel promotion, contributed to the decline of the judiciary. Policies affecting the High Court in Bengal had a specially damaging impact. The first of these was the subtraction in 1880 of Rs. 5,000 from the annual salary of the Justices, thus reducing their income to the same amount received by comparable judges in other High Courts of British India (*i.e.*, Rs. 45,000). In conveying the protest of the High Court, the Chief Justice, Sir Richard Garth, formulated a long disquisition on the decline of the judiciary. He expressed surprise that Lord Cranbrook (Secretary of State) should favour the reduction in light of difficulties enlisting barristers at home for High Court vacancies. “The

50. M.J.D. LaTouche, Chief Sec. to Government of N.-W.P. and Oudh, to Sec. to the G. of I., Home Dept., Allahabad, 9 Jan., 1894, in *ibid.*, 75.

51. Note by A.P. MacDonnell, Home Member, 13 March 1884, in *ibid.*

truth is", Garth told Ripon, "that most good men at home would infinitely prefer an appointment as a County Court Judge or a Police Magistrate at a salary of from £ 1,000 to £ 1,500 a year rather than come out here on a salary of 14,200."⁵² The reduction would not only deter men at home, but would further injure the judiciary in the eyes of covenanted civilians.

A group of eleven memorials addressed to the Secretary of State reflected the dismay created among lower ranks of covenanted civilian judges by the salary reduction.⁵³ The Lieutenant-Governor agreed with the judges, and warned that inducement for civilians to join the judiciary would be considerably lessened. A. Rivers Thompson, Home Member, spoke of the "widespread notion in Bengal" that the judicial service was inferior, and he predicted that "the certain effect of the action now taken will be to make the judicial service more unpopular, and in a very few years to leave for the highest judicial offices incompetent men."⁵⁴ The Secretary of State, however, remained implacable in face of these protests.⁵⁵

Concurrently, the refusal of the center to comply with the High Court's request for extended leave privilege also annoyed the Judges. Chief Justice Garth regarded this as yet another one in the series of decisions which had made the "position of the Calcutta Judges so disagreeable" that "we shall have the worst Judges when we require the best."⁵⁶ Later, in Dufferin's administration, the Government denied the request of civilian High Court Judges that they may not be required to pay four per cent of their salaries to the Civil Annuity Fund, a privilege enjoyed by the non-civilian members. After four years of remonstrance, both the Secretary of State and the Government of India combined to reject the request.⁵⁷

Less than a month before this action, the judges had been dealt another blow in the form of a ruling that they should

52. Sir Richard Garth to Ripon, Calcutta, 31 Aug., 1880, R.V.P.

53. G. of I., Home, Jud., A, 137-141, Feb., 1882, N.A.I.

54. Note by A. Rivers Thompson, Home Member, 7 Feb., 1882, *ibid.*

55. Hartington to Ripon, India Office, 6 April 1882, R.V.P.

56. Garth to Ripon, Calcutta 19 April 1882, R.V.P.

57. S. of S. to G.-G. in Council, India Office, 4 June 1891, G. of I., Home, Jud., A, 98-100, July 1891, 91, N.A.I.

serve 14½ years instead of 11½ to be eligible for pension.⁵⁸ Again the Government had not consulted the High Court prior to the change; and although the new regulation would not apply to any of the current Justices, they nevertheless considered it a duty to protest: "A series of changes has been made from time to time in recent years," they said, "and the Judges have not failed to observe that they have invariably tended in one direction, viz., towards diminishing the advantages of an appointment to a High Court Judgeship." The changes, they asserted, had irreparably impaired the attractiveness of the judicial branch.⁵⁹

The validity of the charge appeared to be confirmed by the growing volume of criticisms aimed against the judiciary, and especially against the High Courts. It became much more difficult to enlist competent English barristers as justices after 1882. Worthy candidates for the High Court among covenanted civilians also became a rarity.⁶⁰ The denigration of the High Courts was a familiar theme in the correspondence of Lord Lansdowne and the succeeding Viceroys. The "incompetency" of the Calcutta and Allahabad High Courts, he claimed, had created a serious backlog of appeals in both courts.⁶¹ The condition of the Punjab Chief Court had become equally reprehensible by 1889, according to home secretary A.P. MacDonnell: "The Chief Court is so weak that no stimulating influence can be expected from it."⁶²

Condemnation reached an even greater intensity in Curzon's correspondence. Curzon believed "the level of the High Court Benches in India, just at present, is most discredibly low."⁶³ The contrast between the brilliance of the Indian pleaders and barristers who appeared before the Courts and the incompetency

58. S. of S. to G.-G. in Council, India Office, 14 May 1891 (Judicial Despatch 15, 1891), G. of I., Home, Jud., A., 205-213, July 1891, 206, N.A.I.

59. H.W.C. Carnduff, Registrar of High Court at Fort William, in Bengal, to Sec. of G. of I., Home Dept., Calcutta, 2 Sept., 1891, in *ibid.*

60. Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 26 Sept., 1884, R.V.P.

61. Lansdowne to Cross, Calcutta, 9 Dec., 1891, L.V.P.

62. Note by A.P. MacDonnell, Home Sec., undated, G. of I., Home, Jud., A, 197-199a, 1889, N.A.I.

63. Curzon to Hamilton, Viceroy's Camp, Nepal, 1 April 1901, H.C.

of the Judges, he said, proved alarming and embarrassing to government.⁶⁴ In 1903, Curzon claimed the vast arrears of the High Courts had practically attained "the dimensions of a public scandal."⁶⁵ The blame for this, he thought, should be indiscriminately levelled against both the barristers and civilian judges of the courts. Mediocrity was the most that could be expected from the civilian judges because, said Curzon, "it is only the inferior Civilians who, as a rule, take to the Judicial side, and are ultimately available for promotion to the Bench [*i.e.*, the High Courts]."⁶⁶

In spite of concern, nothing substantial was done to rejuvenate the image of the judiciary until 1899. Concerted pressure for a face-lifting first came from Lord Elgin. Secretary of State Hamilton conceded that a salary increase would do most to raise the prestige of the Calcutta Court, but feared that an increase for the judges would evoke an outcry from the executive branch for a similar concession.⁶⁷ The judges desired repeal of the two regulations affecting salaries and pensions which had been so harmful to the Court. Though their duties were more onerous and their office supposedly more prestigious, yet their salaries did not match that of the Home Secretaryship. Every possible step, insisted the Chief Justice, should be taken to restore an aura of dignity to the Court. Only then could the judiciary compete fairly for capable officers in a service where "all the real prizes. . . the Governorships and other high offices, . . . go to the Executive, not to the judicial officers."⁶⁸

The India Council finally adopted two of the reforms suggested by Chief Justice MacLean and the Government of India. By returning to the salary scale in effect before 1882 and thus raising the remuneration of the justices above that of the chief secretaries of the supreme government, the Secretary of

64. See, *e.g.*, Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 12 June 1902, H.C.

65. Curzon to Hamilton, Calcutta, 5 March 1903, H.C.

66. Curzon to Sir Arthur Godley, Permanent Under-Sec. of State for India, Garhwal, 5 Oct., 1903, C.V.P.; also Curzon to Brodrick, Calcutta, 14 Dec., 1904, C.V.P.

67. Hamilton to Elgin, India Office, 20 March 1896, E.V.P.

68. Sir Francis MacLean, Chief Justice of the High Court, Calcutta, to Elgin, Calcutta, 23 March 1897, E.V.P.

State hoped "to remove inequalities which have an invidious appearance between officers of like importance and dignity in the judicial and in the executive line, respectively. . . ." ⁶⁹ The requisite term for pension also was returned to the *status quo ante*. These revisions, however, were meager when considered in terms of the practically insurmountable prejudice against judicial service among covenanted civilians.

Beginning with the first appearance of Indians in higher government service during the 1870's the restriction on Indian recruits to judicial positions constituted yet another sign of inferior status for the judiciary among British covenanted civilians. Employment of Indians in higher judicial posts offered the government an opportunity to appease educated Indians without granting them access to the most sacrosanct of British institutions, the executive covenanted service. On the other hand, according to the British judges, this practice had "unsettle [ed] the prospects of the judicial branch of the service" and thus had driven "an excessive number of men into the executive line." The over-crowding, said the petitioner, had "in a double manner, injuriously affected his prospects." ⁷⁰

From the earliest discussions concerning admission of Indians to higher government service the sentiment prevailed that Indians were most suited for the judiciary and should be limited to that branch. ⁷¹ It is highly probable that the parallel promotion scheme of 1873 had been prompted at least in part by a desire to maintain the British monopoly of higher executive positions. Covenanted judicial appointments, it was thought, were the only posts they could grant to Indians without endangering the foundations of the Raj, and incidentally without further damaging the image of the covenanted service.

69. S. of S. to G.-G in Council, India, Office, 27 April 1899, (Judicial Despatch 18, 1399), G. of I., Home, Jud., A, 391-398, June 1899, 391, N.A.I.

70. Memorial of G.A. Grierson, Officiating Joint Magistrate of Patna, Bankipore, 28 May 1884, G. of I., Home, Public, 103-141, June 1885, 106, N.A.I.

71. See note by J.L.M., Under-Sec., Home Dept., 21 Aug., 1883, G. of I., Home, Jud., B., 110-111, Oct., 1884, N.A.I.; see also Roy, *Civil Service*, p. 100.

While the home secretary in the supreme government, Alexander Mackenzie displayed vigilance in this matter, the personal choice of civilians between the executive and judiciary, at least until the depletion of the judicial cadre, had reached the crisis point that usually had been taken as a matter of course. But when Anundoram Burooah and R.C Dutt of the Bengal Covenanted Service choose the executive branch in 1883, Mackenzie hoped the separate and parallel promotion system would allow the government to deny their requests. Mackenzie feared that "if the Bengal Government will not exercise its powers and keep unsuitable Natives out of the Executive line, we shall have much trouble some day."⁷² The Under-Secretary was unable to find any explicit provision for interference by the supreme government in choosing the civilians.⁷³ S.C. Bayley, the Home Member, sympathized with Mackenzie, but suggested that in lieu of direct interference, the Viceroy might communicate privately with the Lieutenant-Governor on the issues.⁷⁴ Ripon, however, refused to comply with the wishes of the Home Department.⁷⁵

Mackenzie and Bayley resumed their campaign soon after Ripon's departure from India. They secured the support of Lord Dufferin who requested his private secretary to instruct the Lieutenant-Governor along the lines suggested by Mackenzie. The Lieutenant-Governor said he had been aware of the government's original intention to "limit their [Indians'] employment to the judicial side."⁷⁶ But he knew also that any public reversal of the personal choices indicated by Indian covenanted civilians would create an uproar in the Indian press. He nevertheless, promised to promote the aims of the Home Department in a surreptitious fashion.⁷⁷

72. Note by A. Mackenzie, 26 July 1883, G. of I., Home, Jud., A, 305-306, Jan., 1886, N.A.I.

73. Note by W.J.S., 20 July 1883, G. of I., Home, Jud., A, 305-306, Jan., 1886, N.A.I.

74. Note by S.C. Bayley, Home Member, 21 Sept., 1883, G. Of I., Home Jud., B, 110-111, Oct., 1884, N.A.I.

75. Note by Ripon, 11 Oct., 1883, in *ibid.*

76. Sir Rivers Thompson, L.-G. of Bengal, to Viceroy, Darjeeling, 19 April 1886, G. of I., Home; Jud., A, 303-305, Jan., 1886, N.A.I.

77. *Ibid.*

The general tenor of testimony given by Englishmen before the Public Service Commission of 1887 supported the impression that Indians were more suited for judicial service. This patently racist consensus dealt another blow to the reputation of the judiciary, since British judges inevitably were by association painted with the same taint of inferiority as their Indian counterparts.⁷⁸

It is interesting to note that statements of Englishmen emphasizing the judicial aptitude of Indians were almost always made by executive administrators. Prominent judicial officers, on the other hand, looked upon the extended employment of Indians in judgeships as equally dangerous to Indianization of Collectorships or Commissionerships.⁷⁹ There might perhaps develop a monopoly of the judiciary by Indian officials.⁸⁰

The gradual loss of prestige by the judiciary had at least two ramifications for British administration. First, it generated an unhealthy defensiveness among British judicial officers, a type of reaction particularly evident in the High Courts after 1882. In Calcutta, the chronic tensions between the High Court and the Lieutenant-Governor were exacerbated to such lengths that it was impossible to maintain a modicum of cooperation between these two arms of the administration. Secondly and more significantly, judicial reforms were either delayed or forgotten because they inevitably became the victims of crippling controversies.

The necessity for judicial reform was commonly urged by prominent executive administrators throughout the late nineteenth century. In Bengal, Lieutenant-Governors agonized over alleged weaknesses, abuses, and inefficiency of the courts.⁸¹ Officials of the Punjab Government, including M i c h a e l

78. Note by P.G. Melitus, Deputy Home Sec., 7 Feb., 1894, G. of I., Home, Est., A, 75-91, July 1894, N.A.I.

79. See, e.g., Testimony of Raymond West, Judge of the High Court of Bombay, 28 Jan., 1887, *Proceedings of the Public Service Commission*, IV, Section II, pp. 353 f.

80. Sir H.T. Prinsep, Judge of the High Court, Calcutta, to Curzon, Calcutta, 14 May 1899, C.V.P.

81. B. Fuller, *Studies of Indian Life*, p. 326.

O'Dwyer⁸² and Denzil Ibbetson⁸³ condemned their own provincial judiciary for its failure to protect the small landholders against the moneylenders. H.E.M. James, formerly of the Bombay commission, drew a connection between the inferiority of judicial officers and the growing problems of land alienation and peasant indebtedness. "The fact is," he wrote, "that our Indian judicial system is the weakest part of our whole administration, and most out of touch with the people."⁸⁴ The parallel promotion scheme had brought mostly incompetent men into the judiciary.

In criminal matters (he wrote) it works badly enough. But in civil matters the evil effects of incompetent courts are far worse and more wide-spreading. . . . The Civil Courts are ruining the whole agricultural population in many important provinces.⁸⁵

English judges in India, he concluded, lacked the commonsense of their counterparts at home who "come to sensible decisions and met out substantive justice."⁸⁶

The malaise of the judiciary— itself a deterrent to the enlistment of more competent British judges appeared in the minds of the British rulers to result from an inability to make English law in India conform to the dignity and integrity of its English prototype. According to Bampfylde Fuller, civil courts in India were popularly known as "casinos," and they had a reputation for providing more amusement than justice.⁸⁷ In both civil and criminal cases, litigants commonly hired professional witnesses who were coached beforehand about their testimony. Near the court-houses the plaintiffs and defendants would meet a host of touts who advertised the abilities of local lawyers. "The courts," said Fuller, "were regarded as instru-

82. S.S. Thorburn, *Musalman and Money-Lenders in the Punjab*, pp. 116 f.

83. Denzil Ibbetson, Deputy Commissioner Rohtak, "Memorandum on the proposals for a Punjab Agriculturist Relief Act." 7 March 1899, G. of I., Home, Jud., A, 234-300., Dec., 1891, 245, N.A.I.

84. H.E.M. James, "Some Further Reflections on India," *National Review*, 22 (Sept.—Feb., 1893-94), p. 774.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 775.

86. *Ibid.*

87. Fuller, *Studies of Indian Life*, p. 123.

ments for profiting by deceit, and in judicial proceedings the truth is exceedingly difficult to discover.”⁸⁸ Carstairs thought that many of the cases before the courts were only short acts in much longer battles between men who directed the drama from behind the scenes.⁸⁹ Only men of means could afford litigation in the civil courts. Many injustices endured by the poorer classes, especially after the *M u t i n y*, were handled in summary fashion by the informal zamindari courts sanctioned by the British in Bengal and in the N.-W.P. Some complaints might go to the courts of Indian munsifs or on rare occasions be appealed to the revenue courts of District Magistrates. But neither occupancy or non-occupancy tenants could afford litigation in the higher British Civil Courts where the lowest settlement would cost at least 1000 rupees.^{89a} The litigiousness in the District Civil Courts allegedly fostered by the British legal system involved primarily landed or relatively affluent elements. But inevitably the financial burdens of this costly game would fall on tenants as well as landlords. By expanding the debt or financial responsibilities of landlords, the proliferation of land disputes in the civil courts would lead inevitably to more extortionate demands on the tenants and would divert attention of landlords away from improvement of agrarian enterprise. Maintaining solvency became for many landlords an end in itself. In his travels through northern India during 1849-50, Col. William Sleeman expressed fear that civil litigation would “devour like white ants, the substance of the landholders of all classes and grades.”^{89b}

In some respects it appears that constant vilification of the judiciary was an exercise in shifting blame from executive administrators unable to devise an effective survey and record of rights which would either militate against litigation or at least confine it to expeditious hearings in the revenue courts of the magistrates.^{89c} The more introverted and often socially ostracized judges became convenient scapegoats to explain the

88. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

89. Carstairs, *Little World*, pp. 14 f.

89a. Whitcombe, *Agrarian Conditions*, p. 210.

89b. W. A. Sleeman, *A Journey Through the Kingdom of Oudh in 1849-50*, quoted in Whitcombe, p. 214.

89c. Whitcombe, *Agrarian Conditions*, pp. 216-217.

difficulties of the Raj, in effect to bear the onus for the fragility of British rule in the late nineteenth century. A typical example of this hypocritical position of judges appeared in the two articles written for the *National Review* in 1893-94 by H.E.M. James, formerly of the executive service in Bombay. While praising British administration "as efficient as any in the world,"⁹⁰ James acknowledged in a second article that about three quarters of the land in British India was "hopelessly" mortgaged, and contended that the fault lay entirely with the members of the British judiciary. "The weak and incompetent" civilians recruited for the bench, he contended, 'are ruining the whole agricultural population in many important provinces.'⁹¹ This same attitude prevailed in the N.-W.P. Rural instability and alienation of property to money-lenders, according to one Settlement Officer, was due not to deficiencies of revenue settlement, but rather to "the whole machinery of the civil law. In producing incessant litigation... worked against the integrity... claimed for the summary dealings of the revenue administration."^{91a} One may infer from an observation of John Beames that leading executive administrators favoured frequent transfers of judicial officials in order to keep them off-base and thus make them all the more vulnerable to bear the blame for failure of the legal system.⁹²

Some critics urged the simplification of the legal system, with less emphasis on its imitation of English law as one step in the right direction. Even Sir Fitzjames Stephen, who had himself been a prominent figure in the assimilation of English law to Indian, warned Lytton in 1879 that codification had reached a point of diminishing returns, and that there was already "more than any district officer can really carry in his head."⁹³ A. P. Howell, formerly Home Secretary, demoted for unknown reasons by Lytton, published an attack against the

90. James, "Reflections on the Way Home," *National Review*, 22 (Sept.-Feb., 1893-94), pp. 774 f.

91. James's, "Some Further Reflections", *National Review*, 22 (Sept.-Feb., 1893-94).

91a. See E. Whitcombe, *Agrarian Conditions*, p. 206.

92. Beames, *Memoirs*, p. 245.

93. Stephen to Lytton, York, 22 July 1879, *Stephen Correspondence*.

anglicization of Indian law in the *Calcutta Review*. English law and legal precedents, he argued, had begun to percolate to the lower level courts where Indian barristers and judges vaunted themselves on their knowledge of English laws which they often cited in false contexts "to the neglect of that accuracy in the statement of facts on which most decisions really turn." In Howell's opinion, displacement of Indian customs by English law was irrational wherever it involved use of exotic remedies for purely indigenous problems.⁹⁴

The inapplicability of British codified contract law and court formality to the Indian setting was obvious in their failure to protect the small landowners, tenants, or landless peasants against the rapacity of money-lenders and large landlords. According to Elizabeth Whitcombe, vicious and costly litigations were the inevitable by-products of British law in the N.-W.P. The fountain-head of this confusion lay in the doctrinaire adherence of British officers and courts to the nineteenth century law principle, as stated by Lieutenant-Governor George Edmonston, that "the whole of a man's property is liable for the liquidation of his bona fide debts."^{94a} The structure of patchwork settlement in the N.-W.P., with several grades of landholding classes, including taluqdars, zamindars, Rajputs, joint families (or co-parceners), and smaller landholders represented by Lambardars, provided limitless opportunities for litigation under the terms of the alien legal concepts. Added confusion resulted from alienation of land to money-lenders, especially in the poorer districts towards

94. A.P. Howell, "Legislation in India," *Calcutta Review*, LXXXII (April 1886), CLXIV, pp. 446 ff; see also statement of Sir Henry Durand in 1860 as quoted in the *Bengal Civil Service* (by "an Out-cast"): "The error of our Indian judicature has notoriously been the influences which the example of the technicalities of English law, practice, and procedure have unfortunately been allowed to exercise . . ." For a valuable recent discussion of these issues see Lloyd and Susan Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition*, pp. 279 ff; the Rudolph analysis, however, is not concerned with the significance of I.C.S., idiosyncracies for the problems of judicial reform.

94a. Edmonstone quoted by Whitcombe, *Agrarian Conditions*, p. 220.

the East and South of the N.-W.P.^{94b} On the whole, however, the most troublesome problem in the N.-W.P. was not alienation to moneylenders, but rather the proliferation of expensive and complex litigation among the landed elements.^{94c}

The money-lender was much more menacing to the small landholders of the Punjab. S. S. Thorburn, a Punjab official argued that the contract law had become a most convenient weapon in the hands of Punjab money-lenders against illiterate landed cultivators. In the subordinate Punjab civil courts where Indian munsifs presided, peasant debtors, according to Thorburn, found themselves at a double disadvantage because the judges, themselves drawn from the bunniah (money-lending) class, had fewer compunctions than British judges in upholding the law against the defaulters. Denzil Ibbetson, destined to become Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab for a brief period under Curzon, wrote a specially poignant critique of Punjab civil justice in 1889 :

I believe that the whole of our system of law and justice is utterly unsuited to the circumstances, necessities, habits and ideas of the people. . . . I know that our Civil Courts stink in the nostrils of the peasantry. . . . [Education] is only adding yearly to the number of those who are able to avail themselves of the facilities and encouragement which we offer to the educated to oppress the ignorant.⁹⁶

With the introduction of civil courts and codification, beginning especially with the establishment of the Punjab Chief Court in 1866, the Law in Punjab became increasingly impersonal, Urban money-lenders were encouraged by the formality and impersonality of the legal procedures to foreclose

94b. Whitcombe, *Ibid.*, pp. 226-227 ; Cf. statistics on increase in the landholdings of banias in the N.-W.P. cited in Francis Robinson's, "Municipal Government and Muslim Separatism in the United Provinces, 1883-1916," *Modern Asian Studies*, 7, Part 3 (July 1973), pp. 403 ff.

94c. Whitcombe, pp. 227-231.

95. H. H. Risley, "The Bengal Tenancy Act," *The Calcutta Review*, LXXXIII (July 1886), p. 111.

96. Ibbetson's Memorandum, 7 March 1889, G. of I., Home, Jud., A Dec., 1891, N.A.I.

on mortgages, thus relegating a growing number of small holders to unending poverty.^{96a}

In Bengal, where the permanent settlement of 1793 had confirmed the ownership of the land in the hands of a landed aristocracy (the zamindars), the system of British law worked to support the claims of the wealthy against the peasantry. Zamindars or their agents could perpetrate injustices with virtually no fear of being brought to justice or even of being brought to the courts of British judges. Tenants would think carefully before offending their landlords; they knew that zamindars had unlimited resources for oppression.⁹⁷ The zamindar could easily alter the account book, or he might threaten to institute a criminal case against the complainant.⁹⁸ "The Courts could do nothing," says Carstairs: "if any man had the rashness to complain against him [*i.e.*, the landlord], no witness dared give evidence. . . ."⁹⁹

In Bengal therefore the courts, particularly the civil courts, were acted not so much as the agencies of justice but rather as a bulwark of the *status quo*. Somewhat sarcastically, Carstairs claimed that "few of us Government officers realised what a fearful advantage our system of law courts gave to the rich over the poor."¹⁰⁰ The backlog in the civil courts of Bengal testifies to endemic and expensive haggling among zamindars and other powerful classes over possession of land. Absence of confidence in the courts inevitably added to the unattractiveness of the judiciary in the eyes of junior civilians. Those who became judges often did so unwillingly, and they instinctively developed a bias against executive officials for their depreciation of the judiciary.

Constant complaints concerning deficient training of covenanted civilian judges added still further to their low reputation.¹⁰¹ The adoption of a legal training program for

96a. Norman G. Barrier, *The Punjab Alienation of Land Bill*, pp. 8-13.

97. Thomas R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt; India, 1857-1870*, p. 187.

98. See, *e.g.*, Beames, *Memoirs*, p. 137.

99. Carstairs, *Little World*, p. 19.

100. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-92.

101. See, *e.g.*, N.C. Roy, *The Civil Service*, p. 163.

new civilians in the Bombay presidency raised the issue with the Government of India. From 1862, all civilians in Bombay were "required, on their arrival in India, to attend the Government Law School at the Presidency for one year."¹⁰² Madras wanted to inaugurate a similar program in 1864, and predicted dire consequences for failure to take immediate remedial action :

... result of the present system will be to exclude civilians from the bench, not in favour of English lawyers on whose behalf the agitation against the Judicial arrangements of the Indian Government have been hitherto carried on, but in favour of Natives and East Indians especially educated for the Judicial Service.¹⁰³

While Bombay had bypassed the Government of India and already introduced its training program with the sanction of the Secretary of State,¹⁰¹ Madras' preliminary correspondence with the supreme government led to the defeat of its proposals. The Viceroy, John Lawrence, denied the urgency of the problem, stating that the broad opportunities of subordinate district officials for acquaintance with Indian customs ought to provide adequate preparation for judicial assignments. Deficiencies of the judicial branch, he said, "must result not from any fault in the system," but from the personal incompetency of judges, and opinion indicative of the executive tendency to be wary of the judicial conundrum and to use the judges as scapegoats for the malfunctioning of the judiciary.¹⁰⁵ In Bengal, as in Madras, the judiciary lacked the benefit of trained judges having adequate experience in legal procedure prior to the assumption of their courtroom responsibilities.

In 1880, Sir Richard Garth, Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, complained that poor preparation was aggravated

102. A D. Robertson, Sec. to Government of Bombay, to E.C. Bayley, Sec. to G. of I., Bombay, 9 Feb., 1863, G. of I., Home, Jud., A., 47-70, 21 March 1864, 171, N.A.I. (numbering of the file is irregular).

103. A.J. Arbuthnot, Chief Sec. to Government of Bengal, to Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., 10 June 1863, G. of I., Home, Jud., A., 47-70, 21 March 1894, 905.

104. Minute by H.B. Harington, 5 March 1863, in *ibid.*, 56.

105. Minute by John Lawrence, Viceroy, 5 March 1864, in *ibid.*, 69.

by the apparent decline in the intellectual capacities of judicial appointees. Garth lamented that “a young civilian may be, and often is, transformed into a District Judge, and has to sit in judgment upon Native Judges of twenty years standing, without any knowledge of civil law, or experience in conducting a civil suit, or having even opened the Code of Civil Procedure.”¹⁰⁶ This disproved the claim made in 1873 that the parallel promotion scheme would automatically provide the requisite training to young civilians entering the judicial branch. The Government of Bengal subsequently admitted the defect in 1881.¹⁰⁷

In light of this, Sir Ashley Eden, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, called for the repeal of the separate and parallel promotion system. Barring repeal, he suggested some improvement might be effected by granting all civilians, after five years of service, the authority of a munsif with power to try civil rent suits. This arrangement would hopefully help relieve the courts, their constantly increasing burden of litigation and, in areas of emergency, “the presence of a European covenanted officer exercising the power of a Magistrate and a Civil Court would be a great service in checking agitation.”¹⁰⁸ Civilians would be required to choose their branch of service after nine years, rather than after ten or twelve. At this stage, they would be given limited power to try criminal appeals in addition to more concentrated work of civil cases. These proposals received the support of the Home Department and the Viceroy. The Government of India conveyed its approval in a letter dated 18 June 1881.¹⁰⁹

According to the Bengal Civil and Criminal Justice Report for 1883, Eden’s scheme had “proved of little or no

106. Sir Richard Garth, Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court, to Ripon, Calcutta, 31 Aug., 1880, R.V.P.
107. Horace A. Cockerell, Sec. to Government of Bengal, to Sec. of G. of I., Home, Rev. and Ag. Dept., Calcutta, 7 Feb., 1881, G. of I., Home, Jud., A., 135-136, June 1881, 135, N.A.I.
108. *Ibid.*
109. Charles Grant, Officiating Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., to the Sec. to the Government of Bengal, Simla, 18 June 1881, in *ibid.*, 136.

practical value,"¹¹⁰ and in essence it was abandoned. The depletion of the judicial ranks had forced many civilians, choosing the judicial branch, to assume judgeships without any intermediate period of subordinate judicial service as anticipated by Eden. During Elgin's administration, protests mounted against "the appointment of lads of nine years service to the responsible position of Sessions Judge." This practice, according to the Home Member of the Viceroy's Council, was "intolerable."¹¹¹

As judges more and more carried the onus of failure to make the British system work effectively in India, they reacted defensively to criticism by refusing to entertain consideration for reform. Increasingly, after 1880, matters requiring cooperation of executive and judicial branches became points of altercation that drove the disputing parties further apart. It became practically impossible to pursue debates in a rational manner. Calcutta High Court Justices looked upon policy disputes as opportunities to vindicate the honor of their Court and of the judicial branch, while in turn the Government of Bengal reacted with hasty assertions of executive authority. Unable to cope with this major flaw in its claim to be the effective and just arbiter of India's destiny, British officialdom fell into the trap of endemic controversy within its own ranks. It became a house hopelessly divided against itself.

This division provided at least some indirect assistance to the incipient nationalist movement in India. During Lansdowne's vicereignty, for example, the Calcutta High Court supported the agitation among educated Indians against the withdrawal of trial by jury in "capital cases."

As you are aware [Lansdowne told the Secretary of State], the relations between the Judges of the High Court and the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal are not satisfactory, and it is to this unfortunate estrangement of the Judicial from the

110. J. Ware Edgar, Officiating Sec. to the Government of Bengal, to Sec. to the G. of I., Home Dept., Calcutta, 19 March 1889, G. of I., Home, Jud., A 109-122, May 1885, 109, N.A.I.
111. J. Woodburn, Home Member, to Elgin, Calcutta, 25 Feb., 1896, E.V.P.

Executive authorities that a good deal of the support which the Bengal agitation has received must be attributed.¹¹²

The action of the High Court in this instance was indicative of behavior which, according to Bampfylde Fuller, had "complicated the efforts of the Government to cut back the early shoots of anarchism."¹¹³

Because of the bitterness subsisting between the Government of Bengal and the High Court of Calcutta, executive authorities were unable to secure the cooperation of the judges for the consideration of judicial reforms.¹¹⁴ The necessity for action would have been apparent even from a casual reading of the "Civil and Criminal Justice Report of the Lower Provinces of Bengal" during the 1880's. Arrears of the High Court, on both the original and appellate sides, accumulated steadily throughout the decade. On the appellate side, arrears numbered 3,303 suits at the end of 1889 as against 1,964 at the end of 1886. In the subordinate civil courts, the arrears had risen from 76,278 in 1886 to 83,243 in 1889.¹¹⁵ According to the executive administrators, failure to arrest the growth of arrears had resulted primarily from the unwillingness of the judiciary to introduce reforms.

The "confusion and disorganization" of the courts had come to the attention of the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Rivers Thompson, during his visit to Chittagong District in 1886.¹¹⁶ Thinking the district Judges lacked adequate supervision, he claimed the High Court had the responsibility to provide initiative for reform. Justice Prinsep undertook an inspection of mofussil courts that yielded several conclusions, all unanimously supported by the High Court. Prinsep emphasized more

112. Lansdowne to Kimberley, Calcutta 1 Feb., 1893, L.V.P.

113. Fuller, *Studies of Indian Life*, p. 295.

114. Note by A. Mackenzie, Home Sec., 16 May 1884, G. of I., Home, Jud., A. 173-176, Oct., 1884, 173, N.A.I.

115. W. Dunbar Blyth, Officiating Chief Sec. to the Government of Bengal. to Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., Darjeeling, 21 June 1886, G. of I., Home, Jud., A. 408-426, Aug., 1886, 408, N.A.I.

116. See F.B. Peacock, Chief Sec. to the Government of Bengal, to Sec. to the G. of I., Home Dept., Darjeeling, 16 Oct., 1886, G. of I., Home, Jud., A. 62-79, May 1887, 62, N.A.I.

courts, better accommodations for judges, and more highly paid subordinate judges as the basic requisites of an adequate judiciary.¹¹⁷ In short, the judges attempted to rid themselves of responsibility for reform and to pass it on to the executive branch. The measures proposed by the judges simply called for the expansion of existing facilities by executive decree. The High Court did not indicate support for thorough evaluation and renovation of the judicial system. In actuality, neither executive nor judicial branches recognised or admitted the real root of the problem in the civil courts, namely, the unwillingness of the British Government to disturb the existing landlord and bania manipulation and abuse not only of the courts but also of land revenue records and documents (discussed in the next chapter). This continuation of abuse by landlords of the judicial system constitutes yet another reminder of the essentially artificial character of British rule in the late nineteenth century.

In a letter from the Government of Bengal to the Home Department of the Supreme Government, 16 October 1886, Sir Rivers Thompson continued to place the full burden of blame on the back of the judiciary. Inefficiency in the courts had resulted, he said, not primarily from lack of adequate judicial facilities, but rather from the failure of the High Court to provide supervision and regulation of judicial administration.¹¹⁸ In forwarding a despatch to the Secretary of State, proposing *temporary* appointment of additional munsifs to care for the backlog, the Home Department omitted the Lieutenant-Governor's critical opinions. Neither were the Judges informed of Thompson's letter. By keeping the circulation of the letter at a minimum, the Government of India obviously hoped to avoid yet another clash with the Court. The Court had nevertheless obtained knowledge of the offending letter surreptitiously.¹¹⁹ In its report on the Administration of the Civil

117. C.A. Wilkins, Registrar of the High Court of Judicature, Calcutta, to the Sec. to the G. of I., Home Dept., Calcutta, 9 Sept., 1885, G. of I., Home, Jud., A., 191-207, Oct., 1885, 192, N.A.I.

118. F.B. Peacock to the Sec. to G. of I., Darjeeling, 16 Oct., 1886.

119. See note of A.P. MacDonell, Home Sec., 19 Sept., 1887, G. of I., Home Jud., A., 289-293, Sept., 1887, N.A.I.

Justice in Bengal for 1886, the Court wrote "the flattest contradiction they would give to Sir Rivers Thompson's impeachment."¹²⁰ They refused to recognize any abuses in the courts, and instead reiterated Justice Princep's plea for increased judicial facilities.

The ensuing discussion of the supreme government reveals its predicament concerning the incessant battle between the executive and judicial branches in Bengal. On the one hand, the Government of India realized the necessity for radical reform of the court system: On the other, it foresaw the futility of another confrontation with the sensitive Judges. Any accompanying public agitation would embarrass the Government of India. In reality, the Government lacked the stamina to confront the basic dilemma of the British judicial system in India, namely, how to reconcile upper class abuse of the courts with the frequent official protestations of their efficiency and unvarying rectitude of the British rule. On the whole, the Judges had the stronger position, at least, in terms of public support. A.P. MacDonnell, the Home Secretary, wrote perceptively on the role of public pressure in forcing the central government to let the Court have its way. "Public opinion," he said, "will not allow our repressing litigation by prohibitive stamp fees. We must, therefore, increase our agencies for dealing with it."¹²¹

The Home Member recommended that an official be placed on special duty to analyse the distribution of munsifs in Bengal. In a Resolution authorizing the appointment, the Government of India implied its provisional support for the opinion held by the Court. The official chosen (M.J.F. Stevens, later a Justice of the High Court) was commissioned in 1889 to "collect the necessary information, and to place it before the Court in such a form as will enable the Judges to advise the Government as to the precise extent to which the existing staff of Munsifs should be permanently increased."¹²²

120. *Ibid.*

121. Note by MacDonnell, 29 Jan., 1899, G. of I., Home, Jud., A., 292-351, May 1889, N.A.I.

122. Extract from the proceedings of the G. of I., Home, Jud., Calcutta, 13 March 1889, in *ibid.*, 336, para., 6.

Stevens' conclusions corresponded closely with the figures previously projected by the Judges as the minimum needed number of additional munsifs. Having acceded twice before to the Court's demands, the supreme government, in passing Stevens report on to Bengal, gave its sanction to yet another increase in personnel for the lower courts.¹²³

The concessions of the supreme government, however, did not calm the Judges, who continued to express offence at the least provocation, forestalling consideration of any substantial judicial reform. In the spring of 1890, for example, when the Government of India sent an official letter to the Court lamenting the continuing growth of arrears in litigation, the Court termed the criticism "a censure" and a blow to the High Court.¹²⁴ The government denied any intent to impugn the integrity of the Court. For that very reason, the Government had not required any explanation from the Judges for the backlog "such as would have been required from a Local Government or Administration in the case of a subordinate Court."¹²⁵

Judicial reform would have been even less possible during the Lieutenant-Governorship of Sir Charles Elliott (1891-94). An impetuous man, he had already incurred the disfavour of the Judges in his capacity as Chairman of the Retrenchment or Finance Commission.¹²⁶ Elliott showed even greater impatience with the High Court and judicial branch than had Sir Rivers Thompson. Two incidents occurring in 1891 and 1892 prompted the Judges to charge undue, "serious", and illegal interference in judicial affairs by the Lieutenant-Governor.¹²⁷

123. C.J. Lyall, Officiating Sec. to G. of I., to Chief Sec. to the Government of Bengal, Simla, 9 July 1890, G. of I., Home, Jud., A., 2-15., Sept., 1890, 15 N.A.I.

124. H.W.C. Carnduff, Officiating Registrar of the High Court at Fort William, to the Officiating Sec. to G. of I., Calcutta, 22 April 1890, G. of I., Home, Jud., A., 333-339, July 1890, 336, N.A.I.

125. C.J. Lyall, to H.W.C. Cranduff, Simla, 14 June 1890, in *ibid.*, 337.

126. See, *e.g.*, Minute of Sir Charles Elliot, 23 Dec., 1889, G. of I., Home, Jud., A., 141-182, Jan., 1890, 180, N.A.I.

127. Carnduff to Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., Calcutta, 25 Jan., 1892, G. of I., Home, Jud., A., 203-226, Jan., 1893, 210, N.A.I.

In both cases Elliott denied any personal intention to impugn the Judges. He wanted, if possible, to avoid the crippling effect on judicial reform of renewed conflict with the judiciary.¹²⁸ Both the Central Government and the Secretary of State issued *e q u i v o c a l* judgments concerning the controversy but on balance their opinions aimed at conciliating the Judges.¹²⁹

A third eruption, in 1893, involved an executive censure of a covenanted Sessions Judge. While the *C o u r t* insisted that "the censure passed should be withdrawn,"¹³⁰ the Government of India, in complete frustration, acquiesced in the comment of its Home Member that "there is nothing more to be said on the subject, which must be regarded as closed."¹³¹

Some of the extreme bitterness disappeared with Elliott's retirement, but the alienation between courts and Government continued. Although expressing concern about the deficiencies of judicial administration, Curzon would not undertake the task of renovation in view of the previous controversies. Hence the inadequacies of the existing judicial system in Lower Bengal (and elsewhere) continued unabated, tempered only by the occasional grudging allowance to the judiciary of more subordinate judges. The insufficiency of this provision appeared evident in the inability of the courts to impede expansion of arrears. Arrears in the subordinate civil courts of Bengal, for example, had risen from 83,243 in 1889 to 90,707 in 1896.¹³²

Status stratification in the covenanted service must be considered as an important factor preventing effective cooperation for judicial reform. Branded with the labels of

128. H.J.S. Cotton, Chief Sec. to the Government of Bengal, to the Sec. to the G. of I., Home Dept., Darjeeling, 22 Sept., 1892, G. of I., Home, Jud., A., 203-226, Jan., 1893, 221.

129. See, *e.g.*, S. of S. to G.-G. in Council, India Office, 1 June 1893 (Judicial Despatch 19 of 1893), G. of I., Home, Jud., A., 61-66, Aug., 1893, N.A.I.

130. Carnduff to the Sec. to G. of I., Calcutta, 30 Jan., 1894, G. of I., Home, Jud., A., 39 Feb., 1894, N.A.I.

131. Note by Home Member, A.P. MacDonnell, 9 Feb. 1894, in *ibid.*

132. C.W. Bolton, Chief Sec. to Government of Bengal, to the Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept. Calcutta, 10 Jan., 1898, G. of I., Home, Jud. 372-387, Feb., 1898, 372, N.A.I.

inferiority and incompetency by their covenanted colleagues in the executive branch, judicial officials responded with recalcitrance when called upon to consider reform. This refractory behaviour became essentially a conditioned response in consequence of measures taken during the viceroynalties of Northbrook, Lytton, and Ripon, impairing drastically the image of the judicial branch. Resistance to reform by the High Court was, in turn, spurred on by the articulate section of the Indian public which made use of the inter-governmental controversy in its own nascent struggle with the British Raj. But aside from these easily detected deterrents to judicial reform, one is also compelled to suggest that the bickering between governments and courts provided a convenient cover for the much more important and fundamental inability of either branch, but especially the executive branch, to make English law work effectively in the alien environment of India.

5

PROMOTION AND POLICY

The following chapters turn from analysis of I.C.S., impact on administrative mechanisms to a consideration, of I.C.S. involvement in major policy decisions of the late nineteenth century, chapter five deals specifically with the role of individual officials.

Careerism in the I.C.S.

The petitions and correspondence of covenanted civilians suggest two primary motivations in choosing an Indian career: obtaining prominent positions with facility and reaping the high salaries attached to those appointments. As in most bureaucracies, perhaps especially because of its acquisitive middle class social background, the Covenanted Civil Service was characterized by an obsessive concern for promotion, prestige, and status. Sir H.J.S. Cotton¹ significantly gave the title "On the Ladder" to one chapter of his memoirs. Sir Bampfylde Fuller, who ended his career as the controversial Lieutenant-Governor of East Bengal, wrote revealingly: "[Indians] observe that individual officers [*i.e.*, British civilians] win promotion and honour by good work and they can hardly believe that the work is disinterested."²

The importance of status and prestige in the operation of a bureaucracy have been discussed by Chester A. Barnard in an essay first published in 1946.³ Barnard notes that "the system of status is a strong and probably an indispensable developer of the sense of responsibility and therefore of stability and reliability," but at the same time paradoxically it can

1. H.J.S. Cotton, *Memoirs*, pp. 114 ff.

2. Fuller, *Studies of Indian Life*, p. 352.

3. Chester A. Barnard, "Functions and Pathology of Status Systems?" *Reader in Bureaucracy*, ed. R.K. Merton, *et al*, pp. 242 ff.

be disruptive by “depressing and limiting [men] of inferior status,” and (one might add) by generating demoralizing personal conflicts among competitors for status. Barnard also notes that the bureaucratic “premium on routine qualities has a depressing effect on creative and innovative leadership.” British Indian bureaucracy during the late nineteenth century conforms to this model.

Status anxiety fostered a spirit of keen competition and even bitter rivalry among civilians, pitting individual against individual and group against group. Competition was enhanced by the monolithic, hierarchical character of both the executive and judicial branches of the service, but particularly the former. The Anglo-Indian editor of the *Indian Daily News* told the Secretary of State that “every official seeks to magnify his office, and endeavours to have everything printed, and the more he can thus put himself in evidence the more important he becomes.”⁴ Relationships between superior officials and their subordinates were often obstructed by the fear of senior men “that the subordinates may distinguish themselves. . .”⁵

Sensitivities and rivalries among civilians required careful consideration in order to carry on the work of government with a modicum of success. Sir Fitzjames Stephen characterized rivalry for promotion as “the great feature of Indian Government,”—a result, he thought, of the inferior social background of British officialdom in India :

You must never forget [he told Lytton] that 19 civilians in 20 are the most commonplace and the least dignified of second and third class Englishmen and that their poor little minds are in all ordinary cases almost absorbed in measuring their position and power against somebody else’s, when they are not actually at work in that cruel climate. . . . They think every detail of vital importance, and their nerves being all on the quiver, they get into the

4. James Wilson, Editor of the *Indian Daily News*, to Lord Randolph Churchill, Rutland Park, Sheffield, 26 Aug., 1885, enclosure in Churchill to Dufferin, India Office, 28 Aug., 1885, D.V.P.

5. Anonymous, *The Bengal Civil Service*, p. 93.

queer state of jealousy and avaricious grasping after power which you see.⁶

The task of making appointments at the highest level fell to the viceroys, and all of them complained of the intrigue and jealousy among the several candidates. Dufferin found it extraordinary to discover any civilian who was "free from personal ambition and from sensational appetites, which," he said, "are the ruin of some of our cleverest civil servants."⁷ Remarking to Lord Cross on the "very self-seeking" behaviour of W.W. Hunter, he added despairingly that in this "respect I am sorry to say he [Hunter] has many rivals in this country."⁸

Despite great success as a writer, especially his monumental collation of material in the *Imperial Gazetteer*, Hunter nevertheless fits the status conscious mould of all the better known officials. Hunter looked upon all his literary productions as simply a prelude to the ultimate attainment of a provincial governorship or at least a seat in the Viceroy's Executive Council: "I aspire to a circle far above the circle of fashion. . . . I mean the circle of power," he wrote.⁹ Several leading rivals, particularly Mackenzie, succeeded in labelling Hunter as a literary dilettante (they considered the *Gazetteer* to be superficial and not authoritative) and kept Hunter from reaching any of the highest positions.

Lord Elgin expressed even stronger dismay than had Lord Dufferin concerning rivalries among the covenanted civilians. "These appointments," he wrote, "are among the most troublesome bits of my work."¹⁰ He denounced the frequent transfers and promotions desired by civilians but disruptive of administrative continuity and efficiency. For the authoritarian mentality of Curzon, civilian intrigue was doubly trying, causing him "more annoyance and tribulation of spirit than any part of my work."¹¹ All viceroys found themselves

6. Stephen to Lytton, London, 7 May 1876, Stephen Correspondence.

7. Dufferin to Cross, Viceroy's Train, 2 April 1887, D.V.P.

8. Dufferin to Cross, Calcutta, 28 Dec., 1886, D.V.P.

9. Hunter's letter quoted in Skrine, *Life of Hunter*. p. 44.

10. Elgin to Lord Harris, G. of Bombay, Simla, 14 May 1894, E.V.P.

11. Curzon to Hamilton, Viceroy's Camp, Hyderabad Territory, 9 April 1902, H.C.

at a disadvantage in handling these problems, largely because they came to India uninformed both with respect to policy and to personalities. A humorous and revealing case in point was Dufferin's response to Lepel Griffin's frantic effort to secure the Foreign Secretaryship even before Dufferin had departed for India. Dufferin found himself nonplussed, for, as he confessed, he had not yet even heard about the foreign secretaryship let alone the probable candidates for the post.

Although Viceroys had the prerogative to appoint whom-ever they wanted to the highest positions, they wisely "spare [d] neither time nor pains" in their "anxious efforts" to appease all the possible claimants to a vacancy.¹² Higher officials who remained in India beyond the limit of twenty-one years necessary for pension were under no compulsion to complete any further period of service. They might resign or they might take furlough at any time, perhaps thereby seriously embarrassing the Government of India. The weapons employed to obtain desired posts often included a threat of resignation. Many of the highest officials of the late nineteenth century, including Mackenzie, Crosthwaite, Elliott and A.H.L. Fraser followed this route with varying degrees of effectiveness. Fraser, having been consigned to the remoteness of the Central Provinces, but briefly gaining notice as a member of the Opium Commission (1893-94), threatened to resign in 1897,¹³ and in the following year became officiating Home Secretary of the supreme government, later serving as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal.

Lower Level Appointments and the Criteria for Promotion

While grossly ignorant of India and of civilian capabilities or aptitudes, viceroys possessed a more informed perception concerning the relative social status of their civilian subordinates. This together with the influence exercised by close associates had overriding weight in decisions regarding pro-

12. D.M. Wallace, Private Sec. to the Viceroy, to D. Fitzpatrick, Officiating Chief Commissioner, C.P., Calcutta, 11 Feb., 1887, D.V.P.

13. Sir W. Mackworth Young, L.-G. of Punjab, to Elgin, Simla, 21 Aug., 1897, E.V.P; and Elgin to Young, Simla, 4 Sept., 1897, E.V.P.

motion. These factors often proved more significant than either the merit or the seniority of the candidates. Men without these advantages more often than not found themselves posted to remote and undesirable positions far from the glamour and prestige of provincial or central headquarters. Several civilians recorded their misfortune with an attitude of fatalism. In 1861, John Beames, of the Lower Bengal Commission, was appointed to officiate as Magistrate and Collector in Purneah, a District "shunned by all officers whose ability or personal influence were sufficient to secure them favourite districts." "I was sent there," he concluded, "because I was a stranger whom no one knew or cared about." Similarly, "Chittagong being very unhealthy, was regarded as a penal station."¹⁴ While Beames suffered in Purneah, the son of Sir Barnes Peacock, Chief Justice of Bengal, had been appointed Collector at "the healthy and favourite district of Monghyr."¹⁵

It would be difficult to document the precise role played by social status, consanguinity, or other close associations with superiors in the elevation of officials. Clearly there existed a general consciousness of "the gentleman," and the "gentlemanly" qualities required to prepare men for higher offices. Lord Curzon's comment concerning one of his subordinate secretaries in the Foreign Department reflects the peculiar importance of family background in the careers of covenanted civilians :

We have in the [Foreign] Department only one man who has at all a considerable acquaintance with Afghanistan [Curzon told Lord George Hamilton]. Being not quite a gentleman, for his father was a tradesman, he has not occupied quite the same positions, or made the same advance in promotion, as others have done, but being a man of a good deal of industry and some ability, he has acquired a great mastery of Afghan and frontier questions.¹⁶

Everyone had his own concept of "the gentleman," and the criteria for applying it to individual civilians became more and

14. Beames, *Memories*, pp. 133, 279; see also Kisch to his brother, Chittagong, 13 May 1875.

15. Beames, p. 133.

16. Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 31 May 1899, H.C.

more ambiguous as the nineteenth century drew to a close. Increasingly it was thought possible for individuals from relatively lower status to acquire the characteristics of a gentleman, but in cases of controversy or competition for preferment, it might still be alleged that men of humble birth seeking higher office were actually faulty replicas of the real "gentleman". A classic case in point was Sir Charles Elliott's opposition to the appointment of Mr. P. O'Kinealy as Standing Counsel to the Government of India. Closely tied to Elliott's archenemy, Sir A.P. MacDonnell, O'Kinealy was classified by Elliott as not a gentleman by birth (any more than his brother the Judge, and some others of these Irish Roman Catholics), and I have heard he has not put on to any great extent the manners of a gentleman as others have learned to do."¹⁷

Consanguinity would naturally play a more significant role among Haileybury than among competition recruits since the former had been selected generation after generation from the same Anglo-Indian families. Sir Auckland Colvin, for example, Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces from 1887 to 1892, was a son of John Russell Colvin who himself had served in the same post three decades earlier.¹⁸ Sir Ashley Eden, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in the early 1880's, was a son of the third Lord Auckland, Bishop of Bath and Wells, and a nephew of George Eden, Earl of Auckland, Governor-General of India from 1835 to 1842.¹⁹ Sir Steuart Bayley, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal from 1887 to 1892, was the youngest son of William Butterworth Bayley who had served both as officiating Governor-General and as Director of the East India Company in the early decades of the nineteenth century.²⁰ Augustus Rivers Thompson, Lieutenant-Governor from 1883 to 1887, had several distinguished forebears associated with the I.C.S., going all the way back to his great grandfather who had served as Private Secretary to Warren

17. Sir C.A. Elliott, L.-G. of Bengal, to Elgin, Calcutta, 4 April 1895, E.V.P.

18. See Sir Auckland Colvin, in *Dictionary of National Biography, 1901-1911*, p. 395.

19. See Buckland, *Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governors*, II, p. 688.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 838; see also Cotton, *Memories*, p. 205.

Hastings.²¹ Sir George Campbell, Lieutenant-Governor from 1871 to 1874, had several Anglo-Indian antecedents and an uncle who had served as Lord Chancellor from 1859 to 1861.²² Charles Bernard, who rose in the 1880's to become Chief Commissioner of Burma, was a nephew of John Lawrence, a former Viceroy.²³

Available sources indicate that even among competition civilians, consanguinity continued to play an important part in separating the favoured few from the helpless majority. Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, a competition recruit who served as Foreign Secretary under Dufferin and Lansdowne, regarded by the former as his closest and most able associate, was the second son of General Sir Henry M. Durand, former military member of the Viceroy's Council and Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab.²⁴ Mackworth Young, appointed by Lord Elgin in 1896 to be Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, had boosted his prospects by marriage to the daughter of Sir R. E. Egerton, Lieutenant-governor of the same province during Lytton's viceroyalty.²⁵ His successor, Sir Charles Montgomery Rivaz, who served as Lieutenant-Governor from 1902 to 1907, was related to a number of distinguished former Anglo-Indian officials, including Sir Robert Montgomery, Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab from 1859 to 1865.²⁶ G.M. Batten, Secretary in the Financial Department during Lytton's administration, had consanguinous ties with the Strachey family, and this appears to have been significant in his preferment.²⁷ Others whose family background or marriage helped to advance their status included W.W. Hunter, a nephew of James Wilson, first Financial Member of the Viceroy's Council in

21. Ripon to Hartington, Calcutta, 17 March 1882, R.V.P; see also Buckland, *Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governors*, II, p. 760.

22. *Ibid.*, I, p. 482.

23. See, e. g., Cotton, *Memories*, p. 116.

24. See, e. g., Sachchidananda Bhattachary, *A Dictionary of Indian History*, p. 320.

25. See Sir R.E. Egerton, L.-G. of Punjab, to Ripon, Camp Hissar, 26 Dec., 1880, R.V.P.

26. See *Dictionary of National Biography*, 1922-30, p. 723.

27. See Rivers Thompson, Home Member of Viceroy's Council, to Ripon, Simla, 21 June 1881, R.V.P.

1859.²⁸ Mr. Justice Cuninghame, a brother-in-law of Fitzjames Stephen, who on Stephen's importunity, was brought up by Lytton from the Madras Civil Service to serve at the High Court in Calcutta.²⁹ C.E. Buckland, a relation of Sir Richard Temple and a close school friend of Lord Lansdowne, who held several high appointments in the Bengal Secretariat,³⁰ and J.B. Lyall, a younger brother of the popular Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces, Alfred Lyall.

One of the most interesting clues to the complex but obscure web of family relationships subsisting among higher officers throughout the late nineteenth century (including both Haileybury and competition recruits) is provided in the memoirs of H.C. Rivett-Carnac. Entering the service in the last term of Haileybury civilians, Rivett-Carnac had obtained a nomination through several influential connections, including maternal relationship to the Palmerston and Russell families.³¹ Despite his hopes for a post in the foreign service, Rivett-Carnac had been forced into the I.C.S., as the only one of three brothers eligible by age for the last year of Haileybury nominations. Rivett-Carnac progressed rapidly in the initial years of his service, not only because of relatives in England, but more importantly because of family ties to prominent men serving in India. Most conspicuous among these was his first cousin, Sir Richard Temple, who served as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal and ultimately as Governor of Bombay. Temple's fate had been similar to that of his cousin: though a scion and eldest son of a wealthy landed English proprietor, Temple had been forced into an Indian career when his father's second marriage created straightened financial conditions in his enlarged family.³² Temple chose his cousin, Rivett-Carnac, to fill a number of potentially promising offices, including an important secretariat post in the Central Provinces during the 1860's while Temple was Chief Commissioner. Despite some undisclosed

28. Skrine, *Life of Sir W.W. Hunter*, p. 6; also p. 78.

29. See Stephen to Lytton, including the following letters: 19 June 1877, and 17 July 1877, Stephen Correspondence.

30. See, e.g., Temple to Ripon, London, 30 March 1881, R.V.P; also A.P. MacDonnell to his wife, 6 April 1891, MacDonnell Papers.

