

CITY POLITICS IN COLOMBO IN THE 19th CENTURY.*

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THE NATURE OF CITY POLITICS IN COLOMBO.

CITY politics in Colombo started with the introduction of Municipal system in the latter half of the 19th century. It could be seen that there were two types of conflicts or struggles involved in city politics. One was the conflict between the Government and the Municipal Council on the issue of local self-government. The municipal council wanted to enjoy full powers of local self-government while the government was not very keen in promoting local self-government but that of self-reliance. Yet at the same time the government did not want to exhibit the real situation and hence attempted to show that their aim, also, was to promote local self-government. Therefore, ever since the introduction of municipal system in 1865, which conferred wide powers of local self-government, the effort of the council was to preserve them and get them expanded more and more, while the effort of the government on the other hand was to make the council pay for the services provided within the city and relieve the government of that burden. In the mean time the government was also active in increasing the control of the government over the council. This policy and practise of the government was contrary not only to the expectation of the council but also to the declared aim of the government in establishing municipal system. Hence the conflict between the government and the municipal council over the problem of local self-government could be identified as the predominant cause of contention in the city politics in Colombo in the 19th century.

The other struggle was between the people themselves who wanted to become municipal councillors and thereby the rulers of the city. They fought their battle on several issues such as profession, vocation ethnicity, caste, religion etc. as could be seen in the following pages, and it is also evident that the extent and the trend of the influence of these factors changed from election, to election, ward to ward and from time to time as well.

THE SEAT OF CITY POLITICS.

The Ordinance No. 17 of 1865¹ made provisions for a Municipal Council in the city of Colombo. It empowered the Governor to define

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the limits of the town and divide it into wards or districts. Accordingly a Proclamation was issued by Governor Hercules Robinson to define the