31. Rivett-Carnac, p. 13.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

maleficence during the viceroyalty of Lord Mayo, Carnac's connections nevertheless assured him a comfortable billet, that is, of an Opium Commissioner at Benares, a post requiring a minimum of work and allowing for pleasant holidays in the hills during the hot weather. Even then, Temple and others continued to boost Rivett-Carnac for higher appointments. J.B. Lyall, connected to him distantly by marriage and closely by friendship at Haileybury, nominated Rivett-Carnac as his successor to the Lieutenant-Governorship of the Punjab in 1891.³³

Through ties with Temple, Rivett-Carnac was associated not only with one of the most influential individuals in the late nineteenth century India, but as well with a whole family of Anglo-Indian luminaries, including a Viceroy (Lord Dufferin) and a Governor of Madras (the Duke of Buckingham), both of whom with Lord Palmerston were members of the Temple family. Rivett-Carnac had ties with other prominent civilians through marriage, his wife being the daughter of Sir Henry M. Durand. When Temple was sent as Chief Commissioner to Nagpur, he "encouraged" Rivett-Carnac to suggest any of his friends or relatives for the important task of land settlement operations in the newly established Central Provinces. Charles Bernard and Charles Grant, both having their own prominent Anglo-Indian antecedents, were among those recommended by Rivett-Carnac. Carnac "also suggested Alfred Lyall and Charles Elliott, both of whom were known to me, and connected with me by marriage."³⁴ Unfortunately these connections are not spelled out, but this small fragment of information taken together with other details concerning his Anglo-Indian relations, would appear to suggest the existence of a veritable royal family among many of the highest covenanted civilians. Sir Charles Elliott's chances for preferment may also have been aided by his relationship to Sir Fitzjames Stephen, a second cousin, who told Lytton that Elliott "is one of the cleverest fellows with his pen, and in some ways, I met with

33. See J.B. Lyall, L.-G. of Punjab, to Lansdowne, 17 Aug., 1891, L.V.P.

34. Rivett-Carnac, p. 82.

in India.”³⁵ The success of the well-known competition recruit, H.J.S. Cotton, resulted not only from lineage, including four generations connected with India and a grandfather who had served on the Court of Directors, but also from his earlier ties with the Elliott family in England (apparently non-consanguinous). While a student at Brighton College during his adolescent years, Cotton attended church with his parents in the parish of the Rev. H. V. Elliott, father of Henry Cotton’s close friends, Charles and Julius. The former, notes Cotton, “was afterwards one of my kindest and best Indian friends.”³⁶ While Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Elliott appointed Cotton as Chief Secretary of the provincial government and set him on the path of possible succession to the Lieutenant-Governorship itself.

A complete diagram of family ties among covenanted civilians would be a most valuable and revealing document. But even without complete information, enough fragments exist to show their over-riding importance, not only during Haileybury days, but also in the later decades of the nineteenth century when competition men began to assume higher level appointments. The reluctance of aristocratic spokesmen to trust competition recruits having no ties with the upper stratum of English society is evident in Sir Fitzjames Stephen’s comment on C.U. Aitchison, who had passed as the fifth in the competitive examination of 1885: “I don’t much mourn over Aitchison’s departure to Mysore. He is an excellent specimen of the best sort of man you will get by competition and has great knowledge, but is a very dry stick.”³⁷

Aitchison is an example of the few competition civilians who apparently rose to high posts without the crutch of a family connection. Others were Alexander Mackenzie, A.P. MacDonnell, and Bompfylde Fuller. C.H.T. Crosthwaite had no apparent family connections, but he had been a close friend of C.P. Ilbert, and it was only after Ilbert’s arrival

35. Stephen to Lytton, Ravensdale, 25 Sept., 1879, Stephen correspondence.

36. Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories*, p. 25.

37. Stephen to Lytton, London, 15 March 1878, Stephen correspondence.

in India that Crosthwaite's fortunes took an upward turn.

For men devoid of any obvious connections, there must of necessity be many imponderables in a search for clues to their success. One clue lies in Rivett-Carnac's statement that some of the earlier competition men gained early notice because of their academic achievements in England. Certainly, Alexander Mackenzie, winner of several first class prizes during his academic career at Trinity College, Cambridge, and Edward C. Buck, with a similar record at Clare College, would fit this category.³³ As university men disappeared from the ranks of contestants, there seemed less respect for recruits, not only among old Haileybury men, but also among the earlier competition men as well. For the notion persisted that, failing a proper family background, a higher education would be the next best guarantee of one's claim to be a "gentleman". Education in England at the universities, according to E.C. Buck, had the effect of weeding out the "undesirable elements", while at the same time it served, however, vaguely, as "a test of a certain social standing."³⁹

This approval of the well educated though socially inconspicuous recruit helps to account for the amazing number of highly successful competition recruits whose fathers were clergymen—a well educated stratum of English society and the first among the non-aristocratic classes, according to Kitson Clark, to be included in the fraternity of "gentlemen".⁴⁰ Among the better well known civilians in this category were Alexander Mackenzie, son of Rev. John Robertson Mackenzie,

38. See, e.g., G. of I., Home, Public, B, 74-75, 25 Oct., 1864.

39. *Proceedings of the Public Service Commission*, VI, Section II, p. 137.

40. William Reader notes that in the period from 1860 to 1874, "much the largest group (*i.e.* fathers of I.C.S., recruits) were the clergymen, — 27.5 per cent of the total, whereas no other grouping ran over 10 per cent. For the very large preponderance of clergymen there are presumably two main reasons: one, that clergymen, on the whole, were not rich and their sons had to earn their own living; that . . . in the early nineteenth century far more educated men . . . went into the Church than subsequently, simply for lack of alternative occupation." Reader, *Professional Men*, p. 95.

D.D. (1811-1877), onetime moderator of the English Presbyterian Synod, Charles H. T. Crosthwaite, son of Rev. John C. Crosthwaite, rector of St. Mary-at-Hill, London; Bampfylde Fuller, whose father was Vicar of a church in Hampshire; Herbert H. Risley, son of a pastor in Buckinghamshire; Sir Andrew H. Fraser, eldest son of Rev. Alexander Fraser, D.D., a Presbyterian missionary Sir George Knox, Chief Justice of the High Court at Allahabad and son of the Rev. George Knox Vicar at Exton, Rutland; Denzil Ibbetson, son of the Vicar at St. John's in Adelaide. South Australia.⁴¹ Several of these same men had performed well in school and at civil service examinations,—Mackenzie passing second among 82 recruits chosen in 1861, Knox passing fourth among forty men in 1864, Fuller eleventh among thirty-five men in 1873, Ibbetson posited third in the competition of 1868.⁴² The correlation of Industrious scholarship and upward mobility were hallmarks of many middle class Victorians, none more so than the conscientious sons of clergymen who, more than likely, had been especially inspired by the several forms of religious revival in the mid Victorian era.⁴³

Among a fairly representative cross section of successful competition civilians coming to India after 1855, all (without exception) had served at least two to seven years as assistant or joint magistrates in various districts before obtaining their first extraordinary appointment. James Westland had served almost for seven years in the lower district assignments before his selection as Officiating Junior Secretary to the Government of Bengal in 1869.⁴⁴ Alexander Mackenzie held similar positions from 1862 to 1866, when he was appointed Officiating Under-Secretary to the Government of Bengal.⁴⁵ David Miller Barbour, eventually Finance Member of the Viceroy's Council, spent practically the first eight years of his career in lower district posts. Henry Mortimer Durand served as an assistant

41. *Dictionary of National Biography*.

42. See *Reports of the Civil Service Commissioners* (for various years).

43. See, e.g., G. Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England*, *passim*, especially e.g., pp. 63 and 64.

44. *History of the Services, Bengal, 1887-1890*, p. 18.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

magistrate for two years; Charles Elliott, for almost six years; Edward C. Buck, for about the same period, and so on.⁴⁶ Even in this formative stage of official careers, some men had already been marked out for special favors. Both Rivett-Carnac and H.J.S. Cotton, for example, were appointed to the desirable district of Midnapore for their probationary apprenticeships.

Midnapore [wrote Rivett-Carnac] was the station of my desires. It was not very far from Calcutta, and had what was termed an almost 'up-country' climate, —dry, not damp like Lower Bengal as it lay to the West, and had a range of hills of its own, with fine jungles . . .⁴⁷

Men without influence or connections were commonly assigned to uncomfortable stations such as Chittagong in the East Bengal, etc.

Most work of assistant and joint magistrates, according to Crosthwaite, was undemanding and included "the trial of ordinary thefts and such other police cases, with mere routine revenue work [*i.e.*, checking collection of taxes and land revenue], along with the charge of the treasury."⁴⁸ During the promotion controversy of the 1870's, some civilians advocated the abandonment of these lower appointments to the subordinate and Indian uncovenanted servants, leaving the higher more important district posts for a smaller and more select group of the covenanted Englishmen.⁴⁹ Rivett-Carnac credited the "elementary preparatory work of an Assistant Magistrate" performed in "some out of the way station in the hot weather" as one of the reasons for the falling off of university men among recruits of the late nineteenth century.⁵⁰ "The older, mature, university man," wrote Carnac, "conscious of his own ability and the position this might command at home, would be inclined to disappointment" as a menial assistant.

46. *Ibid.*, (of p. 154 here), see various volumes.

47. Rivett-Carnac, *Many Memories*, p. 50; see also Cotton, *Memories*, p. 68.

48. Note by C.H.T. Crosthwaite, 17 Dec., 1875, G. of I., Home, Public A, 223-280, Sept., 1877, N.A.I.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Rivett-Carnac, p. 34.

“The average ordinary work in the districts demanded no selected university talent” in Carnac’s estimation.⁵¹

Lacking influence or luck, men rather automatically moved from the level of assistantships to the higher district appointments, including magistrates and collectors in the executive branch and District and Sessions Judges in the case of the judicial branch. Picking at random any two or three men whose highest appointments remained those of the district throughout their career, it would be found that they were moving into the collectorates and judgeships within about the same period of time (six to ten years) as their more fortunate contemporaries moved into the secretariat and other extraordinary appointments.⁵²

As heads of districts, men had more responsible if not more onerous duties. John Beames caricatured the Magistrate and Collector as very much like “Joseph in the Egyptian prison, ‘whatever was done therein, he was the doer thereof.’ ”⁵³ Yet in a private letter to W.W. Hunter, dated 12 November 1869, Beames questioned the veracity of the Collector-Magistrate’s image as an omniscient potentate, charging that the ordinary Collector-Magistrate of Bengal had little accurate information of the intricate Bengali social structure: “There is no part of India of which we know less than our oldest possessions, Bengal, Behar and Orissa . . . I tremble to think of the avalanche of fact and fiction which will be showered on your devoted head if the gazetteer be left to District Magistrates.”⁵⁴

The Collector-Magistrates supervised land revenue collection and also adjudicated minor criminal and civil cases, including minor civil rent decisions for settlements of less than Rs. 1,000 that appealed from the courts of munsiffs for zamindars. In rent or land disputes, he was dependent for infor-

51. *Ibid.*(of p. 155, here)

52. See, e.g., History of the Services of Loftus Richard Totenham, Edmund Elliot Lowis, and William Macpherson, *History of the Services, Bengal, 1887-1890*.

53. Beames, *Memoris*, p. 159.

54. Beames to W.W. Hunter, Balasor, 12 Nov., 1869, in Skrine, *Hunter*, p. 185.

mation upon petty Indian subordinates, including patwaris and account keepers who were largely under the thumb of landlords. Beyond this major sphere of responsibility, district collectors also became overseers of general public welfare, acting as plenipotentiaries in the areas of education, health, and public works.⁵⁵ Not much creative initiative was expected or desired from the District Magistrates, especially as the nineteenth century moved into its final decades, when *laissez-faire* and fear of change combined to place a premium on inaction and caution as characteristics of the ideal district officer.⁵⁶ "Happy is the province that has no history," wrote Elgin's Private Secretary in a most laconic serendipitous analysis of district administration during the late nineteenth century.⁵⁷ Whatever their degree of competence, it is hardly conceivable that one or two men from an alien culture could really comprehend the mysteries of a district which, in size and population, might be as large as Yorkshire or Connecticut, having a population of more than one million people. Rapid mobility, as discussed earlier, also obviously added to their ignorance.

Two special responsibilities, however, required more initiative and diligence among lower level administrators, namely land revenue settlement and famine administration. "Some of the most distinguished of Indian administrators," wrote Rivett-Carnac, "had risen in the settlement school, and there

55. See Beames, p. 159; C.H.T. Crosthwaite, *Notes on the N.-W.P.*, quoted in Whitcombe, *Agrarian Conditions*, pp. 235 f.

56. See, e.g., H.J.S. Cotton, Chief Commissioner of Assam, to Curzon, Shillong, 5 May 1899, C.V.P.: "It must be remembered that in the old days the district officer exercised an influence and authority which he no longer possesses."

57. H. Babington Smith, Private Sec. to Viceroy, to C.J. Lyall, Officiating Chief Commissioner of Assam., 6 Oct., 1894, E.V.P. By far the most sarcastic comment concerning district officials in India comes from the pen of George Orwell who spent much of his early life observing the Raj at work in Burma: "There is a prevalent idea that the men at the 'outposts of empire' are at least able and hard working. It is a delusion. . . Few of them work as hard or as intelligently as the postmaster of a provincial town in England. The real work of administration is done mainly by native subordinates." Orwell, *Burmese Days*, pp. 60 f.

was generally a keen competition for places in that department.”⁵⁸ Settlement work brought both higher pay and better prospects, for allegedly it required keener qualities of administration (especially tact and cleverness) than would be demanded in the ordinary line of responsibilities. Land revenue assessments were established initially at annexation or establishment of new provinces (in the case of the Central Provinces, 1861-62), and were revised (except in Bengal where the settlement was permanent after 1793) at twenty or thirty year intervals.⁵⁹ This work embraced several functions, including land survey and measurement, classification of land in terms of its potential productivity, settlement of boundary disputes, rewarding of tenures and land ownerships, and determination of rents paid by tenants to landholders. Settlement required more direct contact with the rural populace and thus provided greater acquaintance with local conditions than could have been possible in other branches of executive administration.

Whatever the benefits of settlement operations,⁶⁰ their noble ends were, nevertheless, often vitiated during the late nineteenth century by adherence of the government to laws of political economy, particularly the sanctity of contract and the sale of land for debt. In a year of drought, the gains obtained by revision of a settlement could almost overnight be lost as money lenders expropriated tenancy or proprietary rights of debtors who failed to pay interest and who found themselves in need of more money to pay government revenue taxes.⁶¹ Two well known civilians of the late nineteenth century, Charles Crosthwaite in N.-W.P. and S. S. Throburn

58. Rivett-Carnac, p. 81.

59. Fuller, *Studies of Indian Life*, p. 270.

60. See the following: Fuller, *Studies of Indian Life*, pp. 147, 149 f., pp. 271-173; Fuller, *Some Personal Experiences*, pp. 35 ff; D.M. Wallace, Private Sec. to Viceroy, to A. Mackenzie, Chief Commissioner, C.P., Simla, 6 Aug., 1888, D.V.P; Maconochie, *Life in the I.C.S.*, pp. 100 f.

61. For alienation of land to banias or money-lenders in the N.-W.P., see Francis Robinson, “Municipal Government and Muslim Separatism in the United Provinces, 1883-1916,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 7, part 3 (July 1873), pp. 389-441.

in the Punjab, spoke out as the critics of political economy. Crosthwaite confined his criticisms for the most part to a single article in the *Calcutta Review* of 1873, but Thorburn wrote a great deal on the subject, including a book titled *Musulmans and Money-Lenders in the Punjab*, published in 1886. Thorburn's criticisms served as one of the catalysts for the enactment of the 1908 Punjab Land Alienation Legislation, but his verbosity on this and other sensitive questions damaged his career, and doomed him to relatively obscure posts in the Punjab Commission.

Crosthwaite's position may have helped him to some degree during Ripon's administration, since the ideas of his 1873 article more or less corresponded with the reform principles of Ripon's Bengal Tenancy Bill. Crosthwaite's article had condemned the alienation of land to money-lenders in the N.-W.P., and elsewhere in Northern India, and claimed that this tendency hurt not only the landed elements but also the tenants who became the victims of the new greedy absentee landlords. These bania landlords, he claimed, had "no sympathy or fellow-feeling of any sort with his people."⁶² Crosthwaite recommended not only "abolition of sale in execution for debt," but also, in order to stabilize the agricultural classes, the establishment of "right or preemption on behalf of Government," so that Government could regularize the transfer of land, preventing it wherever necessary or feasible and managing estates temporarily on behalf of defaulting or heavily indebted owners of land.

Many officials also recognized that benefits of a survey were often nullified by the inadequacy or fraudulence of the records. Baden-Powell, an apologist for periodic settlement as against the alleged inequities of the permanent settlement in Bengal, looked upon the N.-W.P. settlement operations as "absolutely reliable."⁶³ But, after carefully scrutinizing many of these records, Elizabeth Whitcombe has found that rarely if ever did actual rent or occupancy holdings correspond with

62. C.H.T. Crosthwaite, "A Land Policy for Northern India," *The Calcutta Review*, 56 (October 1873), p. 226.

63. Baden H. Baden-Powell, *The Land Systems of British India*, Vol. II, p. 39.

those calculated or established by the settlement officers. While settlement officers paid most attention to potential productivity of the soil, village records and zamindari subordinates relied mostly on caste and social status to determine rent of tenants. This divergence dictated long years of settlement controversy and, according to F.O. Mayne of the Board of Revenue, caused chronic disruption of village economy and "depreciation in the value of the land."⁶⁴ Even the completed settlement records were hopelessly inaccurate and hence often "useless". While some N.-W.P. officers prided themselves on their settlements as providing "every atom of information which can be required,"⁶⁶ in reality the complexity of holdings, sub-holdings, and multiple occupancy defied accurate or even adequate measurement. In one case, subordinate amins (Indian surveyors) in Mirzapur estate completely despaired of ferreting out actual conditions and simply submitted a copy of a survey map originally prepared twenty-five years earlier. In fact it was virtually impossible to attain correspondence between the actual conditions of the villages and the artificial categories specified in the record books. Aside from complexity, fraud zamindari also militated against fairness and accuracy. The patwaris or record keepers were most often creatures of the zamindars, and altered the records of the villages at the whim of their overlords. Whitcombe notes that the Privy Council in London had candidly assessed the N.-W.P. village record books (*wajib-ul-arz*) "as the proprietor's document."⁶⁷

Famine control operations had been especially important to several Lower Bengal officials during the 1870's. Stuart Bayley, at that time Commissioner of Patna, added to his hereditary advantages through his work as Chief Executive Officer for the famine operations under direction of two Lieutenant-Governors, Sir George Campbell and Sir Richard

64. F.O. Mayne, 20 March 1871, quoted in Whitcombe, *Agrarian Conditions*, p. 131.

65. Whitcombe, p. 144.

66. A. Cadell, *Muzaffarnagar Settlement Report, 1878*, quoted in Whitcombe, pp. 252 f.

67. Extract from the judgment of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, 6 July 1887, quoted by Whitcombe, p. 252.

Temple.⁶⁸ "It was at this time", wrote H.J.S. Cotton, "that Lord MacDonnell won his spurs."

According to Temple, "the local officers on whom the brunt of work fell most heavily were A.P. MacDonnell and C.F. Magrath."⁶⁹ One of the lesser known officials who gained notice through famine work was Herman Kisch, a man fully aware of the significance his work might have for later promotion: "On the whole", he wrote, "it is very lucky to have been sent to famine work as it ought to improve one's prospects materially."⁷⁰ The first dividend for Kisch was his escape from assignment to Chittagong. Lack of family connections remained a major block to higher appointments for Kisch; nevertheless he was able to secure several temporary appointments in the Bengal Secretariat and ultimately obtained the comfortable, though not prestigious, Postmaster Generalship of Bengal and also a token honor, the C.I.E. Most importantly, his post allowed him to spend the summer months with his family at Darjeeling.⁷¹

As much or more may be learned about the criteria for promotion from those who failed to achieve success as from the careers of leading officials. Men at the bottom (*i.e.*, those remaining in the dull, dusty work of the districts throughout their official careers) were consistently men devoid of connections. Creativity among these men was not particularly beneficial for their careers according to the Bengal "outcast", because "the men who are most successful are those who are machines devoid of individuality, without original ideas, or who humour the ignorance. . . . of their superiors."⁷² These sentiments were echoed by Robert Carstairs who believed his fellow district officers were more worried about the opinions of their superiors than about the welfare or status of the Indian masses. "In many cases", Kimberley warned Dufferin, "you will get from your subordinates the advice they think

68. See, Cotton *Memories*, p. 126; Temple, *Men and Events of my Time in India*, pp. 399-408; Buckland, *Bengal under the L.-G.'S*, II, p. 598.

69. Temple, *Men and Events*.

70. Kisch to his sister, 8 Aug., 1874, Kisch correspondence,

71. Kisch to his mother, Calcutta, 15 Dec., 1885.

72. Anonymous, *The Bengal Civil Service*, p. 32.

will please you, rather than their independent opinion.”⁷³

Yet officials had more than adequate justification for caution and timidity. The maverick who stepped out of line inevitably stayed at the bottom of the heap. Viceroys themselves encouraged this ethos, and had the tendency of dividing the civilians between those who could be regarded as “safe” and those who indulged in innovations or eccentricities. Sir Steuart Bayley, having attained the highest ranks of the hierarchy, was characterized by Dufferin as the best prospective Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal precisely because he was both “safe and sensible.”⁷⁴ Curzon rationalized his choice of C.H. Rivaz as Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab in almost identical words; “He (Rivaz) has neither considerable ability nor great energy. On the other hand he is sober minded, level headed, in no way a crank. . .”⁷⁵ Anyone of irregular behavior or outspoken opinion could rarely hope to be considered for higher appointments. H.J.S. Cotton might be considered as a notable exception, but this would be a superficial judgment not based on a close scrutiny of his complex career.

Henry Beveridge and William Wedderburn provide the best examples of self-inflicted damage to careers by association with advanced educated and politicized Indian opinion. Beveridge had consistently and unequivocally favoured rapid Indianization of the bureaucracy and the Government of India. Having entered the service in 1858, he almost immediately “ranked himself firmly with Indian aspiration for self-government.”⁷⁶ As a consequence of this and also of his own self-confessed social shyness, Beveridge found himself posted to judicial appointments in unpleasant and remote stations, for example the District of Backergunge, “a district to which only those would be sent who stood in the bad books of authority.”⁷⁷ One of his first and most notable anti-establishment statements appeared in the form of his book titled *The District of Backergunge*, published in 1876. His consign-

73. Kimberley to Dufferin, India Office, 2 April 1885, D.V.P.

74. Dufferin to Churchill, Simla, 28 Aug., 1885, D.V.P.

75. Curzon to Hamilton, Camp, 30 Oct., 1900, H.C.

76. Beveridge, *India Called Them*, p. 41.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

ment to the judicial branch under Campbell's parallel promotion scheme was the inevitable reward for his political deviations. In *Backergunge*, Beveridge emphasized the feasibility and importance of the "gradual abandonment of India."⁷⁸ "I think we should look forward to the time when India can be left to herself, and that we should hasten its coming by putting the internal administration more and more into the hands of natives; for example, probably nearly all the judicial offices in Bengal might be held by natives."⁷⁹ In 1887, while testifying before the Public Service Commission, Beveridge claimed that the use of native agency in place of British officials would not only be more economical but would actually enhance administrative effectiveness because of the Indian's superior linguistic skill, cultural knowledge, and experience of his own country.⁸⁰ Kindred ideas occasionally were articulated even by imperialist spokesmen, such as Lord George Hamilton, but never in a public medium.

Beveridge's extraordinary behavior clearly destroyed all hopes for elevation to higher positions. One of his few sympathizers thought "that his being kept out of a post for which Fraser, MacDonnell, and others that I would have never thought fit was a piece of injustice not devoid of a ludicrous aspect."⁸¹ In 1886, on the occasion of being superseded for a judgeship in the Calcutta High Court, Beveridge surprisingly and naively submitted an official memorial of protest. He pointed out that the man selected for the Court was junior to at least eight other men in the judicial branch, and claimed, in reference to himself, that he had performed efficient, patient, and effective service. He admitted that his essays on Nand Cumar, later published as a book, contravening Sir Fitzjames Stephen's defense of Warren Hastings, had likely created animus against him; but Beveridge avoided any mention of his advanced political opinions. He concluded rather pathetically by asking the Lieutenant-Governor "if I have ever been charged during all my length of service with any-

78. Beveridge, *District of Backergang*, e.g., p. x.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 396.

80. *Proceedings of the Public Service Commission*, VI, Section II, p. 41.

81. H.E. Busted to H.J.S. Cotton, Bray, Ireland, 21 Oct., 1886, Cotton papers,

thing that was mean or dishonourable.”⁸² The Government of Bengal found the memorial both embarrassing and improper. Sir Richard Garth, Chief Justice, refused to give any reasons for Beveridge’s supercession, but expressed “profound surprise that it should be thought possible that anything but fitness for the office should be supposed to constitute any claim on the office of a Judge of the High Court.”⁸³

Beveridge’s misfortune did not impede his candor. In October 1888, for example, he published an article titled “The Administration of Justice in Bengal,” appearing in the *Calcutta Review*, where among other startling observations he reminded his readers of the unhappy truism that “no body would assert—except, perhaps in a Jubilee speech—that the British Government is beloved by the Indians.”⁸⁴ Despite his idiosyncrasies, it is obvious that even a crusader and maverick like Beveridge had not divested himself of those same pervasive motivations for status and prestige so dominant among the common lot of his I.C.S. contemporaries.

Sir William Wedderburn, who had inherited a baronetcy, was Bombay’s counterpart to Henry Beveridge. With his schemes for cooperative credit and for revival of village panchayats, he was doubtless known (and disliked) as a troublesome innovator. But his disfavour in the eyes of the Bombay hierarchy resulted primarily from his advanced political sentiments and his open association with Indian political aspirations.⁸⁵ It is evident that Ripon’s viceroyalty encouraged him to become excessively vocal in this respect. At the time of his transfer from the Sessions Judgeship of Ahmednagar to that at Poona, Wedderburn was given lavish entertainment by Indian friends who praised him for his friendship and liberality toward their cause. In return, Wedder-

82. Henry Beveridge to the L.-G. of Bengal, Alipore, 5 April 1886, enclosed in G. of I., Home, Jud., A, 28-32, July 1886, 28, N.A.I.

83. C.M.W. Brett, Registrar of the High Court of Calcutta, to the Officiating Sec. to G. of I., Calcutta, 16 June 1886, in *ibid.*, 31.

84. Henry Beveridge, “The Administration of Justice in Bengal,” *Calcutta Review*, Vol. 87, 174, Oct., 1888, p. 323.

85. Extract from the *Bombay Gazette*, 27 March 1882, in G. of I., Home, Public, A., Aug., 1882, 92-97, N.A.I.

burn referred warmly to "our truly, wise and good Viceroy" who had become known "throughout the land . . . for whatsoever things are just and honest and of good report,"⁸⁶ an opinion clearly not shared by Wedderburn's colleagues in the bureaucracy. The Government of Bombay viewed the entertainments and accompanying speeches as violations of its rule against reception of addresses by covenanted civilians. Wedderburn contested the censure, contending that the accolades of his Indian friends were not illegal since they "were not addressed to me but to the guests assembled for the entertainments."⁸⁷ The Government of Bombay replied that the addresses, though oral, "were of a very formal character," and refused to remove the censure.⁸⁸ Though probably sympathetic with Wedderburn's behavior, Ripon considered it inexpedient to reverse the Bombay decision.

Having completely identified himself with the policies of Lord Ripon, Wedderburn found himself practically ostracized by his civilian colleagues. Randolph Churchill, while Secretary of State, deliberately passed over Wedderburn for the High Court of Bombay specifically for political reasons :

Sir William Wedderburn [he wrote] who is acting Judge in the room of Judge West, might be supposed to have claims to the vacant appointment. I have decided, however, to pass him over, unless you should press me not to. I think he is perfectly unfitted to be a Judge. He is crotchety and also to a degree a political incendiary. He had a great deal to do with sending over to England this absurd Indian deputation [from the various political organizations in 1885], and never loses an opportunity of associating himself with native political movements. I consider that this deplorable habit of his constitutes a fatal disqualification for the judicial bench. . .⁸⁹

86. *Ibid.* (of p. 164 here).

87. W. Wedderburn to the Chief Sec. to the Government of Bombay, 27 May 1882, in *ibid.*

88. Sec. to Government of Bombay to W. Wedderburn, undated, *ibid.*

89. Churchill to Dufferin, India Office, 27 Nov., 1885, D.V.P.

Dufferin inclined to be slightly more tolerant "of his [Wedderburn's] political eccentricities," had counselled Churchill that an insult to Wedderburn would only agitate the Indian politicians all the more. Luckily, said Dufferin, Wedderburn disliked being a Judge anyway, and "his own ambition is to retire at once on a modified pension."⁹⁰ C.P. Ilbert, however, who knew more than Dufferin about the personal wishes of civilians, had apparently received a very different impression of Wedderburn's aspirations. Ilbert's letter to Dufferin on the subject suggests that Wedderburn also craved higher assignment. Wedderburn had petitioned Lord Reay, Governor of Bombay, who in turn asked Ilbert whether Wedderburn might be given a seat on the Central Legislative Council. This was impossible, thought Ilbert, because Wedderburn "would be treated both by Europeans and by natives as a representative of Bombay native views, and these could be better represented by a Native . . ." ⁹¹ The conundrum resolved itself only when Wedderburn accepted a brief officiating appointment as Chief Secretary in Bombay. It was not so much a case of Wedderburn's having "been forgiven,"⁹² but rather the most convenient way to "settle this difficulty."⁹³ Wedderburn remained only for a short time in the acting post, and then resigned,⁹⁴ later taking vengeance by participation and leadership in the British Parliamentary Committee of the Indian National Congress.

Published criticism of government by an official also could have devastating effect on promotion, whenever the identity of the offending author could be discovered. To assert that "a great deal [of criticism] could be said with impunity . . . on political matters"⁹⁵ hardly tallies with the history of men who tried such activity. Speaking of his own experience as a writer

90. Dufferin to Churchill, Calcutta, 22 Dec., 1885, D.V.P.

91. C.P. Ilbert, President of the Viceroy's Council, to Dufferin, Calcutta, 18 Feb., 1886, D.V.P.

92. Woodruff, *The Guardians*, p. 163.

93. Ilbert to Dufferin, Calcutta, 26 Feb., 1886, D.V.P.

94. The exact circumstances of his resignation remain unknown, but since his was only an "officiating" appointment, he may have been forced out by the incumbent.

95. Woodruff, *The Guardians*, p. 175.

for the short lived satirical *Indian Observer*, John Beames observed that "free and temperate criticism of the measures of Government by officials was not permitted in 1872." Even moderately worded critiques, according to Beames, incurred the wrath of government "In India our rulers are thin-skinned, and by degrees made the writers in the *Observer* to understand that it was not safe to write in it any longer."⁹⁶ Lieutenant-Governor Campbell doomed the paper by scattering the most important contributors to remote stations.⁹⁷

Promotion and Policy in the Secretariats: Beyond district appointments, less favored civilians could hope only for advancement, to Revenue Commissionerships or (in Bengal, N.-W.P., and Madras) to the small but locally prestigious Boards of Revenue. Both the Boards and the Commissionerships served as links between the Lieutenant-Governors and the district officers. They provided some incentive for older officials to stay in India for the completion of their thirty-five years' tenure.

More hopeful officials looked next for advancement to the secretariats, both in the provincial and in the supreme governments. The influence of the promotion mechanism and careerism on the formation of imperial policy became much more prominent at this level of official assignment. The first generation of competition recruits had just begun to move into these positions at a crucial turning point in British Indian history, namely the viceroyalty of Lord Ripon. A few, including Aitchison, Elliott, and Bernard, had already moved to Chief Commissionerships by the early 1880's and hence were removed from the vortex of controversy during Ripon's tenure. On the other hand, some of the most influential men of the late nineteenth century, especially Alexander Mackenzie and A.P. MacDonnell, stood at the centre of the cyclone. Mackenzie, recruited in 1861, moved into a major officiating secretariat

96. Beames, *Memoirs*, p. 203.

97. See Cotton, *Memories*, p. 110; Beames, p. 203; see also case of Mr. C.J. O'Donnell, author of the so-called "Black Pamphlet" against Richard Temple, 1872, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 107-174, April 1882, N.A.I.; and case of J.C. Geddes, first among the competitors of 1861 who was demoted in 1873 for his outspoken objection to a road cess, G. of I., Home, Public, A, Feb., 1874., 265-266.

position in Bengal in 1877 and on to the Home Department Secretaryship of the supreme government in 1881.⁹⁸ MacDonnell, an 1864 recruit, followed closely behind Mackenzie, and was his immediate successor in a Home Department position⁹⁹.

While difficulties often arise in unraveling the personal motivations of these men in relation to specific policy debates of Ripon's viceroyalty, there is nevertheless voluminous correspondence showing their obsession with higher appointments and greater prestige. Both MacDonnell and Mackenzie wrote reams of letters to viceroys seeking preferment for higher posts beyond the secretariats. It is inevitable to infer that secretariates sought promotion not only by direct correspondence with viceroys but more importantly through support of articulation of policies most favored by them.

The situation in Ripon's viceroyalty, however, was one of extreme discomfort for the aspiring secretaries. Coming to India in the wake of Gladstone's electoral triumph of 1880, Ripon openly advocated programs in direct conflict with the view of his Anglo-Indian constituency, especially commercialists. He was motivated by Gladstone's promise to seek an Indian policy more in accord with indigenous sentiments than the policy of Disraeli's Conservative ministry.¹⁰⁰ Ripon's philosophy of imperial government contrasted sharply with the lethargy and conservatism of his subordinates in the bureaucracy. The Ilbert Bill crisis proved the most dramatic revelation of Ripon's commitment to liberal policies. The initial impetus for this legislation, giving equal jurisdiction to Indian along with English covenanted judges, had come from Sir Ashley Eden, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. But it was Ripon who insisted that the legislation be pursued in spite of protests from the British commercialists. Men in the secretariats found themselves in a delicate position, caught between their duties and aspirations as subordinates of the viceroy on the one hand and their desire to placate the opposition, including eventually many of their I.C.S. colleagues. Most officials in the lower ranks of the I.C.S. who had initially

98. *History of Services, Bengal, 1887*, p. 23.

99. *History of Services, Bengal, 1900*.

100. See Wilfred Scawen Blunt, *India Under Ripon*, p. 1.

approved the bill had shifted their position by 1883.¹⁰¹

Though the Ilbert Bill controversy was the most volatile issue of Ripon's administration, there was other legislation of even greater delicacy and significance debated during his tenure, namely the Bengal Rent Bill. Potentially this bill might affect directly the lives of all the agricultural classes of Bengal society, both tenants and landlords (or zamindars). The rent debate produced a massive amount of technical writing. It required a command of the most complex subject ever tackled by the British Indian bureaucracy and also a gymnastic ability to balance between the liberal predilections of the Viceroy on the one hand and the reactionary mentality of the powerful landed class of Bengal on the other.

More than one knowledgeable official with land revenue experience (and even viceroys without it, including Lansdowne) questioned whether any legislation undertaken by the Government of India had actually improved the status of the Bengal peasantry. Robert Carstairs regarded the results of the 1885 Tenancy Act as largely ineffectual in its intention to protect the peasants. Carstairs accepted the verdict of "an old, wise, and much respected landlord," who, in reaction to the legislation, responded perversely "that, whatever you [the British rulers] do, we have ways of forcing them [ryots] to do our pleasure."¹⁰² Government found itself at a special disadvantage in helping the Bengal peasantry because of the practically limitless prerogatives given to zamindars by the Permanent Settlement of 1793. Tenancy legislation of 1859 attempted to stabilize the tenantry by granting permanent occupancy to peasants upon proof of twelve years' continuous cultivation of a particular plot of land. Landlords easily frustrated the aim of the legislation by forcibly shifting tenants from one field to another prior to the expiration of the specified time limit. The gift of additional judicial powers to Bengal zamindars in 1860, one of the several post-mutiny efforts to secure the loyalty of the landed classes,¹⁰³ also acted as a negative counterbalance to the positive features of the 1859 Tenancy act.

101. See despatch of G. of I. to S. of S., 10 Aug., 1883, J. and P., 1516, 1883, I.O.L.

102. Carstairs, *The Little World*, p. 98.

103. See Thomas Metcalfe, *The Aftermath of Revolt*, pp. 162 f.

No reform, including both those of 1859 and 1885, appeared adequate to remedy the plight of the peasants as long as zamindars remained proprietors of the land. Zamindar resources for oppressing the peasants appear to have been limitless. One, described by Carstairs, was the extension of rent credits to their tenants. Whether the credit was a real obligation or largely a fabrication of the landlord, it had the effect of keeping the peasants in debt to the proprietor who, in turn, could use the debt as a weapon to extract more rent. In actuality, the effect of the rent arrears, according to Carstairs, "was to nullify the provisions of the rent law giving the tenants occupancy rights and freedom from arbitrary enhancements."¹⁰⁴ Other arbitrary abuses against illiterate peasants were enumerated by John Beames in connection with his experience as Collector of Balasore. "Very heavily oppressed they were," wrote Beames of the peasants, "and it is a wonder how they contrived to exist at all under the numerous exactions to which they were subjected at the hands of their own countrymen."¹⁰⁵ Beames had inadvertently discovered a remote pocket of his district where peasants complained of several exactions, including a house tax, marriage tax, taxes for religious celebrations and pilgrimage taxes, all technically illegal. Inquiry by Beames' Commissioner, Ravenshaw, revealed similar practices in other parts of the commission. "Various schemes were proposed for putting a stop to this," concluded Beames, "none of which were [sic] effective."¹⁰⁶ the reason being that the Permanent Settlement practically exempted zamindars from any regulation in their management of tenants. S. C. Bayley told Beames that irregularities in treatment of ryots were, "no business of ours; the zemindar had a right to do what he liked with his ryots."¹⁰⁷ W.W. Hunter had labelled the Tenancy Act 1859 as "inadequate to avert the wholesale enhancement of rents in Bengal."¹⁰⁸

It is curious, in light of these assessments and in light of

104. Carstairs, *The Little World*, p. 97.

105. Beames, *Memoirs*, p. 212.

106. *Ibid.*, p. 213.

107. *Idid.*, p. 130.

108. Hunter, *England's Work in India*, p. 96.

later peasant oriented drafts of the 1885 Rent Bill, to find that the initial form of the Bill, introduced in the Bengal Legislative Council in 1879, was characterized more by a concern for rights of the zamindars than of the peasants. Introduction of the Bill fell to the ambitious Financial Secretary of the Bengal Government, Alexander Mackenzie. Over half his speech to the Council, dated 4 January 1879, embodied suggestions "for the more speedy realization of arrears of rent."¹⁰⁹ Mackenzie made special reference to the "difficulties felt by the landholding classes on realizing their rents at the present day," particularly as a result of protracted litigation and the other delays in the courts. The difficulties of the landlords resulted in large measure, according to Mackenzie, from excessive leniency toward ryots expressed in the Bengal Rent Bill of 1859. There had been a termination of the zamindar's authority, originating in Regulations XXXV of 1798 and VII of 1799, which gave broad and summary powers to landlords for the collection of rent arrears. Under these regulations, special legislation to secure payment had not been necessary, for landlords could easily coerce peasants through distraint of crops, summary arrest, and confiscation of personal property. The Rent Bill of 1859, according to Mackenzie went too far in the opposite direction, for it eliminated summary proceedings and compelled the zamindars to take the more lengthy and expensive route of court litigation. Sufficient attention had not been given to the "difficulties of the zamindar's position," difficulties which "have become greater year after year, while the pressure put upon them by government has become heavier and heavier, and they stand now urgently in need of assistance from the legislature."¹¹⁰ Mackenzie proposed through new legislation to restore summary procedures "in all suits for arrears of rent," and "declared the tenure of any ryot having a right of occupancy liable to sale in execution of a decree against such ryot for an arrear of rent . . ."

The remainder of Mackenzie's address focused for the most

109. Speech by Alexander Mackenzie, 4 Jan., 1879, in *Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal*, Vol. XI, 1879.

110. *Ibid.*

part on the status of the peasantry, but even here the new proposals were framed in the context of an overriding concern for the landholders:

In connection with the question of improving the procedure in execution of decrees for rent arrears, it was suggested by various zamindars that it would be simple and more satisfactory to bring to sale the tenure of the occupancy ryot than to put in force provisions of the law for his eviction or failure to pay what was demanded of him.

Mackenzie rationalized provisions for occupancy rights and transfer of occupancy, not on the basis of assistance to the peasantry but primarily in terms of the additional crutch thereby offered to the landlord. Whereas later drafts of the Bill provided for transfer as a method of enhancing the value of the peasant tenure, in 1879 it was seen as a concession to zamindars in order to facilitate forcible sale of land "for arrears of rent."¹¹¹

Subsequent to the introduction of the Rent Bill, the Lieutenant-Governor appointed a Rent Commission (including Mackenzie) for intensive study of the measure. Significantly, the Commission submitted its report in July 1880, well after the Liberal victory in the parliamentary elections and one month after the arrival of the new Liberal Viceroy, Lord Ripon. Both in the report and in the correspondence between Bengal and the Supreme Government, priorities had shifted dramatically from those outlined in 1879. The Bill no longer bore a title referring to facilitation of rent collection, but rather carried a more inclusive heading, namely, "A Bill to consolidate and amend the Law of Landlord and Tenant . . . of Bengal." A concern to "define and strengthen the position of the great mass of cultivators" replaced Mackenzie's former preoccupation with the prerogatives of landlords.¹¹² Mackenzie incidentally had been elevated from the Financial Secretary-

111. See Note by C.L. Tupper concerning letter from the Government of Bengal, dated, 15 July 1880, on Law of Landlord and Tenant, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., A, 16-46. July 1883, N.A.I.

112. See, e.g., A. Mackenzie, Sec. 10 Government of Bengal, to the Sec. to the G. of I., Darjeeling, 5 July 1880, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., A, 16-46, July 1883, 19, N.A.I.

ship to that of the General and Revenue Departments of Bengal on exactly the same day as Lord Ripon's accession to power.¹¹³

C. L. Tupper, Under-Secretary in the Home Department of the supreme government, noted that the new Bill went "far beyond the mere consolidation of the existing law." He pointed for example, to the proposed abolition of distraint (*i.e.*, the privilege of the zamindar to expropriate the crops of defaulting peasants). He noted the diminishment of the period required for acquisition of occupancy rights (from twelve down to three years). In summary, he noted that it was a broad proposal "intended to define rights of occupancy rendering them a valuable property in the hands of a careful tenant". Tupper listed the provisions for improved status of landlords as being only of secondary importance in the new proposals.¹¹⁴ The modifications introduced since 1879, said Tupper, were numerous and profound. "It is one thing to deal with the procedure for the realization of arrears of rent; it is another to consolidate and amend perhaps the most complicated Rent Law in British India."¹¹⁵

The new Home Member, Mr. Rivers Thompson, who replaced C. U. Aitchison in that post at the end of 1880, viewed the Report of the Commission as "extreme," and feared that violent opposition to it had already developed in Bengal.¹¹⁶ The British Indian press echoed his apprehension. The *Englishman*, for example, argued that the new Bill not only failed to facilitate collection of rents, "but actually takes away the means of realising rents hitherto available to the landlord." "We are constrained," the editorialist continued, "to say that criticism that the Bill does everything for the tenant and nothing for the landlord is a perfectly just one."¹¹⁷

113. See *History of Services, Bengal, 1887*, p. 23.

114. Note by Tupper, 15 July 1880, G. of I, Rev. and Ag. Dept., A, 16-46, July 1883, N.A.I.

115. *Ibid.*

116. Note by Rivers Thompson, Home Member, 6 Jan., 1881, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., A, 16-46, July 1883, N.A.I.

117. *The Englishman*, July 23, 1880; see also *Englishman* of 12 July 1880.

The criticisms of the Home Member and of the press failed to deter the liberal Viceroy or the Government of Bengal in pursuit of the "extreme" set forth by the Commission. The despatch finally sent to the Secretary of State in March 1882 on the Rent Bill was, in fact, considerably more advanced in tone and substance than the Commission Report. In the interim the opinion of Alexander Mackenzie had so far shifted from his pro-zamindar speech of 1879 that, in September 1881, he had been elevated to the highest secretariat post in the Home Department of the supreme government. It can hardly be doubted that Ripon had selected Mackenzie largely to obtain a knowledgeable and sympathetic hand to promote the latest pro-peasant draft of the Bill, submitted to the Government of India by Bengal only two months earlier. As Secretary in Bengal, Mackenzie had been a most effective aid in the preparation of Eden's draft Bill; Mackenzie later claimed that he had done practically all the work single-handedly,¹¹⁸ and MacDonnell appeared to support this opinion. As secretary in the supreme government he could be expected to provide the impetus and coordination necessary to guide the legislation safely through the Viceroy's Legislative Council on to the Secretary of State. In fact, Mackenzie was largely responsible for the preparation of the peasant-oriented despatch sent to London in March 1892.

How far careerism played a role in the oscillation either of Ashley Eden or of Alexander Mackenzie probably can never be determined with accuracy. At the least, however, it is evident that their complete and rather sudden conversion to advocacy of peasant rights, simultaneously with the accession of a pro-peasant Viceroy, helped measurably to advance both their careers. In 1882, Eden left India for a seat on the India Council in London, and he did so on the understanding that he was in full sympathy with Ripon, and would give Ripon's more radical rent proposals his complete support in the Council.

118. Eden, according to both Mackenzie and MacDonnell, knew practically nothing of land or rent policies. If this judgment is correct, then it may be supposed that he chose both Mackenzie and MacDonnell as men who were in tune with Ripon on this issue and might help compensate for his own weakness,

“For the bolder measure,” wrote Ripon, “we had the concurrence of Sir A. Eden.”¹¹⁹ Though originally in favor of retaining some vestige of the twelve years’ prescription rule, Eden had later agreed with Ripon and Mackenzie, and “gave his opinion unhesitatingly against the idea of trying to retain a mere shred of the twelve-years rule.” Eden had concurred practically in “the whole of our recommendations.”¹²⁰ Mackenzie went on to the Home Department just at the time when the Rent Bill came before the supreme government. Ripon later made note of the fact that the central government had “never moved in the matter at all, except to examine the voluminous papers. . . until Eden’s letter of the 27th July, 1881 brought the whole question officially before us.” It was only two months after this letter that Mackenzie became Officiating Secretary to the Government of India in the Home Department.¹²¹

Measuring precisely the contribution of the Viceroy as against that of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal or of the Home Secretary in the rent debate would be impossible. Yet a letter from Ripon to Hartington, dated 24 March, 1882 clearly shows that the Viceroy had hardly been a passive observer and that in fact he had been the leading inspiration in the formulation of the most radical proposals of the 1882 Despatch.¹²² Doubtless he had been inspired by the Irish Land Act of 1881 which adumbrated many features of the Bengal Rent Bill as revised by the supreme government. Ripon’s strong views directly reflected his conception of the Irish peasant dilemma, for as he told the Secretary of State, unless the Government of India interfered soon, the peasants of Bengal would be “converted in a few more years into cotter tenants of the Irish type.”¹²³

Whereas Eden had expected to ameliorate peasant conditions by granting permanent occupancy to resident (or “khudkasht”) ryots holding fixed tenure within a village “for

119. Ripon to Kimberley, Calcutta, 1 Jan., 1883, R.V.P.

120. Ripon to Kimerley, Calcutta, 18 December 1882, R.V.P.

121. See Ripon to Kimberley, Calcutta, 1 Jan., 1883, R.V.P.

122. Ripon to Hartington, Simla, 24 March 1882, R.V.P.

123. Ripon to Hartington, Simla, 24 March 1882, R.V.P.

three successive years or more," the despatch of 1882 (as prepared by Ripon and Mackenzie) articulated a completely novel scheme of rights, attaching the privilege of occupancy to the land itself rather than to any specific piece of land held by a specific tenant for a specified period of time. Any time prescription, whether the twelve years laid down in the 1859 Bill or three years proposed by Eden, would enable landlords to shift peasants or fabricate boundaries to prevent accumulation of rights. Limitation of occupancy to a particular village would also facilitate zamindari maleficence into old village boundaries were indefinite or even lost to memory, and so could easily be manipulated. Distinction between "resident" (khudkasht) and "non-resident" (paikasht) ryots should also be eliminated since based, according to the despatch, on the false premise that the former class had traditionally enjoyed more privileges and more favorable rates than the latter. Actually, at the time of the permanent settlement (the *point d'appui* of the despatch paikasht or non-residents paid either the same rates as the permanent settlers or even lower rates "as an inducement to settle and cultivate". Paikasht tenants had "therefore enjoyed practically all the benefits usually attaching to occupancy tenures, though in legal phraseology the occupancy right continued to belong only to the 'resident' ryot strictly so-called."¹²⁴ The distinction between khudkasht and paikasht should be eliminated so far as it affected occupancy privileges. In short, claimed the Government of India (and mainly Ripon and Mackenzie since Mackenzie's superior, Rivers Thompson, opposed these more radical prescriptions), "we prefer simply to take the land as the basis of the occupancy right and to declare that all ryots holding or cultivating ryotti land shall have a right of occupancy therein."¹²⁵ This it was hoped, would eliminate the disastrous effects of the 1859 Bill which, rather than stabilizing the peasantry, had placed in the hands of zamindars an easily manipulated legal device for peasant eviction and enhancement of rents.

Ancillary rules for rent enhancement would be necessary to

124. Despatch of G. of I. to the S. of S., 21 March 1882 (6 of 1882), para. 60.

125. *Ibid.*, para. 62.

guarantee the integrity of the occupancy code. Ripon and Mackenzie agreed with Bengal "that the enhanced rent shall not be more than double the previous rent or more than one fourth of the average annual value of staple crops" (*i.e.*, basic grains as against special crops such as vegetables, tobacco etc.).¹²⁶ But here again the Government of India outdistanced Bengal, for the despatch proposed to lengthen the term of established rental rates from ten years to a period "not less than ten or more than thirty years."¹²⁷ Another significant addition by the supreme government was the proposal for a survey and record of rights which alone, it was thought, would "put an end to the evil of zamindari accounts."¹²⁸

Opposition to the new radical proposals opened on three fronts within the government apparatus: first, the India Council in London, manned by retired officials; conservative in their ideology and averse to any tampering with zamindari authority and proprietary rights in Bengal, secondly, the persistent though largely ineffectual opposition of the Home Member, Rivers Thompson, regarded by his colleagues as a rather weak reed because of chronic illness,¹²⁹ and finally the strident opposition of Sir Richard Garth, Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court and several of his fellow justices.

In a memorandum of September 6, 1882, Garth viewed the proposals as an extraordinary reversal of those made in 1879, and he reserved special scorn for "two of the younger members of that (the Rent) Commission"¹³⁰ [Mackenzie and O'Kinealy] whom he regarded as the source of the radical innovations. Since May of 1880, claimed Garth, Mackenzie had turned against his former support of Bengal zamindars and had attempted to show that this century-old policy was contrary both to Indian tradition and to the Permanent Settlement. Mackenzie's restructuring of British Indian history to fit Ripon's philosophy was regarded by Garth as "only Mr. Mackenzie's view

126. *Ibid* (of p. 176, here), para. 75.

127. See Ripon to Kimberley, Calcutta, 1 Jan., 1883, R.V.P.

128. Despatch of G. of I. to S. of S., 21 March 1882.

129. See, *e.g.*, reference to Thompson in Skrine, *Hunter*, and also references in correspondence of Ripon and the Secretary of State.

130. Ripon rewarded O'Kinealy with a seat in the High Court of Calcutta.

upon that subject," and represented a mockery of legislation and case law accumulated since the time of the permanent settlement. The current debate, according to Garth, was a contest between the judgements of "distinguished and learned men" in the High Courts and Legislative Councils on the one hand and the completely novel and revolutionary "extreme views" of Mackenzie and O'Kinealy on the other, views which had "found favour with Sir Ashley Eden."¹³¹

Garth deprecated the blurring of distinction between the "khudkasht" and "paikasht" peasants, and asserted that a two year period of occupation for prescription of occupancy rights "was about the shortest period of prescription known to law." He further contended that a maximum one-fourth rent was unfair to zamindars and a contravention of the three-fifths rent evidently in force prior to the permanent settlement. In summary, Garth objected strongly to the allegedly one-sided anti-zamindari spirit of the proposed legislation.¹³²

Garth's cynical appraisal of Mackenzie's motivation ignited a bitter personal struggle between these two self-willed men. "The situation is no doubt serious [wrote Mackenzie] when the Chief Justice of the Province . . . impeaches two officers of Government by name as the authors and instigators of all the mischief, describing them as 'pretending' to justify their views by 'as transparent a pretext as ever was presented to the public.'" ¹³³ Mackenzie's sensitivity may suggest that Garth had located a crucial factor in the alteration of the Revenue Bill. The duel between the two men continued in the press and within the government, and was not finally resolved until the advent of Lord Dufferin. In his haste to defend himself, Mackenzie misrepresented the alterations made in the bill, attempting to show that nothing had been introduced contrary to views long held by the Government of Bengal :

131. Minute on the proposed Rent Law for Bengal by Richard Garth, London, 6 Sept., 1882, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., A, 16-46, July 1883, 32.

132. *Ibid.*

133. A. Mackenzie, Memorandum on Sir Richard Garth's Minute of 6 Sept., 1882, 22 Dec., 1882, in G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., A, 16-46, July 1883.

The views of the Bengal Government on the ryot question were known to the public before the Rent Commission ever sat . . . There is not a point of any radical importance in connection with the subject that has not been keenly debated by able advocates on either side.¹³⁴

This statement was patently untrue, since the automatic bestowal of occupancy rights on all peasants proposed in the despatch of 1882 far exceeded any changes envisaged in the Bill as originally considered. Still, Mackenzie adamantly disclaimed any intention for radical change, and insisted that his plan would only restore and consolidate the position held by the masses of the peasantry at the time of the Permanent Settlement. While the peasants themselves had largely been mute in face of their oppression, there nevertheless had been some disturbances in East Bengal, the result being that “the imperative necessity of rent legislation upon the lines of defining and protecting more completely the occupancy right has been forced by the stern logic of facts upon a reluctant government.” As Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Mackenzie had himself articulated this “stern logic” in a letter to the supreme government, 27 July 1881.¹³⁵

The opposition of the Home Member, though not of formidable weight, coincidentally brought into bold relief the fact that the radical proposals had been the product of Ripon’s own thinking in cooperation with the ambitious Home Secretary. Mackenzie, in fact, had written a remarkable note to the Home Member in which he practically demanded that Thompson should bow to the wishes of the Viceroy :

His Excellency [the Viceroy] spoke of the rent despatch today [20 February 1882]. *He hopes earnestly that Mr. Thompson will see his way to giving the proposals. . . a frank and full support.* [italics mine] Lord Ripon seems to concur in the view that once it is admitted that the bill must in any case be amended, the rubicon is practically crossed, and the question whether the amendment should be in the way of supplementing the twelve-years rule or otherwise is a minor matter. But he sees clearly that if it is supple-

134. *Ibid* (of p. 178 here).

135. *Ibid*.

mented *effectually*, all the practical efforts must be secured that the simpler proposal *which he advocates* [italics mine] is meant to carry with it. Of this I have no doubt myself. Either Act X must stand as it is, or amendment must go the length we suggest. The more I look at it, the more I fail to find any middle course.¹³⁶

In response to Mackenzie's impertinence, Thompson recorded a surprisingly bland dissent from the Despatch, a moderation doubtless reflective of Thompson's concern not to jeopardize his candidacy for the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal.¹³⁷ He sympathized "entirely," he said, with the Government's effort to strengthen the position of the ryot, but believed that attachment of occupancy rights to all ryotti land was not a feasible panacea. The twelve years' prescriptive rule, introduced in 1859, would be adequate to secure valid rights if supported "by a detailed local record of rights." Thompson expressed special concern to preserve the distinction between khudkash and paikasht ryots, and insisted that "as between the two, there was a class of ryots to whom, as tenants of old standing, certain measures of protection were extended by Regulation VIII of 1793, and these were the khudkasht ryots." To substantiate this view, Thompson pointed to the opinions of Sir John Shore, who had been pre-eminently responsible for the Permanent Settlement. According to Shore, there existed "no fixity of tenure" for paikasht peasants. Perhaps it was true that paikasht ryots had enjoyed a favorable competitive position in 1793, protecting them against unfair rates such as those obtaining in 1882. In the nineteenth century, however, under altered conditions, the emphasis according to Thompson had not been placed on helping disadvantaged paikashts but rather on preserving the status of the khudkasht. The twelve

136. Demi-official from A. Mackenzie, Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., to A. Rivers Thompson, Home Member, 20 Feb., 1882, in *ibid.*, (Keep-withs)

137. Briton Martin suggests that Rivers Thompson's appointment as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal was hastened by Ripon's desire to eliminate his opposition to the Rent Bill from the Executive Council of the supreme government. See Martin, *New India 1885; British Official Policy and the Emergence of the Indian National Congress* pp. 26, 16 and 17.

year prescription of 1859 had not been chosen arbitrarily, said Thompson, but resulted from the edicts of both Hindu and Muslim law, according to which "twelve years had been sufficient to establish a right by negative prescription, that is by the absence of any claim on the part of other persons during that period." Act X had properly guaranteed the rights of occupancy to the khudkasht peasants. The abandonment of that rule, as in the new proposals, would be a "great error;" any difficulties resulting from Act X would be erased, first by prescription of the rights at the introduction of the new Law rather than twelve years later, and secondly by "the prosecution of a complete survey and record-of-rights."¹³⁸ In recording his dissent, Thompson was careful to mark his note "confidential" and "not . . . to be sent home," thus indicating that it should not be regarded as an overt protest against Ripon's policy.¹³⁹

The third and most formidable source of opposition was the India Council, including Sir Ashley Eden who had gone to the Council precisely because Ripon thought he would support the new proposals. A hint of Eden's gradual desertion of the Viceroy may perhaps be detected in his apparent chumminess with Sir Richard Garth during his final weeks in India.¹⁴⁰ Having placed his "whole confidence" in Eden on the rent bill,¹⁴¹ Ripon was "not a little surprised" to find that Eden had joined with reactionary elements in the India Council to quash the stronger proposals of the Government of India.¹⁴² Eden protested his innocence, claiming that he had been helpless to prevent a compromise which retained the twelve year rule with only slight modification, namely prescription of rights to all who had held *any* land for twelve years rather than any

138. Note by A. Rivers Thompson, Home Member, 7 April 1882, in G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., A, 16-46, July 1883.

139. Ripon to Hartington, Simla, 18 Aug., 1882, R.V.P.

140. A notable indication of this friendship was the fact that Sir Richard Garth presided at the farewell ceremonies for Eden in Calcutta, April 1882. See C.E. Buckland, *Bengal under the L.G.'S*, II.

141. Ripon to Sir Ashley Eden, Simla, 26 May 1882, R.V.P.

142. Ripon to Hartington, Simla, 9 Aug., 1882, R.V.P.; see also Hartington to Ripon, 21 April 1882, R.V.P.

specific plot of land.¹⁴³ Ripon insisted, nevertheless, that "Ashley Eden's change of front is unintelligible to me, though . . . I suspect that it is due to his having been keeping very bad political company lately . . ." ¹⁴⁴

The India Council proposed to keep the distinction between the khudkasht and paikasht peasants and to maintain the twelve year rule of prescription; yet they were willing, as indicated by Ashley Eden, to grant occupancy not only to those who held the *same* land for twelve years (as in the 1859 Bill) but also to those who had "occupied *any* [land] in the village for twelve years."¹⁴⁵ The Council fully admitted the value of a record of rights, but questioned the feasibility of compiling a record in light of probable resistance, and advised extreme caution in implementing this feature of the bill. The Secretary of State's letter insisted that the "commencement of the work in the Patna division" would be the widest permissible experiment to be undertaken. Ripon disagreed with the Secretary of State's opinion "that the suggested change in Act X of 1859 would have almost as wide an effect as the proposals of the Despatch."¹⁴⁶ Ripon estimated that only sixty or seventy per cent of the peasants would gain occupancy rights under the India Council's proposals, and he wondered "what will be the condition of the remainder?" The modification introduced by the Council (*i.e.*, accrual of permanent tenure after twelve years of occupancy in any village land) would virtually destroy the weaker paikasht ryots, since now "it will be necessary to shift them not from field to field, but from village to village . . . to turn him out of his house and deprive him of his homestead."¹⁴⁷

Mackenzie once again found himself in a delicate position. To shift ground and accept the objections of the India Office would largely discredit him in the eyes of the Viceroy. Though

143. Sir Ashley Eden, Member of India Council, to Ripon, India Office, 17 Aug., 1882, R.V.P.

144. Ripon to Hartington, Simla, 30 Oct, 1882, R.V.P.

145. Hartington, S. of S. to G.-G. in Council, India Office, 17 Aug., 1882, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., 16-46, July 1883, 30.

146. Note by Ripon, 8 Aug., 1882, in *ibid*, (keep-withs, Appendix A).

147. *Ibid*.

Ripon's tenure would end in two or three years, yet these might be crucial years for Meckenzie's further advancement. Obversely, active opposition to the admonitions of the India Office would diminish Mackenzie's chances for further advancement after Ripon's departure. Meckenzie took the most logical course—the search for a compromise, attempting to interpret the proposals of the India Office as substantively, though not semantically, synchronous with those of the Government of India. Mackenzie noted that the Secretary of State had been indefinite about the scope of the twelve year prescription, seemingly accepting as valid the occupancy rights of any and all who had cultivated for twelve years, whether the same or a different land, whether in a village or elsewhere. (This latter observation could not in any sense be construed as valid for the “village” had been specifically mentioned as the proper boundary by the Secretary of State.) “This”, claimed Mackenzie, “is quite as large a departure from the present law and custom as anything we ever proposed It seems to me that it would probably cover the whole of the peasantry.”¹⁴⁸ Peasants would be required only to produce evidence of a twelve year cultivation (for example, by use of road cess receipts), and heavy penalties would be invoked for “fraudulent denial of the right.” Mackenzie also observed that continuity of cultivation had not been demanded by the Secretary of State with regard to the twelve year prescription. “The Ryot's status would not be upset,” thought Mackenzie, “by the fact that one or two years' receipts were not forthcoming.” In summary Mackenzie agreed with Ripon concerning the disadvantages of any period requisite to occupancy, but “my object,” he said, “is only to point out that, if we have to accept it, the evil will not perhaps be practically so serious as is anticipated.”¹⁴⁹

Mackenzie's optimism, however, did not infect Ripon, who continued to believe that any term of prescription, regardless of the spatial dimension (whether, a field, village, or estate), would inevitably operate adversely on the peasants. A new

148. Note by A. Mackenzie, Home Sec., 22 Sept., 1882, *ibid.*

149. *Ibid.*

despatch to the Secretary of State, dated 17 October, reiterated Ripon's fear of wholesale evictions from villages by landlords intent on prevention of occupancy status.¹⁵⁰ In a letter to Hartington dated 14 September 1882, Ripon commented bitterly that it might be "wisest to drop the matter of the Bengal Rent Bill altogether until there is a chance of getting it settled in a really satisfactory way." He hastened to add that he would do this only with greatest reluctance, and even hinted at his resignation in such an eventuality.¹⁵¹ His next letter to Hartington was more conciliatory in tone, and asserted the desirability of legislating even if the India Office insisted on serious modification of the Bill.

Ripon held out for as inclusive an interpretation of the twelve year rule as possible. The altered twelve year prescription might reluctantly be incorporated in the revised legislation but Ripon intimated that it should be construed in such a manner as to guarantee the same protection to the majority of ryots as that envisaged by Mackenzie's formula, cited above.¹⁵² Ripon interpreted the new India Council's twelve-year rule as tantamount to a guarantee that peasants who had held any land "in the area of a village or upon an estate for twelve years" would automatically, on implementation of the new law, "obtain at once . . . an occupancy right in all the land which he may occupy in that village or estate, be it three, five, ten or any number of acres, and although he may have occupied the greater part of such land for a week only before the particular date to be fixed in the Bill." This, said Ripon, would be the only viable interpretation, since, "if it is not, it would afford no additional security to the ryots at all and would be perfectly worthless."¹⁵³ He thus interpreted the India Council's views in such a way as to suggest that they must, in the end, signify virtually the same type of protection included in his own proposals except that any twelve year presumption was an arbitrary statement which would continue to facilitate anti-peasant

150. G.-G. in Council to S. of S., Simla, 17 Oct., 1882, in *ibid.*, 31.

151. Ripon to Hartington, Simla, 14 Sept., 1882, R.V.P.

152. Note by A., Mackenzie, Home Sec., 22 Sept., 1882, in G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., A, 16-46, July 1883.

153. Ripon to Hartington, Simla, 3 Nov., 1882, R.V.P.

litigation and the falsification of documents to the detriment of peasant occupancies. Ripon denied the idea that the twelve year rule had any valid grounding in Bengal tradition, and asserted that "the reverence felt at the India Office for [it] . . . appears to me to partake of the nature of a supersition . . ." The altered twelve year rule would not vitiate the principles of occupancy rights advocated by Ripon and Mackenzie, but its presence in the new Act would militate against "the full security to which I believe them [ryots] to be entitled."¹⁵⁴

Two developments secured close adherence to Ripon's intentions in the new round of inter-governmental discussions : first the retention of the legislation within the jurisdiction of the supreme government rather than its assignment to the Bengal Council, secondly, the appointment of a Chief Secretary in Bengal who would help guarantee cooperation of Bengal with the Government of India. Mackenzie had been especially influential with regard to the first of these developments, and possibly with regard to the second as well. "I earnestly trust it [the Bill] will not be made over to the Bengal Council," he told Ripon. Such a move would maximize the obstructive opposition of the new Lieutenant-Governor, formerly Home Member, Mr. Thompson. He preferred that the Bill be kept under his own tutelage. "His Excellency knows," he concluded, "the deep interest I take in the measures."¹⁵⁵ Ripon agreed, and told the Secretary of State "it would be too much to expect that Thompson . . . should fight our scheme through his Council with the heartiness and vigour necessary for its success."¹⁵⁶

Securing the appointment of A.P. MacDonnell as Chief Secretary in Bengal was also a significant asset to Ripon and Mackenzie. MacDonnell had been known in the 1870's as a peasant sympathizer, and had written a report on the condition of the Bihar peasantry in collaboration with his brilliant but erratic contemporary, J.C. Geddes. This may explain why his appointment was not popular in the eyes of the Anglo-Indian

154. Ripon to Kimberley, Calcutta, 1 January 1883. R.V.P.

155. Note by A. Mackenzie, Home Sec., 22 Sept., 1882, G. of I., Rev. and Ag., A, 16-46, July 1883, N.A.J.

156. Ripon to Hartington, Barrackpore, 11 Dec., 1882, R.V.P.

public of Calcutta. In September, 1880, the *Englishman* had carried an article concerning Irish civilians in Bihar, making specific mention of an Irish "Collector of Darbangah during the 'agitation' in that district in 1877, when the ryots of nearly every village refused to pay more than Rs. 2 per biggah as rent, asserting that such was the law laid down by the 'Mai Bap' (as he was gratefully styled)," namely MacDonnell.¹⁵⁷ MacDonnell's name was conspicuously absent from the *Englishman's* list of prospective candidates for the Bengal secretaryship in 1882.¹⁵⁸ There is some evidence to suggest that Ashley Eden, who was using the Rent Bill for his own purposes, may have been instrumental in MacDonnell's appointment. In a private undated letter, almost entirely devoted to a resume of promotions and appointments (a feature characteristic throughout the small volume of his preserved private correspondence), MacDonnell told his wife that Eden "had drawn up a memorandum for Thompson [the incoming Lieutenant-Governor] in which he mentioned my desire to leave the accounts [*i.e.*, the post of Accountant General in Bengal] and get back to the Secretariat." MacDonnell's surprise at his selection was equal to that of the editors of the *Englishman*. Eden's intimation, wrote MacDonnell, "almost took away my breath."¹⁵⁹

From Eden's close (thought perhaps fading) alliance with Ripon at this juncture, one might infer with some confidence that MacDonnell had been tapped precisely for the influence he might exert in Bengal on behalf of the pro-peasant reform. Mackenzie's later recommendation of MacDonnell to succeed him as Home Secretary also suggests that Mackenzie may have looked upon MacDonnell in 1882 as the best spokesman for the Government of India in the Bengal provincial government.

As it turned out, MacDonnell became a most essential liaison between the Supreme and Bengal governments during the ensuing stages of the rent legislation, especially during the Lieutenant-Governor's severe illness of 1883-84. As the Bill advanced into the final phases of its long legislative journey (including a

157. *The Englishman*, 16 Sept., 1880; see also *History of the Services, Bengal, 1900*.

158. *The Englishman*, 17 May 1882.

159. MacDonnell to his wife, United Services Club, Calcutta, undated, but probably April 1882, MacDonnell papers.

revised draft prepared by a Select Committee), Mackenzie and MacDonnell worked together in promoting the Viceroy's effort to strengthen the peasantry. On the question of non-occupancy status and the accrual of occupancy rights, for example, Mackenzie told Ripon that the proposals of the select committee would not be adequate. They did nothing to protect the non-occupancy ryot either against arbitrary ejection or against the imposition of unfair rates of rent. According to the draft of the Committee, "the non-occupancy ryot [said Mackenzie] is only to be admitted to tenancy on terms dictated by the landlord, and that he is to be ejected when his lease (if he has one), expires." Furthermore, according to Mackenzie, court appeals to prevent rack-renting would do nothing to prevent unfair rates, for the Bill "enables the landlord to eject him [the non-occupancy ryot] *even if he agrees to pay the Court fee.*"¹⁶⁰ With the assistance of MacDonnell, Mackenzie put forward an addendum to provide the desired protection. To the clause specifying that "ryots having a right of occupancy are entitled to sit at such rates as may be agreed upon between them and their landlords," (obviously an arbitrary arrangement), Mackenzie and MacDonnell intended to add "a proviso that the rates of rent [for non-occupancy tenants] shall not exceed the average rates payable for the same class of lands by ryots of the vicinity."¹⁶¹ Aiding the non-occupancy ryots was thus contingent upon an assurance that "the occupancy ryot is carefully safeguarded," and it was their intention to cooperate with Ripon in the attainment and consolidation of both goals.

MacDonnell prepared a lengthy memorandum of 65 pages, dated 15 September 1884, recording Bengal's response to the revised draft of the Select Committee. Due to Thompson's illness, MacDonnell had reportedly written the whole of the memorandum.¹⁶² Despite opposition from the "majority of the

160 A. Mackenzie, Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., to H. W. Primrose, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Calcutta, Feb., 1884, R.V.P.

161. Mackenzie to Ripon, Calcutta, 28 Feb., 1884, R.V.P.
(According to this letter, the new pro-peasant formula emerged from a personal conference between Mackenzie and MacDonnell, a clear sign of the close cooperation between these two men during the rent debate.)

162. MacDonnell, to his wife, 28 Aug., 1884, MacDonnell papers.

officers consulted," MacDonnell strongly supported the status of the occupancy ryot as defined by the Select Committee and approved by the Viceroy, a definition granting occupancy status to all "who for a period of twelve years, whether wholly or partly before or after the commencement of the Act, have continuously held as a raiyat land situated in any village or estate . . ." He also supported the view that the burden of proof against occupancy status should fall on the landlord. In addition, occupancy status should not be contingent on continuous cultivation of any particular piece of land, but rather it should accrue automatically after twelve years' cultivation of any land in either a village or an "estate." MacDonnell strongly resisted efforts to eliminate "estate" from the formula and to limit ryot occupancy to the perimeters of a single village. Such limitation complained MacDonnell, would represent an unfortunate "reversion to the definition in section 19 of Sir Ashley Eden's Bill."¹⁶³ To the objection that the "estate" as an occupancy border would prove an injustice to zamindars, MacDonnell replied that "the village may, and often does, comprise portions of more than one 'estate.'"¹⁶⁴

Pursuant to his agreement with Mackenzie, MacDonnell emphasized regulation of rent enhancements as a way of safeguarding the status of both occupancy and non-occupancy ryots. MacDonnell voiced objection to the "prevailing rate" provision for enhancement, the reason being that the high and increasingly competitive rent paid by non-occupancy tenants, if viewed as a "prevailing rate," would inevitably provide ground for enhancement of occupancy rents. Such enhancements, claimed MacDonnell, would be inimical to fair rent. "Fixity of tenure is a conception incompatible with competition leading to rack-rent." Of what value would occupancy be if tenants were subject to the escalating spiral of rents based on the spurious concept of prevailing rates? The operation of the spiral would provide further rationale for yet higher enhancement of non-occupancy rates. A vicious cycle of never-ending

163. A. P. MacDonnell, Sec. to Government of Bengal, Rev. Dept., Darjeeling, 15 Sept., 1884, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., B, 71, October 1884, N.A.I.

164. *Ibid.*, para. 22.

increases would ensue. For these reasons, the Bengal Government “must respectfully press for the withdrawal of this ground of enhancement in the Bill.”¹⁶⁵

A rise in prices would also be illegitimate ground for enhancement unless certain qualifying factors and contingencies (including cost in production, decreasing productivity, etc.) were taken into consideration.¹⁶⁶ MacDonnell proposed that one-half the increased profit resulting from rise of prices be given to the ryot as “an allowance for increase in costs of production,” the remainder being susceptible to collection by the landlord. He also decried the Bill’s provisions for a potential twenty-five per cent increase “on rents of old durable land every fifteen years.” Noting that this would “quadruple the rent in less than a century,” MacDonnell argued that rents in many areas of Bengal were already too high. MacDonnell therefore proposed that rent be limited to a maximum of “one-fifth the gross produce of staple food-crops.”¹⁶⁷ As a measure of control over non-occupancy rates, MacDonnell reiterated suggestions made in his letter of 27 September 1883, namely that non-occupancy ryots should be allowed to cultivate at “fair rents” as determined by the courts, or alternatively be paid by the zamindar “one forth of the fair rental of the holding for each year of the tenancy up to a maximum of three times such rental” as compensation for this disturbance of ejection.¹⁶⁸

The zamindars inveighed loudly against provisions for attainment of occupancy status, first claiming that they represented violations both of the permanent settlement and the 1859 Act, and secondly contending that permission of occupancy status to non-khudkasht ryots after a period of twelve years’ cultivation in a villiage was contrary to the ancient tradition of Bengal according to which “the only occupancy ryots were the hereditary residents or k h u d k a s h t ryots of the

165. *Ibid* (of p. 188, here), para. 40.

166. *Ibid.*, para. 44.

167. *Ibid.*, para. 50.

168. *Ibid.*, para. 67.

village.”¹⁶⁹ Zamindars also criticized limitations on enhancements of rents, particularly those provisions eliminating private contractual enhancements and requiring the zamindars to adjudicate in the Civil Courts for all enhancements not already approved or established by executive action.¹⁷⁰ They denounced clauses granting freedom of transfer or sale of occupancy rights as an opening for the moneylenders and a weakening of their own domination over ryots. Finally, they expressed dismay that legislation undertaken initially in 1879 to assist their collection of rents had ended in a bill giving no facilities either for collection or for enhancements.¹⁷¹ According to the zamindars, the impetus for the Bill had come from the “peasant proprietary school of officials and from them alone,” Mackenzie and O’Kinealy being singled out for special mention.¹⁷²

MacDonnell answered all these criticisms in another lengthy memorandum, dated 27 September 1883. He strongly defended the clauses providing occupancy status for “ryots, who have resided twelve years in the village . . . in all lands they hold or may hold in that village.”¹⁷³ He regarded as untenable the argument that occupancy status of the “estate” rather than that of the village was contrary to the traditional idea of the khudkasht ryot who supposedly had held land only in the village of his residence. He especially ridiculed the Bihar Landlords’ Association for their claim “that the khudkasht ryot was altogether unknown to Bihar at the time of the Permanent Settlement. Quite to the contrary, said MacDonnell, it was actually zamindars who were “removable” as revenue collectors on the eve of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal while “the cultivator’s

169. The petition of the Central Committee of the Zamindars of Bengal and Behar to the Earl of Kimberley, S. of S., Calcutta, 17 Nov., 1883, G. of I., Rev. and Ag., B, 21, N.A.I.

170. *Ibid.*, para. 28.

171. *Ibid.*, para. 60.

172. Memorial on the Bengal Tenancy Bill by the landlords of East Bengal, Dacca, 2 Nov., 1883, G. of I., Rev. and Ag., B, 1, Dec., 1883; see also Memorial of the Zamindars of Bhagulpore, G. of I., Rev. and Ag., B, 105-106, Dec., 1884, N.A.I.

173. A. P. MacDonnell, Officiating Sec. to Government of Bengal, to the Sec. G. of I., Legislative Dept., Darjeeling, 27 Sept., 1883, G. of I., Home, Legislative, A, 8-555, April 1885, 12, N.A.I.

right to hold his land as long as he paid the authorized rent was less questioned.”¹⁷⁴ In sum, MacDonnell had become the champion of Ripon’s rent policy; indeed he looked upon himself as having saved the policy, “steering the course through eddies and shallows and past nasty snags;” even daring to brave the opposition when Ripon himself, so he had been told, “was getting anxious,” “He is a poor thing,” said MacDonnell of Ripon (in contrasting his own bravery to Ripon’s vacillation) “unable to persevere in the face of what he mistakes for public opinion.”¹⁷⁵

MacDonnell obviously was ignorant of Ripon’s delicate position with regard to the rent bill, and doubtless he would have been surprised could he have foreseen the shift in his own position necessitated by the departure of Ripon from India. The truth was that Ripon, in the summer of 1884, found himself more and more in doubt about the disposition of Kimberley and the India Council toward the latest draft of the Bill. He expressed fear that Kimberley might unilaterally veto the Bill without prior warning.¹⁷⁶ He had a premonition that “members of your Council were inclined to oppose various portions of the Bill, “but he found it difficult to elicit any concrete information from the Secretary of State as to the exact nature of the objections. At last the suspense ended, for late in July he received a telegram from London saying that “it would be better that the change of Viceroys should take place before the end of the year.”¹⁷⁷ On the surface, it appears the change was an effort to avert the appointment of a Conservative viceroy in case of new elections.¹⁷⁸ More important, it appears that Ripon’s intransigence on the Rent Bill (in July 1884, he believed that transfer of occupancy rights might be the only point of compromise on the bill)¹⁷⁹ was proving of some embarrassment to the embattled Liberals. Ripon’s departure in November rather than December, as suggested in Ripon’s

174. *Ibid* (of p. 190, here).,

175. MacDonnell to his wife, 28 Aug., 1884, MacDonnell papers.

176. Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 5 June 1884, R.V.P.

177. Telegram noted by Ripon in letter to Kimberley, Simla, 2 July 1884, R.V.P.

178. S. Gopal, *Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon*, p. 214.

179. Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 30 July 1884, R.V.P.

own letter to Kimberley of July 30, would remove him from the scene before the opening of the new Calcutta Legislative season, and would "give my successor . . . time enough to study them [rent questions] before he has to deal with them in the Legislative Council."¹⁸⁰ Looking at the sweeping and pro-zamindar modifications introduced in the Bill by Dufferin, it would appear that the Liberal Party and, certainly, the India Council were greatly relieved at Ripon's departure.

The relative phoniness of Ripon's official supporters and the evidence of Ripon's pre-eminent role in pro-peasant orientation of the Rent Bill is adventitiously revealed by the readiness of the Legislative Council and the supreme secretariat to accept Dufferin's pro-zamindar alterations. One by one the noble goals envisaged by Ripon fell beneath the axe, and hardly a whimper was heard from those officials who had once seemed so eager to support the cause of the peasants. The bureaucrats followed their new mentor most quiescently. Promotion depended not on consistent loyalty to the lofty principles of the former Viceroy but rather on readiness to follow the direction of the new one.

Having spent a month in study of the Bill, Dufferin, nonetheless, confessed a great lacuna in his mind on the rent problem in Bengal. "I am obliged to deal with it [he said] before I have an opportunity of acquiring any acquaintance with the practical operation of the local agricultural systems of Bengal and Bihar."¹⁸¹ Still he felt confident enough to say that he was "full of misgivings" about the latest draft of the Rent Bill and to enumerate features requiring immediate alterations. Dufferin appeared to be a member of the old school of liberalism, eschewing dramatic intervention by government to save peasants as contrary to the philosophical principles of political economy. Overall, the Ripon-Mackenzie Bill, he thought, reflected "an unnecessarily violent and one-sided" anti-zamindar character, the result of "the influence of two Irishmen who seem to have manipulated the Lieutenant Governor unreservedly—a Mr. MacDonnell and Mr. O'Kinealy. . . both of them clever men, and both of them animated by the bitter

180. Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 30 July 1884, R.V.P.

181. Dufferin to Kimberley, Calcutta, 23 Dec., 1884, D.V.P.

anti-landlord spirit with which we are familiar.”¹⁸² Apparently Mackenzie had successfully dissociated himself from the Bill after Ripon’s departure.

Dufferin objected specifically to the following features of the 1884 draft legislation: 1. the invalidation of contracts between zamindars and non-occupancy peasants barring the accrual of occupancy rights over the specified period of twelve years; 2. the use of the word “estate” rather than or in addition to “village” as the limitation or boundary of peasant ownership. “Estate,” said Dufferin, “is too large a term, and would unduly extend the operation of the occupation clauses of the Act.” Sir Steuart Bayley, successor to Rivers Thompson as Home Member, and a man who had given willing support to the Ripon-Mackenzie proposals now came forward as a “fair and moderate man” who would arrange for alterations in line with the wishes of the Viceroy.¹⁸³

In the interim between Dufferin’s accession to office and passage of the Rent Bill in March 1885, the Select Committee entered into protracted negotiations, striking out or altering all the points considered by Dufferin to be incendiary. “The Committee,” wrote Dufferin, “met 64-times and sat from three and one-half to four hours each time, which represents a continuous period of twenty days and twelve hours. Of these sittings, twenty-six were held at Calcutta, subsequent to my arrival.”¹⁸⁴ This frenzy is a fair index of the India Office’s desire to eliminate the rent controversy as soon as possible. Both in the Council and in the Select Committee, Dufferin found ready acceptance of his wish to scratch “estate” from the definition of occupancy and to retain only the “village” as the boundary of occupancy privileges.¹⁸⁵ Even the safeguards against unimpeded enhancement, initially approved by Dufferin, eventually went into the scrap barrel. Of course, said Dufferin, he did not on principle approve Bengal’s pro-

182. *Ibid* (of p. 192 here) Making the “Irishmen” scapegoats for the doomed Legislation became popular in the Calcutta society; see also Hunter to his wife, 20 Jan., 1885, in Skrine, *Hunter*, p. 341.

183. Dufferin to Kimberley, Calcutta, 23 Dec., 1884, D.V.P.

184. Dufferin to Kimberley, Calcutta, 17 March 1885, D.V.P.

185. Dufferin to Kimberley, Calcutta, 20 Jan., 1885, D.V.P.

posed one-fifth limit on rent since "it was manifestly an unsound and unphilosophical method," contrary to freedom of contract. But he had accepted the idea initially as "a mode of procedure with which the population had become familiarized."¹⁸⁶ Late in January, however, the Bengal Government willingly destroyed its own rationale for the one-fifth limitation by bringing forth statistics "which proved that in certain districts of the Provinces where the condition of the tenantry was admittedly prosperous, the rents paid without complaint or inconvenience were manifestly in excess of the one-fifth limit." Whereas previously Bengal had argued that one-fifth was such an excessively high limit that it would be inconceivable for most landlords to reach it in many years, now the Lieutenant-Governor and his subordinates meekly suggested that this was too low for being the maximum rent.¹⁸⁷ S. C. Bayley penned a strong denunciation of the one-fifth limit, saying it was theoretically indefensible, "as rent must depend on *net* profit, not on gross profit," and also practically invalid because "there is ample evidence that in many districts ryots (peasantry) do, in very many cases, pay more than one-fifth . . . and yet thrive."¹⁸⁸

Circumstances were becoming uncomfortable for those officials who had previously supported Ripon. Already Bayley and W.W. Hunter had swung around to Dufferin's viewpoint. Mackenzie had completely vanished, taking leave of absence for one year and three months beginning on 9 January 1885. MacDonnell's position seemed most uncomfortable of all, for only four months earlier he had written Bengal's ill-fated response to the draft of the Select Committee (discussed above). Before the end of January, even MacDonnell had practically deserted the cause of the peasantry. In a letter addressed in accordance with secretariat protocol to Dufferin's Private Secretary, MacDonnell agreed with the Viceroy "that exaction of excessive rents is not a charge which lies at the door of the Bengal zamindars as a class." MacDonnell undermined many features of the Bill by admitting that condi-

186. Dufferin to Kimberley, Calcutta, 20 Jan., 1885, D.V.P.

187. *Ibid.*

188. Note by S. C. Bayley, 18 Jan., 1885, enclosure in *ibid.*

tions varied greatly from one region to another, thus allegedly nullifying the value of a Bill portending to legislate in uniform fashion for the whole of Bengal.¹⁸⁹

The taciturn and nearly invalid Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir Rivers Thompson, broke his silence on the issue with his own letter, which showed adventitiously how greatly he had been dominated by MacDonnell in previous months. The rent legislation, said Thompson, had wandered from the intended track. It was the problem of rent collection by zamindars, according to Thompson, which had "originally started the idea of fresh legislation in connection with the Tanancy Bill in Bengal, and I am at one with the zamindars in thinking that whatever else the Bill contains, it says and does little for the special grievance from which they suffer."¹⁹⁰

By the time of its passage, in March 1885, the Rent Bill carried only the smallest vestiges of the pro-peasant character provided by Ripon, Mackenzie, and MacDonnell. "Estate" had been eliminated from the definition of occupancy ryot; the maximum one-fifth ceiling on rent had been expunged; nullification of contracts preventing accrual of occupancy status by paikasht ryots had been rejected; "the right of non-occupancy tenants to compensation for disturbance" (*i.e.*, ejection for failure to pay higher rents) had disappeared; the "hard and fast twelve per cent rule "on enhancement of rents" by contract had been "mitigated . . . in certain specified cases;" and "initial rent" between landlord and ryot would be subject to no legal limit, but rather open to complete "freedom of contract." The only notable advances for the peasant were 1. the much watered down provision that every ryot who holds a bit of land (*i.e.*, occupancy ryot) is credited with an occupancy right (in a village) until the contrary is proved," and 2. the stipulation that "the (occupancy) ryot cannot contract himself out of his status."¹⁹¹ There was also provision for a record of rights, but this was weakened by delimitation of the

189. A. P. MacDonnell, Sec. to the Government of Bengal, to D. Mackenzie Wallace, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Calcutta, 22 Jan., 1885, D.V.P.

190. Dufferin to Kimberley, Calcutta, 17 March 1885, D.V.P.

191. Dufferin to Kimberley, Calcutta, 2 March 1885, D.V.P.

record to specific "local" areas, an ambiguous clause susceptible to conflicting interpretations. Dufferin expressed satisfaction that those officials from Bengal (especially MacDonnell who had attempted previously to give the Bill "a more extravagant character than it now possesses "had" behaved very well, and had admitted it (the final draft) to be a good Bill as it went."¹⁹²

The zamindars were still unhappy, especially with the Bill's provision for a survey and record to rights because "of a conviction," said Dufferin, "which is spread among the zamindars that the Lieutenant-Governor and his Irish advisers are bent on their destruction."¹⁹³ Dufferin agreed with zamindars in their denunciation of Thompson, and especially criticized the appointment of Michael Finucane, "who is known to be an enthusiastic champion of the ryots," as Superintendent of Agriculture in Bihar.¹⁹⁴ Finucane's selection, had resulted more from MacDonnell's initiative than from Thompson's bungling. Ten years later, MacDonnell put forward Finucane's name for a C.I.E., because "he rendered excellent service to me while I was Secretary to the Government of Bengal. Years ago his assistance in all matters connected with agrarian matters was very valuable. He has long been known," concluded MacDonnell, "as the best authority on Rent questions in Bengal."¹⁹⁵ In order to guarantee that pro-peasant officials in Bengal would not get out of hand, Dufferin announced in Council that the survey and record clauses "would be confined to a special and limited area, and would be applied only in a very cautious and tentative manner." Furthermore, Dufferin ordered "that any record of rights prepared for the Bengal Government should be submitted for confirmation to the Government of India."¹⁹⁶

192. Dufferin to Kimberley, Calcutta, 2 March 1885, D.V.P.

193. Dufferin to Kemberley, Calcutta, 10 March 1885, D.V.P; see also documents in the following: G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., B, Sept., 1885, 41; also G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., A, 1-23, Nov., 1885, especially 8, N.A.I.

194. Dufferin to Kimberley, Calcutta, 10 March 1885, D.V.P.

195. A. P. MacDonnell, Member of Viceroy's Council, to Elgin, Calcutta, 19 March 1895, E.V.P.

196. Dufferin to Kimberley, Calcutta, 10 March 1885, D.V.P.

The zamindars had now little to fear from the Bengal Government. With the rapid alteration in the thinking of the Chief Secretary, A.P. MacDonnell, the rest of the secretaries quickly fell in line. It is true that MacDonnell attempted to initiate local legislation for a survey and record of rights, but this was quickly quashed by the Viceroy. MacDonnell was handsomely rewarded for his years of cooperation with Ripon and Mackenzie and for his subsequent adroitness in accommodating his views to those of Lord Dufferin. In March 1886 he succeeded Alexander Mackenzie as Secretary to the Government of India in the Home Department. According to a letter of Mackenzie written some years later, Mackenzie himself had played a major role in MacDonnell's advancement: MacDonnell "owed his selection to succeed me as Home Secretary entirely to my urgency with Lord Dufferin."¹⁹⁷ In light of Dufferin's own occasional outbursts against "the Lieutenant-Governor (Thomson) and his Irish advisers," this move raises several curious questions, and among other speculations, leads to the conclusion that this was an instance of promotion to de-fuse the current controversy. Whether intended or not (and it is difficult to imagine that the result had not been carefully calculated), this was precisely the effect produced. While MacDonnell subsequently proved more consistent than Mackenzie in his desire, when feasible, to promote peasant welfare, it is obvious that status consciousness and obsession with promotion were dominant themes in the careers of both men, and that these motives go far to explain their behaviour with regard to the rent bill controversy.

Adherence to views advocated by or acceptable to viceroys was a trait common to all secretaries, throughout the controversy. Lord George Hamilton later observed that "if any reform, administrative or otherwise, is to be put in motion in India, the bulk, if not the whole, of the initial work. . . . falls on the shoulders of the Viceroy."¹⁹⁸ Though largely true, the statement carries the ring of unfairness; because the absence of civilian initiative had become a type of conditioned official

197. Sir A. Mackenzie, Chief Commissioner, Burma, to Elgin, Rangoon, 21 Feb., 1885, E.V.P.

198. Hamilton to Curzon, Deal Castle, 27 Aug., 1902, H.C.

response. Virtually no official would risk crossing the Viceroy; nor would any upset the equilibrium of a government whose delicate balance and brittle relationship to the Indian populace had the effect of placing a natural priority on minimal change. Even the initiatives taken by Mackenzie and MacDonnell ended in failure or an impasse because many imperial spokesmen, especially retired men on the India Council, feared alienation of the landed classes of Bengal on whom the British had relied almost from the beginning of their rule in Bengal.

Much of the unreality attaching to the jumble of theories and ideas put forward during the controversy of the 1880's relates not only to a lack of precise or adequate information but, more importantly, to the fact that theory was made to fit prevailing viceregal opinion rather than to synchronize with the actual state of affairs. Hence, under Ripon, secretaries could write volumes concerning injustices to impoverished peasants; but then, only a few months later under Dufferin, revive the notion that it was actually the zamindars who required assistance from the Government. Ripon diagnosed the situation in a letter to Kimberley near the close of his viceroyalty:

The questions of Revenue Settlement and Land Tenure are among those most closely affecting the vital interests of the great mass of the people . . . and now, after five years' lucubrations, we do not seem to be much nearer a satisfactory settlement than we were when we began this examination. . . . In the meanwhile the people suffer; their existence is the sport of official theories, or of ignorance, carelessness, or mistaken zeal of our officers. The occupancy tenant, as the result of our legislation, is being improved off the face of the earth, and his place is being taken by the rack-rented cotter tenant whom we have imported into India doubtless because we have found him so eminently desirable an element of Irish society. And now a change of Viceroys is about to take place. By the time Dufferin has mastered the subject you will be replaced by a new Secretary of State . . . and the dreary round has to be begun again profiting only to those consummate masters of the act of how-not-to-do-it, who compose the Indian Council. I will not dilate upon the

reflections which the thought of such a system raises in my mind.¹⁹⁹

Imperial policy in the way-stations of the Chief Commissionerships.

Having reached the secretariats, civilians of the Bengal commission automatically became potential candidates for the highest positions. But there still remained a considerable obstacle course to cross before reaching the top of the hierarchy. Next came one of three Chief Commissionerships; Assam, the Central Provinces, and Burma. Almost all the leading men of the late nineteenth century followed this route. The object was to pass through the chief commissionerships as quickly and as deftly as possible. This is doubtless the reason why aspirants like Elliott, MacDonnell, and C.J. Lyall preferred the remote and usually quiet province of Assam over the other two Chief Commissionerships. Yet, very few men aspired to Burma, the most risky of the three posts, because it offered the most likely arena for more visible performance during these years. An appointment in Burma was sometimes more easily obtained because the incumbent commissioners were vulnerable to criticism by their potential rivals for failure to achieve rapid "pacification" after the annexation of Upper Burma.

A three-pronged strategy characterised the policy of Chief Commissioners : 1. projecting oneself as a "safe" administrator; 2. disparaging the records of incumbents or predecessors who might be rivals for still higher posts; 3. willingness to compromise on any point necessary to gain or to keep the confidence of the Viceroy.

Chief Commissioners of Burma were particularly vulnerable to the vendettas of their rivals during the last two decades to the nineteenth century. When Charles Bernard became Chief Commissioner there in 1880, the British ruled only the provinces of so-called Lower Burma, while Upper Burma, with its capital at Mandalay, remained under the suzerainty of a Burmese King. The King promoted good relations with the British officials in Rangoon, and during the early years of 199. Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 3 Oct., 1884, R.V.P.

Bernard's tenure, Lord Ripon wrote glowing reports of Bernard as an administrator.²⁰⁰ But the death of the King and the subsequent intrigues in his court, highly disadvantageous to British commercial control of Upper Burma, now placed Bernard in a precarious position, C.H.T. Crosthwaite, who had served as officiating Chief Commissioner of Burma during Bernard's brief absence in 1884, became the most outspoken critic of Bernard. It is obvious from Crosthwaite's correspondence, particularly with C.P. Ilbert, that he hoped to displace Bernard. Even though currently serving as Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, Crosthwaite viewed Burma as a more promising route to a Lieutenant-Governorship. In a letter to Ilbert, dated May 1886, Crosthwaite openly attacked Bernard as "not the man" for the Burma crisis because "he does not carry his men with him, and they distrust him."²⁰¹ Later he confessed to Ilbert that he had "contemplated the possibility" of replacing Bernard as Chief Commissioner. "Here to fore," wrote Crosthwaite, "it (Burma Chief Commissionership) has been looked upon as a stepping stone to the Council or a Lieutenant-Governorship, and therefore men have accepted it cheerfully." Expressing the fear that the move to Burma might come too late for him to reap these benefits, Crosthwaite urged that his appointment should be accompanied both by a substantial raise in salary and the elevation of Burma itself to the status of a Lieutenant-Governorship.²⁰²

In addition to these private hints, Crosthwaite had already written to the Viceroy suggesting alleged inadequacies of current Burma policy and proposing annexation of Upper Burma as the only solution. It was not only a question of instability or anarchy in the court at Mandalay. More important had been the wedge provided by this instability for the interference of the French: "The question—how far the French are to be allowed to establish their influence in Upper Burma, is a pressing

200. Ripon to Hartington, Bay of Bengal, 31 Dec., 1881, R.V.P.

201. Crosthwaite to Ilbert, Edinburgh, May 1886, Ilbert papers.

202. Crosthwaite to Ilbert, Edinburgh, 30 June 1886, Ilbert papers.

one."²⁰³ Continued or expanded French interference would not only cause "injury . . . to our trade," but would also further weaken British control over Lower Burma, "a matter of considerable anxiety for the last four years." "The French," wrote Crosthwaite, "have begun to occupy themselves with Upper Burmah ever since they set about to extend their influence in Tonquin." Appointment of a French Vice-Consul to Rangoon in 1883 was seen by Crosthwaite as part of the conspiracy. The end result would be that:

if we sit by until the French Government has acquired concessions and has by virtue of them begun to work mines, construct railways, and establish Flotilla Companies, we shall have great difficulty in dealing with Upper Burmah without raising quarrels with the French who will probably demand the retirement of British influence in Siam in return for their acquiescence in the action we find it necessary to take in Upper Burmah.²⁰⁴

Commercial and political pressures began to accumulate in England for its annexation.²⁰⁵ Crosthwaite's argument contributed to the Government of India's acquiescence in this pressure. Only a few days after receipt of Crosthwaite's letter, Dufferin acknowledged his own fear of French intervention and his eagerness for the annexation.²⁰⁶ Accordingly at the end of 1885, the reigning monarch of Upper Burmah was imprisoned by the British, and early in the following year Dufferin himself announced from Mandalay that "upper Burmah will . . . be governed through the instrument of British officers."²⁰⁷

203. C.H.T, Crosthwaite, Chief Commissioner, C.P., to D. Mackenzie Wallace, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Pachmarhi, 12 Oct., 1885, D.V.P.

203. *Ibid.*

205. Woodruff considers financial instability and malfeasance of the Upper Burma Court to have been the immediate cause for its annexation, and seems to suggest that fear of the French, as outlined by Crosthwaite, was only a secondary consideration. Woodruff, *The Guardians*, p. 123; Briton Martin gives a much more valid picture of the developments; see Martin, pp. 242, 245, 248.

206. Martin, *New India*, p. 245.

207. Telegram from the Viceroy, Mandalay, to C.P. Ilbert, Calcutta, 17 Feb., 1886, D.V.P.

Doubts about Bernard arose soon after the annexation. Several tribes and villages of Upper Burma refused to accept their new rulers passively, and the British were confronted with a protracted guerilla conflict. By the summer of 1886, Dufferin had become apologetic in his correspondence with the Secretary of State : "I am sorry to say that our difficulties in Burmah do not seem to be decreasing. Bernard and all the authorities there used to prophesy confidently that the dacoits [marauding rebels] would collapse with the rains, but as yet there are no signs of that."²⁰⁸ On one or two occasions British troops had suffered reverses or "checks," and Dufferin had reached the conclusion that Bernard and his subordinates had under-estimated the number of forces necessary to complete the pacification.

Adding to Bernard's difficulty was the presence in Burma of a correspondent of the London Times, a Mr. Moylan, who doubled as legal counsel for French companies or individuals whose property had been confiscated in Upper Burma after annexation. According to Bernard, Moylan had told him openly that "if you don't settle the claims of those Frenchmen, I shall have to show up certain matters which will reflect discredit on the administration."²⁰⁹ Bernard was certainly correct in his premonition that this ill conceived combination of lawyer and journalist "may cause trouble and bring me somewhat into ill repute."²¹⁰ Articles began appearing in the London papers "denouncing Bernard on account of his legal arrangements in Mandalay."²¹¹ Moylan embellished these stories with charges of injustice to Burmese rebel leaders, for example that one leader had "wanted to surrender, but was refused" and that another "who surrendered under the amnesty was transported."²¹² In private correspondence, Dufferin staunchly de-

208. Dufferin to Kimberley, Simla, 2 July 1886, D.V.P.

209. C.E. Bernard, Chief Commissioner, British Burma, to Wallace, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Rangoon, 4 March 1896, D.V.P.

210. *Ibid.*

211. Dufferin to Ilbert, Legal Member, of Viceroy's Council, Simla, 14 June 1886, D.V.P.

212. A.P. MacDonnell, Officiating Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., to Wallace, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Simla, 18 Sept., 1886, D.V.P.

fended Bernard against these attacks,²¹³ but he found it impossible to deny the damage that had been done, especially in relation to British Public opinion.²¹⁴

Dufferin gradually turned against Bernard; after all, the Chief Commissioner might serve as a convenient scapegoat to deflect criticisms concerning Burma away from the Government of India. In the gradual eclipse of Bernard, Dufferin on several occasions received a gentle but decisive push from another potential rival of the Chief Commissioner, namely the Home Secretary, A.P. MacDonnell. There appears to have been an alliance in this enterprise between MacDonnell and Moylan. Several references testify to their friendship,¹¹⁵ and this friendship was helpful to MacDonnell when he was called upon to officiate briefly as Chief Commissioner of Burma in 1889. MacDonnell began to ply the Viceroy with letters, questioning Bernard's arrangements for pacification and administration of Upper Burma.¹¹⁶ While the Home Member, J. B. Peile, continued to be sympathetic with Bernard, MacDonnell became increasingly outspoken about Bernard's allegedly erratic behaviour, particularly his estimate of recruits required from India to man the civilian and police departments in Burma. Bernard suspected misrepresentation of his telegrams by the Home Department.¹¹⁷

No single issue concerning the civilian or military cadres in Burma would in itself constitute a strong case against Bernard's competency. Taken together, however, they undermined his credibility, and diminished Dufferin's patience to the vanishing point. That afforded ample excuse for Dufferin to go along with others in placing blame for Burmese problems on the

213. Dufferin to Lyall, L.-G. of N.-W.P. and Oudh. Simla, 27 Oct., 1886, D.V.P.

214. Dufferin to Cross, Simla, 27 Sept., 1886, D.V.P.

215. See, *e.g.*, Sir C. Bernard, Chief Commissioner, Burma, to Wallace, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Mandalay, 28 Aug., 1886, D.V.P.

216. MacDonnell to Wallace, Simla, 18 Sept., 1886, D.V.P.; MacDonnell to Wallace, Simla 7 Nov., 1886, D.V.P.; MacDonnell to Dufferin, Calcutta, 20 Nov., 1886, D.V.P.

217. Bernard to Dufferin, Mandalay, 13 Dec., 1886, D.V.P.

shoulders of the embattled and vulnerable Chief Commissioner.²¹⁸ Finally, at the outset of 1887, Dufferin asked for Bernard's resignation.²¹⁹ "Bernard, when you see him" he told Lord Cross, "will not impress you favourably. The want of dignity in his manner and personal appearance is much against him and I fully admit that you were right in deprecating his nomination to the Punjab."²²⁰ In Dufferin's opinion, Bernard had simply become another example of the "absolute dearth of really capable men in the upper ranks of the Indian Public Service," a phrase which now began to appear in Dufferin's correspondence with embarrassing regularity.²²¹

Bernard's successor, C.H.T. Crosthwaite, seemed hardly the type to dispel Dufferin's disillusionment. In recalling his first encounter with Crosthwaite, Dufferin remembered him as "a very commonplace little chap (who) had just missed an easy shot at a tiger the night before".²²² Both Kimberley and Dufferin preferred the flamboyant Lepel Griffin for the post. But Griffin had set his eyes on the Lieutenant-Governorship of the Punjab, and failing to obtain that position, had resigned in a huff from the Service. Dufferin was left with Crosthwaite as the only apparent alternative.

Crosthwaite had the influential assistance of C.P. Ilbert, still Legal Member of the Viceroy's Council, who knew Crosthwaite "intimately."²²³ As early as June 1886, Ilbert had come to the conclusion that "Crosthwaite would be the best man to take his [Bernard's] place."²²⁴ Dufferin at first "seemed a little annoyed that the proposed appointment should have been broached with anyone. . . .before Bernard has even heard anything about it."²²⁵ Kimberley feared that Crosthwaite was "rather worn out" whereas Burma required "a vigorous determined man fit for rough work."²²⁶ Meanwhile, Crosthwaite continued

218. See, *e.g.*, Telegram, Viceroy to MacDonnell, 22 Nov., 1886 D.V.P.

219. Dufferin to Bernard, Calcutta, 3 Jan., 1887, D.V.P.

220. Dufferin to Cross, Viceroy's Train, 2 April 1887, D.V.P.

221. See, *e.g.*, Dufferin to Cross, Simla, 3 Sept., 1886, D.V.P.

222. Dufferin to Cross, Simla, 3 Sept., 1886, D.V.P.

223. C.P. Ilbert to Wallace, 23 July 1886, D.V.P.

224. *Ibid.*

225. Wallace to Ilbert, Simla, 23 July, 1886, D.V.P.

226. Kimberley to Dufferin, India Office, 30 July 1886, D.V.P.

to goad Ilbert, writing on one occasion that he hoped "Burma will be my lot" and taking another shot at Bernard for the "great delay in organizing the civil staff in Burma." He reiterated his preparedness "for what will undoubtedly be a tough job."²²⁷ Dufferin finally turned to Crosthwaite in November 1886: "I have gone carefully through the list of all the available men [he told the Secretary of State] . . . and no other likely person has turned up. It is a most disheartening thought that this should be the case."²²⁸ Crosthwaite assumed the Chief Commissionership in March 1887.

Crosthwaite had viewed the Burma position as one possible escape from what he considered a serious personal dilemma. In looking at the small number of top positions open to the I.C.S. and the number of competitors for these posts, Crosthwaite feared he would never rise higher than the Chief Commissionership of the Central Provinces. "I am afraid," he told Ilbert, "my chance for the Council (i.e., Viceroy's Council) or for any further step is small."²²⁹ Crosthwaite had "only six years left [in the service] if I live," and according to service regulations he would lose all chances for one of the highest positions unless he had already obtained it before the end of that six years (or thirty-five years of service). "Bernard, Colvin, and Elliott," he complained, "are my juniors in years and hardly senior in service." He argued that his large family was the main reason for his importunity. In fact, like other men at the top of the I.C.S. hierarchy, he seemed inexorably enticed by the momentum of advancements and promotions to reach the highest possible post at the highest salary.

As shown in later correspondence, Crosthwaite had never actually relinquished the Council or a Lieutenant-Governorship as the appropriate capstone of his Indian career. But in 1886 he looked towards Burma as the only assurance of a minimal status before leaving India. He had informed Ilbert that a higher salary and elevation of Burma to a Lieutenant-Governorship would be necessary to help him "recoup" his position vis-a-vis his major civilian competitors. The Lieutenant-Governor-

227. Crosthwaite to Ilbert, Edinburgh, 17 Aug., 1886, D.V.P.

228. Dufferin to Cross, Camp, 23 Nov., 1886, D.V.P.

229. Crosthwaite to Ilbert, Edinburgh, May 1886, Ilbert papers.

ship, he claimed, "would weigh much with me, not on personal grounds, but because the position of the Commissioner is not nearly strong enough for the work to be done. He must have more power over his men and promotions must not be subject to the interference of the Government more than they are in the Lieutenant-Governorships."²³⁰ Dufferin regarded these demands as highly unusual, but felt obliged to meet them as far as possible. Crosthwaite grudgingly accepted a monthly increase in salary from 5000 to 6000 rupees,²³¹ but his quest for the Lieutenant-Governorship remained unrequited. His trump card was the threat of resignation, a highly undesirable prospect according to the Viceroy.²³² Though the Lieutenant-Governorship could not have been a firm commitment without prior approval of the Secretary of State, Crosthwaite charged that it had been promised by the Viceroy, and insisted that it should be part of any settlement arranged with the India Office.²³³

Although Dufferin obtained no results from his entreaties with the Secretary of State, nevertheless Crosthwaite gradually became less persistent. Dufferin would soon leave India; a new Viceroy knowing nothing of previous understandings between Dufferin and himself would have less sympathy for Crosthwaite's nagging demands. In fact, as Dufferin's tenure came to a close, Crosthwaite became at least outwardly resigned, telling Dufferin that "if success does not follow it is my 'kismet.'" Obviously he hoped that Dufferin would convey a good report of him to Lord Lansdowne; for though he had been relatively successful in repressing the rebels, there were still areas of weakness, and he was persistently maligned by Moylan in the London newspapers. Crosthwaite requested that Dufferin allow him to visit Calcutta and introduce himself to the new Viceroy: "Your departure," he told Dufferin, "will be the signal for a fresh outburst of malevolent misrepresen-

230. Crosthwaite to Ilbert, Edinburgh, 30 June 1886, Ilbert papers.

231. Crosthwaite, Chief Commissioner, C.P., on special duty with the Public Service Commission, to Dufferin, Bombay, 3 February 1887 D.V.P.

232. Dufferin to Cross, Simla, 10 Aug., 1888, D.V.P.

233. Sir C.H.T. Crosthwaite, Chief Commissioner, Burma, to Dufferin, Mandalay, 20 July 1888, D.V.P.

tation by the *Times*, and I shall feel greater confidence if I am known to Lord Lansdowne.”²³⁴

Crosthwaite had good reason for concern. His highly questionable policy against the “dacoits” involved the removal of women, children, and other relatives from villages held by the dacoits and keeping them in exile till the rebel bands had been dispersed or destroyed.²³⁵ Dufferin had tacitly assented to these tactics, but “carefully [had] evaded any such direct assent as would have involved him in responsibility.”²³⁶ Crosthwaite wanted to publish his own defense as a counterbalance to Moylan’s charges, but Lansdowne counselled against it because, he said, “the paper [*i.e.*, Crosthwaite’s essay] contains a good many damaging admissions which would certainly be picked out and laid hold of by the critics.” Fortunately for Crosthwaite, the India Office eschewed the criticisms of the press and went along with the current tactics as necessary “in the state of anarchy that then existed.”²³⁷

The appointment of A.P. MacDonnell to officiate during Crosthwaite’s brief furlough in 1889 brought a curious interlude in Burmese affairs. MacDonnell had hoped for the Chief Commissionership of Assam, and had good reason to believe that he might receive it with the help of Lansdowne who described MacDonnell as “an old friend of mine.”²³⁸ Their common association with Ireland may provide some clue to their friendship and it is interesting to note that Lansdowne later recommended MacDonnell for the position of Under-Secretary of State for Irish affairs (1902).²³⁹ As a Liberal Unionist, Lansdowne may have sighted MacDonnell as a man who could later be used by the British Government to bring some order out of the Irish cauldron. Lansdowne informed Hamilton that though MacDonnell was “a nationalist and a Roman Catholic, [yet] he is a landlord, and is known to have a very strong opinion as to the necessity of asserting authority and the

234. Crosthwaite to Dufferin, Mandalay, 1 Sept., 1888, D.V.P.

235. Crosthwaite to Dufferin, Mandalay, 2 Jan., 1888, D.V.P.

236. B. Fuller, *Some Personal Experiences*, p. 45.

237. Cross to Lansdowne, India Office, 25 April 1890, L.V.P.

238. Lansdowne to Cross, Viceroy’s Camp, 4 April 1892, L.V.P.

239. Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 30 Oct., 1902, H.C.

law."²⁴⁰ Unfortunately, MacDonnell had formidable competitors for the Assam position, and Lansdowne hoped that he would accept the temporary appointment in Burma as compensation for his disappointment.

During his three months in Burma, beginning in September 1889, MacDonnell emphasized exposure of the alleged incompetence of Sir C. Crosthwaite. From the very beginning, he made disparaging comments about the incumbent, at the same time went out of his way to ingratiate his old acquaintance Moylan. Unlike his predecessors in the Burma post, MacDonnell cultivated Moylan with invitations and private tete-a-tetes. Lord Lansdowne had "no doubt that Moylan will represent everything in rose-colored tints from the moment that MacDonnell appears upon the scene."²⁴¹ In a letter to his wife, MacDonnell remarked very smugly about the conspicuous unpopularity of Crosthwaite "among the non-officials here."²⁴²

Whatever else he may have accomplished during his brief officiating appointment, MacDonnell had at least succeeded in making conditions less favourable for the incumbent after his return. Crosthwaite had to defend himself against the accusation of W.E. Ward, Judicial Commissioner of Burma, supported by MacDonnell, that criminal proceedings and sentences against dacoits in Lower Burma, had been exceedingly harsh. Crosthwaite complained that "MacDonnell has been forcing my hand a little too much in this matter."²⁴³ Crosthwaite also confronted a renewed effort by Moylan to undermine him in the newspapers, by contrasting his administration unfavorably with that of MacDonnell.²⁴⁴

Having weathered this barrage, Crosthwaite finished out his term as Chief Commissioner in comparatively uncontroversial fashion, except for sensational accusations of head-hunting by

240. *Ibid.* (of p. 207 here).

241. Lansdowne to Cross, Simla, 30 Aug., 1889, L.V.P.; see also MacDonnell to his wife, Government House, Rangoon, 13 Sept., 1889, MacDonnell papers.

242. MacDonnell to his wife, Rangoon, 13 Sept., 1889, MacDonnell papers.

243. Crosthwaite, Chief Commissioner, Burma, to Lansdowne, Rangoon, 18 Dec., 1889, L.V.P.

244. Lansdowne to Crosthwaite, Calcutta, 3 Feb., 1890, L.V.P.

government forces against the remaining rebels. Crosthwaite said that "repeated orders have been issued against the bringing in of heads," but he insisted that in some cases this practice was necessary for purposes of indentifying rebels who had been killed far from government headquarters.²⁴⁵ At long last he obtained the desired reward for the risk he had taken in Burma. In October 1890 he was appointed Home Member of the Viceroy's Council.

Lansdowne simultaneously elevated Sir Charles Elliott from his seat in the Viceroy's Council to the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal. Sir Charles had held a number of important assignments during his career in the I.C.S., beginning in 1856. He had been selected for settlement operations early in his career and later had held a number of special appointments, including of secretaryship to the Indian Famine Commission in 1879 and of Census Commissioner for India from October 1880 to February 1881. In March of the latter year, he rose to the Chief Commissionership of Assam, a post regarded by him and his contemporaries solely as a stepping stone to the Council and eventually to a Lieutenant-Governorship.²⁴⁶

Certainly Assam under Elliott was little more than a stepping stone. There was a paucity of correspondence between Elliott and the Viceroy during his Chief Commissionership, and Elliott found himself in a situation much like that of a later Chief Commissioner, C. J. Lyall, who told the Viceroy "there has been nothing to write about. The time I have been here, wrote Lyall, "has been one of profoundest quiet. . ."²⁴⁷

Only one question caused any worry for Elliott, namely the condition of the tea plantations. Elliott aimed at maintaining the status quo, not to interfere in any substantial way with the planter's control of the indentured labor force of coolies. Hearing rumours of proposals in the supreme government to impose heavier supervision over coolie immigration to Assam, Elliott hastily wrote to Ripon, assuring him that little if any change was required in the current regulations. Contrary to stories of

245. Crosthwaite to Lansdowne, 8 July 1890, L.V.P.

246. See *History of Services, Bengal 1895*, pp. 56 and 57.

247. C.J. Layll, Officiating Chief Commissioner, Assam, to H. Babington Smith, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Shillong, 29 Sept., 1894, E.V.P.

excessive maltreatment of coolies, Elliott told the Viceroy that he had been "most impressed [by] the extent to which the tea coolie is the master of the situation." The competition for labour was so great, and the cost of importation of coolies so heavy, that the coolie, he thought, was a "very valuable animal," and it would be reasonable to suppose that he would be treated with care. "As far as my observation went," concluded Elliott, "facts confirm this hypothesis." Elliott not only cautioned against stronger interference, but suggested that "the interference may probably be reduced to some extent."²⁴⁸ Only a few days later, Elliott expressed pleasure to hear that the rumour of drastic change had been unfounded.²⁴⁹

Elliott's optimism of 1881 contrasted sharply with his report to Lord Dufferin in 1884 which stated that "the death-rate among the coolies is still abnormally high, and constant vigilance is required to enforce sanitary precautions on the gardens." It is hardly plausible to suppose that conditions had changed so drastically in the space of three years. Obviously Elliott disdained the interference of the unpredictable and humanitarian Ripon in the placid waters of a seemingly successful Chief Commissionership. Elliott's note to Dufferin came at the end of his term in Assam, and Elliott was more than glad to leave any reforms to his successor.²⁵⁰

Of greater importance to Elliott in 1884 was the question of his own promotion. "By next February I shall have been four years in Assam," he reminded Lord Ripon, "and I think the Province will by then have got out of me nearly all the good there is in me." He proposed to go on leave in 1887 and then to return, but only, he insisted, if appointed to a higher post. If it were intimated that no higher post would be open to him, then "I should hardly care to return" to Assam.²⁵¹ In blunt terms, Elliott hoped to succeed Sir A. C. Lyall as Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces, and if

248. C.A. Elliott, Chief Commissioner of Assam, to Ripon, Shillong 27 June, 1881, R.V.P.

249. Elliott to Ripon, Shillong, 30 June 1881, R.V.P.

250. C.A. Elliott, Chief Commissioner, Assam, to Dufferin, Manipur, 29 Dec., 1884, D.V.P.

251. C.A. Elliott, to Ripon, Shillong, 3 June, 1884, R.V.P.

anyone else in the meantime were chosen in stead of him, "I should retire."²⁵²

Two factors frustrated Elliott's scheme at this juncture. Ripon was retiring and proposed to leave the N.-W.P. decision in the hands of his successor. Lyall decided, despite the offer of a seat on the India Council, to delay his departure, and did not retire from the I.C.S. until the end of 1887. Elliott shifted his strategy: When he returned to duty in 1886, he had been assigned as President of Dufferin's Finance Committee, but he was still anxiously scheming to secure a higher post as soon as possible.²⁵³ Desperate to extract a commitment from the Viceroy, Elliott bombarded Dufferin with letters asking whether he should leave his property at Shillong or have it packed and shipped to Calcutta.²⁵⁴

Dufferin at first proposed to resolve this dilemma by making Elliott the Finance Member of his Executive Council; but as in other similar instances, London authorities viewed civilians as inadequate for the appointment.²⁵⁵ Elliott looked upon this slight as "a severe . . . mortification to my self-esteem," and with no other openings apparently available, he once more threatened to resign.²⁵⁶ Dufferin salvaged Elliott's pride by appointing him as an ordinary Public Works Member of the Council in succession to T. C. Hope. Elliott's "rather rough hand," he believed, "will be less felt in a Department which has long suffered from even more rude handling of his predecessor."²⁵⁷

Lansdowne realized the appointments of Elliott and of Crosthwaite would inevitably raise a protest from Alexander Mackenzie. Mackenzie, who had been serving for three years in the C.P., Chief Commissionership, had regarded his post as some-

252. *Ibid.*(of p. 210, here).

253. See Elliott, Chief Commissioner, Assam, and President of the Finance Committee, to Dufferin Madras, 29 Sept., 1886, D.V.P.

254. Elliott to Dufferin, Madras, 26 Sept., 1886, D.V.P.; telegram from Elliott to Dufferin, Madras, 10 Oct., 1886, D.V. P. Elliott to Dufferin, Darjeeling, 17 Oct., 1886, D.V.P.

255. Dufferin to Elliott, Simla, 22 Oct., 1886, D.V.P.

256. Elliot to Dufferin, Calcutta, 15 March 1886, D.V.P; Elliott to D. Mackenzie Wallace, 20 Jan., 1887, D.V.P.

257. Dufferin to Cross, Viceroy's Train, 2 April 1887, D.V.P.

thing akin to banishment. Almost from the day he was appointed Chief Commissioner, Mackenzie had indulged in efforts to escape as soon as possible, using as leverage the accolades of earlier Viceroys, especially Ripon. Having served in the C.P., for less than two years, Mackenzie expressed outrage when he was passed over for the Home Membership in favour of a Madras civilian. "I have the conviction in my mind," he told Dufferin, "and I know it is the opinion of men whose opinion I value that I have in my time done harder and better work than not a few [including Crosthwaite and W.W. Hunter] who have today more to show in the way of recognition."²⁵⁸

Two years later, in 1890, Mackenzie still remained anchored to the C.P., and his reaction to the appointments of that year was even more vitriolic than his diatribe of 1888. He had served almost thirty years in India, and he believed that the time had come for him to be Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. Hearing of Elliott's promotion, Mackenzie became completely distraught, and charged that Lansdowne had kept him out of the appointment "which I had been led, by more than one of your Excellency's predecessors and many other high authorities, to regard for years past as the natural culmination of my Indian career." He concluded that "this cloud of marked supercession" had nullified his effectiveness in the C.P., (though how he did not say) and asked the Viceroy to "do me the kindness of relieving me of my duties here."²⁵⁹

Mackenzie's subsequent acceptance of the Chief Commissionership of Burma seems incongruous with his adamant claims to some higher appointment. But Lansdowne presented the transfer as a compliment and an advancement for the frustrated Chief Commissioner; and it is clear that Mackenzie conceded to the transfer, not because he greatly desired to work in Burma ("Burma is in some respects less desirable than the C.P."), but primarily as a minimal opportunity to secure at least the semblance of an advancement: "In the eyes

258. A. Mackenzie, Chief Commissioner, C.P., to Wallace, Camp, 16 Sept., 1888, D.V.P.

259. Mackenzie to Lansdowne, Pachmarhi, C.P., 19 Oct., 1890, L.V.P.

of the world, it [Burma] is a more important charge than this, though on that point I am not sure the world is right."²⁶⁰ MacDonnell's influence may have played a role in this arrangement, for while he did not have "any desire to return to Burma,"²⁶¹ on the other hand Mackenzie's transfer opened the C.P., Chief Commissionership for himself. Later developments would also seem to confirm that the Viceroy had made these transfers to accommodate the wishes of his "old" friend MacDonnell.

The promotion mechanism and imperial policy at the highest levels of the bureaucracy

With the appointments of 1890, the stage had been set for some of the most intense bureaucratic controversies of the late nineteenth century. Competition civilians who had risen through the ranks of secretariat work and chief commissionerships were now in a position to compete for the most prestigious positions in British India, especially seats in the Viceroy's Council, the Lieutenant-Governorships, and more particularly the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal. Even in rare instances when innovative ideas emerged, the dominant emphasis on caution, especially in relation to land revenue in Lower Bengal, eventually dictated a policy of minimal change and a maximum concern to preserve the delicate status quo. Many policy discussions of these years deeply affected careers of officials, but had almost no effect on the economic and social condition of India. The survey and record of rights for Bengal under the provisions of the 1885 Rent Act is the most obvious example of this generalization. It would be impossible to understand the real dimensions of the survey and record controversy without first knowing something of the careers, personal motivations, and informal relationships of the various officials involved in this

260. Mackenzie to Lansdowne, Camp, 28 Oct., 1890, L.V.P.

261. General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India to Lansdowne, Khandwa, 3 Nov., 1890, L.V.P. "I am surprised to hear that Mackenzie has accepted the Chief Commissionership of Burma, for it was generally believed he would retire if he did not get Bengal, A.P. MacDonnell will be pleased, for I do not think he had any desire to return to Burma."

imbroglio. The two major parties to the controversy were Sir Charles Elliott and Sir A.P. MacDonnell.

In the isolation of the Central Provinces, MacDonnell (much like Mackenzie) had become almost paranoid regarding his status, and he looked upon government policy as an effort of his rivals to spite him personally. Remarking on the assassination of several British officials (including the Chief Commissioner of Assam) at the small state of Mainipur, MacDonnell strongly condemned the North-East frontier policy, and told his wife that "dislike to me personally animated the Government of India [in its policy]. . . However it does not matter much now."²⁶²

While in the C.P., MacDonnell directed much of his energy toward discrediting the work of his predecessor, Alexander Mackenzie, who now had become his major rival for the Home Membership to the Council and for the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal. Bampfylde Fuller, leading revenue-officer of the Central Provinces, regarded this personal hostility as the fundamental cause for MacDonnell's attack on previous revenue policies of the Central Provinces. "I fear," MacDonnell told his wife, "that Mackenzie did not understand the question [*i.e.*, Land Revenue Settlement in the C.P.]; and he let himself be (led) into raising the ryots' rent too far."²⁶³ Fuller, on the other hand, claimed it was MacDonnell who lacked understanding. MacDonnell's minute on the subject, said Fuller, "was full of arithmetical mistakes, and I asked permission to correct them, and have the minute reprinted before replying to it. This was done, and I defended the assessment."²⁶⁴ The Government of India sent its genial and conciliatory Revenue and Agriculture Secretary, E. C. Buck, to mediate between the two sides. The outcome was a slight retreat by MacDonnell who tried to satisfy Fuller with the bestowal of a token honor, the C.I.E. "I suppose," MacDonnell told Fuller, "that you are sticking out for a C.S.I. but you've no chance of this."²⁶⁵ In the subsequent years,

262. MacDonnell to his wife, Pachmarhi, C.P., 6 April 1891, MacDonnell papers.

263. *Ibid.*

264. Fuller, *Some Personal Experiences*, p. 54.

265. *Ibid.*

MacDonnell deliberately attempted to keep Fuller in subordinate offices, but Fuller's superior knowledge of revenue matters eventually brought him to the top of the hierarchy. Mackenzie expressed chagrin at MacDonnell's behaviour. "I looked on it as quite certain," he told the Viceroy, "that Fuller would come to the forefront of the service ere long, and would be entitled to the higher honour of the C.S.I., and that, if he were given a C.I.E., now, it might in the end be detrimental, rather than otherwise, to his advancement."²⁶⁶

MacDonnell's isolation in the C.P., was broken reassuringly by Lansdowne's personal visit with him in April 1892. Less than a year later, the Viceroy asked MacDonnell to officiate as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in the absence of the ailing incumbent, Sir Charles Elliott. There was also a hint that the appointment might become permanent. Lansdowne told MacDonnell that he would "make Elliott understand that the question of his going cannot remain an open one for an indefinite time."²⁶⁷ Rumours circulated that MacDonnell's appointment to Bengal might well become substantive.²⁶⁸ G.H.P. Evans, Additional Member of the Viceroy's Legislative Council, reported that "people here. . . are all hoping that Providence may interfere with Sir C. Elliott's expressed intention in returning."²⁶⁹ All this appeared to encourage MacDonnell's bellicose attack on the fabric of Elliott's administration of Bengal. MacDonnell's correspondence during his officiating tenure betrays unmistakably an intention to discredit and reverse Elliott's policies so completely that Elliott would find it awkward to return, or, indeed, that he might even be ousted from the Lieutenant-Governorship.

MacDonnell began to repudiate seriatim practically every action or policy of the incumbent. He was clearly aided in this endeavour by Elliott's unpopularity, both among his civilian

266. G.H.P. Evans, Additional Member of Viceroy's Legislative Council, to Lansdowne, Calcutta, 1 July 1863, L.V.P.

267. Lansdowne to Sir A.P. MacDonnell, Chief Commissioner, C.P., Calcutta, 15 March 1893, L.V.P.

268. This may be drawn, at least inferentially, from MacDonnell's letter to Lansdowne, Pachmarhi, 27 May 1893, L.V.P.

269. G.H.P. Evans to Lansdowne, Calcutta, 1 July 1893, L.V.P.

subordinates and among the vocal elements of the Bengali educated class.²⁷⁰ Elliott had departed on furlough leaving a fertile legacy of animosity and recrimination which could easily be exploited to personal benefit by the *locum tenens*, A.P. MacDonnell.

A veiled hint of MacDonnell's cynical strategy was implanted in a letter to Lansdowne, written even before he came to Calcutta to take up this acting appointment. "I may not be always able to follow Sir Charles Elliott's methods, or support his proposals. This I say after reading certain papers he has sent me in connection with the settlement matters in Bengal."²⁷¹ He inserted an unusual pledge to "conduct affairs quietly, and without any sensationalism," a stance ordinarily taken for granted in such circumstances, but in this instance, more observed in the breach than in the observance.

The seamy side of MacDonnell's activities is revealed in an exchange of letters between himself and Sir Charles Elliott during August 1893. Elliott initiated the exchange with the accusation that MacDonnell had issued orders to choke off information and to deliberately conceal the actions of the Bengal Government from Elliott during his absence.²⁷² MacDonnell replied acidly that he had "never understood you to ask. . . that copies of *all* official correspondence of importance. . . should be regularly sent to you while on leave." MacDonnell thought it impossible to comply "with such a request" since it was allegedly "not only opposed to all official practice but open to very serious objection."²⁷³ MacDonnell added weakly that he had intended to write Elliott about his decision but had been forestalled "in the extreme pressure of work." In a note at the bottom of Elliott's letter, MacDonnell commented on Elliott's "extraordinary personal behaviour to me"—his refusal

270. See, e.g., Lansdowne to Cross, Simla, 23 Sept., 1890, L.V.P.; Kimberley to Lansdowne, India Office, 10 Feb., 1893, L.V.P.; Lansdowne to Elliott, Calcutta, 2 April 1893; Elliott, L.-G. of Bengal, to Lansdowne, Belvedere, 3 April 1893, L.V.P.

271. Elliott to MacDonnell, England, 3 Aug., 1893, MacDonnell papers.

272. *Ibid.*

273. MacDonnell to Elliott, Calcutta, 22 Aug., 1893, MacDonnell papers.

to receive MacDonnell properly before departing for England and his suppression of some unnamed document relating to the Bihar land survey.

It is obvious why MacDonnell should wish to conceal papers from Elliott. More and more of the letters and documents of the Bengal Government contained criticisms and denunciations of Elliott's policies.²⁷⁴ MacDonnell took exception to Elliott's allegedly illegal avoidance of the Board of revenue, and claimed that "unless we are able to break away entirely from the past it (*i.e.*, the Board) ought to be recognized in all its statutory functions. I have established relations with the Board and have been assured of its cordial assistance."²⁷⁵ MacDonnell also cast aspersions on Elliott's relationship with the Bengal Legislative Council, and boasted that he had developed a superior method to cope with the increasing load of administrative problems in Bengal. A system of "informal conferences" had been established with Council Members prior to formal sessions, MacDonnell saw this as the "embryo... of an Executive Council for Bengal which is I think the direction in which the things are moving."²⁷⁶

Elliott's handling of local rebels against the Rajah of Keonjhar, one of the Orissa feudatory states, was described by MacDonnell as "not successful." He strongly denounced the alleged policy of firing on unarmed rebels who had come to reclaim the bodies of relatives killed by Government troops.²⁷⁷ Lansdowne objected, however, to MacDonnell's manner of presenting the case "as conveying too general a censure and too abrupt a repudiation of your predecessor's orders."²⁷⁸ MacDonnell backed down slightly, expressing the hope that "I may

274. MacDonnell to E.C. Buck Sec., Rev. and Ag. Dept., G. of I., Darjeeling, 17 June 1893; and MacDonnell to Lyall, Darjeeling, 19 June 1893, MacDonnell papers.

275. MacDonnell to Lansdowne, Darjeeling, 24 June 1893, MacDonnell papers.

276. MacDonnell to Lansdowne, Darjeeling, 24 June 1893, MacDonnell papers.

277. Telegram from MacDonnell to Sir Mortimer Durand, Foreign Secretary, G. of I., Darjeeling, 8 July 1893, MacDonnell papers; also MacDonnell to Lansdowne, Darjeeling, 30 June 1893, MacDonnell papers.

278. Lansdowne to MacDonnell, Simla, 13 July 1893, L.V.P.

before long be able to report improvement without any apparent change in policy while upholding the Maharajah's position in face of his recalcitrant people."²⁷⁹ He also disavowed responsibility for the highly provocative language of his initial telegram to Sir Mortimer Durand concerning Keonjhar, claiming that he personally had not sent the telegram "till after it had been issued. I approved it afterward," he argued unconvincingly, "as it was too late to alter it."²⁸⁰

Unfriendly relations between the executive and the judicial branches of government in Bengal proved a fertile field for repudiation of Elliott's policy. Having taken the side of the judiciary against Elliott, it is little wonder that MacDonnell could report he was getting on amicably with the High Court: "I don't really see why there need be any quarrels with the Judges," he told the Viceroy,²⁸¹ in yet another backhanded slap at the incumbent Lieutenant-Governor.

A letter from MacDonnell to Lansdowne dated 13 July 1893 represented the apotheosis of his campaign to undermine Elliott's position. In this letter, MacDonnell discussed a memorandum he had received recently from Elliott dealing with "the Newspaper Press and Administration generally in Bengal." Elliott's memorandum, said MacDonnell, "vindicates his own administration with special reference to his methods, condemns unsparingly his critics, maintains that the whole current of native thought and education is bad and subversive of authority. . . . (and) maintains that India should be governed on continental rather than on English methods. . ."²⁸² In light of MacDonnell's own crucial role in preventing expanded Indian participation in the covenanted bureaucracy (see the next chapter), it is doubtful that he really felt much different than Elliott about many of these issues, but he viewed the memorandum as a golden chance to suggest that Elliott was

279. MacDonnell to Lansdowne, 13 July 1893, MacDonnell papers.

280. MacDonnell to Lansdowne, Bankipore, 30 July 1893, MacDonnell papers.

281. MacDonnell to Lansdowne, Darjeeling, 24 June 1893, MacDonnell papers.

282. MacDonnell to Lansdowne, Darjeeling, 13 July 1893, MacDonnell papers.

too irrational, perhaps even too dangerous to hold the office of a Lieutenant-Governor:

I confess [MacDonnell told Lansdowne]. . . that I read the paper with amazement. I had no idea till now that Elliott took up this line. . . If he is to be judged by this paper, then he is hopelessly out of touch with all shades of opinion in the province, and I fear that publication of his minute would have the worst effect on the remainder of his administration. I will not even let it get into the office. I will send it on to your Excellency in a stricty confidential way. . . As well think. . . to turn back the stream of the Ganges [as to?] govern Bengal openly on continental methods by which Sir Charles Elliott clearly understands the pre-eminence of our control by the Executive over the Judicial branches of the administration.²⁸³

The most complex and significant issue pursued during MacDonnell's acting appointment, namely the survey and record of rights in Bihar, must be understood against the backdrop of this thinly veiled effort to oust the incumbent. This is not to say that MacDonnell's promotion to the Bihar survey was nothing more than another instance of his duplicity. Human motivations are rarely uncomplicated; and to MacDonnell's credit, as noted above, there is a rather consistent strain of concern with the peasant running throughout the greater part of his career.

MacDonnell viewed the amelioration of the peasantry in Bengal as a possible means of shoring up the fragile structure of British rule in India, building up the loyalty of the masses as a counterweight to the protests of the educated classes whom he despised as strongly as any of his civilian contemporaries. MacDonnell was one of the few officials of the late nineteenth century who offered any real substantiation of the claim that the British ruled India in the name of the masses. While others used this cliché constantly as the justification of British rule, MacDonnell tried to vivify the cliché by openly advocating improvement of the peasant's status in Bengal. Yet the peasantry clearly came second when compared with advancement of his own career, a fact reflected, for example, in MacDonnell's

283. MacDonnell to Lansdowne, Darjeeling, 13 July 1893.

eagerness to compromise with Dufferin on the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885. Resuming the campaign for peasant welfare during his acting tenure as Lieutenant-Governor, he acted not only from an impetus to help peasants but also (and more importantly) to show himself more competent to carry through the survey in Bihar, a program which had already been initiated under the supervision of the incumbent, Sir Charles Elliott.

When MacDonnell had moved from Bengal to the Home Department of the supreme government in 1886, all opposition to abandonment of a survey of rights had collapsed, and the whole of the survey and record operations came to a complete hiatus. The Secretary of State had refused to approve a cess for the funding of the survey, and the Government of India informed him that without this tax, "we should prefer to close the survey and record operations in Muzuffurpur at the end of the season."²⁸⁴ Kimberley happily responded "that the only course to pursue is to abandon the proposed measure for the present."²⁸⁵

The question of a survey and record in Bengal remained largely in abeyance from 1886 till the fall of 1889, with only occasional reminders from Finucane and MacDonnell concerning the advisability of these policies. As Secretary of the Agricultural Department of Bengal, Finucane submitted a report for 1885-86, citing "the uselessness of the Tenancy Act without any record of rights or some other method of certifying to the ryot the amount of his rent."²⁸⁶ In a letter to the Viceroy's private secretary after returning from furlough in 1888, A. P. MacDonnell claimed that Sir John Strachey, member of the India Council, favoured a survey and record for Bengal, and he placed blame for obstruction in the Council on the shoulders of Sir Ahsley Eden, who "according to all accounts, exercised a preponderating influence in the Revenue

284. G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., to S. of S., (8, Revenue, 1886), Simla, 4 May 1886, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept. A., 1-33, Nov., 1887, 6, N.A.I.
285. Kimberley, S. of S., to G. of I. (21, Legislative, 1886), India Office, 15 July 1886, *ibid.* 10.
286. Report of Finucane cited in Sir E.C. Buck, Sec. to G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., to Sec. to Government of Bengal, Simla, 11 May 1887, *ibid.* 24.

Committee of the Council, a result which can only be explained by his powerful will, for he was singularly ignorant on revenue matters.”

Now that Eden is gone [concluded MacDonnell], intelligence is having its due weight, and the only true remedy for the agrarian difficulty in Bengal, which will preserve the landed aristocracy in their rights while safeguarding the ryots' interests, has a chance of succeeding.²⁸⁷

The “Irish secretaries” were not entirely alone in advocacy of the survey; from the early months of 1888, momentum slowly began to build up for the reinstatement of the survey operations, at least in Bihar. In a letter of 25 January 1888, for example, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal “expressed his satisfaction with the result of Mr. Collin’s experimental survey of a selected area in Muzufferpore,” and suggested that the the survey might be extended to cover other controversial areas.²⁸⁸

The Lieutenant-Governor’s proposals for renewal of the survey, however, did not include provision for maintaining a record of rights, a measure which Bayley feared would provoke insuperable opposition on the part of the zamindars. The benefits to be attained would include, he hoped, the elimination of illegal cesses collected by middle men, including patwaris or gomashtras, and the termination of “enhancing rents by illegal means.” On the Basis of these considerations, Bayley was prepared to ask for the extension of the survey to the whole of the Patna division; but he recommended a delay until Bihar had recovered from the damage caused by the recent floods.²⁸⁹

The delay meant that surveys could not be resumed until after Charles Elliott had succeeded Bayley as Lieutenant-Governor. Coming from the North-Western Provinces where periodic

287. MacDonnell, Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., to Sir D. Mackenzie Wallace, Simla, 5 April 1888, D.V.P.

288. Philip Nolan, Chief Sec. to Government of Bengal, to G. of I., 2 Jan., 1888, cited in C.E. Buckland, Officiating Sec. to Government of Bengal, to Sec. to G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., Calcutta 3 Sept., 1889, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., A, 11-16, February 1890, 11, N.A.I.

289. Buckland to G. of I., 3 Sept., 1889, para. 10.

settlements (in contrast to Bengal's permanent settlement) were a prominent part of bureaucratic responsibility, and having himself gained notability as a settlement officer in both the North-Western Provinces and the Central Provinces, Elliott would appear to have been uniquely qualified for this phase of his work in Bengal. Aside from family connections, Elliott's early reputation had largely resulted from his revenue innovations which were regarded as important for more accurate revenue records in the N.-W.P. In place of relying solely on previous records of zamindars, Elliott introduced a tripartite soil classification as an additional and simplified basis for rent assessments.²⁹⁰ In reality, settlement officers found it necessary to combine Elliott's method with consideration of the social composition of the villages. An experienced revenue officer such as Elliott was inevitably aware of the failings and weaknesses of settlement operations reliant, of necessity, on the agency of Indian subordinates [particularly patwaris and amins] who were more loyal to landed proprietors than to the British Government.²⁹¹

While forthright in expressing his fear "that survey settlements in Bihar will be resisted with the utmost vehemence" by landed interests, Elliott nevertheless agreed with his predecessor "as to the advantage, and I may say the absolute necessity, of a survey, if administration is to be conducted with complete and accurate knowledge of economic facts."²⁹² An accurate record of rights, he said, would provide the only adequate foundation for implementation of the Bengal Tenancy Act. Elliott argued that a record had already proven helpful in the adjoining N.-W.P., and he did "not think it right that the agricultur of Bengal should rest any longer under a disability which attaches to them in no other part of India. . ."²⁹³ The Board of Revenue, on the other hand, opposed any general survey in Bihar, saying that this would violate the terms of the Rent Act. But Elliott persisted that "uncertainty and

290. Baden-Powell, *The Land Systems of British India*, II, pp. 58 f; and Whitcombe, *Agrarian Conditions*, p. 126.

291. See Whitcombe, pp. 126-129.

292. Elliott to Lansdowne, 29 June 1891, L.V.P.

293. Buckland to G. of I., Calcutta, 9 July 1891, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., A, 54-55, Sept., 1891, 54, N.A.I.

worse evils still exist on all estates," so that any survey, in his estimation, should cover the whole of the province, concentrating first on the heavily congested areas of North Bihar.

On the difficult question of maintaining the record, Elliott sought to dispose of the Bihar patwaris [servants of the zamindars whom he regarded as dishonest] and to create a new officer Cadre directly under the supervision of government "that might be called kanungos or Land Registrars, and whose work would be solely to register changes of names among the proprietors, tenure holders, and ryots, and changes in the rent where authorized by a . . . law or carried out by mutual agreement."²⁹⁰ Since they would be working in the context of the Bengal permanent settlement where government did not "intervene to keep up accurate record of collections and arrears of rent," the kanungos would have considerably less work than patwaris in the N.-W.P., and therefore government would require many fewer agents, perhaps not more than one-tenth of the number employed on record work in the N.-W.P. A smaller native agency would lessen the financial burden which could hopefully be met through the imposition of registration fees, rather than through the levy of new taxes.²⁹⁵ Lansdowne gave full support to Elliott's proposals, but with a touch of cynical realism admitted that "with a population of about 800 to the square mile, one feels that no measures of administrative reform can do more than palliate the troubles of the cultivators."²⁹⁶

Though the effect of a survey might be minimal, and though zamindars could doubtless discover many devious ways to evade the intended effect, still the landed classes emerged as implacable enemies of the survey proposals.²⁹⁷ A petition from the Bihar Landholders Association, dated 10 March 1892, cited several reasons for the infeasibility of the survey: that it had not been requested either by zamindars or ryots (a specious

294. *Idid*, (of p. 222, here), para. 20.

295. *Ibid.*

296. Lansdowne to Elliott, L.-G. of Bengal, Simla, 27 July 1891, L.V.P. see also Sir E.C. Buck, Sec. to G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., to Sec. to Government of Bengal, Simla, 18 Sept., 1891, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., A, 54-55, Sept., 1891, 55.

297. See, e.g., Elliott to Lansdowne, Motihari, 27 Nov., 1891, L.V.P.

argument, since ryots had no voice to articulate grievances), that it would bring about "an increase in litigation, which will be ruinous both to landlords and ryots," that the cost, both of the survey and of the record, would be prohibitive: that the survey would create antagonisms between zamindars and ryots; that "amins" employed by Elliott from the N.-W.P. would be untrustworthy; and that excessive floods still made agricultural conditions in Bihar unfavourable.²⁹⁸

With controversy increasing, Elliott's health broke, and MacDonnell stepped in to officiate for a period of six months. MacDonnell's approach to the issue was motivated by three goals: 1. discrediting Elliott's proposals as inadequate, though surely there was contradiction in his criticism of Elliott's failure to work through the Board of Revenue, when obviously there would have been no survey whatever, had Elliott agreed to follow the Board; 2. showing himself as more competent than Elliott to cope with the opposition of landlords; 3. accounting for his own difficulties with the zamindars in terms of Elliott's alleged mistakes.

The crucial difference between Elliott and MacDonnell centred on the method of maintaining a record of rights. Elliott had not initially been averse to the maintenance, but as the work progressed he had become skeptical about its immediate practicability in face of mounting opposition.²⁹⁹ MacDonnell, however, had previously been an advocate of maintaining the record, and he soon made this the departure point of his campaign against Elliott's revenue policy. While consistent with his own previous tendencies, MacDonnell's insistence on the record was contradictory to a promise made prior to Elliott's departure. In the first and unsent draft of a letter to the Home Member, P.P. Hutchins' dated July 7, MacDonnell confessed he had "promised Elliott that I would not raise the question of legislation on the lines of the (patwari record maintenance) bill of 1885," a local Bengal bill which Dufferin had quickly suppressed.

298. Petition from the Chairman of the Bihar Landholders Association to Private Sec. to the Viceroy, 10 March 1892, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., B, 24-28, May 1892, 24, N.A.I.; see also Sec. of Tirhut Landholders' Association, to the Sec. of Rev. and Ag. Dept., G. of I., 11 May 1892, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., B, 60-61, May 1892, 60.

299. Elliott to Lansdowne, Bombay, 2 June 1893, L.V.P.

ssed.³⁰⁰ MacDonnell rationalized the breach of this promise on the basis of Elliott's alleged concealment of a letter from the Government of India, dated August 1892, which had "indicated... a desire that provision should be made for maintaining the record when once it had been correctly prepared."³⁰¹ The fact that MacDonnell deleted these sentences from the final draft of the letter reveals the fallaciousness of this argument. Moreover, even before the discovery of this "suppressed" letter, MacDonnell had already made known his determination to proceed with measures for maintenance of the record. In a letter to Lansdowne, dated June 24, he had said "the main points are the question of expense and the question of the future maintenance of the record."³⁰²

In actuality, the controversy between Elliott and MacDonnell turned more on the style of MacDonnell's approach than on substantial differences between the two men. Rather than presenting his own proposals as a logical extension of earlier suggestions with regard to kanungos, MacDonnell pictured himself in the role of the righteous adversary justifiably overriding the inertia of an incumbent who had deceitfully concealed important papers. In reality, MacDonnell's scheme differed little from that envisaged by Elliott in 1891. The schemes of both men rested on the establishment of native officers, superior to the patwaris and subordinate to the government, "whose functions would correspond more closely to those of the kanungos under Emperor Akbar's land system." The kanungos, said MacDonnell, "would be the servants of government alone, and would be in no way subordinate to the zamindar."³⁰³

Thus far the scheme, even the phraseology, appeared practically identical to that of Sir Charles Elliott, the only differences being the inclusion of "village inspection" and the recommen-

300. MacDonnell to Hutchins, Darjeeling, 7 July 1893, MacDonnell papers; A.P. MacDonnell, Minute on the survey and record of rights in Bihar, Darjeeling, 24 July 1893, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., A, 36-37, July 1893, 36, N.A.I.

301. MacDonnell to Lansdowne, Darjeeling, 24 July 1893, MacDonnell papers.

302. *Ibid.*

303. MacDonnell Minute on the survey, 24 July 1893.

dation for a special tax required in order to finance this additional responsibility of the record agency. The only alternatives to this proposal, claimed MacDonnell, would be the abandonment of "all attempts to maintain the record," or to register the zamindari patwaris as part time government employees, responsible to government for registration and record, under the previously unused patwari Regulation XII of 1817.

At the least, MacDonnell proposed to proceed with registration of patwaris as an economical short cut to finish the survey, but then to retain them for maintaining the record if the zamindars refused any other scheme. "If the zamindars agree to a scheme of maintenance outside XII, I shall, after the survey is over, see what I can do to assist them in procuring the repeal of Regulation XII of 1817 and cut the patwari loose from all official control and supervision."³⁰⁴ In another blast at Elliott, MacDonnell harshly condemned the survey officer in Muzzufferpur, Col. Sandeman, who "has been making the survey and record through so-called patwaris who are not registered and are in point of fact zemindari servants pure and simple."³⁰⁵ While unregistered patwaris were obviously scoundrels, MacDonnell hoped that their registration and hence responsibility to government would cure them of the worst offence. Their registration would pave the way for their employment as record keepers, should the zamindars prove obstinate to the introduction of the new agency of kanungos.

E.C. Buck, Revenue Secretary to the Government of India, regretted the aspersions made by MacDonnell against Elliott's survey policy, and tried to eliminate the element of personal controversy.³⁰⁶ Contrary to MacDonnell's charges of incompetence on the part of Elliott, Buck reminded the Viceroy that Elliott had volunteered to undertake the survey, and had promised proposals for the record of rights "after gaining further experience." Buck portrayed this gradual approach as the most feasible way of operating the survey in light of previous oppo-

304. *Ibid.* (of p. 225, here), para. 30.

305. *Ibid.*, para. 31.

406. Note by E.C. Buck, Rev. and Ag. Sec., 13 July 1893, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., A., 36-37, July 1893.

sition from London to any combined program of survey and record. In the supreme government's response to MacDonnell's letter, Buck insisted that the record had not been relinquished by Elliott or by the Government of India, expressed the approval of MacDonnell's current initiative to establish a system of maintenance, and highlighted the fact that little difference existed between MacDonnell's proposals and those originally submitted by Elliott: "... in some of its leading features Sir A. MacDonnell's scheme is in accordance with that sketched in Sir Charles Elliott's letter of 1891."³⁰⁷ The only notable difference according to Buck was the provision for finance, and Buck hoped a compromise could be obtained, with part of the funds coming from the registration fees and the remainder (if any were needed) from a cess.

Despite his diplomacy, Buck's effort to mitigate the Elliott-MacDonnell feud proved unsuccessful, partly because of Elliott's increasing suspicion of MacDonnell's intentions but even more because MacDonnell, in his rush to discredit Elliott, had introduced measures which left Elliott with a legacy of confusion when he returned as Lieutenant-Governor at the end of 1893. MacDonnell's strategy involved the threat of registering the patwaris as leverage to secure concessions from the zamindars for the establishment of kanungos as the lesser of the two evils. In order to build a base for this approach, MacDonnell first insisted that all patwaris engaged in the survey should be registered. MacDonnell complained he could not "pretend to fathom Elliott's policy" in using private patwaris for this work: "There cannot be a doubt that he was entirely wrong and that if he were to persist in the error the result might be lamentable."³⁰⁸

European indigo planters responded first to MacDonnell's strategy. W.B. Hudson speaking for the European planters in Bihar, recommended disestablishment of the patwaris and "use [of] the money paid to him by the zamindar to pay amins."³⁰⁹ Such an arrangement would be specially acceptable to planters who looked on patwaris as an instrument of

307. Buck to Sec. to Government of Bengal, Simla, 24 July 1893, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., *ibid.*, 37, para. 5.

308. MacDonnell to Hutchins, Darjeeling, 7 July 1893, MacDonnell papers.

zamindari deception, preventing the planters of unencumbered access to village cultivators. MacDonnell snatched at Hudson's message as the much desired wedge for the displacement of patwaris by government kanungos. "Your letter," MacDonnell told Hudson, "inspires me with the hope that I shall now find an ally in you." The patwari, he asserted, could now be "wholly disestablished for anything I care; I will make you a present of him with my blessing." In his place, MacDonnell proposed maintenance of the record "by local enquiry on the spot by well paid officials who shall give no trouble to the landlord nor require any complicated returns from him." With the projected elimination of the patwaris, MacDonnell hoped that Hudson would become an enthusiastic convert to his scheme, bringing over not only his European associates to the side of the government, but the zamindars as well.³¹⁰ MacDonnell was actually satisfied to drop the patwari since his initial efforts to obtain registration of those patwaris engaged in the survey of Muzzufferpore had thus far been unproductive, despite his boastful claims to the contrary.³¹¹

Should zamindars persist in their opposition to the record and survey, MacDonnell saw three alternative courses: 1. abandonment of attempts to maintain a record; 2. special legislation without consent of landlords; 3 forcible registration of patwaris to keep the record. The first of these he rejected outright. The second would be preferable, but the third could be kept in readiness "reluctantly as the last resource," but more importantly, as a threat to obtain consent to the second alternative, namely, government kanungos. MacDonnell assigned one of his district officers to approach landlords with this plan in a "tentative" fashion so as "not to commit me formally to the plan. . ."³¹²

309. W.B. Hudson, President of the Planters' Association of Bihar, MacDonnell, 6 July 1893, MacDonnell papers.
310. This is implied in a letter from MacDonnell to Durbhungah, Darjeeling, 3 Sept., 1893, MacDonnell papers.
311. See Mr. Bell, Manager of Maharajah of Durbhungah's estate, to Col. Sandeman, head of survey operations, 3 July 1893, MacDonnell papers.
312. MacDonnell to C.C. Stevens, Board of Revenue, Lower Provinces, Darjeeling, 3 Sept., 1893, MacDonnell papers.

MacDonnell played his full hand on the patwaris at a conference with the zamindars and planters held at Muzzufferpur in July and August 1893. His difficulties, he claimed, had largely resulted from illegal and extravagant promises made by Elliott, including "absolute abolition of the patwari" (though MacDonnell himself had now more or less promised the same action, but had not yet communicated his decision to the supreme government).³¹³ In contrast to Elliott's alleged pusillanimous behaviour, MacDonnell pictured himself as both a resolute and a successful negotiator. While sending his surrogates into the conference with the patwari threat in hand, MacDonnell remained in the wings, trying "to conciliate and not to . . . push the zemindars into a corner."³¹⁴ In private conversation, MacDonnell supposedly discovered that "while affirming their dislike to the survey, they were prepared to help it if only I would not work the patwaris. The result is that they accept our scheme of maintaining the record. . . *if* the record must be maintained."

Subsequent developments proved that MacDonnell's appraisal of the conference had been too sanguine, and had reflected more his obsessions with his image as Lieutenant-Governor than it had the realities of zamindari opposition. MacDonnell's self-aggrandizement as a skillful diplomat was in fact a cover for his partial retreat from the aggressive stance he had taken when first assuming his officiating appointment. He admitted that legislation to provide kanungos for maintaining the record might require delay until March of the following year (i.e., after Elliott's return), and also suggested that "the settlement should not be rushed."

MacDonnell's amazing new accusation that Elliott had been rushing the survey was motivated not only by the consistent effort to discredit Elliott but also by an attempt to suggest that he himself could more ably carry the scheme to a conclusion when Elliott left India permanently probably in 1895.

313. Joint Memorial enclosed in Minute on the Cadastral Survey by MacDonnell, 20 Sept., 1893, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., A., 11-34, Nov. 1893, 23, N.A.I.

314. MacDonnell, Minute II on the Cadastral Survey, 20 Sept., 1893, *ibid.*

Events hardly justified MacDonnell's arrogant evaluation of his diplomacy, within a month of the conference at Muzzufferpur, the Government of India had received a long petition from several Bengal zamindari associations condemning the progress of the Bihar survey. Lansdowne himself had been warned of the opposition by a telegram from the Maharajah of Durbhunga, dated only one day after MacDonnell's self-congratulatory letter. MacDonnell's scheme for maintenance of the record, said the Maharaja, was "thoroughly disliked by all zamindars. Memorial will follow."³¹⁵ In the memorial, zamindars condemned the survey as a contravention of section 101 of the Bengal Tenancy Act which provided that "the local Government may in any case, with the previous sanction of the Governor General in Council . . . make an order directing that the survey be made, and a record of rights be prepared, in respect of the land in a *local area* by a Revenue Officer."³¹⁶ The zamindars insisted that "the survey of a whole province, or of four entire districts of a province, can, with no expansion of language, be described as the survey of a 'local area.'" In the meantime, zamindars engaged in certain ingenious obstructions. Raja Rameshwar Singh and the Maharajah of Durbhunga both announced their intention of going on pilgrimage, and requested that the survey not be initiated on their estates during their absence.³¹⁷

MacDonnell at first tried to discount reports of the zamindari opposition. Durbhunga's post-conference telegram to the Viceroy had been a misrepresentation of the fact, said MacDonnell, probably written by some troublemaker in Durbhunga's entourage rather than by the Maharajah himself.³¹⁸ When the opposition persisted, MacDonnell nevertheless submitted a draft bill for kanungos and simultaneously issued a defense of his policy, an impressive and lengthy document, heavily emphasizing divi-

315. Telegram from Durbhungah to Viceroy, 9 Sept., 1893, MacDonnell papers.
316. See Section 101 of the Bengal Tenancy Act, quoted in Joint Memorial by the British Indian Association (see footnote 313).
317. MacDonnell to C.C. Stevens, Board of Revenue, Lower Provinces, Darjeeling, 3 Sept., 1893, MacDonnell papers.
318. MacDonnell to Lansdowne, Belvedere, 14 Aug., 1893, MacDonnell papers.

dends he invisioned for the peasantry. MacDonnell reluctantly admitted that the zamindars resentment still existed, but he believed that ultimately they would consent to "maintenance of the record through kanungos or land lord keepers" rather than consent to the registration of patwaris.³¹⁰ In addition, MacDonnell continued to claim, though without any factual shred of evidence, "that the great majority of Bihar landholders do think the scheme as good as could be devised in the prescribed conditions, and that they are immensely relieved in mind by my acquiescence in their conditional acceptance of it in preference to the patwari scheme."

The greater part of MacDonnell's minute, however, consisted in justifying the survey enterprises on the basis of assistance to the peasantry. "It is true," he admitted, "that the ryots do not make their grievances known through public meetings, telegrams to newspapers, and all other devices of an exotic system of agitation, but the grievances are there all the same." To the zamindari accusations that, the survey of a whole province was a contravention of the 1885 Act, MacDonnell cited the proceedings of the Legislative Council, indicating that if the survey worked successfully in a small area then it could be "extended to the entire Province of Bihar."³²⁰ MacDonnell cited statistics showing that zamindari revenues in Bihar had increased "one hundred-fold" since the later part of the eighteenth century, all without any corollary improvement of peasant status. MacDonnell noted Mr. Collin's report on his survey of a tract in Muzzufferpur showing that since 1840, while prices of basic grains had risen only 29 per cent, average rent in villages had gone up 116 per cent or perhaps as high as 137 per cent. This increase, claimed MacDonnell, "was doubtless effected by extra-legal means," in large measure aided by the threat of handing over villagers to indigo planters who provided only minimal profit for the peasant. Lacking a survey and record, the Tenancy Act of 1885, "has remained as much a dead letter in Bihar as Act X of 1859 had done."³²¹

319. MacDonnell, Minute II on the survey.

320. *Ibid.*, para 26.

321. *Ibid.*, para, 36.

The only solution to the peasant dilemma in Bihar according to MacDonnell, would be the enactment of the bill now put forward by himself for maintenance of the record. The bill called for the repeal of the Patwari Regulation of 1817, and at its place, as more economical (and less inquisitorial) agency, the establishment of government kanungos having charge over several villages and being paid from the proceeds of a cess to be levied in equal amounts on both zamindars and peasants. According to the Bill, "the maintenance of the land records will be confined to a record of charges in the more permanent facts of holdings and estates, and will not include facts relating to the payment or non-payment of rent for any particular period or holding."³²² The Bill also proposed to give the government the power of revising or updating the record at regular intervals, preferably annually, but at least triennially.³²³ No provision was made for lowering of excessive rents; yet wherever the rents were below standard, landlords would be given the right of enhancement. MacDonnell in fact saw possibility of considerable pecuniary benefit to landlords. The ryots would supposedly gain firm establishment of a record which would in future prevent unjust enhancements or ejection.

MacDonnell's campaign to discredit Elliott did not, in the end, prove effective enough to prevent Elliott's return. Remark- ing about rumours that Elliott would resign because of the Bihar controversy, Lansdowne noted that Elliott "could scarcely resign without the appearance of a timidity, which does not belong to him."³²⁴ Yet the abrasive style of the *locum tenens* could hardly be expected to ensure a smooth enactment of the proposed legislation after Elliott's return. Elliott charged that MacDonnell's Bill had "gone far beyond what I am prepared to agree in :

I was, and am [he said] prepared to try the system of keeping up the record through kanungos, in certain local areas as an experiment, but never agreed to settle on this

322. "The Land Record and Maintenance Bill, with Statement of Objects and Reasons," Appendix C of *ibid.*

323. MacDonnell, Minute II, para. 70.

324. Lansdowne to Evans Simla, 12 July 1893, L.V.P.

untried scheme as our future policy, nor to pass a cess to pay for its establishment.³²⁵

Lansdowne reassured Elliott that he had no intention to pass the Bill before Elliott's return, and that "you will have plenty of opportunities of seeing the Bill and expressing your opinion upon it."³²⁶ But Elliott's wrath was still evident in his comments on MacDonnell's second minute in support of the draft legislation. He was enraged by the imperious tone of the document: "No outsider who reads it would suppose that the writer is only a temporary *locum tenens*, carrying on, with such improvements as he would suggest, the work which I had started." "It is to me," said Elliott, "that he [MacDonnell] is leaving this legacy of embroiled interests and re-awakened hostility." Elliott observed sardonically that the most skilful aspect of MacDonnell's minute "was the way in which he conceals and ignores all the part taken in introducing the Bihar Survey by the official for whom he is acting, and his success in creating the impression that he himself has been the sole mover in the matter."³²⁷ Elliott summarized MacDonnell's behaviour throughout as evidence of a "craving to create a reputation at the expense of one's predecessor. . . . It is not in the Bihar Survey question alone that I find abundant traces of the existence of such a craving," he concluded. Nothing was gained by the controversy in the way of meaningful change for the peasantry of Bengal. In the end, the prolongation of the controversy after Elliott's return was significant factor encouraging continued and intensified opposition of the zamindars. No positive advancement could be achieved in the field of agrarian legislation.

MacDonnell's appointment as Home Member after the return of Elliott to Bengal was both a sign of Lansdowne's unshaken confidence in MacDonnell³²⁸ and also a guarantee that the controversy would continue unabated. E.C. Buckland

325. Sir C.A. Elliot, L.-G. of Bengal (on leave), to Lansdowne, London, 20 Sept., 1893, L.V.P.

336. Lansdowne to Elliot, Simla, 17 Oct., 1893, L.V.P.

327. Elliot to Lansdowne, Madras, 27 Nov., 1893, L.V.P.

328. There is only a hint of doubt in Lansdowne's letter to MacDonnell, dated 14 Aug., 1893.

suggested a conference of experts from other provinces "who would in consultation with Bengal officers submit a set of draft rules for the consideration of the Local Government and the Government of India."³²⁹ This, however, failed to provide a *modus vivendi* between MacDonnell and Elliott because no agreement could be reached on the scope of issues to be discussed in the conference.³³⁰

Because of this impasse, and faced with Lansdowne's imminent departure, the Government of India found itself compelled to send a despatch containing both its own views (that is, those of MacDonnell) and those of Elliott as well. On the most crucial issue of maintaining the record, the Government simply reiterated the views formally voiced by MacDonnell, namely that "the map and record of rights must not be fettered by any restrictions which will preclude the accomplishment of this object." In lieu of annual inspection, three years were regarded as the maximum time limit for the revision of the record. The despatch rehearsed Elliott's proposals for an alternate scheme, but concluded with a plea for their dismissal: "We have no wish [stated the despatch] to underrate the difficulties which Sir C. Elliott apprehends, but we believe that he exaggerates their extent and magnitude."³³¹

A prolonged silence greeted this important despatch in London, in part because of the retirement in March of Lord Kimberley and his replacement by H.H. Fowler (later Viscount Wolverhampton). As time passed, MacDonnell could see that an adverse decision might be handed down by the new Secretary of State.³³² In the despatch of 5 July 1894, Fowler turned aside the fully-fledged program of MacDonnell and approved instead the half-way measures of Elliott. He also agreed to the

329. Note by E.C. Buck, 10 Oct., 1893, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., A., 11-34, Nov., 1893.

330. Note by Home Member, A.P. MacDonnell, 12 Dec., 1893, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., A., 16-24, Jan., 1894, N.A.I.

331. G. of I., Dept. of Rev. and Ag. (Despatch 8 of 1894) to S. of S., Calcutta, 26 Jan., 1894, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., A., 24-25, Jan., 1894, 24, N.A.I.

332. Note by A.P. MacDonnell, 21 April 1894, G. of I., Rev. and Ag. Dept., A., 22-23, N.A.I.

repeal of the patwari regulation of 1817,³³³ a point agreed to by both Elliott and MacDonnell, but in the case of MacDonnell only if his program of peripatetic annual or triennial inspection were adopted. Fowler practically admitted that Elliott's quasi-voluntary scheme would not likely secure the cooperation of either landlords or tenants. He noted the unanimity of the Calcutta conference in support of a "yearly correction of the village papers by officials who visited each village;" but he expressed doubt as to the viability of the scheme since the experience of the N.-W.P. had showed that, although they had had "much stronger sub-divisional and village rural establishments than are proposed for North Bihar," nevertheless "the yearly papers were, upto a recent date, incorrect and untrustworthy," an argument against MacDonnell's scheme curiously based on the inefficiency of British officials in administering a similar scheme elsewhere. Fowler also deprecated the additional taxes and irritating interference to be caused by MacDonnell's scheme: In the circumstances of rural Bengal there would be a risk, and there would be among the people themselves much fear, of evil from a scheme which will let loose on a single district a staff of 240 new, and mostly low-paid officials.³³⁴ In sum, while granting that MacDonnell was a master. . . of the subject," Fowler, nevertheless, said he was "very unwilling to sanction the imposition of a further and a permanent cess until Sir C. Elliott's system which relies partly on the cooperation of the people, has been tried."³³⁵

With the rejection of the continuous inspection, MacDonnell sought to preserve the patwari as the only remaining vehicle for some modicum of the government control.³³⁶ Elliott at first resisted this additional "interference" with his administration, but in a final gesture of concord, agreed to accept the will of the supreme government. "I trust," Elliott wrote to the new Viceroy, Lord Elgin, "your Excellency appreciated my loyalty to the government in repressing the amendment which

333. S. of S. to G.-G. in Council, India Office, 5 July 1894 (Revenue Despatch 80 of 1894), *Copies of Despatches to India, 1894*, I.O.L.

334. *Ibid.*, para. 12.

335. *Ibid.*, para. 14.

336. MacDonnell to Elgin, Simla, 28 Sept., 1894, E.V.P.

advocated the repeal of the Patwari Regulations. I strongly advocated that repeal, but when overruled, I bowed to the decision."³³⁷ In short, Elliott's Bill for maintenance of the record required registration of all mutations in the properties of occupancy ryots, optional registration in the case of non-occupancy ryots, and establishment of the government kanungos to take care for this registration.

Any assessment of gains or losses from this protracted struggle would necessarily be somewhat speculative. At a minimum, it is evident that the efforts of both Elliott and MacDonnell show the relative helplessness of the government in trying to alter the relationships of landlord and tenant in Bengal. MacDonnell had projected himself as a more fearless and competent ruler who would not be afraid to brook the wrath of the zamindars in order to ameliorate the conditions of the peasantry. A closer scrutiny reveals that MacDonnell had been chary of zamindar opposition, and had often misrepresented his relationship to the landlords. At first he had arrogantly denied the existence of any opposition. When the reverse became evident, he pictured the resistance as ephemeral or unrepresentative. The final resolution of the problem fell to the returning embattled incumbent, Sir Charles Elliott. The London authorities agreed with Elliott that irritation of the landlords was not tolerable, and consequently there should be no serious challenge to their hegemony over peasants. This decision seemed all the more acceptable in the absence of any outcry against injustice on the part of peasants. It is also evident that the survey and records were much more massive enterprises than anyone, particularly MacDonnell, had been able to foresee. By 1900, the survey work had not yet been completed even in North Bihar; but despite this slowness, half the survey workers were withdrawn by Mackenzie in 1896 for service in Orissa. The survey therefore remained confined to relatively limited portions of Bengal, namely parts of North Bihar and seen as an area also requiring a survey and record, remained uninvestigated throughout the whole of the late nineteenth century. A candid pessimistic evaluation of the survey came from Elliott's successor, Sir Alexander Mackenzie:

337. Elliott to Elgin, Kalimpong, 25 April 1895, E.V.P.

The local administration is simply swamped with the amount of settlement work Elliott undertook. We had 120 gazetted officers engaged on it last cold weather. The worst of it is they are most of them very inexperienced, and under no proper supervision; and the work appears to me to be badly done at times while the ordinary administration is hampered by short-handedness.³³⁸

In 1896, Mackenzie drafted an amendment to the Bengal Tenancy Bill which attempted to hasten the survey by establishing the principle that the "record of rights would only be presumptive and not conclusive proof,"³³⁹ thus handing any disputes over to the judiciary. This not only failed to facilitate the survey but also opened the door for further expensive and futile litigations in the civil courts. The failure of various attempts at survey and records had inevitably lent themselves to more and more confusion in agrarian territories. The unreliability, invalidity, and inaccessibility of revenue records constituted an insuperable barrier to bring about any effective land reforms in post-independence India.³⁴⁰

Elliott's willingness to compromise on the Patwari issue had resulted in part from previous experience in the N.-W.P. where government consistently winked at the malfeasance of the patwaris. It also resulted from Elliott's satisfaction that his enmity toward MacDonnell had largely been vindicated. With the departure of Lansdowne at the end 1894, MacDonnell had lost his great patron and with him the support necessary to secure the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal. MacDonnell took up appointment as Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces in 1895 with misgivings and more than a hint of bitterness: "Calcutta not Allahabad," he told his wife, "ought to have been the finishing up of my Indian career." The N.-W.P. was "nothing but a larger —C.P.," and he felt that "Calcutta has ruined us for other provinces."

The questions which arise in Bengal have more the complexity of English politics than those which the N.-W.P.

338. Mackenzie to Elgin, Darjeeling, 5 May 1896, E.V.P.

339. D. Rothermund, "The Record of Rights in British India," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, VI., 4 (Dec. 1969), pp. 351-367,

340. *Ibid.*, p. 361.

presents: I shall miss the independent European public that Calcutta furnishes.³⁴¹

MacDonnell's selection for the N.-W.P. was one among several instances of the extreme caution displayed by Elgin in making high level appointments. Elgin, as Curzon later observed, depended heavily on his civilian subordinates, and he tried to be sure that those selected would cause the least difficulty for him. Elgin had no stomach for pugnacious leadership. He was a man given to quiet diplomacy and personal solitude. At Simla, he spent most of his time secluded with his family at Mushobra, a lodge located some distance from the viceregal mansion. In February 1895, when the Secretary of State announced the selection of C.H.T. Crosthwaite for the India Council, Elgin quickly grasped the opportunity to use the N.-W.P. vacancy as the solution to his headaches in Bengal. Elliott's personal influence was evident in Elgin's contention that "there might be inconvenience in his (MacDonnell's) succession to Bengal for personal reasons not applicable to the N.-W.P."³⁴² Elliott had persistently urged the Viceroy to scratch MacDonnell's name from the candidates for Bengal. As a result, Mackenzie's name moved "to the top of the list."³⁴³ When Mackenzie's appointment was finally announced in September, Elliott wrote with relief that he "thought it was hardly possible that any other appointment could be made;" but, he added, "there were disquieting rumours about as to the efforts Sir A.P. MacDonnell had been making at the India Office to get transferred to Bengal, an arrangement which I should have much regretted."³⁴⁴

Yet it was unthinkable, at this stage in MacDonnell's career that he should leave India without the attainment of a Lieutenant-Governorship. One could hardly predict what trouble he might cause Elgin's viceroyalty or the Conservative government in England if he were left out in the cold: "Public interests will suffer," Elgin told the Secretary of State, "if he is not employed in one of the highest posts."³⁴⁵ The departure of

341. MacDonnell to his wife, not dated, 1895, MacDonnell papers,

342. Elgin to Fowler, Calcutta, 23 Feb., 1895, E.V.P.

343. Elgin to Fowler, Camp, 1 April 1895, E.V.P.

344. Elliott to Elgin, Darjeeling, 1 Sept., 1895, E.V.P.

345. Telegram, Elgin to Fowler, Calcutta, 23 Feb., 1895, E.V.P.

Crosthwaite prior to Elliott's retirement seemed almost providential to Elgin. The new arrangements would not only pacify Mackenzie but would also avoid the storm of zamindari complaint in the case of MacDonnell's appointment to Bengal. In Bengal, said Elgin, MacDonnell "would have been much more likely to have taken or been forced into the appearance of taking sides, had he remained to initiate and carry through land legislation."³⁴⁶ On another occasion, Elgin spoke of the "very great embarrassment" MacDonnell would suffer in Bengal since "he would most certainly be expected—and I think almost inevitably be compelled, by his previous actions to reverse some of Elliott's decisions. I have great faith in hisadroitness," added Elgin, "but I should not like the position myself."³⁴⁷

MacDonnell's assignment to the N.-W.P. solved not only the problem of getting him out of Bengal but also opened the way for Mackenzie's appointment to higher office. Elgin found himself under considerable pressure from Lord Kimberley and subject to Mackenzie's tiresome machinations. Elgin seemed more susceptible to these pressures than had Lansdowne, and furthermore he had not imbibed Lansdowne's intense personal hostility toward Mackenzie, a hostility resulting largely from Lansdowne's close association with A. P. MacDonnell. When MacDonnell superseded Mackenzie in the Home Membership of the Council, Mackenzie believed that the Viceroy had made "a personal question out of Sir A. P. MacDonnell's appointment. "The latter," Mackenzie told Elgin, "is my junior, and owed his selection to succeed me as Home Secretary entirely to my urgings with Lord Dufferin."³⁴⁸

In addition to personal bias, Lansdowne also had a substantive policy grievance against Mackenzie, namely his bungling of the opium question in Burma. While on furlough in the summer of 1893, Mackenzie heard rumours of Lansdowne's anger "because of the way in which I took up the opium question. . ." Mackenzie first discounted these rumours as the

346. Elgin to Fowler, Calcutta, 6 March 1895, E.V.P.

347. Elgin to Fowler, Calcutta, 30 Jan., 1895, E.V.P.

348. Sir A. Mackenzie, Chief Commissioner, Burma, to Elgin, Rangoon, 21 Feb., 1895, E.V.P.

product of gossip resulting from MacDonnell's appointment to act as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in the absence of Elliott. Even though MacDonnell was "an officer so much my junior," nevertheless, said Mackenzie, "I thought this quite natural as a temporary arrangement seeing that I was at home recouping my health, and should have been very unwilling to return to India for an acting appointment in the month of May."³⁴⁹ Mackenzie could not imagine that anything he had done would "warrant my permanent supercession," and he expressed confidence that he would yet be Elliott's successor.³⁵⁰

Lansdowne felt differently, and candidly told Mackenzie that "your action in taking up the opium question or perhaps, I should say, in giving your adhesion to Mr. Smeaton's [Financial Commissioner of Burma] views on the eve of your departure from Burma, appeared to me somewhat ill-judged."³⁵¹ In expressing sentiments akin to those of the anti-opiumists in England (i.e., virtual total prohibition of opium in Burma), Mackenzie had helped create an embarrassing financial crisis for the Government of India, and had inadvertently committed the greatest *faux pas* of his career.³⁵² Written on the eve of his precipitate departure on furlough, Mackenzie's opium minute of 30 April 1892 failed to consider the financial consequence of such a policy for the Government of India.

Yet it was precisely the financial question which most disturbed the Viceroy and the Financial Department. As Lansdowne later reminded Mackenzie, "the action to be taken in regard to Burma could scarcely fail to affect our position with regard to the opium question generally, and before recommending sudden or far reaching changes, it was desirable to consider very thoroughly what their ultimate consequences were likely to be."³⁵³ Any campaign to limit opium in Burma, especially the total prohibition proposed by the Chief Commissioner, might well become an opening wedge for an attempt to

349. Mackenzie to Lansdowne, Birmingham, 6 June 1893, L.V.P.

350. *Ibid.*

351. Lansdowne to Mackenzie, Simla, 4 July, 1893, L.V.P.

352. Minute by Sir Alexander Mackenzie, 30 April 1892, G. of I., Finance and Commerce Dept., A., 285-415, April 1895, 290, N.A.I.

353. Lansdowne to Mackenzie, Simla, 4 July 1893, L.V.P.

stop the sale of opium elsewhere. The Government of India counted heavily on profits of its opium monopoly in Bengal and duties on Malwa opium shipped from India to China where use of the durg was prevalent. Tampering with this revenue would be financially disastrous, since (as Bampfylde Fuller had said) "the most important of the receipts (to the Government of India) which are classed as profits is the income that is derived from the export of Indian-grown opium to China."³⁵⁴ In addition, the government held a monopoly on all sales of liquors and durgs in India and operated "shops for the sale of spirits, wine, opium and ganga, all under government license."³⁵⁵ Revenues from opium excise alone were estimated to compose roughly one-tenth of the supreme government's revenue.³⁵⁶ Sir D. Barbour, Finance Member of the Viceroy's Council, placed "the total net revenue from opium at Rs. 6,000,000 yearly," and added that "it would be impossible to carry on the administration of India" if that revenue were to be lost.³⁵⁷

The attack of the anti-opiumists in England focused ultimately on the lucrative China trade and thus directly threatened the greatest portion of the opium revenue. The campaign in London was reaching its zenith at the same time that Smeaton and Mackenzie submitted their proposals to the Government of India. A memorial from the society for the suppression of the opium trade to the Secretary of State for India condemned the Government of India for its refusal to give immediate approval to "only too moderate proposals of the Chief Commissioner for putting down the opium vice in Lower

354. Fuller, *Studies of Indian Life*, p. 262. For another expression of the importance of opium in the budget of the Government of India see Ripon to Hartington, Simla, 5 Nov., 1882, R.V.P. also Major E. Baring, Finance Member of Viceroy's Council, to Ripon, Simla, 4 Nov., 1882, enclosure to above letter.
355. R. Carstairs, *The Little World*, p. 287.
356. *Ibid.*; and David E. Owen, *British Opium Policy in China and India*, p. 330.
357. Para. 157 of the Opium Commission's Report, quoted in G. of I., Finance and Commerce Dept., to S. of S. (305 of 1895), Simla 19 Oct., 1895, G. of I., Finance and Commerce Dept., A., 370-407, April 1896, 372, N.A.I.

Burma.”³⁵³ The society reserved its greatest scorn for the government’s attitude toward the China trade. There was a contradiction, according to the memorial, between restrictions on “the spread of the opium vice” in India “whilst it (government) has been stimulating the trade with China utterly regardless of characters blasted, lives lost, families ruined, and a whole nation impoverished, through the use of opium.”³⁵⁹

Mackenzie’s exposure of the government’s anomalous position in Burma (prohibition of opium in Upper Burma but sale of the commodity through licensed brokers in Lower Burma) gave added leverage to the reformers in London. As it turned out, only a Royal Commission on Opium (1893) saved the Government of India from economic crisis. There were moments during the life of the Commission when all opium revenues seemed to be in danger, but on the whole the Commission proved an effective diversion. The most radical anti-opium appointee to the Commission resigned even before the hearings began, clearly because he surmised that compromise would be inevitable. Sir J. B. Lyall wrote Lansdowne in September 1893 that “the facts of the case are all really known well enough, and the object appears to be to get an expression of opinion, of native opinion in particular, which will carry sufficient weight to enable the question to be shelved.”³⁶⁰ Lyall’s prognosis proved correct. Lord Brassey, chairman of the Commission, noted in a letter to Lord Elgin early in 1894 that the most significant result of the hearings had been “the admission by one anti-opium colleague that the prohibition on the sale of opium except for medical use is impracticable and uncalled for;” in lieu of government sales, blackmarkets would spring up, smuggling would flourish, and opium would still be grown and exported to China. “It seems to me quite clear,” said Brassey, “that, while we raise money from drink duties [in

358. Secretary of the Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade to the Under-Sec. of State for India, May 1892, G. of I., Finance and Commerce Dept., A., 666-673, June 1893., 667, N.A.I.

359. *Ibid.*, para. 14.

360. Sir. J. B. Lyall, Member of the Opium Commission (and formerly L.-G. of Punjab), to Lansdowne, London, 7 Sept., 1893, L.V.P.

England], we cannot possibly call upon India to surrender the revenue from opium."³⁶¹

The Report of the Opium Commission, said that the Government of India, "may be regarded as a vindication of the past action of the Government of India in regard to the production, consumption and sale of opium, and as an endorsement of the views which have guided us in our past policy." The Viceroy's Council greeted with relief and enthusiasm the verdict of the Commission that "a cessation of the opium trade in Bengal would have no real effect in reducing the use of the drug in China," and that the trade should therefore continue unabated. The decision of the Commission would save the Government of India from serious financial embarrassment and would obviate the necessity for new and provocative taxation in India.³⁶²

In the meantime, Mackenzie's role as a catalyst in the opium controversy had completely vitiated his expectation for advancements under Lord Lansdowne. Lansdowne told him bluntly that his opium minute had been "ill-judged," and he intimated his displeasure by refusing to give any assurances about further promotion.³⁶³ Mackenzie's reaction to this news was characterized by pathological indulgence in sensational manoeuvring. By the time he had finally reached the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal at the end of 1895, he had become so psychologically debilitated and physically weakened that he found it difficult to meet his responsibilities, suffered from bouts of an undiagnosed illness (sometimes called neuralgia), and in the end felt compelled to retire only twenty-eight months after his appointment.

He first tried to discredit Lansdowne's interpretation of his opium policy, claiming that his letter of 30 April 1892 had been no different from his proposals of February 1891 concerning which he had "heard no word of censure or complaint . . . until now."³⁶⁴ He pleaded, almost pathetically, that he had "never

361. Lord Brassey, President of the Opium Commission, to Elgin, Bombay, 23 Feb., 1894, E.V.P.

362. G. of I., Finance and Commerce Dept., to S. of S. (305 of 1895), Simla, 19 Oct., 1895, G. of I., Finance and Commerce Dept., A., 370-407, April 1896., 372, N.A.I.

363. Lansdowne to Mackenzie, Simla, 4 July 1893, L.V.P.

364. Mackenzie to Lansdowne, Birmingham, 1 Aug., 1893, Godley papers.

wittingly done anything directly or indirectly to embarrass the Government of India.”

Mackenzie evinced even greater despair when Lansdowne appointed MacDonnell, allegedly in supersession of himself, as H. Member of the Viceroy's Council. Kimberley told Lansdowne that Mackenzie “is most unwilling to return to Burma, which is associated with the death of his wife, and to which he ‘shrinks from exposing his young bride.’”³⁶⁵ At this point Mackenzie obtained a six-month extension to his leave.

In November, while still on leave in England, Mackenzie cast hints that he would “make himself disagreeable in consequence of having been, passed over.”³⁶⁶ According to C.P. Ilbert, Mackenzie had some notion of embarrassing Lansdowne by publishing some of their opium correspondence; but, as Lansdowne noted, it seemed unlikely that these letters would cause any sensation. Lansdowne had been careful not to over-expose himself, and he had sent copies of all the letters for Godley's personal examination. “I am wholly unable,” wrote Godley, “to see anything out of which he can make a capital of any sort.”³⁶⁷ Lansdowne replied with the ultimate condemnation reserved for all aspiring middle class climbers who had slipped in the estimation of the Victorian aristocracy: “He [Mackenzie] is not a gentleman, and I should probably have been wiser if I had not written to him as frankly as I did.”³⁶⁸

Having made little progress in England, Mackenzie decided for unknown reasons to return to India before the expiration of his leave. He may have hoped for some preferment from the new Viceroy with whom he had already conversed in London. As a last resort, he could still legally return to Burma, though Lansdowne had hinted that this would not meet his approval: “Setting all questions of personal convenience on one side,” he told Godley, “it is a very bad thing that this Service [i. e., the Chief Commissionership of Burma] should be handed backwards and forwards from one man to another for a period of a

365. Kimberley to Lansdowne, India Office, 21 Sept., 1893, L.V.P.

366. Godley to Lansdowne, India Office, 17 Nov., 1893, L.V.P.

367. Godley to Lansdowne, India Office, 17 Nov., 1893, L.V.P.

368. Lansdowne to Godley, Simla, 31 Oct., 1893, L.V.P.

369. Lansdowne to Godley, 4 Dec., 1893, Godley papers.

few months."³⁶⁹ Sir C. Pritchard, it was rumoured, had purposely remained in Council longer than he intended, in order to keep Mackenzie out.³⁷⁰

In May 1894, after several unsuccessful attempts to inveigle an office in the supreme government Mackenzie returned in despair to Burma. Still he continued to importune the Viceroy, pleading the ill health of his wife as the main reason why he must be transferred and hence promoted.³⁷¹ Mackenzie suggested *inter alia* that his appointment as successor to Crosthwaite in the N.-W.P. would solve all the problems. "The idea of the N. W. Provinces possibly coming my way," he wrote, "is too good to cherish, and yet a North-West man, Elliott, took Bengal, when everybody, including Elliot himself, thought I, as a Bengal man, was sure to get it."³⁷² But Elgin, who at the least must be given credit for careful use of his patronage, decided upon another arrangement. MacDonnell in the N.-W.P. would defuse the hostility of landlords in Bengal and would relieve Elgin of embarrassment. Mackenzie could then be appointed temporarily as Home Member in place of MacDonnell, until Elliott's retirement made it possible to accommodate Mackenzie's ultimate ambition.

Having expended energy and ingenuity for more than a decade in a constant effort to obtain the Lieutenant-Governorship, Mackenzie entered office in December 1895 suffering from chronic physical and psychological exhaustion and displaying a kind of disenchantment. By October 1896, he was complaining that "my heart has got into an irritable state: the doctor thinks from over-worry, plus long-standing dispepsia." He allegedly began making "alarmist" proposals to counteract the failure of the rice crop in Bengal. Elgin disapproved of his idea to advance six per cent profits to traders in order to prevent hoarding or export of rice out of Bengal, and he also condemned Mackenzie's suggestion to impound all known charity funds for disbursal by the government.³⁷³

370. Elgin to Fowler, Calcutta 30 Jan., 1895, E.V.P.

371. Mackenzie to Elgin, Upper Burma, 3 Nov., 1894, E.V.P.; Elgin to Fowler, Calcutta, 30 Jan., 1895, E.V.P.; Mackenzie to Elgin, Rangoon, 21 Feb., 1895, E.V.P.

372. Mackenzie to Elgin, Rangoon, 2 March 1895, E.V.P.

373. Elgin to Hamilton, Calcutta, 16 Dec., 1896, E.V.P.

The famine crisis revived the feud between MacDonnell and Maekenzie, each man attempting to convince the Viceroy that his famine policy was wiser than that of his rival. Elgin and Hamilton generally preferred MacDonnell's more cautious, less expensive operation to Maekenzie's over reliance on charity.³⁷⁴

When appraised of Elgin's dissatisfaction,³⁷⁵ Maekenzie fired off a bitter letter to the Viceroy replete with aspersions directed towards MacDonnell:

Some of the papers [of the Famine Committee] which I have seen appear to make it a reproach to Bengal that its estimates of distress have been exactly verified by results, while those of other provinces have proved fallacious, and that our relief workers were taken in time and kept from falling into a state of emaciation. In my view a well-managed system of famine relief does not require a horde of starvelings to prove its success.³⁷⁶

Doubtless his ire had been compounded by the knowledge that Elgin had recommended MacDonnell for a G.C.S.I. in recognition of his famine work while Maekenzie had been offered nothing.³⁷⁷

In the meantime, Mackenzie's physical deterioration necessitated a furlough. When he returned in December 1897, Elgin found it difficult "to discover his real intentions, and I cannot feel sure whether he means to remain out here for his full term."³⁷⁸ Maekenzie had become even more irascible, antagonizing the Bengali politicians by denouncing their operation of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation. When at last Mackenzie announced that his doctors recommended his retirement, the Secretary of State judged that "Mackenzie is evidently too emotional to be a pleasant coadjutor, and I think you are well rid of him."³⁷⁹

There was a depressing similarity among Mackenzie and his nearest contemporaries in the Bengal Lieutenant-Governorship.

374. Hamilton to Elgin, India Office, 19 Feb., 1897, E.V.P.

375. Elgin to Hamilton, Simla, 12 May 1897, E.V.P.

376. Mackenzie, L.-G. of Bengal, to Elgin, Darjeeling, 25 May 1897, E.V.P.

377. Elgin to Hamilton, Calcutta, 17 March 1897, E.V.P.

378. Elgin to Hamilton, Calcutta, 23 Dec., 1897, E.V.P.

379. Hamilton to Elgin, 7 April 1898, E.V.P.

Three retired under a cloud of recrimination (Thompson, Elliott, and himself); three had been broken in health, including Mackenzie, Thompson and Woodburn, the last of whom died while still in office, S. C. Bayley was the only Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal during the 1880's and 90's who left the office in good health and without bitterness. But he had retreated from India well before the end of his normal tenure, spurning the illusory glory of the Lieutenant-Governorship for the sake of uncontroversial and comfortable employment at home.

Mackenzie's resignation precipitated another bizarre display of acute sensitivity on the part of A. P. MacDonnell. In contemplating Mackenzie's possible successors, Elgin (apparently forgetting or forgiving MacDonnell's difficulties with the zamindars) had decided it would be best to transfer A.P. MacDonnell from the N.-W.P., first because he felt that Mackenzie's heir apparent in Bengal (H. J. S. Cotton) was not yet ready for the post, and secondly because another candidate, Sir John Woodburn (currently Home Member of Council) was a North-Western Provinces man who "knows nothing of Bengal."³⁸⁰ Oddly enough, in a private letter to his wife, MacDonnell interpreted this offer as "an attempt to perpetrate a job the object of which is to benefit Woodburn [as his successor in the N.-W.P.] at my expense."³⁸¹ "On the whole," he added, "I do not know for what I have to thank Lord Elgin," the Viceroy who had given him both the Lieutenant-Governorship and the G.C.S.I.³⁸² In the next letter to his wife, MacDonnell reiterated his annoyance, again lashing out at his old enemies Elliott and Mackenzie to explain his decision not to accept Bengal:

I disliked undertaking the Government of a province which had been conducted on lines different from that which I had thought right, ever since Elliott went into it and which I should be powerless to alter. . . . The acceptance of Bengal would have shunt me out from anything else for ever [he is referring to the possibility of the Governorship

380. Elgin to Hamilton, Calcutta, 3 March 1898, E.V.P.

381. MacDonnell to his wife, Camp, N.-W.P., 16 March 1898, MacDonnell papers.

382. *Ibid.*

of Bombay]. I was not much influenced by the money consideration: for after Bengal if I had lived through it, I should fancy to be certain of a seat in the India Council. . . . If I knew for certain that I had no chance of Bombay, the objection to Bengal would have been reduced by so much. . . . I had the feeling that I was being pushed: and that a wish to (promote?) Sir John Woodburn was not altogether foreign to the business.³⁸³

His later misgivings were revealed in a nostalgic letter to his wife written at the end of 1898: "But dearest Allahabad is not Calcutta. It is as big as Jubbulpore. . ."³⁸⁴

MacDonnell was doubtless the most outstanding of the covenanted civilians in the nineteenth century, if for no other reason than the fact that his handiwork is found in practically all major decisions of the supreme government (and many provincial governments as well) from about 1884 onward. Lord Elgin, though dim in his perception of most problems in India, had a sense of MacDonnell's eminence and claimed that he was the only one among the higher officials who could consider views in a wider framework than his own personal aspirations.³⁸⁵ Yet it is clear that MacDonnell was obsessed by concern for status and promotion, even at the end of his career when he had reached the highest appointments in the Indian bureaucracy. Service in India left a feeling of unfulfilment, and even high offices did not in itself satiate the extraordinary appetites of men caught in the ceaseless cycle of promotion and competition for higher promotions.

Yet among all officials in the late nineteenth century, MacDonnell appeared to be exceptional in his ability to bring personal motivations into some meaningful coherence with a concept of imperial responsibility and with the formulation of imperial policy. Throughout, he had sporadically been the advocate of land reform, but it is evident that he consistently

383. MacDonnell to his wife, L.-G.'s Camp, N.-W.P., 23 March 1898, MacDonnell papers.

384. MacDonnell to his wife, Camp, 7 Nov., 1898, MacDonnell papers.

385. Elgin to Fowler, Calcutta, 30 Jan., 1895, E.V.P: "He (MacDonnell) is one of the few men I have met here who seems to deal with the larger questions that arise in internal administration in a broad and sympathetic spirit."

planned his strategy so as not to jeopardize his advancement. His advocacy of rent reform during the Ripon administration more than any other factor brought him to the forefront, but only because he had the backing of Mackenzie and of the Viceroy himself. An understanding of his survey and record proposals in Bengal during his officiating Lieutenant-Governorship requires consideration of his struggle against Elliott as well as his desire to aid the peasants. Ideologically, his concern had emerged from the belief that amelioration of peasant grievances in India would preclude a political disaster similar to that experienced by Britain in Ireland. "A stitch in time saves nine" was the epigram he chose as the summation of his philosophy.³⁸⁶

Like Elgin, Curzon also held MacDonnell in high esteem, calling him "by far the most capable administrator that we have in this country."³⁸⁷ Despite serious friction between them relating to famine policy in Bombay and some divergence of opinion on MacDonnell's moderate N.-W.P. Land Bill of 1901, still Curzon said he was ready to "forgive him everything for his capacity." "It is such a God-sent," concluded Curzon, "in this pigmy-ridden country, to find a man who at least has mental status."³⁸⁸ MacDonnell, he said, was "destitute of even a ray of human emotion."³⁸⁹ "You have no conception," he told Hamilton, "of the extent to which the man [MacDonnell] is disliked as it appears to me by the entire service."³⁹⁰

Policy Making and the India Council Appointments :

Final check on behaviour of the upper echelon of covenanted civilians was the possibility of a seat on the India Council in London after retirement. Originally constituted in 1858 as part of the Crown apparatus for the governance of India, the Council served in an advisory capacity to the Secretary of State. According to 1858 Act, Council Membership would include

386. MacDonnell to Curzon, Camp, 25 June 1900, C.V.P.

387. Curzon to Hamilton, Bareilly, 22 April 1901, H.C.

388. *Ibid*

389. *Ibid*.

390. Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 24 May 1899, H.C.

fifteen members chosen by co-option with life membership (contingent on good behaviour), a majority having "served or resided in India for a period of ten years."³⁹¹

The Government of India Act Amendment Bill of 1869 introduced several alterations. Selection by the Secretary of State replaced co-option as the means of selecting new members, and the term of members was limited to a period of ten years, though members might be reappointed on special consideration. The Secretary of State was given ultimate authority and veto power over the Council in matters of high policy. The powers of the Council remained imprecise, and thus there was considerable latitude for tension and controversy between the Council on the one hand and the Secretary of State and/or the Viceroy on the other.³⁹² Despite this, there appeared to be a consensus among Viceroys and Secretaries of the State that the Council was a necessary evil. Most importantly, it served the vital function of helping to neutralize imperial affairs, keeping the Government of India (for the most part, though not completely) out of the cockpit of the party politics in the House of Commons.

In addition, the Council members provided indispensable advice for the Secretaries of the State who usually came to office without any first-hand acquaintance with India. Their control or check on the Secretary of State, though occasionally meddling, could ultimately be abrogated if necessary under the euphemism of high imperial policy. The Council supposedly held the power of veto over the Government of India's financial decisions [the area in which it sometimes became most troublesome], but even in finance, when related to questions of "high policy," "the Secretary of State might give what order he chose."³⁹³ In answer to Curzon's denunciation of the Council's interference in petty financial decisions, Hamilton warned him of more dire difficulties if the Council were eliminated :

If you take it [*i.e.*, the control over budget decisions] away from the Council, to whom would you give it? The House of Commons would ask for it, and though a direct

391. S.N. Singh, *The Secretary of State for India and His Council*, p. 9.

392. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

393. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

control could be refused, still I am sure that the Secretary of State would not obtain the full transfer of power without the House of Commons associating with it an indirect control exercised by themselves. I am always careful to avoid raising any question likely to draw attention to the vast powers financially we [the Viceroy and the Secretary of State] in common can exercise.³⁹⁴

Viceroy's unanimously regarded the Council as an albatross around the neck of their governments throughout the late nineteenth century. Ripon, for one, warned that "if the reins [of power] are thrown upon them, they will get all abroad and will deprive the Secretary of State control of the general policy of the Indian administration which he ought to keep in his own hands."³⁹⁵ Retired civilians on the Council, having finally been liberated from the restraints of the promotion mechanism, and no longer under the thumb of a Viceroy who had the power of life or death over his subordinates, would naturally tend to become slightly more bumptious and to be less controllable than they had been in the highly pressurized atmosphere of the British Indian bureaucracy.

Lytton proposed to remove these irritations by revising the constitution of the Council and selecting officials for a short term in Council during the regular course of their career, rather than after retirement, thereby hopefully securing the same high level of cooperation obtained by the promotion mechanism in India.³⁹⁶ When Ripon protested the refractory behaviour of the Council, Hartington replied that home approval of his policies would rest on the ability of the Viceroy "to secure the cooperation of the Council as well as that of the Secretary of State."³⁹⁷ Ripon seemed astonished, and said "it had never entered into my head that the Viceroy of India had become in practice the subordinate of the India Council in Downing Street."³⁹⁸ Ripon became even more perturbed when one of his own nominees for Council, Sir Ashley Eden, disavowed his support of Ripon's

394. Hamilton to Curzon, Coates, 9 Jan., 1901, H.C.

395. Ripon to Kimberley, Calcutta, 18 Dec., 1882, R.V.P.

396. Singh, *The Secretary of State for India*, pp. 44 f.

397. Hartington to Ripon, 7 Sept., 1882, R.V.P.

398. Ripon to Hartington, Simla, 2 Oct., 1882, R.V.P.

policies, including both the Ilbert Bill and the Bengal Tenancy Bill. Ripon reminded Kimberley that Eden had himself recommended the main provisions of the Ilbert Bill with the emphatic judgment that "the time has now arrived when all native members of the Covenanted Civil Service should be relieved . . . restrictions of their power . . ." ³⁹⁹ The Secretary of State replied, rather ambiguously, that the Council "are not really under our control, except so far as the Secretary of State has legal powers to constrain them, and they do not possess the traditional loyalty of the Civil Service to whatever party is in power," precisely because the neutral status of the India Office placed them outside Parliamentary supervision. But despite continued obstinacy of the Council, Kimberley approved the final version of the Ilbert Bill, arguing that the ultimate power of disallowing an act passed in India lay not with the Council but only with himself. ⁴⁰⁰ Like Hamilton at a later date, Kimberley recognized the advisability of keeping the Council, since the alternative "of a Standing Committee of the House of Commons, which would watch over Indian affairs, would be opposed to the principles on which our government is conducted." ⁴⁰¹

Elgin occasionally berated the Council, noting in one instance that "it is impossible not to resent the continual expression of distrust [by it]." ⁴⁰² It remained for Curzon to launch the most relentless campaign against the Council's prerogatives. When Hamilton noted that the Council became specially obstinate "if they think I speak from a brief supplied by you or as your advocate," ⁴⁰³ Curzon singled out the unique susceptibilities of retired civilians as the explanation for this phenomenon :

I really quite understand the position of men who having trembled at the nod of the Viceroy for the greater part of their lives are eventually in a position where they can

399. Letter of Government of Bengal to the G. of I., 20 March 1882, quoted in Ripon to Hartington, Simla, 21 Sept., 1883, R.V.P.

400. Kimberley to Ripon, Kimberley House, 11 Sept., 1884, R.V.P.

401. Kimberley to Dufferin, Kimberley House, 22 April 1886, D.V.P.

402. Elgin to Hamilton, Viceroy's Camp, Bangalore, 20 Nov., 1895, E.V.P.

403. Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 14 Feb., 1901, H.C.

with impunity dance a hornpipe tune upon his prostrate frame.⁴⁰⁴

Hamilton considered Curzon's diatribe as too excessive, noting that the Council had approved sixteen out of twenty-one proposals from Curzon's government, the most controversial being the formation of the North-West Frontier Province, denounced by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab (Mackworth Young) and by his predecessor, Dennis Fitzpatrick, now in the India Council, as a direct insult to them and to the Punjab Commission. The five deadlocks between Curzon and Council related to relatively minor financial questions, the one area where Council had the constitutional privilege to exercise a veto. Nothing short of an undesirable constitutional overhaul could limit the authority of Council in these matters. Hamilton therefore believed Curzon should swallow his pride and learn to tolerate the peccadillos of Council opposition.⁴⁰⁵ In any major impasse, the Secretary of State would have recourse to the Prime Minister's Cabinet whose support of the Viceroy [as had occurred for example in the case of the Frontier Province] would in effect preclude the possibility of a negative vote in the India Council.

Curzon returned to the offensive after Hamilton's retirement. In words almost identical to those used by Ripon, Curzon told the new Secretary of State, St. John Broderic, that "the situation seems to me to be a complete inversion of the principle upon which the Government of India is conducted in theory, or has, as a rule, been conducted in practice."⁴⁰⁶ Not for the first time, Curzon suspected a plot among Council members "to drive me to resign,"⁴⁰⁷ and he offered proposals to expunge the remaining vestiges of power wielded by the Council. Though the Prime Minister extended his "sympathies" and registered his own disbelief "in these systems of elaborate checks and counter-checks," yet he doubted that the requisite legislation would be forthcoming during the current session of Parliament. Reading between the lines of Balfour's

404. Curzon to Hamilton, Calcutta, 7 March 1901, H.C.

405. Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 19 June 1902, H.C.

406. Curzon to Broderick, Train, 2 March 1905, C.V.P.

407. *Ibid*,

letter, one may surmise that he had decided to let it alone.⁴⁰⁸

Doubtless the power of the Council, though undefined and often illusory, gave it prestige and attractiveness in the eyes of retiring civilians. Equally important to the less affluent among retiring civilians was the yearly salary of £1,200 attached to the Council membership, an amount which more than doubled the total yearly pension they would normally receive.⁴⁰⁹ As a result the Council constituted a final incentive for "safe" behaviour among those who had attained the highest positions. It provided Viceroys with important (although not fool-proof) leverage to stop any extravagance perpetrated or envisaged by provincial Lieutenant-Governors. It is doubtful that Curzon's plan to diminish the prestige of the India Council would have proven a clear advantage to the Viceroy. Such a change might have created more problems in India than it would have solved in England.

Retiring Mughals of the I.C.S. had the option of taking seats on the boards of commercial enterprises, but the overwhelming majority aspired to obtain seats in the India Council. In urging the Foreign Secretary, H.S. Barnes, to remain in India in order to take a Lieutenant-Governorship, A.C. Lyall told him to "bear in mind that a successful Lieutenant-Governor has a strong claim on a seat in Council at home; and this is a much more satisfactory career than [a secretariat position in the India Office]."⁴¹⁰

All the most prominent officials of the late nineteenth century (including Crosthwaite, Fitzpatrick, Elliott, Mackenzie, MacDonnell, the Lyall brothers, Philip Hutchins, and Charles Pritchard, W.W. Hunter, and others) actively campaigned for seats in the India Council; and almost all moderated their behaviour in accordance with this goal. The case of Charles Pritchard, Public Works Member of the Council from Bombay Commission provides a good example of exclusion due to obstreperous behaviour. Elgin noted that "both on the score of health. . . and

408. A.J. Balfour to Curzon, Whittingham, 1 Jan., 1905, C.V.P.

409. Singh, *The Secretary of State*, p. 156.

410. A.C. Lyall to H.S. Barnes, Survey, 16 Aug., 1901, Barnes papers, Oxford.

pecuniarily, it would be of much consequence” “for Pritchard to obtain a seat in the Council.”⁴¹¹ Elgin might also have noted that Pritchard, having served in Bombay, would have no hope for higher promotion in India. Bombay and Madras civilians were not eligible for Lieutenant-Governorships in Northern India, and they were automatically excluded, by firmly established convention, from accession to the governorships of their own Presidency. Unfortunately, as member of Council, Pritchard had violated practically every canon of good behaviour. “The great difficulty with him,” said Lord Elgin, “is the extreme obstinacy with which he adheres to his opinion.”⁴¹² Pritchard had persistently helped the Bombay government against the wishes of the supreme government. He had been obstructionist in his attitude toward railway expansion, and was one of the outspoken members of the Viceroy's Council who opposed Elgin's forward frontier policy. Pritchard's naivete was apparent in his belief that Elgin would still advance his candidacy for the India Council. But his failure to support government legislation, according to Hamilton, was “sufficient” to condemn him : “It would be bad precedent to reward contumacy. . . .”⁴¹³ Hamilton's dismissal of Pritchard's request speaks for itself as to the utility of the India Council in securing civilian cooperation :

Where a man's disposition is crabbed and unreasonable, these qualities are apt to develop themselves when he is in the last official position he can hold; he cannot damage himself, or his prospects, by letting loose the full volume of his obstinacy; and men of that stamp have great opportunities here in stopping or retarding business.⁴¹⁴

Sir Charles Elliott's candidacy had been rejected on practically the same basis. Throughout his career, particularly as a result of his endemic conflict with A.P. MacDonnell, he had gained a reputation of having “a faculty of getting into disputes.” Furthermore, he had also been among the opponents of Elgin's policy to subdue the north-western tribes and to esta-

411. Elgin to Hamilton, Viceroy Camp, Agra, 29 Oct., 1895, E.V.P.

412. *Ibid.*

413. Hamilton to Elgin, India Office, 15 Nov., 1895, E.V.P.

414. Hamilton to Elgin, India Office, 3 Jan., 1896, E.V.P.

blish unequivocal British supremacy over all territory below the so-called Durand line, including Chitral and Gilgit.⁴¹⁵ Elliott requested the G.C.S.I., as compensation for the rejection of his candidacy, but Hamilton and Elgin agreed that he "has no special claim for it."⁴¹⁶

Promotion and Policy

Promotion anxiety and a corresponding apprehension of any dramatic change in the delicate status quo of British imperial policy constituted two common threads running throughout the careers of successful covenanted civilians. The idealistic concept of British officials as protectors or representatives of the voiceless masses emerged on rare occasions with regard to the land revenue issue. But the reforms suggested or implemented were either so moderate or so easily violated that they accomplished very little to substantiate that idealistic image. In addition, programs for land reform in the late nineteenth century surfaced most dramatically during the viceroyalty of the reform-minded Ripon, and directly as a result of the incentives provided by himself. The mild initiatives taken during the remainder of the century, most notably by the Government of Bengal in relation to the survey and record, progressed through tedious and protracted controversies ending in a morass of confusion and antagonism.

An overpowering deference for aristocratic authority existed in the mentality of the most middle class civilian officials.⁴¹⁷ Accompanying this was the craving to attain the title of a "gentleman" through assuming "the trappings of gentility,"⁴¹⁸ Companionships or the Knight' Commanderships in the Star of India titles were cherished as appropriate symbols of a gentlemanly status. These honors came almost automatically to those who gained appointment to the Viceroy's Council or to Lieutenant-Governorships. Yet the struggle to achieve such exalted status'

415. Elgin to Hamilton, Simla, 9 Oct., 1893, E.V.P.

416. Hamilton to Elgin, India Office, 9 Sept., 1896, E.V.P.

417. See George Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England*, pp. 251 ff.

418. *Ibid.*, p. 253.

was so arduous, relentless, and enervating that the final achievement often seemed hollow or devoid of its anticipated glamour. Higher officials suffered various degrees of disillusionment, serious illness, or unsatiated desire for further recognition in England. Mackenzie and Elliott both retired in bitterness; both failed to obtain any compensation for their disappointment in the form of a G. C. S. I or a seat in the India Council. MacDonnell, who of all men of the late nineteenth century appeared to have attained the greatest success with immense resilience and stamina, was described at the height of his career by Lord Curzon as devoid of the least touch of human emotion or outward sign of satisfaction.

As promotion and status dominated the motivations of men at the top of the hierarchy, so deference and caution characterized their actions throughout much of their careers. They were tragically paradoxical figures in the sense that their obsequious mentality had resulted from deference to an aristocracy who then turned on them over and over again, most notably Curzon had condemned them for lack of initiative, backbone, creativity and character. It was a mark of aristocratic hypocrisy and contradiction that Hamilton and Curzon could on the one hand view their civilian subordinates as "tired and devoid of initiative,"⁴¹⁹ while on the other hand they typically abhorred any who showed signs of creativity or slight deviation from the servile norms:

I have always looked somewhat skeptically upon the methods and reasons by which legislation in India is promoted [Hamilton told Curzon]. A bustling or enterprising Secretary of a Department who, for personal reasons of his own, does not like the existing law, cannot unfrequently contrive to effect a very considerable alteration on his own initiative and by his energy and determination . . .⁴²⁰

Hamilton had correctly appraised the significance of "personal reasons" in legislative initiative, and it is notable that he pointed to Mackenzie as an example of this phenomenon. Though speaking here of Mackenzie's Municipality Act, he

419. Hamilton to Curzon, 2 May 1901, H.C.

420. *Ibid.*

might have pointed with better effect (had he known anything about it) to Mackenzie's role (and that of MacDonnell as well) in advocating the long and rather fruitless Bengal tenancy investigation, launched under Ripon's approving patronage but dying a lingering and ignominious death under the suspicious eyes of his successors.

Mackenzie and MacDonnell were prime examples of the bustling secretary metamorphosed into a cautious administrator. They emerged largely unscathed from the Ripon experiment because they were adaptable men, veritable paragons of the virtue required for survival in the world of bureaucracy, most importantly accommodation with and or exploitation of viceregal proclivities, not struggling against them or being crushed by them. MacDonnell's promotion of the Bihar survey and record was somewhat exceptional and, though unsuccessful, remains a monument to his singular consistency on the question of peasant welfare. Yet even this policy cannot be understood as the product of abstract altruism, but must rather be considered in the context of the struggle MacDonnell had undertaken to discredit the incumbent Lieutenant-Governor Sir Charles Elliott. In this MacDonnell had the tacit support of his friend, the Viceroy, who knew little of India, particularly land reform, and "was often, as he himself realized, out of his depth."⁴²¹ The whole weight of circumstances during the late nineteenth century—largely uniformed and do-nothing Viceroys (Dufferin, Lansdowne, Elgin)⁴²² together with obsequious subordinates anxious not to rock the boat—conspired to promote stagnation, lethargy and sterility in government, making it impossible to fulfil the high sounding ideals used to rationalize the alleged necessity of unending imperial rule.

The incorrigible mavericks of the late nineteenth century—the Wedderburns, the Thorburns, and the Geddesses of the I.C.S.—were excluded from high office or preferment by the Government of India. H.J.S. Cotton's relative success might

421. Gopal, *British Policy in India*, 1858-1905, p. 206.

422. *Ibid.* Of Dufferin, Gopal says, "The fact was that Dufferin was unequal to the task of governing India," Gopal, p. 178; of Lansdowne and Elgin, he asserts that "during the tenure of these two acquiescent unimaginative men, the viceroyalty reached its lowest ebb in the nineteenth century," p. 180.

be seen superficially as an exception to the rule, but a closer examination discloses the essential accommodations Cotton had made enroute to higher offices. The altruistic side of Cotton's personality had been inspired by the teachings of the great social theologian at King's College, London, Mr. Frederick Denison Maurice, and later by the writing of Auguste Comte. He became a member of the Positivist Society in London prior to his departure for India; while in India, he helped establish a small branch of the society composed of himself and a handful of Bengalis. Though sometimes regarded as a "crank," his family connections and apparent popularity among higher officials, including Campbell and Temple, helped to insure his upward progress in the civilian hierarchy. His altruism revealed itself occasionally and embarrassingly in the form of publications, including an article in the *Fortnightly Review* 1878,⁴²³ an address to the London positivists in 1883, and most importantly in a book titled the *New India*, first published in 1885.⁴²⁴ In 1888, however, he became alienated from the Bengali politicians as a result of a controversy between himself as Chairman of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation and Bengali landlords in Calcutta concerning "the taxation of unearned increment."⁴²⁵ His official superiors, including S.C. Bayley and Charles Elliott, interpreted the falling out between Cotton and the Bengalis as a favourable omen. Elliott described Cotton as a man who "has sown his wild oats (politically speaking), and found out the hollowness of the Baboo, and is all the more useful for having passed through that stage."⁴²⁶ During the 1890's both Bayley and Elliott singled out Cotton as an heir apparent to the throne of Bengal. Suspicions still lurked in the minds of both Elgin and Curzon. The former advanced him cautiously to the Chief Commissionership of Assam, but Curzon caught him off guard in his policy towards the tea planters. Though Curzon had himself warned Cotton to curb injustices against the coolies, he failed to support Cotton's

423. See extract in Cotton's personal scrapbook, p. 1. Cotton papers.

424. Cotton, *New India*, p. 13; see also "Positivism in India", *Saturday Review*, 9 July 1887, p. 64 of Cotton's scrapbook.

425. See quotation from *Indian Mirror*, in Cotton, *Memories*, p. 209.

426. Elliott, L.-G. of Bengal, to Lansdowne, Calcutta, 1 April 1893, L.V.P.

criticisms of the planters in the *Assam Labour Report* for 1900.⁴²⁷ Curzon used the controversy as an opportunity to hasten Cotton's departure from India. He allegedly rejected Cotton's voluntary resignation in favour of a more "honourable solution," namely the bestowal of a K. C. S. I. after an early retirement, in April 1902.⁴²⁸ Hamilton congratulated Curzon for this devious denouement, and expressed relief that Cotton would now be deprived of any higher appointment.⁴²⁹ Curzon's conclusion was that Cotton "would never have done for a Lieutenant-Governorship."⁴³⁰ In retirement, Cotton reverted completely to his youthful radicalism, spoke out as a parliamentary candidate against Curzon's policies, was regarded as a hero and martyr by Indian politicians, and returned in triumph to India as President of the Indian National Congress (1904).⁴³¹

Nowhere in the late nineteenth century had adaptability proven to be so important as in the question of land reform legislation. Both Mackenzie and MacDonnell had come to the fore as the prime architects of change in Bengal, but only because strong encouragement from the champions of land reforms in both Ireland and India, namely Gladstone and his Indian Lieutenant—Lord Ripon. The accidental circumstance of Rivers Thompson's illness also placed the spotlight on the Secretaries. Thompson appeared as largely an inconsequential and inactive cypher during much of his tenure. With the departure of Ripon and the eclipse of his reforms, Mackenzie apparently lost all enthusiasm for the Rent Bill, MacDonnell remained concerned, pushing for stronger measures under all three of Ripon's inert successors. But MacDonnell advocated reform only as

427. Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 24 July 1901. H.C.; H.J.S. Cotton, Chief Commissioner of Assam, to Curzon, Shillong, 2 Aug., 1901, C.V.P.; Curzon to Cotton, Simla, 10 Sept., 1901, Cotton papers. It appears that this last letter was not printed or included in Curzon's own collection of private correspondence, a deletion which speaks for itself concerning the discreditable nature of Curzon's action; see also Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 11 Sept., 1901, H.C.

428. Curzon to Hamilton, Viceroy's Camp, Burma, 21 Nov., 1901. H.C.

429. Hamilton to Curzon, India Office, 17 Dec., 1901, H.C.

430. Curzon to Hamilton, Camp, Darjeeling, 18 Feb., 1902, H.C.

431. See, e.g., Cotton, *Memories*, pp. 283 ff.

circumstances permitted and not in such a fashion as to jeopardize his status in the eyes of the Viceroys. To use the words of Curzon, MacDonnell was the most "cleverish" of all covenanted civilians in the late nineteenth century, and he combined his cleverness (or duplicity, as in the case of his relations with Elliott) with a wider vision of the land problems than any of his contemporaries. MacDonnell's cleverness, however, did not secure the success of his most significant proposals, especially those relating to the survey and record in Bengal which were rejected by the despatch from the India Office of July 1894.

This frustration of substantial land reform in Bengal is indicative of the stagnation and inertia pervading the Government of India throughout the late nineteenth century. Without the encouragement of a Ripon, the impetus for reform in Bengal seemed to fizzle out, renewed only in sputters and starts, mostly by the cautious and flexible MacDonnell. Yet in light of the creative initiatives begun during Ripon's tenure, only to be snuffed out by later conservative Viceroys and Secretaries of State, it seems slightly a misplacement of blame for Curzon to constantly lambaste the bureaucrats as the fountainhead of inaction in the Government of India. Curzon believed himself to be the only man in India willing to initiate change. "When you urge me to delegate more authority to my subordinates," he told Hamilton, "I confess I think that you hardly realise how quickly such a proceeding on my part would bring the whole machine to a stand-still." The press, he said, supported his reforms, (*i.e.*, administrative secretariat reforms) "but the departments. . . from sheer crassness and torpor, are averse from all initiative and devoted to the worship of the *status quo*."⁴³² Hamilton wondered whether twenty five years of service in India had not perforce sapped high officials of needed strength, and noted that "with the exception of MacDonnell, all the older officials in India who have recently returned, and whom I have met, seem to me to be quite played out."⁴³³ To be fair, however, he might have added that the whole apparatus of government in India during the late nineteenth century had operated in a fashion inimical to creativity among subordinates, and certainly,

432. Curzon to Hamilton, Camp, Spring 1901, H.C.

433. Hamilton to Curzon, 2 May 1901, H.C.

Curzon had done nothing himself to loosen the steel framework of obsequiousness. His disposal of Cotton was a particularly ignominious example of his penchant for crushing any spark of independent action or thought among subordinates. Curzon's hypocrisy appears all the more insidious because Cotton had exposed the Government inertia in the particularly sensitive area of race-relations, a problem which, as Curzon acknowledged, "has wrecked many a man's career, and I have never desired that it should ruin mine."⁴³⁴

For several reasons, clearly not all the fault of the I.C.S., the style and pace of policy formulation in the late nineteenth century showed the Covenanted Civil Service to be a notably weak instrument, its potential dulled by its collective responsibility to a hierarchy and ultimately to a Viceroy who knew little or nothing of India. In the case of individual officials, initiative was dulled by consciousness of censure and perhaps virtual oblivion for aberrant behaviour or proposals. Civilians had no desire to endanger their opportunity to rise above the common level and make a name for themselves in England. They lacked the independence derivative, in the case of elected officials, from a constituency or an electorate. Rather, they owed their soul to the company store. Looked at optimistically, through the perspective of Max Weber's ideal bureaucracy, this kind of behaviour might be labeled as "professionalization" defined by Weber as the process whereby officials become "subject to a code of professional ethics according to which the officials will faithfully execute the duties attending his office regardless of personal sentiments and disagreements with the policies involved."⁴³⁵ The definition does not, however, fit the realities of the I.C.S. It was not so much a "code of professional ethics" but rather a mechanism of professional incentive that guaranteed whatever cooperativeness existed in the ranks of

434. Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 23 Sept., 1903, H.C.

435. Max Weber's thesis on bureaucracy as expounded by Reinhard Bendix, "Bureaucracy and the Problem of Power," in *Reader in Bureaucracy*, ed. Robert Merton, *et al.*, p. 129. Professor Carl J. Friedrich has argued that Weber's concept of bureaucracy is both inaccurate and irrelevant. See Friedrich, "Some Observations on Weber's Analysis of Bureaucracy," in *Reader in Bureaucracy*, pp. 27 ff.

the Indian Civil Service. Furthermore, a study of the I.C.S. does not show that even the negative mechanism of incentives could bring about subordination of individual or group aims and animosities to the higher aim of a better government.

The case of the I.C.S. presents the anomaly that while it constituted the substance of political power in India, at the same time it was largely "incapable of determining how its power should be used."⁴³⁶ The bureaucratic structure *per se* was so constituted that it was essentially inimical to substantial or meaningful policy initiatives. Since the bureaucracy reigned but did little actually to rule India, one is left with George Orwell's perceptive comment that "the real backbone of the [British Indian] despotism [was] not the officials but the army. Given the army, the officials and the business men can rub along safely enough even if they are fools . . . a dull decent people, cherishing and fortifying their dullness behind a quarter of a million bayonets."⁴³⁷

Unable to rule, the energies of the I.C.S. were often dissipated in tedious and chimerical personal disputes which made it impossible for covenanted servants to unify behind a single concerted effort to achieve improvements or change. Somewhat paradoxically, status considerations not only kept officials in line, but also made them bitter enemies of each other. The landscape of late Victorian India is strewn with the debris of obstructive hostility among higher officials in India, including most notably the Elliott-MacDonnell battle, but also Mackenzie's jealousy of Elliott, Crosthwaite's dislike of his successor MacDonnell, the exploitation of Bernard's difficulties by both Crosthwaite and MacDonnell, and the various group controversies discussed in chapters three and four. The controversies discussed here constitute only a small fraction of the immeasurable dimensions of human jealousy and hostility which motivated covenanted civilians. The MacDonnell-Elliott controversy was doubtless the most intense and the most important in the late nineteenth century because its duration and outcome signaled the virtual end of attempts to implement the mild ennobling clauses of the 1885 Rent Bill.

436. Reinhard Bendix, "Bureaucracy and the Problem of Power," *Reader in Bureaucracy*, p. 129.

437. George Orwell, *Burmese Days*, pp. 60 f.

6

THE I.C.S. AND THE POLITICS OF INSECURITY

Adherence to the *status quo* was not only an important criterion for promotion applied to individuals; it also provided a cushion of security *vis-a-vis* various threats both to the Raj in general and to the I.C.S. in particular. In the *weltanschauung* of convened civilians, their own security and that of the Raj were interchangeable. It is nowadays a psychological truism that the need for security is "one of the most inclusive concepts of motivation," and that it embraces the desire to obtain certainty with respect to the attainment of "prestige and self-realization."¹ The perception of internal threats within India, especially disaffection of the emergent educated middle classes, augmented racist anxieties among British bureaucrats.

O. Mannoni's pioneering study of French colonialism and indigenous nationalism in Madagascar provides a paradigm of the correlation between psychological insecurity and racism in the colonial milieu. Mannoni portrays Shakespeare's Prospero and Defoe's Robinson Crusoe as literary archetypes of European colonialists. Like their fictional counterparts, the historical colonialists allegedly possess a fundamental urge to escape the inhibitions, frustrations, and guilt of their fractured childhood. They are immature neurotics and misanthropists who hope to find release in the simulated "solitude" of some foreign "island" where they may indiscriminately project onto the unknowing and helpless natives all the shortcomings which they secretly harbour in their own imagination.² The weakness of this analysis, from the standpoint of the historian, is the failure to provide any empirical evidence from case studies of the colonialists.

1. Laurance F. Shaffer and Edward J. Schoben, Jr., *The Psychology of Adjustment*, p. 91.
2. O. Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban; the Psychology of Colonization*, trans. Pamela Powesland, p. 103; also pp. 30 f, and 120.

Although the case of the British officialdom in India simulates Mannoni's model of racism as a compensation for inferiority, autobiographical literature does not corroborate Mannoni's reasons for the inferiority *per se*. The literature fails to reveal any unconscious stream of escapism among covenanted civilians in the late nineteenth century. Those who wrote accounts of their careers usually looked upon India, not as an escape, but rather as an exile to endure, a burden often imposed by parents, only reluctantly or perhaps unwillingly accepted by themselves in lieu of some more promising opportunity at home. Inferiority arose not from the unreconciled neuroses of childhood, but rather from the perceived status of covenanted civilians *vis-a-vis* other professions in England. The threat posed by the Indian educated classes to the vestiges of the I.C.S. status and authority intensified civilian insecurity and the racism that followed inevitably. Without the rigorous kinds of corroborative case histories and other evidence demanded of modern historiography, Mannoni's theory remains an interesting and valuable hypothesis to be modified and revised in light of a further historical study.

The Mutiny of 1857-58 was widely recognized as a major factor in the exacerbation of racial alienation during the first decade of competition recruitment.³ "The events of 1857," claimed W.J. Allen, member of the Board of Examiners of Bengal, "had tended to widen the distance between European functionaries and their Native neighbours, a result much to be deplored and one which is calculated, I think, to impair and weaken. . . the political and social influence of our government in this country."⁴ Across the total spectrum of civilian opinion and arising from the post-Mutiny insulation of officials there emerged the apprehension that anti-British hostility was pervasive among Indians. An equally prevalent opinion, voiced by Herman Kisch, held that there was no "power or means of combination among the natives of different parts of India such as would be necessary at the present time to give even a

3. See, e.g., Cotton, *Memories*, p. 66.

4. Minute by W.J. Allen, Member of Board of Revenue, Lower provinces, G. of I., Home, Jud., A., 47-70, March 1864., 62, N.A.I.

temporary success to a rebellion.”⁵ Nevertheless, premonitions of such a possible combination reinforced the insecurity of the civilians. The indigenous advocates of a thorough political change became the target of relentless denunciation and above by the covenanted civilians.

Disdain for Indians was often expressed by civilians in terms of the alleged inability of both educated and non-educated Indians to become adequately westernized, to fulfill the prognosis of the liberal imperialists as articulated by Macaulay and his entourage in the 1830's. Alfred Lyall gave vent to these feelings shortly before his retirement as Lieutenant-Governor of the N.-W.P.

I should like to have done something for the people [he told Dufferin]; I certainly have tried to do it, though I confess to a kind of latent pessimism with regard to the grand enterprize of civilizing India that leads me to regard the natives with something akin to pity.⁶

The failure of Indians to westernize in large numbers with rapidity not only offered rationalization for racist disdain but as well provided a cogent argument to maintain British hegemony of the civil service, an argument often voiced during the sessions of the Public Service Commission of 1887. In contrast to the impulsive optimism of the pre-Mutiny era, Justice West of the Bombay High Court glumly testified that:

“a different people cannot, in a generation or two of easygoing progress, take the exact impress that centuries of thought and suffering, of strife and compromise, have stamped on the English character.”⁷

English character and principles, concluded West, must remain dominant over the people of India in order to assure a more complete and fruitful assimilation of European ideas and principles.

Anglo-Indian racism, like racism everywhere, represented a combination of disdain, fear, and ignorance. It was especially

5. Kisch to his mother, Calcutta, 30 June 1888.

6. Sir A.C. Lyall, L.-G. of N.-W.P., to Dufferin, 20 Nov., 1887, D.V.P.

7. Written testimony of Raymond West, Justice of the High Court of Bombay, in *Proceedings of the Public Service Commission*, IV, Section III, p. 213.

their fear or insecurity motivating officials to regard and prospect of change, whether political, social, administrative, or otherwise, as a threat to the fragile equilibrium of imperial control. Three emergent threats of the late nineteenth century, including criticisms from the aristocracy at home, increasing scrutiny from Liberal democratic forces in Parliament, and most importantly the vituperative protest of the growing educated classes in India, added significantly to the insecurity of the covenanted civilians. Their insecurity and ancillary defensiveness constituted a mirror image of the fragility and brittleness permeating the Raj at the end of the nineteenth century.

The expanded electoral franchise in England interjected an increasingly critical voice into Parliamentary debates concerning India. There was a premonition in the Government of India that it would be hamstrung by the forces of democracy among M.P.'s. In the words of the Earl of Kimberley, Secretary of State in Gladstone's Liberal cabinets, Great Britain had "to solve the great problem whether a democratic House of Commons can long retain an Empire such as India." He expressed "dread" concerning "the instability of temper and the hysterical moods which the nation is subject to, and which seem to me incompatible with the maintenance of a world-wide Empire."⁸ The sentiments of the rank and file of civilians concerning M.P.'s who cultivated favour among the Indian critics of the bureaucracy were epitomized in the reactions of Herman Kisch to the fortunes of Gladstone in 1886. Speaking of Gladstone's victory in February, Kisch, "like the majority of Anglo-Indians, [was] much grieved at the downfall of the Conservatives;"⁹ the collapse of the Government only a few months later on the question of Home Rule for Ireland evoked the comment that "people here are much pleased at the result of the division."¹⁰ Sir Fitzjames Stephen, a quondam critic of the civilians but a champion of the empire, expressed alarm at Gladstone's victory of 1880, and decried the tendency of many in Gladstone's party to view "our position in India" as "at best

8. Kimberley to Dufferin, India Office, 19 March, 1886, D.V.P.

9. Kisch to a brother, Calcutta, 9 Feb., 1886.

10. Kisch to a brother, Darjeeling, 10 June, 1886.

that of a set of penitent thieves, or receivers of stolen goods,"¹¹ and their refusal in Indian affairs to accept the advice of aristocratic imperial protagonists.

For the most part, however, the fears of civilians and other imperialists concerning the potential obstructiveness of Parliament did not appear to be substantiated by the course of events in the late nineteenth century. The Government of India found itself quite capable of dodging the brickbats hurled by radical M.P.'s. In June 1893, Lansdowne expressed dismay that the Liberal ministry had allowed a resolution for simultaneous I.C.S. examination to be debated and passed by the Commons, noting that "its effects here will be most mischievous" and that "our small Civil Service is a mere handful in the midst of the millions whom we have to govern, and it would be a calamity of the first magnitude if it were to be largely recruited from amongst the successful competitors of examinations held in this country."¹² "What you tell me as to the dead-set by Liberal M.P.'s., against our whole administration in India," he wrote Kimberley, "is very serious."¹³ He further lamented "the tendency to constant interference, and the continual meddling with purely local questions about which the House of Commons can know absolutely nothing."

Spokesmen among the covenanted civilians were equally concerned, and their views doubtlessly influenced the Viceroy's thinking on this matter. C.H.T. Crosthwaite, currently Lieutenant-Governor of the N.-W.P., asserted that if M.P.'s "think they have a perfectly docile and mild population to deal with, who can be perfectly well governed by Bengali Babus, or even natives of other provinces, they are mistaken." Crosthwaite vilified D. Naoroji, the Parsi Indian Nationalist, resident in London and himself a Liberal M.P. in the 1890's, as the most pestilential nuisance in the House of Commons, and expressed the conviction that the Government of India must ignore the House on the simultaneous examination question in order to maintain the rudiments

11. Stephen to Lytton, Cornwall Gardens, 16 May 1880, Stephen correspondence.
12. Lansdowne to Kimberley, 13 June 1893, L.V.P.
13. Lansdowne to Kimberley, Simla, 22 Aug., 1893, L.V.P.

of "British order, justice and good government" in India.¹⁴ While on furlough in 1888, A.P. MacDonnell clearly perceived the dilemma of the Indian Government created by the effects of its policies might have "on the condition of parties at home;" on the other hand, he also noted the strategy of "centralizing" Indian affairs in the India Office, a euphemism for diversion of Indian affairs from Parliament whenever necessary to minimize embarrassment to the Government of India.¹⁵ This was precisely the strategy advocated by the Viceroy himself, Lord Dufferin, who told the Under-Secretary, A. Godley, that "the India Office ought to take a bolder line with these tiresome gentlemen [*i.e.*, M.P.'s]." Dufferin believed that the Secretary of State, without reference to Parliament, should simply announce "that the Government of India has decided that such and such a course was the best mode of proceeding that the matter is entirely within their own jurisdiction. . ."¹⁶ This was the line of action adopted with regard to the Resolution of 1893, probably the most serious challenge from Parliament in the late nineteenth century. The ensuing events demonstrated clearly that the fears of the civilians had been considerably exaggerated and that Parliament was little more than a paper tiger in Indian affairs.

British Liberal opinion concerning imperial policy became more forceful and operative if represented within the Government of India itself rather than merely speaking inchoately from Whitehall. The viceroyalty of Lord Ripon is the most notable case in point. But even in this instance, liberalism foundered, due largely to the inertia and opposition of the civilian bureaucracy. Official opposition was all the more intense in light of Ripon's conscious encouragement of political development among the educated middle class.¹⁷ "It is Ripon's

14. C.H.T. Crosthwaite to Lansdowne, Camp, N.-W.P., 21 June 1893, L.V.P.
15. MacDonnell to Wallace, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Simla, 5 April 1888, D.V.P.
16. Dufferin to Godley, Calcutta, 13 Feb., 1888, Godley Collection.
17. See, *e.g.*, Kisch to a brother, Calcutta, 14 April 1880; D. Fitzpatrick, Chief Commissioner of Assam, to Wallace, Camp, 20 Feb., 1888, D.V.P.

chief title to statesmanship", writes S. Gopal, "that he realized the necessity of some form of partnership [and]... that the educated Indians were prepared to cooperate."¹⁸

Though there can be no doubt about civilian animus against Ripon's forward policy, nevertheless on specific issues officials moved cautiously and were compelled to pursue rather devious procedures to thwart the intentions of the Viceroy. Perhaps the most notable case in point was his program for the expansion of local self-government. This was the most significant of all measures undertaken by Ripon to liberalize the Government of India and gradually to introduce the educated class to the responsibilities of democratic institutions. Local self-government would, in time, "have expanded into a fully democratic state," according to Ripon.¹⁹ Officials who lead the rearguard action against the plan saw it largely as a further encroachment on the security and prestige of the British Raj.

Ripon initially presented his scheme as a logical extension of steps previously introduced by Lord Mayo who, in Ripon's own words, was "the real author of the self-government policy." The various pieces of municipal legislation enacted by provincial legislative councils during Mayo's time had widened the sphere of municipal usefulness and extended the elective principle.²⁰ Ripon tried to facilitate the acceptance of his own proposals by using the initiative of Lord Mayo as the *point d'appui* of his own more expansive recommendations. According to Ripon, Mayo's "scheme was allowed to languish and of late years, so far as I can make out, no efforts have been made to extend it or even to give it a fair trial."²¹

The "Resolution on Provincial Agreements," penned originally by Evelyn Baring and issued by the Government of India on September 30, alluded to the possibilities of further advancement, and according to Ripon, had excited favorable and enthusiastic response from what Ripon called the Indian "public."²² Ripon determined to ride the crest of this enthu-

18. Gopal, *Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon*, p. 223.

19. *Ibid.*, (of p. 266, here), p. 223.

20. E. Blunt, *The Indian Civil Service*, p. 95.

21. Ripon to Hartington, Simla, 14 July 1882, R.V.P.

22. *Ibid.*

siasm, and publicly announced that he “look[ed] upon the extension of self-government as the best means at the disposal of the Government of India at the present time of promoting and extending the political education of the people of this country,” a phrase hardly calculated to mitigate the fears of the hostile bureaucrats.²³

The Government of India announced the substance of Ripon’s innovations in a Resolution on Local Self-Government dated 18 May, 1882. Ripon gave priority to three points: first, the Local Boards “should always [contain] a large non-official element, and . . . the elective system should be introduced in some form or other;” second, that as regards the control to be maintained by the government over the Boards, it should be exercised from without rather than from within; and third, that “the Board . . . should also be entrusted under due supervision with the management of definite funds.”²⁴ A fourth principle was the commitment to extend local self-government as far as possible throughout rural areas as well as municipalities. Ripon gave special attention to the second of these four points; for despite adamant opposition from Ashley Eden, the retiring Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Ripon insisted that Local Boards would never flourish in the true intention of his proposals unless the Presidents of the Boards were chosen by Board members rather than being imposed by the government in the form of the District Magistrate.

The chief cause of the comparative failure of Lord Mayo’s measures and of the little interest which the natives took in the work of the existing Local Boards was to be found [according to Ripon] in the fact that those Boards were . . . overshadowed by the constant presence of the “burra sahib” of the district [*i.e.*, the District Magistrate].

In the immediate aftermath of the May 18 Resolution, Ripon wrote with naive optimism of the support his proposals had garnered. In a letter to the Secretary of State of May 25, 1882 he asserted that the Resolution “has been so far well received,” both by officials and by the press, with “only one article expre-

23. Speech of Ripon at Delhi, 5 Nov., 1881, quoted in *ibid.* (of p. 270, here).

24. Ripon to Hartington, Simla. 14 July 1882, R.V.P.

ssive of hesitation, and that is found in the Calcutta's *Englishmen*, which is a very conservative paper."²⁵ His mistaken estimate of official support may have been the result of his isolation in Simla and his closeness there to C. U. Aitchison, Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab who also spent his summers at Simla and who had already incurred the stigma of an advanced or radical liberal in the eyes of his civilian colleagues, particularly on the question of Indian employment in the civil service (see below). Equally misleading were the subservient ruminations of the Home Secretary, Alexander Mackenzie, who in answer to journalistic criticisms, probably written by "some young Sub-Divisional Officer," insisted that "good Boards can be had if the Government officers only earnestly set themselves to get such constituted."²⁶

Beyond the purview of the Viceroy, the cynical sentiments of rank and file officials, foreshadowing the denouement of the debate, were recorded by G. R. Elsmie in his diary: "I doubt whether he [Lord Ripon] knows very well what he is speaking about, and I prophesy that very little appreciable change on the face of affairs will result from the excitement of so-called self-government The difficulties," concluded Elsmie, "lie in the character of the people."²⁷ This observation served as a footnote to an equally cynical letter of Sir Robert Montgomery a former Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, who wrote that his comrades in London "are not impressed here with the wisdom of all that is generated [in Simla]:"

I write 'generated' [continued Montgomery] because great and momentous changes are proposed out of some one's brain, I don't know whose, and they are often deemed to be applicable to *all* India, without all India being consulted.²⁸

By the end of June, 1882, the cynicism of civilians, old and new, had become evident to Ripon. Lord Hartington,

25. Ripon to Hartington, Simla, 25 May 1882, R.V.P.

26. Mackenzie to H.W. Primrose, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Simla, 30 May 1882, R.V.P.

27. Note in Elsmie's Diary, 8 Nov., 1882, in Elsmie, *Thirty-Five Years in the Punjab*, p. 293.

28. Sir Robert Montgomery, former L.-G. of Punjab, to Elsmie, London, 12 July 1882, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 292.

Secretary of State, warned Ripon of opposition from retired civilians on the India Council. Sir Ashley Eden, recently elevated to the Council, believed that the Resolution “goes a great deal too far, and that even in Bengal. . . it will be impossible to give so much power to local bodies. . . without doing a great deal of mischief.”²⁹ In light of this caveat, Hartington told Ripon “that it will be desirable— and in this the Local Governments will probably help you— to make them [the Provincial local self-government schemes] as cautious and tentative as you can.”³⁰

What help Ripon received from the Local Governments was largely counter-productive in character. In effect, their inertia and diversionary tactics (added to their simultaneous campaign against the Ilbert Bill) practically compelled Ripon to abandon many of his cherished recommendations. Rivers Thompson, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, found some small latitude for further development of self-government in the already existing municipalities, but in the case of mofussil or district local boards, he thought “it would be wise statesmanship not to precipitate.”³¹ It was his conviction “that official opinion in the Districts will be decidedly hostile to the policy of local Boards as almost impracticable,” and particularly so if no provision had been made for “some sort of direct official supervision and control.” In place of autonomy and flexibility for local boards inherent in Ripon’s scheme, Thompson insisted on “the appointment of a Local Government Board in Calcutta analogous to that in London,” consisting of “an official President and two native non-official coadjutors.” This arrangement would guarantee close supervision by the government and also, through the inclusion of the non-official members, would deflect some of the criticisms of the Indian press and politicians. “A general power of reference to the Lieutenant-Governor from the central board” would establish the right of interference by the Lieutenant-Governor. Thompson believed it impossible to establish local boards in the mofussils successfully within the

29. Hartington to Ripon, India Office, 23 June 1882, R.V.P.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Thompson to Ripon, Darjeeling, 7 July 1882, R.V.P.

32. *Ibid.*

next ten or twelve years. He also wished to finagle the franchise in order to exclude the unemployed university students and graduates who indulged in chronic opposition to British rule.

Ripon and Baring staunchly resisted both of these latter modifications. As to Ripon's insistence on early establishment of local boards, Baring claimed that "ten years hence the political development of the country will have got on a long way farther than Thompson—or, as for that matter, most people in this country imagine." Regarding the franchise in Bengal, Baring easily perceived that "the object of [Thompson] is, manifestly, to exclude the 'penniless, spouting university student.'" Baring declared this to be unwise, since "whether we like or dislike the typical Baboo, the fact of his existence has to be recognized. . . . We had much better recognise his existence and give him a safety-valve for his spouting. . . ."33 Baring also disliked Thompson's proposal for a special Board of control, because such an agency "would be inclined to supervise to such an extent as to interfere unduly with the independent action of local bodies."34

Thompson withheld further opposition until January 1883, noting disparagingly in the meantime that he doubted "the genuineness of the Mofussil enthusiasm in the matter." "Support for Ripon's advanced plan" he thought, "was kept up very much by agitation from Calcutta."35 When finally required to submit his own proposals, Thompson continued to discount the significance of the vocal support for advance from the Bengali "baboo" as that of "people generally who, through education, have not much personal interest in the country." "The zemindars," he speculated, "as a body, I suspect, dislike it." He consequently insisted that any advance "must be very tentative," and he once more posited his central boards as the only feasible agency of supervision.

The effect of Thompson's persistence on the question of the central boards was not only to delay legislative progress in India

33. Baring, Finance Member of Viceroy's Council to Ripon, R.V.P. (Correspondence with people in India, 1882., 128a).

34. *Ibid.*

35. Thompson to Ripon, Darjeeling, 22 Oct., 1882, R.V.P.

but also to reinforce opposition of the India Council (especially of Ashley Eden) to any expansion of local self-government for Bengal. When Ripon finally intimated his grudging acquiescence in the Thompson proposal,³⁶ the India Council seized on his vacillation as further proof that the whole scheme had been misconceived. Recalling Ripon's earlier objection to Thompson's central board, the Secretary of State said that this weighed conclusively against acceptance of the Board to appease the Lieutenant-Governor. Kimberley noted the general displeasure of his Council with regard to Ripon's scheme. He thought he could manage to finesse the Council through appointment of a special committee on local government, chaired by himself; but hastened to remind Ripon "that it is important to humour them as far as possible."³⁷ In a letter of 1 June 1884, Kimberley once more suggested the difficulties of accepting legislation specially honed and hewn down to "humour" the "fancies" of Rivers Thompson.³⁸

No overt scheme of delay and diversion could have proven more successful in wrecking Ripon's Local Self-Government plan for Bengal than was the surreptitious collusion of the Lieutenant-Governor and the India Council. When Ripon informed his subordinates in India Council opposition about the Central Board idea, Thompson remarked, doubtless with his tongue in cheek, that this "necessarily involves further delay in the reconsideration of the position which the refusal entails."³⁹ In exploring the possible alternatives to the central board idea, Thompson in essence reverted to the position of his predecessor Eden, namely, that control by government must be maintained within the mechanism of self-government rather than simply being available outside:

... if the District Committee is to be established [in place of the Central Committee] as the controlling power over all the local Boards and Unions of the District, I have a very strong opinion that in Bengal the Magistrate must be at the head of it. . . . A District Committee

36. See, *e.g.*, Ripon to Thompson, Calcutta, 8 Jan., 1883, R.V.P.

37. Kimberley to Ripon, India Office, 21 March 1883, R.V.P.

38. Kimberley to Ripon, India Office, 1 June 1883, R.V.P.

39. Thompson to Ripon, Darjeeling, 1 May 1883, R.V.P.

without him would, if they did anything, very soon find out objects more attractive than were roads and bridges and schools and ferries. . .

Thompson then exploded with undisguised venom revealing the fundamental cause for opposition to Ripon's policy, namely the fear that the policy represented an irreparable erosion of British power and the encouragement of those who hoped to destroy it:

Our professional politicians [he said] would be quickly arrayed against all official authority. The position would be worked for the purposes of a distinct political character and as the engine for the attainment and for the promotion of ulterior designs. I, for one, do not consider Bengal (at least where the danger is greatest from the comparative advance in education) prepared for this.⁴⁰

Here was a strange inversion of earlier liberal thinking about political development in India. Whereas Macaulay, Trevelyan, and others had envisioned the spread of education as cause for political liberalization, Thompson saw it in exactly the opposite light, namely, as a reason for continued and strengthened autocratic control. Thompson ended his outburst with a shot at "the wretched Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill" (*i.e.*, the Ilbert Bill). The connection drawn between the Ilbert Bill and the local self-government scheme revealed the gnawing fear of British officialdom that Ripon intended generally to undermine their authority and therefore their prestige and security.

The Ilbert Bill crisis had in fact so weakened Ripon's administration that the major aspects of the local self-government program had to be modified in order to pacify the rebellious Lieutenant-Governor. In a letter to Thompson of 15 May 1883, Ripon declared himself willing to accept district boards chaired by the District Magistrates. "With respect to the presidency of the District Officer," he wrote, ". . . I am prepared to leave you a large latitude as to the course to be pursued in each particular district." The only remnant of his original proposal concerning this point was the inclusion of a mild enabling clause, "so drawn as to render legal the election or appointment

40. *Ibid.*, (of p. 275, here).

of a non-official chairman in any District in which the Local Government may think such an arrangement practicable or advantageous."⁴¹ In the fall of 1883, Ripon accepted still further changes to suit the whims of Thompson. When Thompson switched and decided to "control his Union Committees and Local Boards through the Commissioners of the Divisions, etc., rather than through a District Council," Ripon accepted without further discussion, meekly telling the Secretary of State that "a large discretion ought to be left upon such points to the Local Government who will have to work the system when it is established. . . ."⁴²

Bombay officials were much more openly obstructionist than those of Bengal.⁴³ Mr. Justice West of the Bombay High Court, in a note to James Gibbs concerning Ripon's proposals, stated bluntly that "the official class cannot but be in a great measure opposed to them."⁴⁴ Gibbs, a former Bombay official currently serving as Home Member of the supreme government, charged civilian members of the Bombay Council along with Sir James Fergusson, the Governor, as the major culprits. Gibbs had been informed that they hoped to do "as little as possible with regard to Local Self-Government," to which Ripon responded that "Ashburner [a chief civilian opponent] is a man of the oldest of old schools, who ruled everybody despotically when he was a District Officer. . . and firmly believes that is the only way of carrying on government in this country."⁴⁵

Ripon regarded the resolution of the Bombay Council on local self-government, published in the fall of 1882, as so reactionary and contemptible that its acceptance in London would make "my position here. . . quite untenable." Ripon pleaded for support from the Secretary of State against Bombay, indicated he would not create further problems for the remainder of his term, and confessed his desire to be liberated from the burden of India: "quite see now how little it is possible to

41. Ripon to Thompson, Simla, 15 May 1883, R.V.P.

42. Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 6 Oct., 1883, R.V.P.

43. Ripon to Hartington, Simla, 8 Sept., 1882, R.V.P.

44. West to J. Gibbs, quoted in Gibbs to Ripon, 24 June 1882, R.V.P.

45. Ripon to Hartington, Simla, 14 Sept., 1882, R.V.P.

be under the existing system, and I have not much heart left in me to fight against it."⁴⁶

As in Bengal, the major points of contention in Bombay included the questions of elected majorities and non-official presidents for the local boards or committees. Fergusson insisted that no one in Bombay, outside a few artificially inspired public meetings, could conceive the possibility of finding "unofficial Presidents" for any of the rural areas or for more than a handful of the municipalities. On the question of elected majorities for the Boards, Ripon's close associate, Major E. Baring, accused the Bombay government of being "absolutely retrograde insted of progressive." He noted that Bombay's proposals "provided that they [non-official members of the Local Boards] shall not exceed one-half, and they must not be less than one half." The possibility of a non-official majority at some future time "would require fresh legislation." In summary, Baring contended that the Bombay Bills had been "so framed as to render it almost impossible that the policy should succeed."⁴⁷ "At every turn of the two Bills," he concluded, "the power of government interference is brought in"

Ripon's best hope to break the logjam in Bombay was to secure the appointment to Fergusson's Council of a civilian who would be more ductile, perhaps a man who would understand that cooperation on this crucial issue might bring him to the same position of prominence in the supreme government currently held by his Bombay contemporary, J.G. Gibbs. The most promising candidate, J.B. Peile, had previously been associated with Gibbs, and his selection was clearly recognized by Fergusson as an effort to inject the influence of the supreme government more directly into the deliberations of his Council. Fergusson at first tried to prevent the appointment,⁴⁸ but when unsuccessful, said that he "exceedingly regret[ted] the appointment of Mr. Peile to this Council, as I think it is one of the greatest acts of injustice I have ever known, and I doubt if

46. Ripon to Hartington, Simla, 2 Oct., 1882, R.V.P.

47. Baring to J.B. Peile, Member of the Bombay Executive Council, Calcutta, 21 Dec., 1882, R.V.P.

48. Telegram from the Secretary of State to Viceroy, London, 25 Sept., 1882, R.V.P.

there is a member of the Bombay Civil Service, unless it is Mr. Hope, who will think otherwise."⁴⁹ Ripon, on the other hand, exulted in the Secretary of State's approval of Peile, and anticipated that "he will infuse some good sense into the Fergusson Government."⁵⁰

Peile's appointment gave the appearance of achieving the anticipated results. According to Peile's reports to Baring and to Gibbs, he had immediately taken command of the Local Self-Government legislation. He intended to reshape the Bombay Bills to provide "for elasticity and future extension."⁵¹ It was his purpose, he said, to bring Bombay in line with the policy of the supreme government. In a letter to Gibbs, Peile promised that the Bombay legislation would be "constructed on quite a different model, bringing simply to the front the independent sphere guaranteed to the people, leaving room for future concession, and so on."⁵²

By August, even Fergusson had, at least superficially, shown a great change in his attitude toward the self-government question. He wrote to Ripon calmly concerning the introduction of the revised Bills in his Council, and surprisingly praised Peile for making "a very good and felicitous speech in introducing the Bill, [though] perhaps rather more advanced in tone than I would have ventured on myself."⁵³ The reason for his moderation was quite clearly the fact that, despite Peile's semantic juggling, in actuality he had done little to alter the substance of Bombay's position. At the conclusion of a lengthy letter to the Viceroy's Private Secretary, explaining the enactment and implementation of the Bombay legislation, Peile noted casually that "the elected proportion in the Local Boards . . . will in the Rural Boards be one-half, which is generally in accordance with public opinion here, and the Presidents will for the first period be official, which was declared essential by

49. Fergusson to Ripon, Mahableshwar, 25 Oct., 1882, R.V.P.

50. Ripon to Hartington, Simla, 21 Oct., 1882, R.V.P.

51. Peile to Baring, Bombay 28 Dec., 1882, enclosure in Baring to Ripon, Calcutta, 1 Jan., 1883, R.V.P.

52. Peile's letter to Gibbs, quoted in J. Gibbs to Ripon, Calcutta, 6 Jan., 1883, R.V.P.

53. Fergusson to Ripon, Guneshkhind, 26 Aug., 1883, R.V.P.

the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha and other bodies.’⁵⁴ Peile had adroitly killed two birds with one stone. The provision for establishment of elected majorities and non-official presidents sufficed to placate Ripon and the supreme government—the Home Member thought Peile’s arrangements were “satisfactory”⁵⁵—while, on the other hand, the indefinite postponement of these provisions to some unspecified future date secured the cooperation of Fergusson and the Bombay bureaucracy. Peile’s causal assurances to his Bombay colleagues had no doubt exercised the needed tranquilizing effect.

Peile’s duplicity on the self-government issue was nothing more than a reflection of the true sentiments of his close friend and patron, James Gibbs, who after the advent of Lord Dufferin, openly recounted his own misgivings as to any serious implementation of the self-government program. In a minute dated 4 February 1885, Gibbs told Dufferin that “the measure cannot be got into full operation for some years; and in the meantime the dangerous subjects I have above alluded to [*i.e.*, the more advanced demands of the Indian politicians] will be shelved.” Gibbs was especially concerned to reassure Dufferin that “there need be no obligation to elect a non-official chairman,” but even if and when such a development might rarely be effectuated, Gibbs felt certain that the censorship powers of District Magistrates would be insuperable.⁵⁶ In effect, Peile had done nothing more than to understand and to follow the task adopted by Gibbs. In turn, he was rewarded by appointment as successor to Gibbs in the Home Memberships of the supreme government.

A.C. Lyall, the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces, was another of the prominent officials disturbed by the local self-government question. It is obvious, from his post-retirement correspondence, that he had long aspired to obtain a seat on the India Council. This obviously encouraged him to accept Ripon’s formula for local self-government. It is equally obvious that he had injected his proposals with subtle but

54. Peile to Primrose, Poona, 30 Sept., 1884, R.V.P.

55. Gibbs to Ripon, Simla, 22 Aug., 1884, R.V.P.

56. J. Gibbs, “Local Self-Government,” April 1883, enclosure in Gibbs to Dufferin, Calcutta, 4 Feb., 1885, D.V.P.

effective guarantees of I.C.S. supremacy in the infrastructure of local government. Ripon tried to minimize the less progressive features of Lyall's proposals, and told the Under-Secretary of State for India that Fergusson's attempt to use Lyall's alleged equivocation as a crutch for his own obstinacy was unjustified.⁵⁷ Yet only a month earlier on 10 January 1883 he had written to Lyall personally to upbraid him for proposing measures "which would preclude the Government of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh from carrying out my policy in its integrity anywhere."⁵⁸

While Ripon gently nudged Lyall toward more advanced legislation, at the same time he indicated his eagerness to find a *modus vivendi* for compromise between them: "I do not ask you to apply that policy fully to all parts of your Provinces whether they are fit for it or not . . . but I do not think it necessary that you should take power to do so when and where you can."⁵⁹ In consequence of this compromise, Lyall like Peile submitted enabling legislation which possessed a semblance of compliance with Ripon's formula,⁶⁰ but which for the foreseeable future preserved government control on district boards through ad interim appointment of the local chairmen and the selection of local board members by a "nominated electorate." Lyall in fact believed that all the local board presidents would inevitably be officials appointed by the government.⁶¹

Among all the provincial governments, only the Punjab and the Central Provinces submitted schemes conforming to Ripon's expectations. According to the Resolution of the Central Provinces, only one third of the local board members were to be nominated. The remainder would be representatives of the Village Headmen (mukuddams) elected by all the headmen of their "circle" and representatives of the mercantile, professional classes "chosen by a body of electors enrolled by the Deputy

57. Ripon to J.K. Cross, Under-Sec. of State for India, Calcutta, 8 Feb., 1883, R.V.P.

58. Ripon to A.C. Lyall, Calcutta, 10 Jan., 1883, R.V.P.

59. Ripon to Lyall, Calcutta, 10 Jan., 1883, R.V.P.

60. Lyall to Ripon, Benares, 14 Jan., 1883, R.V.P.; see also Ripon to Lyall, Calcutta, 10 Jan., 1883, R.V.P.

61. Kimberley to Ripon India Office, 15 June 1883, R.V.P.

Commissioner under of the orders of the Commissioner.”⁶² The resolution also enabled the local boards to elect their own non-official chairmen.

The precise reasons for the relative liberality of the C.P. proposals cannot be determined; but it is significant to note that they were formulated by C. H. T. Crosthwaite, Judicial Commissioner of the C.P., who undoubtedly saw this assignment as an opportunity to exploit his previous friendship with C.P. Ilbert. As suggested by Alexander Mackenzie, Crosthwaite’s transfer from the N.-W.P., to the C.P., during the previous viceroyalty had clearly indicated that, except for an extraordinary circumstance, he would have virtually no hope to reach the higher echelons of the bureaucracy. Crosthwaite’s cooperation with Ripon and Ilbert unquestionably helped to alter his fortunes. But in later decades, after the departure of the liberals who had raised him to a place of prominence, Crosthwaite also reverted to a reactionary stance in his resistance to liberalization of the legislative councils and to Indianization of the higher bureaucracy. In the meantime, however, Ripon’s judgement that Crosthwaite was “an officer of ability and experience”⁶³ indicates that his local self-government proposals had achieved their intended purpose. It seems hardly coincidental that within six months of his local self-government resolution, Crosthwaite was catapulted out of his C.P., *cul-de-sac* to become acting Chief Commissioner of Burma (from March 1883 to February 1884), a promotion which placed him directly on the path to the highest appointment in the Government of India (see previous chapters).

The most unrestrained civilian opposition to Local Self-Government came predictably from those who had least to fear namely the retired bureaucrats on the India Council at home. They swiftly registered their hostility to the C.P. Resolution. Sir A. Edcn., “why raises all the old points about the unfitness of natives for such a trust,”⁶⁴ had become the leading spokesman for the opposition. The various other coordinate

62. Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 21 May 1882, R.V.P.

63. *Ibid.* (of p. 281 here).

64. Thomas Hughes to Ripon, Country Court, Circuit 9, 4 Feb., 1883, R.V.P.

themes of imperial insecurity and racist arrogance were implicit in Eden's letter to Ripon, dated 17 August 1882:

I must say that the remembrance of the Mutiny . . . and with my knowledge of the shallowness and unreality of the cry of the so-called educated Bengalis, their extreme selfishness and unfitness to manage their own affairs, I do feel very strongly the importance of maintaining as strongly as possible the dignity, position, and influence of the representatives of the Government in the district.⁶⁵

The strength of India Council's opposition became clear in the despatch from the Secretary of State of 19 April 1883.⁶⁶ On the issue of elected representatives, the despatch proclaimed elections as "foreign" and "uncongenial to the habits and feelings of the mass of the people," and insisted that any elections must be confined to "a few localities in each province selected for superior fitness for the change." Kimberley also opposed Ripon's principle of control from without and contended that only officials should serve as presidents of the local boards.⁶⁷ Ripon threatened to resign "if I am unable to carry into effect the main principles of the policy which I believe to be best for the country. . ." ⁶⁸ Kimberley still insisted that "we have to provide for the security and efficiency of our administration," and claimed this could only be done by continuing the "direct participation" of District Magistrates in local affairs.⁶⁹ In the end Ripon contented himself with weak enabling legislation submitted by Bombay and the N.-W.P.

The Ilbert Bill crisis weighed heavily on Ripon's decision to compromise on local self-government. In May 1883, less than a month before his acceptance of the local self-government compromise, Ripon confessed to the Secretary of State that the Ilbert Bill had placed "the bulk of the non-official European community on this side of India. . . in hostility to the Govern-

65. Sir Ashley Eden, Member of the India Council, to Ripon, India Office, 17 Aug., 1882, R.V.P.; see also Eden to Ripon, London, 1 June, 1883, R.V.P.

66. Despatch, 19 April 1883, S. of S. to G.-G. in Council, quoted in Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 21 May 1883, R.V.P.

67. *Ibid.*

68. Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 21 May 1883, R.V.P.

69. Kimberley to Ripon, India Office, 15 June 1880, R.V.P.

ment.”⁷⁰ He was particularly chagrined that “not a few officials adopt the tone of ‘society’, while others who would be as brave as lions in a mutiny. . . are as timid as mice in a political disturbance like the present.”⁷¹

The Bill to Amend the Code of Criminal Procedure, in common parlance called the Ilbert Bill for the Law Member who carried it through the Council, had its genesis in a letter of Mr. B.L. Gupta, one of the few Indian members of the covenanted service. Gupta protested at the restriction of the 1872 code disqualifying Indian district or sessions court judges from exercising jurisdiction over Englishmen in the mofussil or interior regions of India. Ashley Eden, the retiring Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, had forwarded Gupta’s letter to Ripon with the suggestion that this anomaly should be eliminated.⁷² An initial inquiry revealed that most provincial governments of British India substantially supported Gupta and Eden. Of the eight governments consulted, only the obscure Chief Commissioner of Coorg unequivocally rejected Eden’s suggestions.⁷³ In February 1883, Ripon and Ilbert introduced appropriate legislation “to remove at once and completely from the code every judicial disqualification which is based merely on race distinctions.”⁷⁴ Non-official opposition to the Bill, led and incited primarily by Anglo-Indian barristers⁷⁵ and commercialists, mushroomed spontaneously after the introduction of the Bill. Ripon, however, refused to withdraw the Bill, and once more solicited the opinions of the local governments. The results of this second inquiry were disappointing to the

70. Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 8 June 1883, R.V.P.

71. Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 21 May 1883, R.V.P.

72. Horace A. Cockerell, Sec. to the Government of Bengal, to Sec. to G. of I., Calcutta, 20 March 1882, *Correspondence on the Subject of the Proposed Alteration of the Provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure*, p. 7.

73. See Major H. Wylie, Sec. to Chief Commissioner of Coorg, to Sec. to G. of I., 16 May 1882, in *ibid.*, p. 18.

74. Speech of Ilbert in Viceroy’s Legislative Council, 2 Feb., 1883, J. and P. Series, 1883., 401, p. 40, I.O.L.

75. S. Gopal has shown the significant role played in the Ilbert Bill dispute by disgruntled barristers. See Gopal, *Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon*, p. 138.

Viceroy. In the interval between the first and second inquiries official opinion had been greatly affected by the vitriolic Anglo-Indian opposition, highlighted by large protest gatherings and strongly worded petitions. Among the 276 official respondents to the second inquiry, only 45 gave assent to the Bill, 185 denounced it, and the remaining 43 suggested crippling modifications.⁷⁶

Such pusillanimous behaviour suggests yet another important dimension of the insecurity so evident in the mentality of British officialdom in India, namely their concern to maintain a solid front with their fellow expatriates, especially those of the Anglo-Indian commercial community. Lord Harris, Governor of Bombay, spoke for his civilian subordinates when he told Lord Elgin that "what English statesmen must learn to recognize is that whilst a native mutiny is serious, a white mutiny is doubly so. We have got a terribly big job out here, and we must have at least the English garrison behind us."⁷⁷ It is more than likely that the opposition of the Anglo-Indian commercialists had encouraged officials to vent attitudes that they had secretly held from the beginning. At any rate, the important influence of non-official protest in swaying the opinions of the civilians was epitomized in the memorandum of Mr. Justice Scott, member of the Bombay High Court:

Had I been asked to express an opinion on this matter six months ago, I should have minuted in its favour without hesitation; but the unofficial class in India is a most important body and its opinion, when expressed with force and unanimity, as it has been in this matter, deserves careful consideration.⁷⁸

The evaporation of official resistance to Anglo-Indian pressures was evident in the growing consensus among civilians for the withdrawal of the Bill. Opinions ranged from the cautiously worded a p p e a l of Charles Elliott, Chief Commissioner of

76. See G. of I, to S. of S., Simla, 10 Aug., 1883, J. and P. Series, 1883 1516, I.O.L.

77. Lord Harris to Elgin, Bombay, 10 Feb., 1895, E.V.P.

78. Memorandum by Scott, enclosed in and added to letter from Government of Bombay to S. of S., 18 May 1883, J. and P. Series, 1883., 951, I.O.L.

Assam.⁷⁹ to the undisguised venom of Rivers Thompson who wished that "the wretched Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill. . . had been withdrawn in March."⁸⁰ At both ends of the spectrum of official criticism, all were agreed that continuation or widening of the alienation between government and non-official Europeans would be disastrous for the security of the Raj. "I venture to think," wrote Elliott, "that the Government of India cannot separate itself from the feelings, or do without the support, of the English community in India."⁸¹ The collapse of official resolve under the weight of Anglo-Indian animus in the case of the Ilbert Bill represented both the acme and the potential of Anglo-Indian obstructiveness in the late nineteenth century.

The virtual absence of other such dramatic eruptions was in large part due to the fact that the Viceroys were usually as cautious as their subordinates not to cross the British commercial interests. A classic case in point was Curzon's concession to the tea planters of Assam and the sacrifice of the reforming Chief Commissioner, H. J. S. Cotton, who had publicized the malfeasances of the tea industry (discussed briefly in the preceding chapter). Concerning the Ilbert Bill, Ripon agreed with Kimberley's judgement that civilians had displayed a "lamentable want of backbone," and had lacked the "moral courage" necessary to withstand the onslaught of the commercialists:

. . . a quarrel between the Government and the Anglo-Indian non-official community (said Ripon) is productive . . . of a good deal of administrative inconvenience and friction, so that it is not very surprising that there has been a wide-spread tendency among District Officers and even among higher functionaries to bend to the storm and recommend absolute concessions.⁸²

The Home Member epitomized civilian opinion in calling for a generous compromise, even though he realized that "such a compromise means an avowal of defeat."⁸³ The immediate

79. Elliot to Ripon, 28 March 1883, R.V.P.

80. Thompson to Ripon, Darjeeling, 1 May 1883, R.V.P.

81. Elliot to Ripon, 28 March 1883, R.V.P.

82. Ripon to Kimberley, Simla, 6 Oct., 1883, R.V.P.

83. S.C. Bayley, Member of Viceroy's Council, to Ripon, Calcutta, Dec., 1884, R.V.P.

result of civilian cowardice was the mutilation of the Ilbert Bill. Though the final enactment retained a theoretical equality of jurisdiction for Indian judges, this was virtually nullified by provisions for transfer of cases from one jurisdiction to another by guarantee of an adequate supply of unconvenanted Englishmen as temporary J.P.'s to handle Anglo-Indian litigation in the mofussils, and by assuring that English defendents appearing before Indian judges (a highly unlikely possibility in the light of other provisions) could demand a jury with half the bench full of Europeans.⁸⁴

Somewhat in the fashion of Hegelian dialectics, the Ilbert Bill agitation of 1883 and 1884, aimed as it was against the new Indian educated class, became a major catalyst for the formation of the Indian National Congress at the end of 1885.⁸⁵ The Congress spoke for the emergent educated class of Indians whom Lord Ripon had regarded as the vanguard of political development and who should be encouraged in order to facilitate gradual orderly change of policy and to avoid destructive confrontations.⁸⁶

British officialdom, however, had turned against Ripon's constructive approach and viewed the Congress with the same pathological mixture of arrogance and apprehension which consistently colored all their relationships with the Indian populace. On the one hand, officials publicly and confidently caricatured the Congress as a miniscule and an unrepresentative body of the talkative but incompetent politicians, on the other hand, they persistently indulged in efforts to minimize or discredit the Congress.

The interpretation of Congress as an unrepresentative body was inspired by civilians at the top level. It became crystallized as an instinctive response to the Congress after Lord Dufferin's

84. S. of S. to G.-G. in Council, 8 Nov., 1883, Judicial Despatch 10, 1883, J. and P. Series, 10, I.O.L.; and *Report of the Select Committee on the Bill to Amend the Code of Criminal Procedure*, J. and P. Series, 17 Jan., 1884., 326, I.O.L.

85. For a discussion of these and related issues regarding the genesis of the Congress, see Briton Martin, *New India*, passim; especially, pp. 15 and 42.

86. Election Speech of Lord Ripon in *London Times*, 11 Nov., 1885, quoted in Martin, p. 276.

ringing condemnation of the Congress as a "microscopic minority" at the annual St. Andrew's day dinner shortly before his departure at the close of 1888. Dufferin's outburst reflected the increasing enmity between himself and A. O. Hume, a disgruntled retired civilian currently serving as General Secretary or overseer and coordinator of the Congress activity. Embittered by his hostile exchanges with A.O. Hume, Dufferin seized at the advice of J.B. Peile, acting Home Member of his Council, who counselled him to ignore the Congress in consideration of pending reforms "since it did not represent the important interests of British-Indian society, the Native Princes and Nobles, the agricultural and landed interests, the Army, Commerce."⁸⁷ Having got identical advice from other leading civilians, including S. C. Bayley and Auckland Colvin,⁸⁸ Dufferin accordingly concluded his Indian career with his scathing attack on the Congress.⁸⁹

Dufferin's speech encouraged and legitimized the anti-Congress sentiments of the civilians. His words continued to be the instinctive response of civilians to Congress agitation for years after his departure. Auckland Colvin, Lieutenant-Governor of the N.-W.P., looked upon that speech as exercising the phantom of nationalism from the centre stage of Indian political development:

I hope [wrote Colvin in applauding the speech] I may venture to say how glad I am to see that you have rebuked that evil genius of Indian aspirations, Hume. Your remarks will carry confusion into the ranks of the intoxicated train which follows this modern Dionysus in his new conquest of India. . . ⁹⁰

Lower down in the hierarchy, Herman Kisch also emphasized the significance of Dufferin's address, and claimed that:

until Lord Dufferin's speech there was a fear that Lord Lansdowne might commit himself to support the Congress soon after his arrival. This [Kisch concluded] Lord Dufferin has effectually prevented by his speech. . . ⁹¹

87. Peile to Dufferin, 2 Oct., 1887, D.V.P.

88. Martin, pp. 333 and 334.

89. *Ibid.*

90. Colvin to Dufferin, Camp, 3 Dec., 1888, D.V.P.

91. Kisch to his sister, 4 Dec., 1888.

During discussions of 1899 concerning reform of Presidency government, C. M. Rivaz Home Member of the Council, employed, by then a well-worn cliché, of ignoring the Congress:

Why should any regard be paid to the feelings of the Congress? We know that it is in no sense a representative National Body as it claims to be, and that it is, if not absolutely and actively disloyal to the British Government in this country, at all events far from friendly towards it.⁹²

The caricaturizing of the Congress by civilians had been ably facilitated by the erratic career of its eccentric Anglo-Indian founder, himself a former civilian, A.O. Hume. It became common place to regard Hume's heretical political involvements as personal retaliation for the abolition of his post as Secretary of the Revenue, Agriculture, and Commerce Department and his subsequent demotion in 1879 to a junior post in the N.-W.P. Board of Revenue. The Government of India revived the Central Revenue Secretariat in 1881, but gave the leading position to E.C. Buck. Hume retired from the service altogether in the following year. "The *real* reason why Lytton abolished the separate agricultural department," asserted Lord Ripon, "was that he quarrelled with Hume, who was then Secretary, and chose this mode of getting rid of him!"⁹³ It was inevitable that Hume's political idiosyncrasies should be regarded among civilians as the bitter fruit of his professional misfortunes. "He was," wrote Bampfylde Fuller, "not unnaturally bitterly hurt. . . and devoted his time and money to energizing the non-official intelligentsia of India with political hostility to the State."⁹⁴ Other disaffected civilians, claimed Fuller (referring to H. J. S. Cotton and William Wedderburn), had followed in the steps of Hume; so "it was not too much to say that the idea of Indian nationalism was named and baptized under the sponsorship of the Indian Civil Service."⁹⁵

92. Rivaz to W.R. Lawrence, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Simla, 8 July 1899, C.V.P.

93. Ripon to Hartington, Calcutta, 12 March 1881, R.V.P.

94. Fuller, *Some Personal Experiences*, p. 62.

95. *Ibid.*

In retrospect, it appears that arrogant depreciation of the Congress served to assuage deep misgivings among the officials concerning the intentions of the Indian political organizations. In fact, official correspondence in the years immediately following the establishment of the Congress reveals a desperate search for ways and means to smother the emergent opposition. Sir S. C. Bayley, while Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in the late 1880's, confessed to the Viceroy that the Indian political leaders "are not a *quantite negligeeable*," and he feared that "the mass meetings promise to turn their attention to the rents, and we may have hereafter to meet a 'no rent' agitation."⁹⁶ Much as he disliked an official recognition of the agitators, he feared the consequences of ignoring them completely, and so in May 1887 agreed to receive a deputation from the Indian Association in order to "find out what they really want in the first instance."⁹⁷ He also hopefully envisioned the termination of zamindari financial support for political organizations if they became involved in or associated with agricultural disturbances.

Encouragement of divisive currents within Indian society became a touchstone of I.C.S. strategy for handling the nascent political organizations. Bayley counselled the Viceroy to "try to separate. . . the leaders of the old school of Bengali society" from the members of Hume's entourage. He specifically designated the "Mahomedan element" as one of the chief targets for the suggested approach.⁹⁸ Justice J. O'Kinealy of the Calcutta High Court had already pointed out that Muslims in Bengal "though strongly tempted by the Baboos" had thus far refrained from association with the Hume party, and he strongly urged that they be rewarded by the appointment of a second Muslim to the High Court. "Besides," he added, "you really want two Mahomedans as much as two

96. Bayley to Sir D.M. Wallace, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Belvedere, 1 May 1887, D.V.P., a similar fear is expressed in a letter from James White, Collector and Magistrate of Benares, to W.C. Bennett, Sec. to Government, N.-W.P. and Oudh, Benares, 30 Dec., 1888, enclosed in a letter from Colvin to Wallace, 15 January 1889, L.V.P.

97. Bayley to Wallace, 1 May 1887, D.V.P.

98. Bayley to Dufferin, 20 June 1886, D.V.P.,

Hindus.”⁹⁹ Both S.C. Bayley and C.P. Ilbert heartily concurred in this line of reasoning.¹⁰⁰

Despite scattered references,¹⁰¹ it is difficult to trace the development of any blueprinted *divide et impera* policy of the Government of India in relation to latent Hindu-Muslim hostilities, at least prior to the partition of Bengal. But in relation to the partition and subsequent reconstruction of other provinces, the manipulation of both communal and regional divisions obviously played a dominant part. Viceroys before Curzon seemingly avoided direct tampering with communal animosities; for, as Dufferin observed to Lord Cross on 4 January 1887, “such a policy would in the long run recoil upon our own heads.”¹⁰² Dufferin insisted that Muslim abstention from the Congress had been “entirely in accordance with their own views of what is politic, and not at all under any pressure from the officials.”¹⁰³ It is clear, however, that civilians all along had viewed Muslim hostility to Congress as highly favourable to their own security and that of the Raj. Hume argued that Muslim opponents, including Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and the Mahrajah of Benares, were “merely a small clique,” but in the aftermath of Sir Syed Ahmed’s attack on the Congress in December of 1887 and March of 1888, it appeared that these claims would not hold water. Referring enthusiastically to Sir Syed’s December speech, Hermann Kisch claimed that “there are or rather were a few Mohammedans at the Congress [Madras, 1887] but most of the Mohammedan societies and communities declined to join the Congress and the whole affair was got up by Hindus and in the main by Bengalis.” The meaning of all this was self-evident: “the jealousy between

99. O’Kinealy to C.P. Ilbert, Calcutta, 26 April 1886, enclosure in Ilbert to Wallace, 6 May 1886, D.V.P.

100. Ilbert to Wallace, 6 May 1886, D.V.P.

101. In a letter dated 9 Aug., 1893, *e.g.*, Lord Lansdowne told MacDonnell, acting L.-G. of Bengal, that he had made note of ‘ what you have said as to the bias in favour of Mohammedans exhibited by some of your officers.’ Lansdowne to MacDonnell, Simla, 9 Aug., 1893, L.V.P.

102. Dufferin to Cross, Calcutta, 4 Jan., 1887, D.V.P.

103. *Ibid.*

the different religions and races is of-course a good sign so far as the continuance of our power is concerned. . . .”¹⁰⁴

Auckland Colvin, Lieutenant-Governor of the N.-W.P., a most outspoken civilian critic of the Congress, saw the Muslim diffidence as a positive proof of that theory that a ‘national’ movement is absurd in India. The “Muhammedans as a body,” he wrote to Dufferin, “will not adopt a movement initiated by the Hindus, and they detest the claim of the Hindu, whom they dispossessed centuries ago, to return in whatever guise, to power.”¹⁰⁵ Colvin’s claims about the Muslims did not in any way mitigate his fears as to the spread and intensification of Congress propaganda, especially in his own Province in the months preceding the 1888 session of the Congress at Allahabad. Colvin contended that “the question of leaving its [the Congress’] methods uncontrolled seems to me to open more serious consideration.”¹⁰⁶

One tangible evidence of invidious effort to use religious communalism against Congress during the late nineteenth century is contained in a curious memorandum on the North-West frontier policy written by A. C. Lyall in 1890 after his retirement from India. It is notable that this private memorandum undercuts the official minimization of the Congress. “Although the Congress movement may. . . seem somewhat inevitable,” wrote Lyall, “it. . . may become as dangerous to India as a Russian invasion.” What was required in the North-West frontier, therefore, would be a policy to eliminate simultaneously both the external threat of a Russian invasion and the internal weakness arising from the possible Congress agitation. This could be best done by giving encouragement to Muslim sentiment through the establishment of “a purely Mohamedan trans-India Province.”

From the ignorance and character of its inhabitants [continued Lyall], it would, for years to come, be safe from such infections [*i.e.*, Congress]. The same influences would not affect it as have elsewhere developed immature

104. Kisch to a Brother, Calcutta, 2 Jan., 1888.

105. Sir Auckland Colvin, L.-G. of N.-W.P., to Dufferin, Naini Tal, 25 May 1888, D.V.P.

106. Colvin to Dufferin, Naini Tal, 27 April 1888, D.V.P.

political ideas. . . . It is perhaps opportune that affairs on the Frontier should now allow us, without any appearance of partiality, to establish a Mohamedan counterpoise in the shape of a separate Trans-Indus province, and to confirm and utilize the judgment of the Indian Musalmans, in recognizing the Congress movement as identifying their interests with our own.¹⁰⁷

Lyall's suggestion adumbrated a policy aggressively pursued by Lord Curzon who established not only the Frontier Province in the North West but who also had been influenced by the same logic to partition the province of Bengal.

A much more obvious clue to I.C.S., apprehensions concerning the Congress were orders prohibiting the participation of Government employees (British as well as Indian) in the meetings or activities of Congress and other political organizations. This decision entailed a protracted discussion in Dufferin's administration in which the liberally inclined Aitchison found himself outnumbered by a solid phalanx of reactionary colleagues. Although there had been preliminary discussions on the issue prior to 1888, it was not until Alexander Mackenzie's letter to the Government of India, on 31 August 1888, that a definitive policy was formulated. Mackenzie said that the Congress had recently been active establishing several branches in his own bailiwick, the Central Provinces, and that lower echelon employees, tehsildars and moonsiffs, "have attended the meetings and 'assisted' in raising the required subscriptions." "Surely," he concluded, "it is time the Government of India directed that no Government officer shall take part in the proceedings of any political association or organization, or in any combination of these for the purpose of bringing representations before the Government."¹⁰⁸ The Home Secretary, A.P. MacDonnell was reluctant to suggest total prohibition of involvement in any political activity—"any repressive action of the Government towards them would certainly fail and rebound

107. Memorandum by A.C. Lyall on North-West Frontier Policy, 1890, in Benares papers, Oxford.

108. Alexander Mackenzie, Chief Commissioner, C. P., demi-official, to A. P. MacDonnell, Home Sec., G. of I., the Residency, Nagpur, 31 Aug., 1888, G. of I., Home, Public, A., 54-55, April 1890, N.A.I.

to its discredit"—but he considered it fully justifiable for Government to condemn and outlaw any involvement of Indian subordinates "in the public discussion of questions which involve a radical change in our system of government or raise race and religious issues." Furthermore, he believed it incumbent on government to outlaw collection of contributions by government personnel "to support political agitation of any kind whatever."¹⁰⁹

Serious differences arose, however, between MacDonnell's superior officers in the Home Department, and in particular with C. U. Aitchison, and A. R. Scoble, the non-covenanted Legal Member of the Viceroy's Council. Scoble advocated swift and decisive action to stop all affiliation of Indian subordinates with the Congress, first and foremost because it was "immensely important that those servants should not be allowed, by taking part in political movements which have not the sanction of the Government, to create false impressions in favour of those movements. . . ."¹¹⁰ Aitchison cautioned against any rash pronouncements. After all, he contended, "the government has not yet formally pronounced an opinion even as to the Congress; and although its methods may be considered highly objectionable, is government prepared to say that all its objects are disapproved?"¹¹¹ The fallout was a compromise "calling attention to the desirability of [local government'] issuing such orders as will effectually stop the collection of subscriptions by public servants for the promotion of political purposes."¹¹² Nothing had yet been said about the other varieties of political activity.

This government policy became more stringent after the retirement of C. U. Aitchison. Activated by the attractively zealous anti-Congress orders of the Madras Government, dated 20 November 1889, calling on all government employees to "refrain from participating in meetings and demonstrations at which the measures or policy of Government are likely to be in any way discussed."¹¹³ A.P. MacDonnell and his new superior,

109. Note by MacDonnell, 8 Sept., 1888, *ibid* (of p. 293 here).

110. Note by A.R. Scoble, Law Member, 11 Sept., 1888, *ibid*.

111. Note by C.U. Aitchison, Home Member, 14 Sept., 1888, *ibid*.

112. Order in Council, 20 Sept., 1888, *ibid*.

113. Order by the Government of Madras, 933 (Public), 20 Nov., 1889, *ibid*.

officer, P.P. Hutchins, now advocated a universal policy of equal severity. MacDonnell readily acknowledged that the Madras orders "have a much wider scope than was suggested in our demi-official of 22 October," but in contrast to the usual alarm displayed at other irregularities of the minor presidencies, MacDonnell saw "no objection whatever—quite the contrary—to the Madras orders, and I think that other Governments might confidentially be asked to follow suit."¹¹⁴ MacDonnell's proposal passed through the Home office en route to the Viceroy without hindrance. Hutchins agreed that the Government of India should not approve its officers taking a prominent part at the political meetings. . . .¹¹⁵ Government of India issued new orders in this vein on 21 January 1890.

An important test case, leading to refinement of these orders, arose in connection with the 1890 session of the Congress. Invitations and tickets of admission sent by the Congress Secretary to many Bengal officials, including the Lieutenant-Governor, precipitated the debate. The Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Charles Elliott, saw the invitations as a provocative effort to subvert the orders of March 1890, and he hastily informed the Reception Committee of the Congress that the orders "definitely prohibited the presence of the government officials."¹¹⁶ Congress moved to use Elliott's indiscrete interpretation as a means to weaken the government prohibition. Both, Pherozechah Mehta the Bombay Parsi chosen to be President of Congress for 1891, and A.O. Hume charged that Elliott had "altogether misinterpreted these (the March 1890) orders," and they requested clarification from the Viceroy,¹¹⁷ while Elliott and others "take advantage of this standing rule (March 1890) to paralyse the efforts of those friendly to us. . . .," yet the government "in no way enforces this rule against those hostile to us, but winks at their stirring up an anti-Congress movements. . . . deliberately trying to stir up ill blood between

114. Note by MacDonnell, 17 Jan., 1890, *ibid* (of p. 294 here).

115. Note by P.P. Hutchins, Home Member, 20 Feb., 1890, *ibid*.

116. Elliott to Lansdowne, Belvedere, 2 Jan., 1891, L.V.P.

117. Pherozechah Mehta to Lansdowne, Calcutta, 2 Jan., 1891, L.V.P.; A.O. Hume to J. C. Ardagh, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Calcutta, 4 Jan., 1891, L.V.P.

the different sections of the community and using the whole of their official power and influence to oppose the movement." Hume believed that "three quarters of the European mofussil officials"¹¹⁸ had engaged in these obstructive tactics. Hume noted the potentially gratifying benefits of the pending imbroglio for the fortunes of the Congress. The opposition to Elliott's orders had enlivened the Congress and had reportedly encouraged financial aid from several quondam supporters who could only be stirred during the times of a controversy. "Were I a party man (wrote Hume) I should rejoice; opposition, struggle, is the life-blood of a political party, as such. . . it is not too much to say that these orders of Elliott will have been worth half a lakh to us. . . ." ¹¹⁹

The Viceroy first tried to skirt the issue by making a distinction between the Bengal circular and the letter of Elliott's secretary which accompanied it. "It is. . . admitted," wrote Ardagh, the Viceroy's private secretary, "that Mr. Lyon's note went too far in. . . 'definitely prohibiting' the presence of Government officials at such meetings as were recently held at Calcutta." The circular itself, however, did "not prohibit attendance," and therefore "was clearly not *ultra vires*."¹²⁰ Hume and the Congress remained dissatisfied, and continued to extract whatever publicity was possible from a Viceroy who had determined to view the Congress with a "good-humoured indifference."¹²¹ Eventually Lansdowne disavowed not only the secretary's letter but also the circular itself as "*ultra vires*."¹²² Another letter from Ardagh to Hume revealed Lansdowne's anxiety to resolve the dispute and to refurbish his vaunted neutrality to the Congress. In so doing, he articulated a policy far more generous with regard to the legality and integrity of the Congress than any previous statement of the Government:

The Government of India [wrote Ardagh] recognise that the Congress movement is regarded as representing in

118. Hume to Lansdowne, Calcutta, 9 Jan., 1891, L.V.P.

119. *Ibid.*

120. Ardagh to Hume, Calcutta, 7 Jan., 1891, L.V.P.

121. See Lansdowne quoted, in Hira Lal Singh, *Problems and Policies of the British in India*, p. 238.

122. Lansdowne to Hume, Calcutta, 16 Jan., 1891, L.V.P.

India what in Europe would be called the more advanced liberal party as distinguished from the great body of conservative opinion which exists side by side with it. They desire themselves to maintain an attitude of neutrality in their relations with both the parties so long as these act strictly within constitutional limits.¹²³

Ardagh tried also to dispel the notion that the orders of March 1890 had any specific reference to Congress, but at the same time reminded Hume that those orders barring *participation* as contrasted to mere attendance of government employees at political gatherings still remained in force. In a letter explaining this *fr a c a s* to Lord Cross, Lansdowne emphasized the importance he attached to gratifying Hume and to dispelling the notion that the Government had any intention to inhibit the activities of Congress. He admitted that Ardagh's letter would be "criticised upon the ground that it is too conciliatory, and affords too distinct a recognition of the Congress." At the same time, Elliott's letter had pointed up the authenticity of Hume's charges that some "officials were notoriously in the habit of visiting their displeasure on any person connected with it (*i e.* Congress)," and had therefore necessitated a forthright indication of government's neutrality. Lansdowne was "strongly of the opinion that it is for our interests not to show any animus against the Congress, but so long as it acts within constitutional limits, to accept it good-humouredly as representing the view of the advanced party in Indian politics."¹²⁴

Lansdowne's amazing legitimization of Congress as a fully legal party of opposition doubtless augmented civilian apprehensions concerning the activities of the Congress. This was evident in the connection drawn by the leading officials between the Congress and the cow-protection societies of 1893. Officials condemned the Congress as the breeding ground and major instigator of the Gurakshini sabhas. In actuality, no tangible proof of overt or covert connection between the Congress and the Hindu demonstrations against kine slaughter could be brought forward. But the combination of civilian

123. Ardagh to Hume, Calcutta, 19 Jan., 1891, L.V.P.

124. Lansdowne to Cross, Calcutta, 28 June 1891, L.V.P.

hysteria with the desire to discredit Congress led many in the Government to infer automatically that a sinister plot of the Congress lay behind the cow agitation.¹²⁵ As the cow virus spread throughout the N.-W.P., and disturbances reached a climax in the summer of 1893, Crosthwaite reported that "the Mohamedans are seriously alarmed, and. . . they all accuse the Congress." Crosthwaite seemed to have agreed with the accusation, and warned that "the Congress Party was called a microscopic minority; but by means of the 'cow' cry they can get all Hindooism at their back."¹²⁶

Lansdowne initially appeared to accept Crosthwaite's analysis of the problem, viewing the agitation as a screen for the purely political motives of the Congress.¹²⁷ However, he hesitated to take any precipitate action, and heeded the advice of his Home Secretary, C.J. Lyall, who believed press censorship would be unpalatable in England and ineffective in India.¹²⁸ The Viceroy told Crosthwaite that the Government would refuse to muzzle the press, and seemed to indicate that the hands of government were practically tied, except whatever might be done by local or district civilian officials. By October, Lansdowne had become totally disenchanted of the alarmist rhetoric of the civilians. He was no fire eater, and he thought he could already discern the fulfilment of his own hopeful premonition, namely, that the agitation would simply wear itself out.¹³⁰ He optimistically reported to Godley that he thought "the cowkilling agitation is retiring below the surface," and could hardly hide his relief at not being drawn into the provocative course laid out by "some of my 'jumpy'

125. C.H.T. Crosthwaite, L.-G. of N.-W.P., to Lansdowne, Naini Tal, 1 July 1893, L.V.P.; see also MacDonnell, acting L.-G. of Bengal to Forbes (a District Magistrate in Bihar), Darjeeling, 24 June 1893, MacDonnell papers.

126. Crosthwaite to Lansdowne, Jounpore, 18 Aug., 1893, L.V.P.

127. Lansdowne to Kimberley, Simla, 22 Aug., 1883, L.V.P.

128. Note by C. J. Lyall, Home Sec., 21 Aug., 1893, attached to Crosthwaite to Lansdowne, 18 Aug., 1893, L.V.P.

129. Lansdowne to Crosthwaite, Simla, 24 Aug., 1893, L.V.P.

130. Lansdowne to Fitzpatrick, L.-G. of Punjab, Simla, 12 Oct., 1893, L.V.P.

colleagues.”¹³¹ Kimberley was infact glad to hear that “Fitzpatrick is cooling down,” and cast aspersions on the erratic behaviour of C.H.T. Crosthwaite : “He seems to me to show some signs of losing his head in the presence of this undefined danger.”¹³²

The cow agitation had not only made the civilians “jumpy,” but had also reinforced their convictions concerning alleged infeasibility of introducing the representative institutions in India. A major result of the cow movement, according to Crosthwaite, was the proof it afforded of the inadequate preparation of India for “election and representation.” The ostensible connection between the Congress and the cow societies nullified the belief “in England or in Parliament . . . that the natives of India are fitted for a larger share in the Government than we officials in our jealousy would give them.” “The people of India,” he said, “can only be kept in order and peace by a strong and a firm authority which they know cannot be interfered with, or set aside and which therefore they respect.” So the possibility of allowing the Congress members to enter the various Legislative Councils, there to “heckle” the Viceroy and his immediate subordinates, remained unintelligible to Crosthwaite.¹³³

The cow phenomenon was not the only factor raising doubts in the minds of the civilians about the expansion of representative institutions. There were also increasing misgivings about the disparity between the expected course of political development as outlined by Lord Dufferin and the actual course of events as they unfolded after his departure. Since the earliest consideration of political reform, beginning in 1886, Dufferin had always broached liberalization of legislative councils as an appropriate opportunity to repress radical movements, including (by August 1888) the Congress.¹³⁴

I think if some measure of this kind [*i.e.*, a moderate liberalization of the provincial councils through inclusion of a

131. Lansdowne to Godley, 21 Oct., 1893, Godley collection,

132. Kimberley to Lansdowne, Kimberley House, 26 Oct., 1893, L.V.P.

133. Crosthwaite to Lansdowne, Naini Tal, 26 Sept., 1893, L.V.P.

134. Dufferin to Lord Cross, Simla, 17 Aug., 1888, D.V.P.; see also Dufferin to Cross, Nov., 1888, in Godley collection.

few 'loyal' natives and the discussion of local budgets] were to be adopted, a legitimate opportunity would be afforded of getting rid of Congress, as well as of restricting the abuses of the Native Press.¹³⁵

Having obtained Lord Cross' approval for consideration of reform, Dufferin began to canvass his subordinates for opinions and suggestions. The Viceroy gave a very favourable scrutiny to those replies most closely conforming with his own views concerning elimination of extra-constitutional political activity and organizations. He characterized J.B. Peile's l e n g t h y memorandum as "full of good sense, and very much in harmony with ideas which I have harboured very long and from time to time submitted to the Secretary of State."¹³⁶ Peile prefaced his scheme with the principle that the Congress should not be "treat[ed] as supplying the motive or occasion of anything that the Government may resolve to do." "If anything could fall flatter than the 'c o n g r e s s' of 1885," wrote Peile, "it was the Congress of 1886." The reason for this alleged debacle, according to Peile, was the simple fact that Congress had failed to be representative of any significant element in the populace. The Native Princes and Nobles, the agricultural and landed interests, the army, and Indian commercialists had all refrained from any alliance with the Congress. The favourable standing of the government among all these groups proved that "there is no reason why we should be disturbed by a handful of speculative politicians. . . and anything we may do in the way of a change in our method of government should have regard to the great interests, and not to platform agitators."¹³⁷ The theoretical ground for reform should not be the vapourous rhetoric of a negligible handful, but rather it should be the simple "truism that a Foreign Government must admit its alien subjects to participation in their own Government as fast as it safely can."¹³⁸ Participation, h o w e v e r,

135. Dufferin to Lord Cross, Simla, 17 Aug., 1888, D.V.P.; see also Dufferin to Cross, Nov., 1888, Godley collection.

136. Dufferin to J. B. Peile, Officiating Home Member of Viceroy's Council, Simla, 5 Oct., 1887, D.V.P.

137. Peile to Dufferin, Simla, 2 Oct., 1887, D.V.P.

138. *Ibid.*

should not extend beyond a certain minority of elected Indian representatives from "the great interests" already mentioned. In Bombay, for example, Peile envisaged the election of approximately six or seven Indian gentlemen from constituencies delineated in terms of the special interests represented in each instance. "The elected members would then be representative of something, and the mere theorists [*i.e.*, essentially the Congress people] would be then left out in the cold and learn that empty talk is not business."¹³⁹ The powers of these expanded Councils, in Peile's proposals, would not anyway extend beyond a limited type of interpellation, allowing the members to call for statements from heads of departments and permitting some discussion on government replies. There should be no possibility of "voting or motion."¹⁴⁰ The greatest dividend of this arrangement—and clearly the factor most appealing to Dufferin—would be the leverage thereby gained against the radical Indian newspapers. Peile would at first depend on pressures from the newly enfranchised interests to suppress radical journalism. But if this "has no effect, I should be prepared to recommend that if a newspaper is persistently false and malicious, extracts over some time should be printed and published and made the ground, first, of a warning, and if that has no effect, for its suspension for such time as may seem fit."¹⁴¹ By sharing power with the powerful and the loyal few, Peile speculated that Government could then freely indulge in suppression of the noisy and troublesome element. Dufferin approved all the important aspects of Peile's proposals, and he agreed specifically "that if anything is to be done in the direction suggested, advantage should be taken of it to check the present 'license' of the Press."¹⁴²

In following June, 1888, Peile's successor, C. U. Aitchison, submitted his own scheme for reform. Though his ideas introduced several nuances and though they came from the pen of a man branded as too liberal by his colleagues, yet

139. *Ibid.* (of p. 300 here).

140. *Ibid.*

141. *Ibid.*

142. Dufferin to Peile, Simla, 5 Oct., 1887, D.V.P.

they appeared basically compatible with the ideas of his predecessor. C.U. Aitchison agreed that reform should begin in the Provincial Councils and that no exception should be made to the rule that Government "should always be able to reckon on a numerical majority."¹⁴³ Aitchison stressed "decentralization" (hints of Montagu-Chelmsford) as a way "within which their [Councils'] influence can be felt and their opinion will be potent in the settlement of affairs." As to the powers of the councils, Aitchison appeared even more cautious than Peile, emphasizing that councils should be merely "consultative" in function and should not, as in Peile's scheme, include the powers of "interpellation or debate and criticism." As for the type of representation and mode of selecting representatives, Aitchison agreed that only a few members in each Council ("not less than one in three or more than five in twelve") "should be appointed by election." Most significantly, no provision should be made for direct representation of "literary or political societies." Exclusion of the Congress in Aitchison's plan might have been at least partially overcome through the establishment of Municipal and District Boards as "the body of electors for the Council," for Aitchison believed that Congress and other political interests could or "should exercise their influence in returning proper men to the Municipal and District Boards and seek election by them." Two benefits would accrue: "the direct pressure of these societies upon the Government would be eased off;" secondly, "more real life would be infused into the Boards." Though agreeing that councils should serve as a safety-valve, Aitchison failed to concur with Dufferin and Peile on the feasibility of using reforms as an excuse for a direct campaign against the Congress or the Press.

Correspondence of 1888 between Dufferin and Sir Auckland Colvin, Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh shows, however, that the Viceroy and his other major counsellors still intended a dire fate for the Congress in

143, Memorandum on Councils Reform by C. U. Aitchison, Home Member, 26 June 1888, enclosure in Aitchison to Sir D.M. Wallace, Private Sec. to Viceroy, 26 June 1888, D.V.P.

the wake of reforms. When Colvin objected that the liberalization of Provincial Councils "would have so much the appearance of a concession to a popular cry that even though advisable in itself, ought to be postponed,"¹⁴⁴ Dufferin reassured him that reforms could proceed because action would be taken concurrently to decimate the Congress:

. . . it seems to me [he told Colvin] we cannot allow the Congress to continue its existence My idea is to reconstitute the Provincial Councils . . . upon a fairly broad and liberal basis, and, having done this, to consider in what way the happy despatch may be best applied to Congress.¹⁴⁵

But Dufferin had written these ominous words on the eve of his retirement; and there is nothing to show that he seriously tried to convince his successor to take up the cause against the Congress as a *quid pro quo* of the reforms. Indeed, he wrote from Rome in 1886 to urge inclusion of some elected representatives. Yet having repeatedly assured his subordinates that reform would be accompanied by suppression of Congress, it is little wonder that the implementation of reforms met stiff resistance from civilians when they learned that Lansdowne had no intention of following Dufferin's blueprint. While on the one hand Lansdowne campaigned vigorously for the limited introduction of an elective process for some of the delegates in the expanded councils (more or less in conformity with the recommendation of Dufferin's Committee on Provincial Councils, including Aitchison, Westland, and Military Member G. Chesney),¹⁴⁶ on the other, he did nothing to reassure his subordinates regarding the disposition of the Congress. Indeed, his concessions of 1890 establishing the propriety of the Congress as a legitimate opposition party made it clear that Lansdowne had no intention whatever to follow the dark counsels of his predecessor concerning the fate of the Congress. Though the India Council's

144. Colvin, paraphrased by Dufferin in Dufferin to Colvin, L.-G. of N.-W.P., Simla, 9 Oct., 1881, D.V.P.

145. Dufferin to Colvin, *ibid.*

146. See Report on Provincial Councils by the Special Committee appointed by Lord Dufferin, Oct., 1888, enclosure I, in Dufferin to Cross, 20 Oct., 1888, D.V.P.

Act, finally enacted by Parliament in 1892, eschewed any direct provision for election of non-official Council members, nevertheless it provided for nomination by Municipal and District Boards, Chambers of Commerce, and University Senates. These nominations "would be 'elections' in all but name."¹⁴⁷

High officials adamantly resisted the trend, and believed that any experiments with the electoral process below the level of wealthy landed elements would spell disaster for the government:

The great danger of an elective principle [wrote S.C. Bayley, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal to Lansdowne] whether by Municipalities and District Boards electing nominees direct to Council, or electing delegates who should select members, is that, in the present state of affairs . . . the system would inevitably fall into the hands of the Calcutta wirepullers, and we should get homogenous opposition of the Congress type, Pleaders, Schoolmasters, Newspaper Editors, representatives of the professional classes and especially of the educated men of Bengal proper, but representing little else, and especially leaving the basis of the whole, the great agricultural interests of the country, almost untouched.¹⁴⁸

Retired civilians on the Indian Council joined the opposition, particularly with respect to introduction of any elective procedures. Cross told Lansdowne that the India Council would "fully allow the increase of members" in provincial councils; but the Viceroy's advocacy of "the elective principle" met with an icy reception. "My Council," concluded Cross, "is very conservative, and, . . . the latest imports from India, such as Lyall and Peile, the most so."¹⁴⁹

In response to Bayley, Lansdowne retreated slightly and indicated willingness to assure that even the small number of so-called "elected Members" should be subject to approval by Government, and noted that this would meet "one of the conditions upon which you would like to insist, namely, that it

147. Gopal, *British Policy in India, 1858-1905*, p. 185.

148. Bayley to Lansdowne, Belvedere, 7 April 1889, L.V.P.

149. Cross to Lansdowne, Balmoral, 13 June 1889, L.V.P.

should lend itself to modification and expansion in different directions. We should, in fact, scarcely be said to be 'establishing an elective system.'"¹⁵⁰ Bayley was still dissatisfied. In July of 1890, he indicated approval of strictures included in the draft reform bill currently before Parliament which, while enabling the Government of India to devise rules "for an elective element," at the same time subjected these rules to the sanction of the Secretary of State. Bayley felt confident that "if he [Secretary of State] adheres to his present views, he will put his foot down on any proposal in that direction"¹⁵¹ C.H.T. Crosthwaite, Public Works Member of the Viceroy's Council, and Auckland Colvin, Lieutenant-Governor of the N.-W.P. both spoke against any elected elements in the Provincial Councils. Despite this intransigence among his subordinates, Lansdowne still insisted that there must be at least "a moderate recognition of the elective principle."¹⁵²

When at last the councils act had been cleared by Parliament, early in 1892, Lansdowne faced solid civilian resistance both to elections and to the privilege of interpellations within the new councils. The Government of Bombay insisted that "the right of election should be given most sparingly," and the Governor Lord Harris, "doubt [ed] if it be wise to do more at present than give one elected member to Bombay and one to Karachi." Though Sir Charles Elliott, Bayley's successor as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, expressed compliance with the Viceroy's wishes concerning representation, on the other hand Lansdowne criticised him sharply for publicly announcing that "the Council, as constituted by the new Act, is so numerically limited that adequate and proportional representation of the numerous and important interests existing in the Provinces is impossible."¹⁵³ This, said Lansdowne, was "sure to be taken hold of by radicals and malcontents." C. H. T. Crosthwaite, newly appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the N.-W.P., resisted any

150. Lansdowne to Bayley, Viceregal Lodge, Simla, 1 May 1889, L.V.P.

151. Bayley to Lansdowne, Darjeeling, 5 July 1890, L.V.P.

152. Lansdowne to Cross, Calcutta, 11 Feb., 1891, L.V.P.

153. Memorandum by Sir Charles Elliott, quoted in Lansdowne to Elliott, Simla, 23 Sept., 1892, L.V.P.

experimentation with elections which, he said, would "end in disaster and lead to bloodshed before long."¹⁵⁴

As yet, there was no legislative council in the Punjab, and the Lieutenant-Governor (Dennis Fitzpatrick) hastened to forestall the possibility that the new act would be used as an opportunity to establish one:

As I am much opposed on various grounds to anything of the kind [wrote Fitzpatrick] and as the question is a delicate one to discuss officially, I trust that... I may be allowed an opportunity of speaking to your Excellency privately on the matter.¹⁵⁵

Fitzpatrick later convinced the Viceroy of the alleged imprudence of a Council in the Punjab, for, according to Lansdowne, there was "no real demand in the Province for the establishment of a Local Legislative Council, . . . [and] owing to the peculiar circumstances and geographical situation of the Punjab, we ought to think twice before we introduce Parliamentary institutions, even in an embryonic form."¹⁵⁶ It was only with the installation of the new Lieutenant-Governor, Mackworth Young appointed by Elgin on the understanding of his cooperation, that a legislative council could be established in the Punjab.

Thus it was almost solely due to the fortitude of Lansdowne and Elgin that a modicum of political advance could be achieved in 1892-93.¹⁵⁷ The civilian satraps acquiesced grudgingly. After the Bengal elections of 1893, in which the vocal Congress politicians gained important victories, Elliott grumbled that the Indian newspapers had exercised overwhelming influence. "The respectable people," he said, "are afraid of being gibbeted by them."¹⁵⁸ The elections in the North-Western Provinces, held concurrently with those in Bengal, elicited from

154. Crosthwaite to Lansdowne, 13 Sept., 1893, L.V.P.

155. Fitzpatrick to Lansdowne, Simla, 28 July 1892, L.V.P.; see also C. L. Tupper, Chief Sec. to Government of Punjab, to Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., Camp, 31 Oct., 1892, in G. of I., Home, Public, A., 81-104, Feb., 1893, 84.

156. Lansdowne to Fitzpatrick, Simla, 12 Aug., 1892, L.V.P.

157. See Gopal, *British Policy in India*, p. 186.

158. Elliott to Lansdowne, Darjeeling, 15 May 1893, L.V.P.

Crosthwaite alarm that none of the three elected representatives was a Muslim.¹⁵⁹

In the minds of covenanted civilians, the most direct challenge to their security, their status, and their prestige was the demand of educated Indians for Indianization of the Covenanted Civil Service.¹⁶⁰ The virtual exclusion of Indians from the higher echelon of government service was the major cause for the rise of modern Indian nationalism.¹⁶¹ The Indian Association, founded by Surendranath Banerjea in 1876, fed on the discontent of educated Indians who had been denied employment in the government. Resolutions demanding fairer treatment of Indian aspirants for the government service became an annual feature of the National Congress sessions.¹⁶² The growing number of educated but unemployed young men, contended Bampfylde Fuller, "subsist [ed] in depressing dependence upon their relations, and [fell] easily into the net of seditious agitation."¹⁶³

In lower echelons of government service, well over 20,000 Indians held positions at the turn of the century. A

159. Crosthwaite, L.-G. of N.-W.P., to Lansdowne, Camp, N.-W.P., 21 June 1893, L.V.P.; and Lansdowne to Crosthwaite, Simla, 17 Sept., 1893, L.V.P.
160. It is not the purpose here to traverse in detail all the stages of the controversy revolving around the admission of Indians to the Covenanted Civil Service. The relevant laws, regulations, and debates have already been thoroughly considered elsewhere. Two of the most recent and comprehensive discussions of this issue are contained in Hira Lal Singh's *Problems and Policies of the British in India*, pp. 13-74, and in B.B. Misra's *Administrative History of India, 1844-1947*, pp. 201 ff. The object here is rather to investigate the determinative role played by British officials in thwarting any significant entrance of Indians into the covenanted service. This is a dimension of the story not previously considered in an adequate manner.
161. See, e.g., Hira Lal Singh, *Problems and Policies*, pp. 69 ff.
162. See, e.g., summary of the Resolutions passed at the Fourth Indian National Congress held at Allahabad in Dec., 1888, G. of I., Home, Public, A., 145-147, March 1889, N.A.I.
163. Fuller, *Studies of Indian Life*, p. 304; see also, e.g., testimony of Maconochie before the Public Service Commission, Lahore, 27 Dec., 1886, *Proceedings of the Public Service Commission*, Vol. I, Section II, pp. 235 f.

limited number of these ranked relatively high in prestige and salary.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, Indians had never been technically excluded from the competitive examinations held in London. But the educational, linguistic, and travel problems of Indian candidates for the Covenanted Service placed them at a great disadvantage. By 1888, only twelve Indians had gained admission to the Covenanted Service through the competitive examination. Even these never obtained positions above the ordinary level of the executive judicial employment.¹⁶⁵

British covenanted officials jealously guarded their monopoly of the so-called covenanted positions. (See Appendix B). John Morley agreed with Brodrick's assertion that the British monopoly had been a prime weakness of the Government of India. In disclaiming the competency of Indians to hold high offices, the Government of India, said Brodrick, had lost "more by the effect on popular content, than you gain by having your work better done."¹⁶⁶

Legislation of 1861 had in fact technically nullified the absolute monopoly of higher posts previously held by British officials. Lord Canning, at the time Viceroy, waved aside the objection that the legalization of uncovenanted men in higher posts would curtail the just aspirations of British officers. Furthermore, he determined that no racial distinction should be made in elevating men from subordinate to higher reserved posts. Indians had the privilege to compete in London. "Therefore," said Canning, "if a new door is opened in India through which admission to the Covenanted Civil Service can be obtained that door also must be opened to the Natives and Englishmen alike."¹⁶⁸ Retired civilians on the India Council, however, annexed a schedule of offices to the legislation. These offices were ordinarily to be reserved for covenanted officials. Yet even these were not completely closed to Indians whose appointment had been specifically sanctioned by Secretary of

164. See, e.g., Fuller, *Studies of Indian Life*, pp. 329 ff.

165. *Ibid.*, p. 345; and Hira Lal Singh, p. 70.

166. Morley to Minto, India Office, 2 May 1906, Morley collection.

167. Lytton to the Queen, Simla, 18 June 1877, L.V.P.

168. Minute by Lord Canning on the Indian Civil Service, 8 June 1861, G. of I., Home, Public, A., N.A.I.

State and his Council (See Appendix B for a list of Scheduled Posts).¹⁶⁹

But the Act of 1861 remained a dead letter so far as the uncovenanted Indians were concerned.¹⁷⁰ The appointment of Rao Bahadur Deshmukh to an acting post as Sessions Judge of Ahmedabad under the provisions of the 1861 Act provoked the Bombay civilians to memorialize the Secretary of State.¹⁷¹ These remonstrances convinced Lord Lytton that the casual appointments anticipated by the Act were “no longer practically possible.” He lamented the obstructiveness of the British civilians, and asserted that the Covenanted Service was “disposed to over-rate its own importance,” so that “instead of the service being maintained for the good of the country, the country exists for the good of the service.”¹⁷²

Throughout the late nineteenth century, British officials used their ingenuity to prevent the entrance of Indians into the scheduled or reserved posts. On the initiative of the highest authorities, including Viceroys, Secretaries of State, and even Parliament, measures were adopted to provide legal sanction for such appointments. But in every instance, British bureaucrats either interpreted the measures narrowly or totally disregarded them.

In 1870, Parliament enacted a statute clearly specifying that the schedule of positions appended to the Act of 1861 should not constitute a bar to the employment of Indians in scheduled posts.¹⁷³ But the bureaucracy in India continued to procrastinate in the matter of forming regulations for the operation of the Statute.¹⁷⁴ The Duke of Argyll, Secretary of State, sent reminders in April 1872 and October 1873, urging the expediency of framing, at an early date, the rules contemplated by

169. S. of S. to G.-G. in Council, India Office, 9 Aug., 1861, (Legislative Despatch 15 of 1861), G. of I., Home, Public, B., 130, N.A.I.

170. See Roy, *The Civil Service in India*, p. 108.

171. See replies of the Bombay Government to questions of the Public Service Commission, 1887, *Proceedings of the Public Service Commission*, Vol. II, Section I, pp. 37 f.

172. Lytton, “Admission to Natives to the Indian Civil Service,” 1877, paras, 30 and 79, Barnes papers.

173. *Sessional Papers of the House of Commons*, 1870, I., 27, p. 465.

174. Roy, *The Civil Service*, p. 114.

the Act for the admission of the Natives to the Covenanted Civil Service."¹⁷⁵ The rules finally formulated received tentative approval from the local governments, but with the warning, expressed by Ashley Eden, Chief Commissioner of Burma, that the appointments made specifically under the Statute must be "very rare and exceptional."¹⁷⁶

British officials launched a protest even before official promulgation of the new rules in 1875. Approximately 350 covenanted civilians of the Bengal provinces signed a memorial to the Secretary of State. They complained that the rules would be a contravention of previous assurances to the covenanted civilians. The Act of 1861, while theoretically an impairment of their monopoly, had not created any "serious apprehension on their part, inasmuch as it was apparent from the Preamble that the Act was intended to provide against the possibility of the members of the Civil Service being numerically insufficient to fill up the appointments reserved to them by the law."¹⁷⁷ But enforcing the law of 1870 would definitely constitute a breach of faith by the government.¹⁷⁸

In reply, the Secretary of State called on the Government of India to perform the will of P a r l i a m e n t without delay. Nevertheless, he added the assurance that the practical results of the measure would not "affect in any material degree the interests of the present Covenanted Civilians."

After months of inaction, the Viceroy sent a memorandum to the local governments requesting the Lieutenant-Governors to put the law in operation. In Bombay the appointment of an Indian to a judicial post brought down the wrath of the British officials on the local Governor. Madras refused even the least compliance to the law. The two appointments announced in Bengal, under the law, proved abortive: They were declared

175. S. of S. to G.-G. in Council, 16 Oct., 1873, G. of I., Home, Public, A., 225-276, March 1875, 255, N.A.I.

176. C.B. Cooke, Assistant Sec. to the Chief Commissioner of British Burma, to Sec. to G. of I., Rangoon, 20 Dec., 1873, G. of I., Home, Public, A., 255-276, March 1875, 262.

177. The memorial of the undersigned members of Her Majesty's Indian Civil Service serving in Bengal, 12 March 1875, G. of I., Home, Public, A., 277-280, March 1875., 278, N.A.I.

178. *Ibid.*, para. 9.

outside the perimeter of Indian attainments by the Secretary of State.¹⁷⁹

Lytton alienated the British officials during the first year of his viceroyalty, not only by his dramatic rebuff to the Anglo-Indians in the Fuller case, but also through unofficial intimations that he hoped to restrict their number in the service and broaden the field for Indian employment. His views were encouraged, if not promoted, through private correspondence with Sir Fitzjames Stephen. In one of his earliest letters to Lytton, Stephen contended that competitive system was bound gradually to degrade the covenanted service, and said it might be advantageous to replace the expensive covenanted agency with Indians.¹⁸⁰ The present system, he thought, was a "great danger" because it was "worked by third rate Europeans" while important elements of the Indian aristocracy, unable to participate, became increasingly disenchanted.¹⁸¹ Stephen warned Lytton to proceed slowly since even the slightest effort to extend employment of Indians would yield "a chorus of (noise) like the jackals at night from the Covenanted Civilians. . . ."¹⁸² He drafted a speech for Lytton's use at the Delhi Durbar of January 1877, that included intimations of the desired reforms. But having heard from India that the civilians imagined they would be disgraced by the speeches in Delhi, Stephen quickly withdrew the offending remarks and substituted some milder statements. The "main defect" of his first draft, he claimed was "a want of warmth for the civil service."¹⁸³ Notwithstanding his many negative judgments of the civilians, he with others was unwilling to try their patience too far. He noted rather pathetically that they felt "undervalued and snubbed in English society." And he retracted his former criticisms to the extent of saying that civilians were, after all, "the very backbone of the empire," and that generosity to Indians ought not to be at the expense of civilian prestige.

179. Roy, *The Civil Service*, p. 115; Kisch to his mother, Manbhum, 13 Oct., 1876.

180. Stephen to Lytton, Knebworth, 21 May 1876, Stephen correspondence.

181. Stephen to Lytton, Newcastle, 6 July 1876.

182. Stephen to Lytton, 28 Sept., 1876.

183. Stephen to Lytton, Temple, 24 Nov., 1876.

Lytton revamped his speech and omitted the offending passages, especially his proposals for training of Indian officials in colleges fashioned after the example of Haileybury.¹⁸⁴

By May of 1877, Lytton had become fully convinced that obstinacy of covenanted civilians would never allow significant advancement under existing regulations.¹⁸⁵ He therefore suggested to the Government to pursue a wholly new tack through a process of selection "applied to a close Native Service, organised on a footing entirely distinct from the Covenanted Service, which I would reserve exclusively for Europeans."¹⁸⁶ In order to insure a fair beginning for his program, he knew it would be necessary to promise British officials that their area of employment "need not be . . . very largely restricted."¹⁸⁷ The racial exclusiveness of the Covenanted Service would be practically maintained. The process of recruitment by selection, rather than examination, would enable the government to pass over the educated but disliked "Bengalee Baboos" in favour of younger recruits from the old aristocratic families. Stephen applauded the wisdom "in taking the bold line of making a division and giving the European and native[s] respectively shares in the offices."¹⁸⁸

The India Office rejected creation of a separate and "close" Indian branch of the service because it would require a futile application to Parliament for the necessary legislation.¹⁸⁹ Instead, Lord Cranbrook suggested that nominees should be granted a status similar to that of the covenanted civilians. Having performed successfully in probationary appointments, they could then be appointed in the posts ordinarily reserved for the covenanted men.

184. Lytton to Salisbury, Barrackpore, 22 Jan., 1877, Lytton V.P.

185. Lytton to Salisbury, Simla, 10 May 1877, Lytton V.P.

186. *Ibid.*

187. *Ibid.*; see also Lytton to Sir John Strachey and others, 30 Nov., 1877, Barnes papers.

188. Stephen to Lytton, Cornwall Gardens, 3 April 1877, Stephen correspondence.

189. Sir Richard Strachey, Minute upon the measures best suited for the constitution of a Native Civil Service, 9 Jan., 1879, Barnes papers; see also Roy, *The Civil Service*, p. 118.

In August of 1879, the Government of India issued the new rules for implementation of the 1870 legislation, superceding those of 1875. According to the first new rule, local governments were to nominate either young men below the age of twentyfive who may not have had any special training or, elder men "of merit and ability proved in service of the Government, or in the practice of a profession."¹⁹⁰ Nominations were limited to one-fifth of the yearly quota of "civilians appointed by Her Majesty's Secretary of State to the said Service [i.e., Covenanted Service] in such year."¹⁹¹

The ambivalent status of the new Indian recruits soon became evident. According to the notification of August 1879, the nominees were to be granted employment in the "Covenanted Civil Service." Did this mean, asked the Government of Bengal, that they were to rank equally with the members of that Service recruited through the competitive examination in London?¹⁹² This inquiry placed the supreme government in a quandary. If it replied affirmatively the covenanted civilians would agitate on the grounds that their promotion had been threatened and that the Government of India had violated its pledge to them. If a negative reply were sent, it would represent, a departure from the Secretary of State's dictum that a "close" and separate native service should not be established. The Government resolved the dilemma as best it could, giving the advantage to the British officials. In the proceedings of the Government of India for 24 December 1879, the following announcement appeared:

With regard to the question of including Native civilians in the same list as Covenanted Civil Servants, the Governor General in the Council considers it would be better

190. Notification of rules for the appointment of natives of India to offices ordinarily held by members of the Civil Service, Simla, 22 Aug., 1879, G. of I., Home, Public, A, 131-133, Sept., 1879., 132, N.A.I.

191. *Ibid.*

192. Horace A. Cockerell, Sec. to Government of Bengal, to Sec. to the G. of I., Darjeeling, 4 Oct., 1879, G. of I., Home, Public, A., 361-372, Dec., 1879, 365, N.A.I.

that they should not be so included, but that they should be shown in a separate list in alphabetical order.¹⁹³

Lytton, moreover, claimed that statutory servants could not actually belong to the Covenanted Civil Service because "no covenants will be entered with them."¹⁹⁴

The status of the statutory civilians remained anomalous. Lord Ripon, in accordance with his liberal predilections, attempted to enhance their dignity by ignoring many previous practices and by associating them on terms of equality with their covenanted colleagues. He reminded Lord Kimberley that there had never been a legal institution called the "Covenanted Civil Service." There were only the "Covenanted Civil Servants" chosen by competition to take up positions in the same service for which the statutory civilians had been selected in India—that is, Her Majesty's Indian Civil Service.¹⁹⁵

British officials disliked Ripon's interpretation of the statutory rules. The Home Secretary admitted that the phrase "Covenanted Service" had been used in the rules of 1879. But, said Mackenzie, this had been done by a Secretary "without any orders or discussion as to its appropriateness," and the injudicious slip had been rectified in the subsequent government papers. The word "covenanted" in relation to statutory servants, claimed Mackenzie, "has been dropped in recent departmental orders merely because no 'covenant,' as a matter of fact, is taken from Statutory Civilians."¹⁹⁶ Mackenzie also revealed that British officials had been guarded against the appointment of older professional Indians who might assume judgeships in supersession of covenanted civilians. "The Government of India has decided," he wrote, "that, as a rule, it is better to take young men (under age of 25) and train them." There was, he said, "a strong feeling among our European Magistracy that very few Native Judges are fit for Sessions work."¹⁹⁷

193. Extract from the proceedings of the G. of I., in the Home, Rev., and Ag., Dept., 24 Dec., 1879, in *ibid.*, 371.

194. Note by Lytton, 12 Nov., 1879, in *ibid.*

195. See Kimberley to Ripon, 4 May 1883, R.V.P.

196. A. Mackenzie to Ripon, 20 Feb., 1884, R.V.P.

197. Mackenzie, Officiating Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., to H.W. Primrose, Private Sec. to the Viceroy, Simla, 30 Sept., 1881, R.V.P.

The case of Mr. M.G. Ranade aptly illustrates tactics used by covenanted civilians to exclude well-known Indians of the professional classes from statutory appointments to covenanted posts. Sir James Ferguson, Governor of Bombay, charged that the Government of India's rejection of Ranade's appointment as Joint-Judge of Thana in 1880 seemed inconsistent with the provisions of 1879, and "alter[ed] the understanding of the footing upon which native officials of merit were eligible for appointment to the Civil Service."¹⁹⁸ Armed with their reinterpretation of the rules, the central bureaucrats declined to accept Ranade's nomination. New to India and the ways of the bureaucracy, Ripon seemed not to understand the machinations of his advisers. He appeared unable to correct their faulty interpretation of the 1879 rules, and only said that "the feeling in Council against [Ranade's] selections was unanimous."¹⁹⁹

Despite all the precautions of prominent officials to prevent a generous operation of the statutory system, there nonetheless had developed an intense aversion to it among the rank and file of covenanted civilians. Ultimately this attitude doomed the system. While older Indians were excluded because their appointments would entail the supersession of British officials, younger statutories (averaging six per year, until 1886) were treated as impostors because they had been "introduced into the service" without being "tested by public competition."²⁰⁰

The predicament of the statutory appointees was one of Ripon's primary consideration in reopening the question of employment of Indians in government service.²⁰¹ He personally advocated adoption of an open competition held "simultaneously with one in England" as the most feasible rearrangement. But in light of past opposition to this among civilians, he realized the futility of starting from that frame of reference. He believed it might at least be possible to reconsider the age

198. Ferguson to Ripon, Guneshkhind, 19 Sept., 1880, R.V.P.

199. Ripon to Ferguson, Simla, 30 Sept., 1880, R.V.P.

200. Charles Turner, Madras High Court, to C.P. Ilbert, Madras, 3 Aug., 1888, Ilbert papers.

201. Note by Ripon, 26 July 1883, G. of I., Home, Public, A., 86-92, Oct., 1883, N.A.I.

limits imposed on the candidacy for the Covenanted Service in England. Indians had been virtually excluded from the service by Lord Salisbury's reduction of the age limit to 19 in 1876. "It would be desirable at the first convenient opportunity," he wrote, "to return to the arrangement formerly in force."²⁰² The majority of Ripon's civilian advisers, however, adamantly opposed any modifications that would facilitate Indian candidates.²⁰³ C.H.T. Crosthwaite, the officiating Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, favoured a return to the pre-1876 age limits, only because that would give the Government an excuse for giving up the statutory system without at the same time permitting an "undue proportion of Natives" into the covenanted ranks.²⁰⁴

Agitations in India in the mid 1880's caused Kimberley to reconsider the age limit, and Kimberley's successor from the Conservative Party, Lord Randolph Churchill, suggested that Dufferin might openly revive the debate.²⁰⁵ The Government of India had already begun an investigation of the statutory system through correspondence with the heads of local governments. The centre planned to refine the statutory rules so that Indians nominated under them would know they were "not members of the Covenanted Civil Service."²⁰⁶ Replies from the local governments indicated that limited revision of the statutory rules would fail to provide a final settlement of the problem.

Open debate on Indianisation appeared practicable as a substitute for an unmaterialised Parliamentary investigation of Indian affairs. Plagued by the Irish dilemma and threatened with dissolution, Parliament had no time for India.²⁰⁷ But the

202. Minute by Ripon, 26 Sept., 1883, in *ibid.*, (of p. 315 here), 91.

203. C.A. Elliott, Chief Commissioner of Assam, to Ripon, Shillong, 24 April 1884, R.V.P.; Charles Bernard, Chief Commissioner, Burma, to Ripon, Rangoon, 2 May 1884, R.V.P.; C.H.T. Crosthwaite to Ripon, Pachmarhi, 25 April 1884, R.V.P.

204. Crosthwaite to Ripon, Pachmarhi, 25 April 1884, R.V.P.

205. Churchill to Dufferin, Dingwall, N.C., 22 Sept., 1885, D.V.P.

206. Note by C.H.S., Home Dept., on the Despatch from the S. of S. (Public, 65, 15 July 1886), 20 Aug., 1886, G. of I., Home, Public, A., 111-129, Nov., 1886, N.A.I.,

207. Kimberley to Dufferin, India Office, 21 May 1886, D.V.P.

rise of popular agitation in India, as pictured in Dufferin's correspondence with Kimberley,²⁰⁸ made it desirable, both at home and in India, to offer a palliative for the disaffection. In July of 1886, the Secretary of State sent a despatch to India calling for the appointment of the Commission "to devise a scheme which might reasonably be hoped to possess the necessary element of finality, and to do full justice to the claims of natives of India to higher employment in the public service."²⁰⁹

Dufferin's choice to head the fifteen member Commission fell on Sir Charles Aitchison whose unpopularity among his own Covenanted colleagues would lend greater credibility to the Commission's proceedings among the Indian observers. Dislike for Aitchison in the I.C.S. had erupted in 1882 during his tenure as Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, firstly as a result of his plan "to set aside a small number of the higher judicial appointments for natives."²¹⁰ When the departments of the supreme government had overturned Aitchison in favour of restrictions proposed by his subordinates.²¹¹

These limitations did not, however, eliminate Aitchison's prerogative to make exceptional Indian judicial appointments. In the spring of 1885, Punjab civilians deluged the provincial government with a host of memorials denouncing Aitchison's recent appointment of Diwan Ram Nath, an uncovenanted Extra Judicial Assistant, as an Assistant-Judge.²¹² Ripon supported the appointment, but the departmental officials remained hostile to it. Aitchison's subsequent efforts to raise the salaries of uncovenanted Indian employees created further hostility against him. An official letter from the Government of India denounced the suggestion, and left Aitchison with

208. See, *e.g.*, Dufferin to Kimberley, Simla, 26 April 1886, D.V.P.

209. See note by C.H.S., Home Dept., 20 Aug., 1886, on Despatch of S. of S. (Public., 65, 15 July 1886), G. of I., Home, Public, A., 111-129, Nov., 1886, para. 5. N.A.I.

210. Aitchison to Primrose, Camp, Delhi, 19 Jan., 1883, R.V.P.

211. Ilbert, Law Member, to Ripon, Simla, 21 Aug., 1884, R.V.P.

212. Petition of Michael William Fenton, Umballa, 10 March 1885, G. of I., Home, Public, A., 69-125, May 1886., 86, N.A.I.; see also petition of Mr. T.G. Walker, 12 March 1885, in 12 March 1866, in *ibid.*, 85.

the only alternative of making a few and widely spaced sporadic statutory appointments in his inevitable attempt to elevate the lot of uncovenanted officers.²¹³

Still another irritant was Aitchison's selection of Pundit Ram Narain for a three month term as officiating Judge of the Punjab Chief Court in 1885.²¹⁴ Home Secretary Mackenzie reminded the Viceroy that "it was distinctly settled (in view of Aitchison's known proclivities to be rather too hasty in promoting the dubiously qualified natives) that we should insist" on preliminary approval of the appointment by the members of the Chief Court.²¹⁵ If the Judges objected, Aitchison claimed he was prepared to overrule them, because there could be no question of Narain's competence. Ripon's counsellors thought it unwise to side with the Lieutenant-Governor;²¹⁶ so the final approval of the appointment must have been made, largely, due to Ripon's insistence. Punjab officials responded with another spate of memorials.²¹⁷

It is impossible that Dufferin had failed to consider these acrid relationships when he had offered the seat to Aitchison on his Council and invited him to take up the Presidency of the Commission. Aitchison had himself warned Dufferin of the possible consequences at the time of his appointment: "I am not blind to the fact that, whether owing to my native proclivities or other causes of a more personal kind, I am a *persona ingrata* to a large section of my countrymen in India and to many members of the service to which I have the honour to belong."²¹⁸ But he was willing to serve if Dufferin insisted.

The uniqueness of Aitchison's appointment as Home Member increased his difficulties as head of the newly appoint-

213. A. Mackenzie, Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., to Officiating Sec. to Government of Punjab, 27 Jan., 1886, G. of I., Finance and Commerce Dept., A., 42-51, Jan., 1886, 50, N.A.I.

214. Aitchison to D.M. Wallace, Simla, 24 Aug., 1885, D.V.P.

215. Mackenzie to Wallace, Simla, 27 Aug., 1885, D.V.P.

216. See, e.g., C.P. Ilbert, Law Member, to D. Mackenzie Wallace, Simla, 31 Aug., 1885, D.V.P.

217. Aitchison to Ilbert, Simla, 28 Aug., 1885, enclosure in Ilbert to Wallace, D.V.P.

218. Aitchison to Dufferin, Simla, 25 June 1886, D.V.P.

ed Commission. (Although his work on the Commission predated his assumption of the Home Membership, the latter appointment was widely known in advance of the Commission.) Already stigmatized as a dangerous reformer, he now carried the added onus of having upset the regular pattern of promotion and retirement. Senior civilians, particularly Lieutenant Governors, looked upon Aitchison's selection as a slur on them, since a Lieutenant-Governorship had always been considered the culmination of a successful official career,²¹⁹ moreover the Home Membership had usually been reserved for the most promising subordinate administrators.

The apprehensions of covenanted civilians became evident in the Parliamentary stages of organizing the Aitchison Commission. A.P. MacDonnell, the new Home Secretary, emerged as a self-appointed guardian of the Covenanted Service. With the support of colleagues both in the secretariat and in the Viceroy's Council, MacDonnell began his campaign by suggesting measures to constrict the Commission's area of inquiry. Aitchison had desired that consideration be given to the level or proportion of Indian representation in the covenanted branch. "The Home Department," wrote MacDonnell, "considers it undesirable that a question of such delicacy should be directly referred to the Commission." Any substantial readjustments favouring Indian candidacy for covenanted posts, according to MacDonnell, would cause a revival of the Ilbert Bill mania.²²⁰ Mere mention of the Ilbert Bill convinced Dufferin that MacDonnell was correct. MacDonnell's Resolution inaugurating the Commission excluded "the question of the proportion of Natives to Europeans" and suggested that Aitchison be told that he must adhere to this limitation.²²¹

The Home Department also interfered effectively in the appointment of the Commission's membership. When Aitchison nominated the well-known Parsee lawyer of Bombay, Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, the idea was vetoed by J.B. Peile, the new

219. Dufferin to Sir A.C. Lyall, L.-G. of N.-W.P., Calcutta, 7 Feb., 1887, D.V.P.

220. MacDonnell, Officiating Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., to D. M. Wallace, Private Sec. to Viceroy, Simla, 28 Sept., 1886, D.V.P.

221. MacDonnell to Wallace, Simla, 3 Oct., 1886, D.V.P.

officiating Home Member. It was true that Naoroji had an "enormous reputation among natives," but his advocacy of simultaneous examinations had branded him, in Peile's eyes, as not a "sound thinker."²²² Englishmen known for their partiality to educated Indians, including A.O. Hume and H.J.S. Cotton, were purposely excluded from the Council membership.²²³ Aitchison was the only European member who favoured pro-Indian readjustments; but even his sentiments could hardly be considered immoderate (See below).

Simultaneously, the Home Department carefully assured representation of its own reactionary attitudes. Sir Steuart Bayley while still Home Member, pushed through a proposal to appoint a quasi-official delegate, and he personally nominated MacDonnell for the post.²²¹ Though MacDonnell failed to secure a seat, the official appointed in his stead, C.H.T. Crosthwaite, held opinions practically identical to his. Crosthwaite's obstructiveness became evident almost immediately. When Aitchison suggested the work might be expedited by delegating sub-committees to collect testimony in various centres, Crosthwaite demurred on the grounds that "he could not detach himself from the general Commission without previous communication with. . . the Viceroy."²²⁵ Crosthwaite, it seems had been instructed by MacDonnell to keep a check on Aitchison and to report any irregularities. Aitchison considered Crosthwaite's behaviour out of place, and wanted to be appraised of Crosthwaite's status in the Commission. It would be highly awkward, he thought, if it should be revealed that a member of the Commission had instructions from the Government not known to the President.

Whatever his instructions, Crosthwaite clearly believed he had been selected to act as a Government informant. Late in

222. Telegram from Peile to Wallace, Calcutta, 1 Dec., 1886, D.V.P.

223. See telegrams, Dufferin to MacDonnell, Camp, 2 Nov., 1886, D.V.P.; Dufferin to MacDonnell, Camp, 3 Nov., 1886, D.V.P. A scrapbook belonging to H.J.S. Cotton, kept by his family, contains clippings from Indian newspapers lamenting Cotton's exclusion.

224. Note by Bayley, 4 Sept., 1886, G. of I., Home, Public, A., 111-129, Nov., 1886, N.A.I.

225. Aitchison to Wallace, Lahore, 18 Dec., 1886, D.V.P.

December 1886 he addressed a letter to the Viceroy's Private Secretary "on the supposition that I am delegated on behalf of the Government of India" and outlining the several shoals on which he feared the Commission might be wrecked.²¹⁶ Firstly, he argued that Aitchison was rushing the inquiry.²¹⁷ The more advanced Indian opinions could be discredited, he thought, if Aitchison would take more time to expose the "ignorance" of the witnesses and the insubstantial character of the "bogus bodies" they claimed to represent. Aitchison had thus far been unresponsive to this suggestion.²¹⁸

A letter from Sir Charles Turner to the Viceroy indicates that European members of the Commission favoured a drawn out session so that a new President would actually finish in the place of Aitchison. It was widely known that Aitchison planned to take leave in Europe during the spring and summer of 1887.²¹⁹ Aitchison wrote to the Viceroy that he intended either to remain as President to the end (even if the Commission had to adjourn during his projected absence) or to resign immediately.²²⁰

Aitchison's resignation would have noboubt pleased Crosthwaite and the Home Department, but Dufferin feared its effect on the Indian opinion. The Viceroy hastened to inform Aitchison that a summer adjournment would be suitable in order to allow a more careful analysis of the massive testimony. Dufferin also clarified and deflated Crosthwaite's role in the Commission: "The term 'delegate of India,' " said Dufferin, "if used at all, refers merely to the mode in which the member in question was selected, and does not affect his status or functions in the Commission."²²¹

Crosthwaite seemed humiliated by his de facto demotion, and told Dufferin that he hoped "you will soon be able to give me some more active work."²²² Less than two months later, in

226. Crosthwaite to Wallace, Lahore, 21 Dec., 1886, D.V.P.

227. Crosthwaite to Wallace, Lahore, 20 Dec., 1886, D.V.P.

228. Crosthwaite to Wallace, Lahore, 21 Dec., 1886, D.V.P.

229. Turner to Wallace, Lahore, 21 Dec., 1886, D.V.P.

230. Aitchison to Wallace, Lahore, 21, Dec., 1886, D.V.P.

231. Telegram from Private Sec. to Viceroy, Calcutta, to L.-G. of Punjab, 25 Dec., 1886, D.V.P.

232. Crosthwaite to Dufferin, Allahabad, 30 Dec., 1886, D.V.P.

February 1887, Dufferin offered him Chief Commissionership of Burma. In recommending Crosthwaite for Burma, T.C. Hope adventitiously revealed that officials had believed Crosthwaite would replace Aitchison as head of the Public Service Commission: "you have, no doubt, some other high official [other than Crosthwaite] in your eye," he told Dufferin, who could takeover "as President of the Civil Service Commission when Aitchison leaves"²³³

Prominent civilians were not alone in their efforts to foil the Aitchison Commission. The rank and file of covenanted civilians had formed a committee, according to Herman Kisch, "to look after our own interests." Kisch himself participated in a subcommittee created to inform potential civilian witnesses of views they should adopt and points they should emphasize in their testimony. "The Covenanted Civil Service is much agitated," wrote Kisch, "by some of the questions which the Public Service Commission asked . . . which seem to suggest an attack upon our rights . . . If we want to have our rights, we must fight from the beginning . . ."^{233a}

Covenanted civilians testified not only against encroachments on their "rights," but also protested against alleged injustices suffered by them under the existing system. One of their chief grievance was the statutory scheme of 1879. The anomalous position of the statutes made it easy for covenanted officials to condemn them as impostors who had assumed high positions without having earned them through the competitive examination. Branded as impostors, they were subsequently condemned because they "block [ed] promotion"²³⁴ of others. The Commission accordingly recommended repeal of the Act of 1870 (Section 6 of Statute 33 Vict., cap. 3) allowing exceptional appointments of Indians to covenanted posts.²³⁵

233. T.C. Hope, Public Works Member of Viceroy's Council, to Dufferin, 2 Feb., 1887, D.V.P.

233a. Kisch to a brother, Calcutta, 16 Jan., 1887; see also Kisch to a brother, Calcutta, 1 March 1887.

234. Written reply to questions of Public Service Commission by M. McVill, Member of the Governor's Council, Bombay, *Proceedings of the Public Service Commission*, IV, Sec. III, p. 18.

235. Report of the Aitchison Commission, *Sessional Papers of the House of Commons*, 1888, Vol. 48, p. 79.

Other avenues for recruitment of Indians were also condemned by civilians. Simultaneous examinations were almost unanimously condemned. Civilians viewed the educational system in India as deficient in providing the requisite qualities, other than academic training, required for competent leadership. Competitive examinations could not possibly measure the alleged moral weaknesses of an Indian education. Indians, it was thought easily digested facts, but they lacked "depth" and "force of character."²³⁶ Competitions in India would, furthermore, give an immediate advantage to the articulate but intensely disliked educated class of Bengal.²³⁷ For all their "intellectual ability and acuteness," the Indian educated classes, according to Crosthwaite, were nothing more than "great windbags."²³⁸

The only concession considered feasible by covenanted civilians was a raised age limit for the competition in London, from 19 to 22 or 23. This would help mollify Indian opinion without seriously endangering the British monopoly of the covenanted posts.²³⁹ An official of the Bombay Presidency, James Campbell, thought the Commission should disregard the aspirations of "middle-class English-knowing Indians whose outcry no concession will still," and rather try to conciliate "the middle class of England:"

In my opinion [he said] the change that will do most to help the Covenanted I.C.S. to regain its lost popularity in England, and therefore to raise the type of English candidate, is to make the rule that no one but a European can be appointed to the Covenanted Civil Service.²⁴⁰

236. Examination of H.M. Birdwood, Judge of High Court of Bombay, *Proceedings of the Public Service Commission*, IV, Sec. III.

237. See, e.g., replies of W.E. Ward, Officiating Chief Commissioner, of Assam, to questions of the Public Service Commission, *Ibid.*, IV, Section VI, pp. 55 f.

238. Crosthwaite to Wallace, 17 Jan., 1887, D.V.P.

239. Examination of J. Beames, Commissioner of Burdwan, 22 Feb., 1887, *Proceedings*, VI, Sec. II, p. 49; Minute by Alexander Mackenzie, Chief Commissioner, C.P., *Proceedings* III, Sec. I, p. 10.

240. Examination of James M. Campbell, Acting Collector, Panch Mahals, Bombay, 24 Jan., 1887, *Proceedings*, IV, Sec. II, p. 195.

The Commission eventually arrived at a modified version of the position held by Aitchison from the outset. In his letter of December 1885 proposing an open inquiry, Aitchison had said: "My personal view is that the Civil Service proper should be reduced in number and made a *corps d'elite* to which the only door of access should be the competition in England, and that a parallel service should be created to be recruited entirely in India."²⁴¹ In a letter to S. C. Bayley, dated June 28, 1886, he suggested limitation of the Covenanted Service to men recruited through the examination, and transfer of an undetermined number of covenanted posts to "a subsidiary service with lower . . . pay, to be recruited entirely in India."²⁴³ In actuality, the outcome of the investigation appears to have been almost a foregone conclusion, for at one point Aitchison admitted that "so far as our judgments will be affected, our meetings are sheer waste of time."²⁴⁴ He quickly tired of the redundant "nonsense" of the testimony, and viewed it only as a means "to satisfy the public . . . that everything possible has been done to ventilate the question."²⁴⁵

The most vexatious disputes within the Commission included the question of exceptional appointments and the proportion of posts to be transferred from the Covenanted Service. The effect of the Commission's Report was virtually to restrict Indians to posts scheduled for the new Provincial Service.²⁴⁶ The exact proportion of posts to be transferred remained undecided, but the recommendations of the Report were not expansive. As Aitchison himself later told the Viceroy, the supposition that he was a "radical in Indian politics" was mistaken.²⁴⁷

241. Aitchison, L.-G. of Punjab, to Dufferin, Lahore, 18 Dec., 1885, D.V.P.

242. (omit)

243. Aitchison to Bayley, Simla, 28 June 1886, enclosure in Bayley to D.M. Wallace, Simla, 28 June 1886, D.V.P.

244. Aitchison to Wallace, Allahabad, 7 Jan., 1887, D.V.P.

245. Aitchison to Wallace, 3 March 1887, D.V.P.

246. *Ibid.*

247. Aitchison, Home Member, to Dufferin, Simla, 8 Oct., 1888, D.V.P.

Aitchison emphasized recommendations requiring the maximum support of the Government: entrance to the Covenanted Service should be limited to competitors in London; the age limit for the London exam' should be raised to include young men of 19 to 23; the statutory system should be abolished, and the relevant section of the 1870 Act repealed; most importantly, the posts reserved for the covenanted civilians by the schedule of the 1861 Act were to be reduced in number. The deleted positions should be transferred, together with higher uncovenanted appointments, to a new Provincial Service reserved primarily for Indian candidates.²⁴⁸ Posts recommended for the transfer included the following:

Under-Secretaries to the several Governments of India; one-third of the District and Civil and Sessions Judges or Chief Judicial officers of Districts . . . ; one-tenth of Chief Magisterial officers of Districts (including Deputy Commissioners) ; one-sixth of Joint-Magistrates in the Provinces; one member of the Board of Revenue in the Madras Presidency, in the Lower Provinces of Bengal, and in the N.-W.P.; and one of the Financial Commissioners in the Punjab . . . ; one-tenth of the Collectors of Revenue or Chief Revenue officers of Districts . . .²⁴⁸

The Commission neither expected nor desired an immediate transfer of all the provincial posts from the hands of covenanted civilians.²⁵⁰

Although the type and number of posts to be transferred represented an advanced opinion concerning employment of Indians, if viewed from another angle the Report may actually have seemed retrogressive. The establishment of a Provincial Service, as envisaged by the Commission, would automatically preclude association of provincial Indian officials on an equal footing with British bureaucrats in "covenanted" service. On one hand, the British monopoly of higher posts was to be

248. Note by Aitchison, 12 July 1888, G. of I., Home, Public, A., 188-223. Oct., 1888, N.A.I.

249. Report of the Aitchison Commission, *Sessional Papers*, 1888, Vol. 48, p. 83.

250. *Ibid.*

somewhat restricted in scope, but on the other hand, it was to be much more secure than it was formerly, as now it had the clear sanction of the law.²⁵¹

In order to avoid prolonged argument, Aitchison had secured the Viceroy's support in demanding that local governments should be consulted only on the provincial applicability of the proposals, and "not on the principles discussed in the Report."²⁵² The responses of provincial chiefs were, nonetheless, replete with adverse references to the proposed transfers. The minute of Alexander Mackenzie, the then Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, contained a ten-page disquisition on the de-merits of the transfer scheme.²⁵³ Sir Steuart Bayley insisted that the transfer of any district charges would pose almost insuperable difficulties.²⁵⁴

MacDonnell, still Home Secretary, focused his attention on the various arguments of the opposition. In league with Westland in the Financial Department, and with the tacit support of other administrators, he succeeded in obtaining a substantial impairment of the transfer proposals. Since Aitchison had now assumed his post as head of the Home Department, MacDonnell found himself compelled to lead the opposition surreptitiously. He wrote a remarkable document of 150 pages criticizing the Report, and circulated it to other departmental heads without Aitchison's knowledge or approval. In regular departmental procedure, the note should first have been sent to the Home Member for his comments. Aitchison expressed alarm at this blatant divergence from usual bureaucratic protocol.²⁵⁵

251. See Minute by A. Colvin, L.-G. of N.-W.P., enclosure in J. Woodburn, Chief Sec. to Government of N.-W.P., to Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., 19 May 1888, G. of I., Home, Public, A., 188-223, Oct., 1888, 200.

252. Aitchison to Dufferin, 29 February 1888, D.V.P., see also note of James Westland, Finance Member of the Council, 26 July 1888, in G. of I., Home, Public, A., 188-223, Oct., 1888, para. 18.

253. Minute by Alexander Mackenzie, Pachmarhi, 31 March 1888, in *ibid.*, 210.

254. Minute by Bayley, L.-G. of Punjab, 4 May 1888, in *ibid.*, 198; see also a synopsis of these views by J. Westland, Finance Member of the Council, 26 July 1888, *ibid.*

255. Aitchison to D.M. Wallace, Simla, 7 July 1888, D.V.P.

The Viceroy on intimation recalled the memorandum, but the mischief had already been done. Indeed, throughout the ensuing controversy in the supreme government, Aitchison, though Head of the Home Department, pulled little weight.

MacDonnell's minute expressed fear that the reduction of the covenanted posts together with the adjustment of the age limits would "reduce the strength of the British-born element in the Civil Service below the point of safety."²⁵⁶ Optimally, raising the age for the competitive examination would be the one safe concession the government might offer; but the Commission had "excited hopes" for some more extravagant favour. MacDonnell thought these expectations could best be met by rejuvenating the Statute of 1870. A majority of Indian witnesses, he claimed, had not objected to the Act itself but rather to its mode of operation as established in 1879.²⁵⁷ To remedy the defects, the government had only to stipulate that the statutory appointments should be made from the uncovenanted service to any posts "*It may be considered desirable to officer with men not recruited in England.*" Such a proposal would not involve abrogation of the Commission's provincial scheme. At the same time, it would preserve the discretionary power of the government nullified by the Commission's rigid transfer proposal. No change in the existing law would then be required. Increased recruitment for the uncovenanted service would compensate for any proportionate reduction (MacDonnell estimated a one-sixth reduction) of 'competition' recruits. From among the higher ranks of the uncovenanted officers, officials could be chosen for the scheduled offices "as circumstances may dictate."²⁵⁸

256. MacDonnell's Minute, 7 July 1888, in G. of I., Home, Public, A., 188-223, Oct., 1888. MacDonnell's Minute reviews the History of the question from the genesis of the Covenanted Civil Service under Cornwallis. It is a tendentious history balanced in part by the marginal comments of Aitchison. MacDonnell, for example, interprets the Statute of 1861 as a reaffirmation of the British covenanted monopoly. But as Aitchison points out, the precise intention of the law was to legalize previous exceptional appointments.

257. MacDonnell's Minute, *ibid.*, para. 28.

258. *Ibid.*, para. 33.

Potentially, this alteration would reduce the service' posts manned by British officials from 750 to 625, the lowest point MacDonnell considered feasible. The schedule of the 1861 Act would then remain intact, the government using its discretion in appointing uncovenanted Indians to "reserved" posts. No permanent curtailment of the reserved posts, as advocated by Aitchison, would be necessary or advisable.

The Commission's scheme, according to MacDonnell, would further weaken the higher services by blurring the demarcation between those recruited for it from the provinces and those coming from England. The covenanted monopoly was essential because it gave to the latter men the requisite "self-respect" and "prestige in the eyes of the millions." Destroying this demarcation would entail a violation of "one of nature's own monopolies— monopoly in the sense that the strongest man wins."²⁵⁹

Though eventually successful, MacDonnell achieved only partial modification of the Commission's proposals during Dufferin's tenure. Dufferin's administration finally advocated an acceptance of the idea of the "Imperial" and "Provincial" services as outlined by the Commission. But there was some curtailment in the number of transferred posts, and stress was placed on the necessity for moderation in implementing the program. In a *Despatch* to the Secretary of State, the Government of India advised retention in the schedule of all the Revenue Board Memberships and the Financial Commissionership of the Punjab. The despatch technically approved exclusion from the schedule of the Divisional Commissioners in each province, but at the same time refused to amalgamate these appointments with the Provincial Service. The rationale for this ambiguity was that government should not be restricted in appointment of Commissioners even though they might be a legitimate ambition of the provincial civilians. The *Despatch* recommended a similar status for the Under-Secretaryships and Revenue Board secretaryships.²⁶⁰ Transferring one-sixth

259. *Ibid* (of p. 327 here).

260. G. of I. to the S. of S., Simla, 9 Oct., 1888 (Public Despatch 58, 1888), G. of I., Home, Public, A., 188-223, Oct., 1888, 221.

of the scheduled posts would be an "ultimate," not an immediate effect. In India, recruitment for the new service would follow much the same pattern as that of the statutory system. A redistribution of posts between the two services would represent the only substantial alteration made from the past. "The old system will thus merge in the new without any dislocation of the existing arrangements."²⁶¹

It was through the efforts of Dufferin's successor, Lord Lansdowne, that MacDonnell's machinations achieved total success. When the Secretary of State voiced misgivings concerning the recommendations of the Government of India, Lansdowne forwarded MacDonnell's Minute, and suggested that it would resolve the dilemma. "Mr. MacDonnell," wrote Lansdowne, "is an extremely able man, and I have always found his suggestions worthy of attentive consideration."²⁶² Any evasion of the Parliamentary legislations in MacDonnell's plan immediately attracted Cross' attention. He assumed there would be no effort in the various branches of the Indian Government to expedite the Provincial Service program, and he asserted that "for a long time to come," the provincial appointments would be "experimental."²⁶³ Parliamentary legislation to reduce reserved schedule would therefore, be unprofitable, and the intention of the Commission could be met, as MacDonnell had suggested, "upon the basis of the existing Acts of Parliament." Still, local governments might frame tentative lists of appointments for their own Provincial Services. Appropriate positions in the higher uncovenanted service would be included in these lists.

Assisted by the command of the Secretary of State that the schedule of the 1861 Act was to remain inviolate, MacDonnell pursued his campaign to destroy the progressive features of the Commission's Report. He rebuked his Deputy Secretary Mr. Hewett, for his use of the word "transfer" in speaking of the employment of Indians in certain posts, and emphasized the same point in a letter sent to the local governments:

261. *Ibid* (of p. 328 here), para. 14.

262. Lansdowne to Cross, Calcutta, 20 March 1889, L.V.P.

263. S. of S. to G.-G. in Council, India Office, 12 Sept., 1889, (Public Despatch 104, 1889), G. of I., Home, Public, A., 130-137., 130, N.A.I.

There is no question of *transfer*. We must avoid using the word. Its use and avoidance make all the difference between the Report and the Secretary of State's orders. No posts have been transferred to the Provincial Service; but fit men of the Provincial Service are to be appointed to certain posts, scheduled and reserved.²⁶⁴

As for the particular manner of listing provincial appointments, MacDonnell advised that "the time and extent of the admission of members of the Provincial Service to scheduled appointments must . . . be determined by the preponderant administrative needs and aptitudes of the Provinces. . . ." This practically vitiated the decisiveness of the Commission's proposals for the transfer of a specified fraction from each class of appointments. In the case of Bengal, he then proceeded to enumerate posts, for which provincial servants might safely be declared eligible. Though only a tentative guide for *possible* appointments, it still omitted five posts from the minimum number of provincial appointments specified by the Commission. The most notable omission from MacDonnell's list was the position of one Divisional Commissioner.

Despite MacDonnell's caution, the heads of provincial governments still resented the scope of the schedule MacDonnell had sent them. Sir Auckland Colvin, Lieutenant-Governor of the N.-W.P., vetoed MacDonnell's suggestion to include the chief administrative posts in four districts, claiming that neither suitable districts nor eligible Indians could be found for the experiment. He therefore pared the list of two district headships, and eliminated the proposed Under-Secretaryship from it.

C.J. Lyall, MacDonnell's successor as Home Secretary, made no effort to challenge Colvin's action, noting that similar cutbacks had been authorized in the case of both Madras and Bombay.²⁶⁵ In Central Provinces, Alexander Mackenzie refused to open any of the district headships to provincial servants. While in the Punjab the Government submitted its full

264. Marginal note by MacDonnell on Note by J. P. Hewett, 8 Nov., 1889, in *ibid* (of p. 329 here).

265. Marginal Comment by Lyall on note by Hewett, 23 Feb., 1891, G. of I., Home, Public, A., 50-103, June 1892, N.A.I.

quota of posts allowed under the one-sixth ruling, including two District headships, the Lieutenant-Governor, nonetheless, foresaw no early opportunity of giving any sizeable portion of the posts to provincial servants. These provincial responses were confirmed in a Resolution of the Government of India dated 29 January 1892, i.e., almost four years after the publication of the Aitchison Commission Report.²⁶⁶

Of the 93 scheduled appointments ostensibly made available to the provincial servants in 1892, only 51 had been obtained by them as late as 1909. By the year 1924, the number of Indians in scheduled posts was still five short of the specified total.²⁶⁷ This total had moreover represented a considerable curtailment of the Provincial Service as envisaged by the Aitchison Commission which had recommended the transfer of 108 convenanted appointments.²⁶⁸

Indian spokesman rightly concluded that the Resolution of 1892 was actually "retrograde" since the provincial *cadre* as announced fell short of the one-sixth principle operative under the previous Statutory Rules.²⁶⁹ The Financial Department admitted the validity of the accusation: "I am . . . under the impression," wrote the Secretary, James Finlay, "that the result of the Public Service Commission has been somewhat to reduce the number of higher appointments open to natives, and to lower the status of the service maintained to fill the higher appointments intended for natives."²⁷⁰

The supreme government defended itself publicly in a letter to the Government of Bengal formulated largely by the Deputy Secretary of the Home Department, P. G. Melitus.²⁷¹ Against the charge that Indians had been cheated, Melitus

266. Resolution from the Extract of Proceedings of G. of I., in Home Dept., Calcutta, 29 Jan., 1892, in *ibid.*, 88.

267. See Hira Lal Singh, *Problems and Policies*, p. 63.

268. Report of the Public Service Commission, p. 82.

269. Babu Surendranath Banerjea, Honorary Sec. of Indian Association, to the Sec. to the G. of I., Home Dept., Calcutta, 21 May 1892, G. of I., Home, Public, A., 224-227, Aug., 1892, 225, N.A.I.

270. Note by Finlay, 5 Aug., 1892, in *ibid.*

271. C.J. Lyall Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., to the Chief Sec. to Government of Bengal, Simla, 22 Aug., 1892, *ibid.*, 227.

claimed that the one-sixth ratio as provided by the Statutory Rules of 1879 represented only the maximum potential to which Indians might be employed in the reserved post—not a mandatory ruling. Secondly, Melitus said that the one-sixth ratio had been based on the full complement of the Covenanted Service, that is 940 officers, while the calculations of the Commission took into account only the actual number of posts held by those officers, that is 608.²⁷² J. P. Hewett questioned the advisability of pressing this point, because, he said, “the recruitment rate for the Civil Service [in 1879] was fixed on the assumption that the one-sixth of the total appointments made annually would be of Statutory Civilians.”²⁷³ The Home Member, however, overruled Hewett and said that Melitus’ arguments should be embodied in the reply to the Indian protest.²⁷⁴ Other departments were also enthused with the ingeniousness of Melitus’ note. Lansdowne wondered whether the main points could have been stated more succinctly and, published widely for popular consumption. “But,” he confessed, “it may pass the wit of man to condense so intricate a story.”²⁷⁵

Hardly had the British officials thwarted the menace posed by the Aitchison Commission when they were confronted with a Resolution of the House of Commons calling for simultaneous Covenanted Service examinations in India, identical to those in London, the successful competitors “being finally classified in one list according to merit.”²⁷⁶ Lansdowne, who closely followed the advice of MacDonnell throughout his Viceroyalty, felt “vicious about the simultaneous examination affair.” He could not understand how it was allowed to pass, especially, since the idea had been widely condemned as “in the highest degree revolutionary and dangerous.” This insult, added to the inconvenience of the falling value of rupee, had increased

272. Note by Melitus, 23 June 1892, in *ibid* (of p. 331 here).

273. Demi-official letter from J. P. Hewett, Private Sec. to Viceroy, to C. J. Lyall, Simla, 27 June 1892, in *ibid*.

274. Note by P. P. Hutehins, Home Member, 30 June 1892, in *ibid*.

275. Note by Lansdowne, 15 Aug., 1892, in *ibid*.

276. Resolution by the House of Commons, 2 June 1893, enclosure in S. of S. to G.-G. in Council, 22 June 1893, G. of I., Home, Public, A., 325-327, Aug., 1893, 325, N.A.I.

the bitterness among British officials, and Lansdowne apprehended the growth of "a very disloyal feeling in certain branches" of the Service.²⁷⁷

Lord Kimberley could think of no better way of convincing Parliament that it had been mistaken i.e., other than to collect the opinions of the leading administrators in India. He did not wish "to fetter in any way their discretion as to the observations they may think fit to make on the Resolution,"²⁷⁸ but he advised them to write with moderation.²⁷⁹

In a Despatch to the Secretary of State, dated 23 October 1893, the Government of India collated the adverse opinions presented by local administrators.²⁸⁰ Lansdowne thought them "pretty conclusive" and "well worth reading."²⁸¹ While the topic had been "treated temperately and respectfully in all the answers received," Lansdowne asserted there could be no doubt of the conclusion. The Despatch ended with a *non possumus* declaration concerning the examinations, and recommended that a fair trial be given to the provincial system.²⁸² The controversy faded into obscurity during the following year, ending with a Despatch from the Secretary of State expressing his agreement with the Government of India.²⁸³

The large admission of Indians into the higher ranks of the service remained a viable issue during the administrations of Lytton, Ripon, and Dufferin. All the three Viceroys found themselves caught between the protest of educated Indians, on the one hand, and the exclusiveness of the British officials on the

277. Lansdowne to Godley, Simla, 17 June, 1892, Godley collection.

278. S. of S. to G.-G. in Council, India Office, 22 June 1893, para. 2; see also Kimberley to Lansdowne, India Office, 9 June 1893, L.V.P.

279. Lansdowne to MacDonnell, Simla, 5 Aug., 1893, MacDonnell papers.

280. G. of I. to S. of S., Simla, 1 Nov., 1893, G. of I., Home, Public, A., 56-70, Nov., 1893., 69, N.A.I; for other opinions of local Governments, see also. J.J.D. LaTouche, Chief Sec. to Government of N.-W.P. and Oudh, to Sec. to G. of I., Home Dept., 5 Sept., 1893, *ibid.*, 60; Minute by J. Woodburn, Chief Commissioner of C.P., Nagpur, 7 Sept., 1893, *ibid.*, 65, and others.

281. Lansdowne to Godley, 21 Oct., 1893, Godley collection.

282. G. of I. to S. of S., Simla, 1 Nov., 1893, G. of I., Home, Public, A., 56-70, Nov., 1893, 69.

283. Fowler to Elgin, India Office, 13 April 1894, E.V.P.

other. In every case the officials succeeded in vitiating the true intentions of the various measures adopted to mollify Indian opinion. It is somewhat an irony that Aitchison, regarded as dangerous by his colleagues, became the chief architect of a program leading to a more rigid exclusiveness in higher posts than existed, technically, before. He considered the proposals of his Commission to be moderately liberal, and in a sense they were. But much of their substance was removed by MacDonnell and his colleagues. They were further mutilated by the local governments who had responsibility to implement the program. Other than Aitchison and a few minor figures in the Civil Service, there was a complete absence of civilians who were ready to give any real support to the Parliamentary Act of 1870, the Statute of 1879, and the transfer of posts under Aitchison's scheme. Almost to a man they agreed with Dennis Fitzpatrick who, as Home Secretary in 1885, had warned "against the error into which Lord Ripon so commonly fell, and which his successor did not altogether escape of exciting expectations which we cannot possibly fulfill."²³⁴

The three Viceroys after Dufferin were unfriendly to further Indianization of the higher services. Curzon thought that Indianization had already progressed too far. He viewed with alarm the success of Indians in the competition at home, and wished that all the competitive posts had been reserved for Englishmen from the outset. Curzon (with MacDonnell) blamed Dufferin "who might have insisted upon the racial qualification without exciting a murmur whereas now there would probably be a storm."²³⁵ Viceroys after Dufferin failed to see the discrepancy between the declining prestige of the Convenanted Service at home, on the one hand, and their unwillingness, on the other, to entertain qualified Indians in the highest echelons of government. In retrospect, their rigid inflexibility on this issue was a sign not only of their racial arrogance but perhaps, even more importantly of, a declining confidence in themselves and in the Raj to hold sway over the

284. Fitzpatrick to Lansdowne, Simla, 26 July, 1893, L.V.P.

285. Curzon to Hamilton, Viceroy's Camp, Kohat, 23 April 1900, C.V.P.

subcontinent. The liberal prophecies of Macaulay and Trevelyan no longer inspired the Raj; they rather haunted the bureaucrats who confronted the increasing restlessness of the educated classes. Exclusiveness in the I. C. S., was, in reality, not a sign of unimpeachable strength, but rather one another sign of the fragility of the Empire at the end of the nineteenth century.

EPILOGUE

DE-ROMANTICIZING THE INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE

The aura of romanticism often surrounding British bureaucracy in India has embraced at least three essential myths: the myth of the I.C.S'., popularity as a profession; the myth of its efficiency in administering British India; and the myth of its self-sacrificial *esprit de corps*, that infused the government with a primary concern for the welfare of the Indian people. Any scrutiny of the characteristics and motivations of British officials and of their influence on policy necessitates the modification of these myths. In moving from the confusion of inherited fables to the level of historical reality, as disclosed in documentary sources, it is inevitable that myths will either be refined or evaporate. In any event, the myth qua myth disappears. De-romanticizing the British bureaucracy in India has not required establishment of any arbitrary criteria of bureaucratic effectiveness, efficiency, or morale. The analysis contained in these chapters has been based primarily on judgements and evaluations passed by the British on their own system. It is natural to find that men outside the ranks of the Covenanted Service were most critical of it. But throughout, voices from within the Service have added to the sum of opinion proving the untenability of these myths as historical fact. Judged by the British on their own terms, these specious and indiscriminately employed myths are dissipated.

Mythological origins, of the "twilightzone . . . between living memory and written history,"¹ are by nature difficult to discover, and those relating to the I.C.S., are no exception. It is evident, however, that governmental spokesmen became increasingly defensive and thus unobjective in their public evaluations of the I.C.S., at the time corresponding with the rising tide of nationalist protest against the bureaucracy in India. Leading politicians in England obviously promoted the

1. C. Van Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, p viii.

distorted image, despite their own reluctance or unwillingness to give it any credence. This defensiveness represented a strange contrast to the relative openness of criticisms leveled against the officials in the re-evaluation discussions of 1875 and in earlier years.² But between 1875 and 1900 much had obviously happened in India to change the previous incautious remarks of the ruling aristocrats.

The mythology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries quickly adapted itself to become the history of succeeding generations. The continued acceptance and currency of the romanticized interpretation has been reflected in a host of commentaries on British imperialism in the late Victorian era published within the last two decades. Percival Griffiths in his work titled *British Impact on India* sums up his praise of British officialdom with the judgment that it became "the most powerful and closely knit bureaucracy in the world" and included "many of the ablest young men of the British universities."³ Percival Spear, in the *Oxford History of Modern India* published in 1965, concludes that the work of the I.C.S., "was done on the whole with notable efficiency and its standard of conduct was one of the highest in its contemporary world."⁴ The romanticized I.C.S., is

2. Items from the earlier period noting the "inferiority" or "inadequacy" of the I.C.S. recruits included the following: Article II, *The Edinburgh Review*, CXXXIX (April 1874); an anonymously written article titled "The Indian Civil Service: Its Rise and Fall," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, LXXXIX (March 1861), contended that the competition system had failed to fulfill the expectations of Macaulay and others "that men who had taken the highest honours in our great English universities would be found among the competitors for the I.C.S. No such competitors have come forward." Five years later, a similar article, "The Indian Civil Service," appeared in *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, LXXIV (Oct., 1866). Arthur J. Balfour, in an article titled "The Indian Civil Service," *Fortnightly Review* 28 (June-Dec., 1877), clearly implied that the pre-1876 system had been inadequate to provide competent and qualified recruits. See also select items from *Papers Relating to the Indian Civil Service*.
3. Sir Percival Griffiths, *The British Impact on India*, pp. 228 f; also H.H. Dodwell, *The Indian Empire; 1858-1918*, Vol. VI of *The Cambridge History of India* pp. 375 f.
4. Percival Spear, *The Oxford History of Modern India; 1740-1947*, p 88.

the only myth of British imperialism to emerge untarnished from John Strachey's otherwise critical diatribe, *The End of Empire*. While condemning British imperial policy as disastrous for Indian economic development, Strachey nevertheless believed that covenanted civilians had composed the "ablest and the most respectable of all the great bureaucracies of the world." This, he felt, had been the inevitable result of the fact that officials had been "carefully recruited from the ordinary 'firsts' and 'good seconds' of British education. . . ." ⁵

The notion of highly selective recruitment has been repeated continuously by most interested historians and has thus constituted to be a strong cornerstone of the I.C.S., mythology.⁶ Woodruff fails to examine firsthand the conditions under which candidates were recruited, and writes vaguely that "when [a young man] came out to India, he was. . . a University man and usually a classical scholar."⁷ O'Malley provides a lengthy discussion of recruitment policies, but gives no hint of recruitment difficulties during the late nineteenth century.⁸ A more recent version of the myth appears in R. J. Moore's *Liberalism and Indian Politics, 1872-1922*. Moore also avoids any empirical review of I.C.S., recruitment, and confidently asserts that the competitive system faced no difficulty in attracting "gentlemen" scholars from the universities. This judgement adds support to his contention that middle-class educated Indian youths were excluded from the covenanted service on the same grounds as their middle-class counterparts in England: "The Victorian preference for the gentleman made for the exclusion of many able middle-class and Irish youths who had not enjoyed the benefit of residency at a public school, or at Oxford or Cambridge, as well as of educated Indians."⁹ William Reader,

5. John Strachey, *The End of Empire*, p. 61.

6. Partial exceptions to this can be found in B.B. Misra's *Administrative History of India; 1834-1947* and in J.M. Compton's "Open Competition and the Indian Civil Service, 1854-1876," *The English Historical Review*, 83 (April 1968). But both men end their surveys of recruitment policies in the 1870's. Compton's optimistic speculation concerning the results of Salisbury's reform of 1876 is not substantiated by the sources.

7. Philip Woodruff, *The Guardians*, p. 79.

8. See O'Malley, *The Indian Civil Service*, pp. 238-257.

9. R.J. Moore, *Liberalism and Indian Politics 1872-1922*, p. 12.

in his book titled *Professional Men: The Rise of the Professional Classes in Nineteenth-Century England* (1966), considers it impossible that the I.C.S., could have been unpopular as a career choice among English university students. Statements to the contrary are regarded by him as misjudgements.¹⁰ N. C. Roy states simply that the competitive system facilitated the recruitment of what he calls "first rate men" and the enlistment of "higher average ability for the Covenanted Service."¹¹ The tenacity of the myth in common parlance is indicated in one of C. Northcote Parkinson's great satires, *Parkinson's Law: Or the Pursuit of Progress*. Parkinson asserts that the most successful candidates of the Home and Indian Service examinations "were. . . sent forth to govern India." Those of the residue "were retained to govern England."¹² The non-academic lay orientation of Parkinson's book is perhaps itself a convincing commentary on the pervasive currency of the I.C.S., mythology.

As shown in chapter one, the Home Civil Service had always been far more popular than the I.C.S., among the scholars at the universities. Results of the two major age revisions for the competitive examination led the British ruling class practically to despair of devising any system that would attract candidates of the desired calibre. The reform of 1895, highlighted by the combination of examinations for the I.C.S., and clerkships in the Home Service, brought notable superficial improvement, but the speciousness of this gimmickry became evident in the early decades of the twentieth century when not even the Home Service could lure young men to the examination tables. Moreover, as recognized by Hamilton there was little chance that a higher volume of university candidates would in itself solve the problem of morale in the Indian Civil Service.

10. William J. Reader, *Professional Men: The Rise of the Professional Classes in Nineteenth-Century England*, pp. 93 and 186; see also Percival Spear's essay in E. Leach and S. Mukherjee, *Elites in South Asia*, p.1. Spear says there was a "near monopoly" of the I.C.S., by Oxbridge "graduates" as a result of the examination system.

11. N.C. Roy, *The Civil Service in India*, p. 183.

12. C. Northcote Parkinson, *Parkinson's Law; Or the Pursuit of Progress*, p. 28.

Woodruff's statement concerning university affiliation of recruits implies that selected candidates came from among the most competent scholars of the university community. The sources, however, reveal that after 1860, the number of university recruits and candidates declined dramatically until 1876. After that, until 1890, Salisbury's regulations compelled the candidates, chosen at a younger age, to undertake two years of probationary study at a university. But the probationers, never representative of the better talent available in the public schools (and often not graduates of public schools), were clearly considered by their tutors and fellow students as ersatz scholars and ersatz gentlemen. They did not remain at the university long enough to become degree candidates. Both socially and academically, I.C.S., recruits (on their own admission) were ostracized from the mainstream of university life. Though Woodruff appears correct in his statistical review of recruitment at the turn of the century, he has ignored all the intervening difficulties and has also ignored the significance of the Home appointments for the alleged popularity of the I.C.S.¹³

In the romantic hagiography of the I.C.S., unity, enthusiasm, self-sacrificing dedication and fraternal loyalty are assumed to have been the dominant motivations of the covenanted civilians. John Strachey shows no awareness of the prevalent discontentment in the I.C.S., and asserts, beyond "the slightest doubt, that its members put the interests of India, as *they* saw them far above their own fortunes . . ." ¹⁴ Woodruff likewise fails to recognise or to acknowledge the

13. Philip Woodruff, *The Guardians*, see appendix on education and social standing of Indian Civil Servants, p. 366. B. B. Misra's recent study comes closest to the actual situation, at least for the period prior to 1880. But he is somewhat wide of the mark in claiming that the "36%" of the recruits who were university graduates prior to 1879 signified that "Macaulay's hopes were justified up to this point" (Misra, p. 189). It was precisely because the earlier hopes had not been met that the new system had been inaugurated in 1876. In addition, Misra had not examined recruitment statistics for the period after 1892.
14. Strachey, *The End of Empire*, p. 61; see also Griffiths, *The British Impact on India*, p. 228.

chronic and divisive stratifications of the I.C.S. He says nothing of the antagonism between the executive and judicial branches of the administration and nothing concerning the controversy surrounding the separation of the two branches in the Civil Service. He views the choice of the judicial branch by civilians as an incident entirely devoid of the abrasive overtones so evident in the source material.¹⁵ As a consequence he also fails to notice the resulting paralysis of constructive judicial reform.

Woodruff also avoids mention of unhealthy stratification between central administrators and their colleagues in Madras and Bombay. Passing notice is given to "separatism" on the part of Madras administrators, but the origins, nature, and ramifications of this phenomenon are ignored.¹⁶ The imaginary ethos of contentment, described in glowing terms by G.O. Trevelyan, is confirmed by Woodruff. According to Trevelyan, there was "an entire absence of the carping or pinning spirit of discontent (among covenanted civilians) which is so painfully apparent in able men at home . . . who want interest or money."¹⁷ Woodruff concurs, and claims that invidious comparisons relating to prestige and status were absent from the I.C.S.

The inter-service rivalries, individual vendettas, and provincial consciousness, amply documented in chapters three, four, and five of this study, demonstrate that internal unity, fraternal loyalty, and self-sacrificing devotion are not appropriate descriptions for the I.C.S. External threats to their prerogatives and to the security of the Raj were the only forces able to create unity among civilians; otherwise, divisiveness reigned. Time and again important policy decisions were adversely affected by it. Most famine policies could not be effectively coordinated because Madras and Bombay often resisted any interference in their affairs by arrogant autocrats in Calcutta. Controversies relating to functional apparatus hampered the development of constructive, administrative, and judicial reforms. Individual rivalries hampered the introduction of important land reforms in Bengal.

15. Woodruff, *The Guardians*, p. 89.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

17. G.O. Trevelyan quoted in *ibid.*, p. 94.

All these problems suggest at least partial qualification of two claims often made by the romanticizers as to the achievements of British Bureaucracy in India: first they claim that, bureaucratic unity paved the way for the growth and establishment of national unity in India and, secondly, the notion that British officials of the late nineteenth century further consolidated the rule of law established by their predecessors of earlier decades. K. M. Panikkar asserts that the British had effectively centralized administrative authority as early as the "Regulating Act of 1773:" . . . the long established tradition of their administration [*i.e.*, the administration of the provinces] was to follow the direction of the Centre and this continued even after independence."¹⁸ Percival Griffiths praises unreservedly, "the unifying influence exercised on India by an all-powerful impartial bureaucracy determined to secure equality and dedication to the establishment of a uniform system of administration."¹⁹ Eric Stokes (in *The English Utilitarians and India*) dates the effective centralization and unification of India from the Charter Revision Act of 1833 which established a Supreme Legislative Council and simultaneously eliminated temporarily its provincial rivals in Madras and Bombay. This action, according to Stokes, "made the failure to strip the subordinate governments of their semblance of independence comparatively unimportant."^{19a}

The sources actually indicate that the centralizing and regularizing power of the supreme government was often challenged by a number of countervailing influences, including pro-

18. K.M. Panikkar, *The Foundations of New India*, p. 238; see also, Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, pp. 5. f: "...political union never was enjoyed by all India until the full establishment of the British sovereignty..."

19. Griffiths, *The British Impact on India*, 229.

19a. Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*, p. 183. Stokes neglects to mention the revival of Legislative Council's in Bombay and Madras in accordance with the India Council's Act of 1861. Misra makes note of this legislation, but claims "it restored the legislative powers of Local Governments without affecting central control." (Misra, pp. 27-33). In general, Misra fails to recognize important vestiges of local power remaining in the subordinate presidencies.

vincial governments, recalcitrant judges, and local indigenous elites. More recent developments reflect a closer relationship to the bureaucratic divisiveness of the late nineteenth century than to the overly optimistic judgements of most historians. The lack of cohesion between the centre and the provinces and the subsequent facility and ease with which the provinces thwarted the aims of the centre are the major administrative problems disclosed by Paul Appleby in his analysis of Indian administration published by the Government of India in 1956. "The most fundamental administrative problem of [independent] India," concluded Appleby, is "its lack of organic unity."²⁰ Appleby laid special emphasis on the "cumbersome process of cross-reference and consultations" between the states and the central government and the apparent absence of authority allowing the centre to enforce "on the states the co-ordinative decision, if there is one."²¹ This enfeebling absence of authority and initiative is not a development peculiar to post-independence India.

If the British succeeded in holding their Indian Empire together, it was not so much the result of effective administrative structures or operation. Rather, they succeeded by a process of agreeing to disagree, and of allowing the subordinate presidencies to go their own way whenever disagreement arose. In an administration whose bias favoured a minimum of action this was not difficult to do. In a certain limited sense, it may still be said that British administrative structures provided a seed-bed for governmental unity in modern India. But the claim must not be exaggerated: because one is confronted with the paradoxical reality that the structures so highly praised by many historians have carried also the seeds of divisiveness without an effective countermanding authority at the centre. Part and parcel of the British heritage were the long or even incessant delays in making of decisions and also the frequent inability of the centre to act in contradiction to the administrations of the minor presidencies.

As for the record of British bureaucracy in the area of Law,

20. Paul Appleby, *Public Administration in India*, p. 51.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

here again many blanket assertions require modification.²² It may appear, as it did even to some of the Indian leadership (including Naoroji)²³ that "law and order" were the "first blessings" of the British rule, especially when British rule was compared to the semianarchy that existed in the transition period from Mughal to British rule. But, as recently argued by Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, it can also be said that under the British system "law had become less meaningful and useful because of its alien characteristics, inaccessibility, adversary proceedings, and individualist[ic] bias."²⁴ There may have been less marauding under the British rule, but literate and powerful classes used the alien legal system in a subtle fashion to exploit and to undermine the position of those less knowledgeable or less powerful. Vast numbers of peasants or land holders had seemingly as little (perhaps less) security of land tenure under British law as under previous regimes. In the N.-W.P., at least, zamindars also suffered from the ramifications of the alien legal system. Elizabeth Whitcombe appears to argue in contradictory fashion, at one point suggesting that the new legal system forced zamindars into bankruptcy and alienation of their lands,²⁵ but at a later point contending that landowners used all the multifarious devices at their command, either with the consent, or collusion, or even the support of government, to prevent alienation.²⁶ Despite this confusion, the burden of Whitcombe's argument is the malfunctioning of the British judicial machinery, particularly as revealed in the geometric expansion of legal expenses with disastrous consequences for cultivator and landlordalike.²⁷ These patterns of judicial impropriety had been well established in India during the days of the Company rule when Thomas Munro, Governor of Madras from 1819 to 1827, confessed that "our system

22. See, e.g., Percival Griffiths, *The British Impact*, p. 152.

23. Naoroji quoted in Griffiths, *ibid.*, p. 228

24. Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India*, pp. 253 f.

25. Elizabeth Whitcombe, *Agrarian Conditions in Northern India*, pp. 205 and 206.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 228-233.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 205-233.

produces the litigation which we groundlessly impute to the character of the [Indian] people."²⁸

The failure of the supreme government or the provinces to reform the judiciary or to implement a reasonably accurate settlement program obviously augmented the pattern of impropriety and confusion in the late nineteenth century. Attempts to initiate judicial reforms were continuously aborted because of the endemic animosity between the executive and the judicial branches, especially in Bengal. Attempts at land reform in 1885 and after also suffered because of this quarrel. Executive officials hesitated to emphasize or to expose publicly the inadequacies of judiciary in the late nineteenth century for the simple reason that open conflict between the two branches would diminish the stability and authority of the British rule. Government had to be content with the status quo. Any serious tampering with the existing situation would not only exacerbate relations with the judiciary but would also open the Pandora's box of systemic incompetence and injustice, especially in relation to lower classes, and particularly with regard to the inability of the executive settlement officers to secure stable occupancy rights for victimized cultivators.²⁹ In private correspondence, viceroys and other executive officials constantly criticized and even vilified the judiciary as inferior and inadequate. Castigating the judges was of-course one way of hiding the inadequacies of the whole administrative system, including the revenue settlement operations of the executive officers.

Civilians failed to see any discrepancy between their criticism of the legal system and their constant assertions of having established the rule of uniform law in the subcontinent. For many observers the establishment of a codified law, whether effectively operative or not, seemed proof in itself that "British rule has. . . contributed more largely to the well-being of society. . . and the general sense of security which now

28. Thomas Munro quoted in Erik Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth; on the Origins of Militant Nonviolence*, p. 274.

29. The invalidity of revenue settlement records and the subsequent exploitation of cultivators is discussed extensively by E. Withcombe, *Agrarian Conditions*, see especially p. 129.

prevails in every part of the empire.”³⁰ The two articles by H.E.M. James in the *National Review* discussed briefly in chapter four, are indicative of the native optimism and self-aggrandizement existing side by side with the harsh realities of judicial administration in India. James failed to see the discrepancy between his praise for the alleged overall efficiency of British administration³¹ and his assertion, in the second article, that “the Civil Courts are ruining the whole agricultural population in many important provinces.”³²

The rapid mobility of officials, the obstruction of administrative and of judicial reforms, the inadequacies of the secretariat system, and the chronic problems of inter-governmental relations are all phenomena that automatically challenge the myth of efficiency. The strength of this myth may be measured by Percival Griffiths’ suggestion that British officials were too efficient; that by weight of their energetic initiative and effectiveness, they discouraged the development of indigenous enterprise and talent.³³ In most studies touching only indirectly on the Civil Service, the myth of efficiency has remained practically inviolable.³⁴ This has sometimes lead to interesting anomalies. J. P. Lewis’ analysis of the economic problems of India begins by praising British administrative tradition for its “competence and integrity.” These factors are designated as important assets for the development of independent India, even though the tradition, according to Lewis, “has become somewhat frayed since independence.”³⁵

30. “Thirty Years of British Rule in India,” *Saturday Review*, 67 (25 May 1889), p. 632; see also H.M. Birdwood, “The Civil Administration of British India,” *Journal of the Society of Arts*, XLVII (27 October, 1899), pp. 875 ff.

31. James’, “Reflections,” *National Review*, 22 (Sept.,-Feb., 1893-94) p. 351.

32. James’, “Some Further Reflections,” *National Review*, *ibid.*, pp. 774 f.

33. Griffiths, *The British Impact*, pp. 230 and 226.

34. See, e.g., C.H. Philips’, “Foreword” to Hira Lal Singh’s *Problems and Policies of the British in India*; Professor Philips includes “efficiency” among those qualities of British rule to be considered as axiomatic; see also S. R. Mehrotra, *India and the Commonwealth, 1885-1929*, p. 24.

35. John P. Lewis, *Quiet Crisis in India: Economic Development and American Policy*, p. 4.

Yet at a later point Lewis appears to realize it was precisely the British administration with its topheavy but ineffectually centralized bureaucracy which paved the way for many recent and current problems.³⁶

Anil Seal's recent contribution to the historiography of Indian nationalism continues the general tendency of white washing the British bureaucracy. Seal maintains that despite some initial misgivings, Lord Lytton had come to place great confidence in the officials by 1877. The one reference cited to substantiate the alleged change in Lytton's attitude does not tally with the many continuous negative comments on the I.C.S. scattered throughout Lytton's correspondence with Stephen.³⁷ Likewise, when recording Ripon's attitude toward the I.C.S., Seal selects one favourable comment and ignores several others made in the opposite vein.³⁸ Philip Woodruff once again looks to G.O. Trevelyan to support his own bias, namely, that administrative efficiency was a hallmark of the I.C.S.³⁹ While N.C. Roy questions the quality of British administration from the standpoint of its not being indigenous, he nonetheless believes the Covenanted Service was intent to do efficiently "what little it attempted to do."⁴⁰

The notion of efficiency was one among the several popular ideas about the I.C.S., at the turn of the century which gradually, without investigation, came to be regarded as historical fact. In essence this was a mythical rationale used originally by the British to justify their monopoly of higher positions. The "efficiency" of British officials became a racist desideratum for the exclusion of Indians who were branded as inefficient and incompetent, no matter how well they might perform in the competitive examinations or in their university studies.⁴⁸ With

36. *Ibid* (of p. 346 here) pp. 139 f.

37. Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism; Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century*, p. 136.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

39. Woodruff, *The Guardians*, p. 951; see also O'Malley, *The Indian Civil Service*, p. 99.

40. N.C. Roy, *The Civil Service*, p. 46.

41-47. (omit)

48. See Edward Thompson and G. T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, pp. 536 f.

the passage of time, the attribution of efficiency to British officials, no longer feasible for the exclusion of Indians, became an intrinsic part of the historiographical aggrandizement of the British Raj,

By exposing areas or ways in which British officialdom was not efficient, this study does not necessarily or automatically prove that the I.C.S. was "inefficient." Such a judgment would simply be an inversion of the mistake made by historians who have been victims of the "efficiency" myth. Both terms—"efficient" and "inefficient"—are abstract generalizations and relative in many respects to one's conception of what the terms mean in relation to certain institutions or to the certain patterns of behaviour. As Appleby points out, "a charge of governmental inefficiency often means simply that the speaker disagrees with some policy of the government."⁴⁹ But if "inefficiency" is an accusation used by those who disapprove what is done, "efficiency" can be a spurious accolade employed by those who have an ample share of untidiness to hide under the rug. It would be impossible to arrive at any final measurement of determination of efficiency or of inefficiency. But the weaknesses and failures disclosed in this study decisively indicate that the term "efficiency" cannot be applied indiscriminately to describe British administration in India and that the British indulged, all too frequently, in procedures and idiosyncrasies that were inimical to "efficiency."

It can further be postulated that if the strengths of the current Indian Administrative Service are in part a heritage from the British past, so too the deficiencies are not altogether the fault of post-independence Indian bureaucracy. All the major deficiencies highlighted in Appleby's study show affinity with and derivation from the British tradition. The practices so often causing delay and frustration during the British period are identical with those exposed by Appleby as responsible for post-independence perplexities in India, excessive references passing to and fro among the departments, the accompanying accumulation of files, and the concurrent failure to formulate crucial decisions⁵⁰ were as prominent in British administration

49. Paul Appleby *Public Administration*, p. 6.

50. Paul Appleby, *Re-Examination of India's Administrative System*, pp. 30 f, 50; see also Appleby, *Public Administration*, p. 17.

as Appleby and the *Delhi Statesman*⁵¹ indicate they continued to be after 1947. Of the post-independence system, Appleby states:

In addition to the references so often made to Finance and Home affairs, many matters are constantly referred to other ministries which may be thought to have, or which may claim, some impinging interest. . . . The reference is sent on its usual course downward to subordinate personnel charged to examine everything critically in terms precedent and [of] possible ill consequences. Sometimes much is made of little. . . . Too many references of too many matters are made in this way in harmony with the general concern to get agreement to everything by everybody. . . .⁵²

Elsewhere, Appleby criticizes "the filing system and the related business of work done through the hierarchical movement of papers. The time required for answering letters," he adds, "is much too long."⁵³ One might well ask whether Appleby had borrowed words from Curzon or Elgin when he wrote these lines.⁵⁴ Excessive reference and paper work are two reasons, according to Appleby, for the lack of initiative at the centre vis-a-vis the states. This assessment is more than coincidentally reminiscent of the deadlocks constantly occurring between the centre and the minor presidencies in the Victorian era. The two phenomena are in fact related through the continuation of certain bureaucratic procedures (especially those of the secretariats) of the nineteenth century.

British rule during the late nineteenth century was impressive in the outer decorum of its operation and its intricately graded hierarchy from the lowest assistant magistrate to the Olympian figures at Calcutta and Simla. But a probe beneath the facade reveals a certain superficiality or artificiality (the word used by

51. See "Passing the Files", *Delhi Statesman*, 2 Sept., 1964; and "Passing the Files," *Statesman*, 8 Sept., 1964.

52. Appleby, *Re-Examination*, p. 31.

53. Appleby, *Public-Administration*, p. 13.

54. See, e.g., Curzon's Memorandum on the system of noting in the departments of the Government of India, 24 May 1899, . G of I., Home, Public, A., 51-54, Aug., 1899., 53, N.A.I; and Note by Elgin, 20 April 1895, G. of I., Home, Public, A., 396-397, Dec., 1895, N.A.I.

Lytton and Ripon) penetrating the structure. Whatever capacities civilians possessed or lacked, this artificiality militated strongly against substantial accomplishment on their part. Viceroys of the late nineteenth century unanimously condemned the rapid mobility of the covenanted civilian as destructive to efficiency. But Henry Beveridge and H. J. S. Cotton were among the few who unflinchingly admitted the logical conclusion of contradiction between the British claims and the British performance, namely that only Indians could rule other Indians with any depth of comprehension. "The administration. . . of a great country," wrote Cotton, "by a small number of foreign visitors, in a state of isolation, produced by a difference in religion, ideas and manners, which cuts them off from all intimate communion with the people, can never exist as a permanent state of things."⁵⁵ It is also evident that the necessary remedy to rapid mobility and therefore to superficial administration in the districts would have entailed the removal of concessions affecting leave and furlough which were essential for the maintenance of minimal contentment among the officials. "Efficiency" was therefore sacrificed on at least two counts: the appeasement of the civilians and, secondly, the disunity within the I.C.S., that precluded administrative reforms.

Whatever the motivation for British conquest of India, the evident superior military strategy and technology of the British do not signify *a priori* that their methods of governing India were also superior, though the latter assumption has often appeared to issue automatically from the former. The lack of any solid contact between the British officials and their Indian subordinates or citizens, the British apprehension of the Indian "mystery," and the continued adherence to laissez-faire concepts of government were not conducive to the development of an administration that could exercise positive control over the destiny of the Indian people. If Indians acquiesced in such administration, it was not only because of their weaknesses (for example, their traditional regional and caste fragmentation) and their relatively minimal degree of politicization but also because certain aristocratic high caste elements benefitted

55. Sir Henry Cotton, "The Future of British India," *The American Monthly Review of Reviews*, 32 (July-Dec., 1905), p. 453.

greatly from this kind of government. It required an entirely new class, the English-educated middle class, created by the British themselves, to raise any notable opposition. Landed aristocrats, even more firmly ensconced after the Mutiny, were satisfied to support the status quo. In most instances, British administration interfered little with their dominant role in Indian society.⁵⁶

Among all the doctrines of liberal polity, laissez-faire (hence, minimal government) remained a fundamental assumption of the British rule throughout the Victorian era and in fact it was reinforced by the Mutiny.⁵⁷ The shape of affairs in the late nineteenth century suggests, however, that this was not only and perhaps not primarily an ideological commitment, but rather a superficial ideological cover for official anxieties concerning the role of the British officialdom in an increasingly restless society. Curzon, who called the Government of India "a mighty and miraculous machine for doing nothing," was the first Viceroy to seriously question the merit of this laissez-faire approach.⁵⁸ It was precisely in areas not of interest to government or in matters gingerly sidestepped (e.g., judicial and land revenue settlement reforms) that the British rule, in retrospect, appears to have displayed its most serious failures. "Not being appointed by, or responsible to, the people, the I.C.S.," according to Jawaharlal Nehru, "paid little attention to these [affairs] which concern the people most."⁵⁹ British inactivity actually made peasantry's exploitation and depredation appear natural, thus multiplying the difficulties of agricultural reform both in pre- and in post-independence India.

56. "... this history (*i.e.*, British rule in India suggests that the 'blame' [for failure to lift the people] must be shared among the various factions in each nation who conspired with and against each other in exploiting one of those transitory triumphs of human power and ingenuity for which always some have to pay." Erik H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth*, p. 268.

57. See, e.g., Thomas Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt; India (1857-1870)* p. 327: The British in the post-mutiny period "confined themselves almost exclusively to the maintenance of law and order and the construction of public works. Beyond this all was hazy."

58. Curzon to Hamilton, Camp, H.C., D510'10, Vol. 22, p. 2.

59. Nehru quoted in Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth*, p. 277.

The early nationalist leadership engaged in verbal attacks on civilians for their exclusiveness and snobbishness, but they failed for the most part to expose the damage being done by simple absence of administrative initiative and activity. They only blamed the British Raj for what it had done to exclude them from participating in government. But in the twentieth century, it becomes increasingly clear that it might have been more relevant to register disapproval of the bureaucracy for what it was failing to do in relation to fundamental social and economic problems. W.W. Hunter voiced some prescient criticisms along these lines in his book titled *England's Work in India*, published in 1880:

The English in India are now called upon, either to stand by and witness the pitiless overcrowding of the masses of hungry human beings, or to aid the people. . . to meet their growing wants. The problem is a difficult one; but I have shown why I believe it capable of solution. Forty years ago, the political economists would have told us that a Government had no right to enter on such problems at all; and forty years hereafter we should have had an Indian Ireland, multiplied fiftyfold, on our hands. The condition of things in India compels the Government to enter on these problems. Their solution, and the constant demand for improvement in the general executive, will require an increasing amount of administrative labour. . . . The principle of *laissez faire* can, in fact, be safely applied only to self-governing nations.⁶⁰

As time passes, it seems inevitable that British rule in India will become known as much or more for what it did not do as for what it did. It constructed an elaborate judiciary and formulated elaborate codes to accompany it. But the government failed to intervene aggressively to stop the judicial scandal. British administration in India had some form of unity, but the internecine conflicts among the presidencies plus the inability and unwillingness of the government to curb them is an indication of failure to give that unity any real substance. Not knowing what do of a positive nature to shape

60. W.W. Hunter, *England's Work in India*, pp. 130 f.

destiny of the Indian populace, British officials isolated themselves in separate enclaves and more often than not became champions of the status quo.

As for their *esprit de corps*, the sources show there was very little of it in the I.C.S.⁶¹ The countless memorials of protest against supersession, the instability and lack of continuity in district administration, and the endemic personal struggles among the civilians all disclose a pervasive unrest in the I.C.S. It was only in campaigns against supposed injustices and breaches of promise that the Covenanted Service displayed cohesiveness and enthusiasm. Here again the result was stultification of reforms, because no significant advancement toward Indianization of the Covenanted Service could be made as long as the British officials fought it unrelentingly. Nor would it be possible to recruit and retain loyal British cadres if reforms were allowed to diminish their existing prerogatives. Viceroys including Lytton, Ripon and Dufferin, were considerably more pliable than civilians on the question of Indianization. But they were caught in the vice extent as between the necessity to grant concessions to India and the fear of declining I.C.S., attractiveness in England. Thus whichever way the government moved, it would inevitably weaken its brittle equilibrium. Rumours concerning Lytton's plan for employment of Indians in higher positions provoked intense animosity among the civilians, and the Viceroy felt compelled to eliminate the proposals from his speech at the Durbar of 1877. But civilian bitterness remained latent and found its most explosive outlet during the Ilbert Bill fracas in Ripon's administration. Wider Indian employment was never seriously proposed again during the late Victorian era, although Dufferin's Public Service Commission indicated a willingness on Dufferin's part to reconsider the question.

The covenanted civilian did not live in a frame of reference conducive to an idealistic conception of his role. Largely

61. It is quite evident that whatever social advantages the officials enjoyed in India, they were still obsessed with the desire to return home. The sources do not appear to support Professor Hutchins' statement that "because one's social claims were only respected within India, there was little temptation to return home." At least this was not true of the covenanted civilians. See Hutchins, *Illusion of Permanence*, p. 118.

with middle class backgrounds, most civilians aspired to succeed in India primarily in order to provide for a comfortable retirement in England. Promotion to higher positions meant not only temporary prestige in India but also greater security for the future. The industry and enthusiasm displayed by certain individual administrators are not to be accounted for in terms of their *esprit de corps*, but rather in terms of personal motivations to achieve.

If anything, morale in the Covenanted Service, considered as a whole, seemed to diminish in the late nineteenth century. The decline of the rupee, the stagnation controversy, and the development of protest among educated Indians combined to dampen the morale of British administrators. Indian careers, as indicated by the problems of recruitment, became unattractive even among the middle classes as the century progressed through its final decades. The malaise among British officials was aptly expressed in a letter from H. T. Prinsep of the Calcutta High Court to Lord Curzon: "Indian reputations," he wrote, "are like dissolving views in a magic lantern. . . . The Anglo-Indian public comes and goes and lives for the present only."⁶² One should not expect to find the impulses of idealism operating among a body of men discounted by the aristocracy at home, badgered increasingly in India by the educated classes, and regarding themselves as "unfortunate exiles in a land of regrets."⁶³

Hopefully this study has made the record speak for itself in such a fashion that romantic notions have not been allowed to veil some important objective realities concerning the I.C.S. To romanticize the past may be important, indeed inevitable, for those who seek pleasant memories. But a romanticized history can be both unpleasant and dangerous for those who must deal with the imperfections of the present, and who seek an accurate view of past institutions and patterns of behaviour so as to deal more effectively with the p r o b l e m s of the present.

62. H.T. Prinsep to Curzon, Calcutta, 14 May 1899, C.V.P.

63. Curzon to Hamilton, Simla, 21 May 1902, H.C.

APPENDIX A

1. The *cadre* appointments as suggested by the Government of India in 1879 and as adopted by the committee of that same year, included all posts to which salaries of more than Rs. 500 per month were attached. They were as follows :

A. Bengal: (Lower Provinces)

1 Lieutenant-Governor; 3 Secretaries; 2 Under-Secretaries; 6 Judges of the High Court; 1 Registrar; 2 Members of the Board of Revenue; 1 Secretary to Board of Revenue; 1 Junior Secretary to the Board of Revenue; 1 Judicial Commissioner; 27 Judges; 2 Assistant Judges; 1 Small Cause Court Judge; 9 Commissioners; 37 Magistrates; 33 Joint Magistrates; 2 Opium Agents; 1 Chairman of Justices; 1 Collector of Customs; 1 Deputy Collector of Customs; 1 Inspector General of Police; 1 Superintendent and Remembrancer of Legal Affairs; 1 Inspector General of Registration; 1 First Inspector of Registration; 1 Settlement Officer; 1 Assistant Settlement Officers; **Total-138** to which were added **16** non-regulation appointments, making a grand total of **154**.

B. North-Western Provinces:

1. Lieutenant-Governor; 5 Secretaries; 3 Judges, High Court; 1 Registrar; 4 Members of the Board of Revenue, Secretary and Assistant Secretary; 19 Sessions Judges; 1 Small Cause Court Judge; 5 Commissioners; 32 Magistrates; 1 Commissioner of Excise Department; 35 Joint Magistrates; 9 Settlement Officers; 1 Director, Agriculture Department; 1 Deputy Inspector General of Police; 1 Special duty; 1 District Superintendent of Police; **Total-120** to which were added **14** non-regulation appointments, making a grand total of **134**.

C. Oudh:

1 Secretary; 1 Judicial Commissioner; 1 personal assistant; 4 Commissioners; 12 Deputy Commissioners; 4 Civil and Sessions Judges; 1 City Magistrate; 1 Civil Judge; 1 Small Cause Court Judge; 12 Assistant Commissioners; **Total-38**.

D. Punjab:

1 Lieutenant-Governor; 2 Secretaries; 2 Judges, Chief Court; 1 Registrar; 1 Financial Commissioner; 2 Secretaries to Financial Commissioner; 3 Small Cause Court Judges; 1 Civil and Sessions Judge; 13 Commissioners; 32 Deputy Commissioners; 13 Judicial Assistants; 18 Assistant Commissioners; 13 Settlement Officers; 1 Officer on Special Duty. **Total=103.**

E. Central Provinces:

1. Chief Commissioner; 2 Secretaries; 1 Judicial Commissioner; 1 Registrar; 2 Small Cause Court Judges; 5 Commissioners; 18 Deputy Commissioners; 2 Inspectors General; 13 Assistants. **Total-45.**

2. The *cadre* appointments as suggested by Charles Bernard and subsequently listed on the draft Resolution of May 17, 1880, included all posts to which were attached salaries of Rs. 800 per month or more:

A. Bengal : (Lower Provinces)

1 Lieutenant-Governor; 3 Secretaries; 2 Under-Secretaries; 6 Judges, High Court; 1 Registrar; 2 Members of Board of Revenue; 1 Secretary to Board of Revenue; 1 Junior Secretary to Board of Revenue; 1 Judicial Commissioner; 27 Judges; 2 Assistant Judges; 1 Small Cause Court Judge; 9 Commissioners; 37 Magistrates; 23 Joint Magistrates; 2 Opium Agents 1 Chairman of Justices; 1 Collector of Customs; 1 Deputy Collector of Customs; 1 Inspector-General of Police; 1 Superintendent and Remembrancer of Legal Affairs; 1 Inspector General of Registration; 1 First Inspector of Registration; 2 Settlement Officers; **Total-128**, to which were added **11** non regulation appointments, making a grand total of **139**.

B. North-Western Provinces :

1 Lieutenant-Governor; 3 Secretaries; 3 Judges, High Court; 1 Registrar; 4 Members of the Board of Revenue; 1 Secretary and 1 Assist. Sec. to Board of Revenue; 19 Sessions Judges; 1 Small Cause Court Judge; 5 Commissioners; 32 Magistrates; 1 Commissioner of Excise; 20 Joint Magistrates; 1 Director, Agriculture Department; 1 Inspector General or Deputy Inspector-General of Police; 5 Officers on settlement or other special duties; **Total-99**, to which were added **9** non-regulation appointments, making a total of **108**.

C. Oudh:

1 Secretary; 1 Judicial Commissioner; 4 Commissioners; 12 Deputy Commissioners; 4 Civil and Sessions Judges; 1 City Magistrate; 1 Civil Judge; 1 Small Cause Court Judge; 6 Assistant Commissioners **Total-31.**

D. Punjab:

1 Lieutenant-Governor; 2 Secretaries; 2 Judges, Chief Court; 1 Registrar; 1 Financial Commissioner; 2 Secretaries, Financial Commissioners; 3 Small Cause Court Judges; 1 Civil and Sessions Judges; 13 Commissioners and Additional Commissioners; 32 Deputy Commissioners; 13 Judicial Assistants; 5 Assistant Commissioners; 10 officers on settlement or other special duties; **Total-86.**

E. Central Provinces:

1 Chief Commissioner; 2 Secretaries; 1 Judicial Commissioner; 2 Small Cause Court Judges; 5 Commissioners and Additional Commissioners; 18 Deputy Commissioners; 2 Inspectors-General; 4 Assistant Commissioners, **Total-35.**

The information for this appendix is taken from an appendix to a note by F.C. Daukes, Under-Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, concerning the replies of the local Governments to the draft Resolution of 17 May 1880, 3 February 1881, in Government of India Home, Public, 106-155, June 1882, Indent for civilian recruits from home, N.A.I.

APPENDIX B

Statement of appointments reserved by the Schedule of 24 and 25, Victoria, Cap. 54, 1861, and by the Secretary of State's orders extending the Schedule to Non-Regulation Provinces.

(This list appears as an appendix to Note by A.P. MacDonnell, Secretary to Government of India, Home Department, 7 July 1888, in G.O.I., Home, Public, 188-223, Oct. 1888.)

	Government of India	Madras	Bombay	Bengal	N.-W.P. & Oudh	Punjab	Central Provinces	Assam
1. Secretaries, Junior Secretaries, and Under-Secretaries	10	4	4	6	6	4	3	1
2. Accountant-General, Civil Auditor, and Sub-Treasurer	6							
3. Civil and Sessions Judges or Chief Judicial Officers of Districts		21	18	30	24	22	1	2
4. Additional and Assistant Judges			8					
5. Magistrates and Collectors and Chief Magisterial Officers		22	24	47	49	31	18	12

APPOINTMENTS	Government of India						
	Madras	Bombay	Bengal	N.-W.P. & Oudh	Punjab	Central Provinces	Assam
6. Joint-Magistrates and Collectors and Assistant Magistrates and Collectors, Sub-Divisional Officers and similar charges	39	41	45	48	30	7	13
7. Members of the Board of Revenue	4		2	2			
8. Secretaries to Boards of Revenue	2		2	2			
9. Commissioners of Revenue		4	9	11	6	4	
10. Commissioners of Customs, Salt and Opium							
11. Opium Agents		1	1	1			
TOTAL	17	92	142	143	93	33	28
GRAND TOTAL 648							

Lieutenant-Governorships, Chief Commissionerships, and two posts on the Viceroy's Council were also reserved for Covenanted Civilians,

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Correspondence and Papers of Viceroys arranged in chronological order according to the dates of their Indian Service:

Lytton Papers (India Office Library, European MSS., E218)
Ripon Papers (British Museum, I.S. 290).

Dufferin Papers (India Office Library, microfilm; and National Archives of India, microfilm)

Lansdowne Papers (India Office Library, D558)

Elgin Papers (India Office Library, F84)

Curzon Papers (India Office Library, F111)

Correspondence and Papers of Secretaries of State for India:

Hamilton Correspondence (India Office Library, Eur. MSS, D510).

Morley Papers (India Office Library, EUR. MSS., D573)

Private Correspondence and Papers of Other Persons.

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Papers of Sir Arthur Godley, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for India from 1883 to 1909 (India Office Library, EUR. MSS., F102).

Papers of C. P. Ilbert (India Office Library, EUR. MSS., D594). (Primarily letters addressed to Ilbert)

Correspondence of Herman Kisch, I.C.S., (India Office Library, EUR. MSS., B155) Parts of this correspondence have since been published in book form)

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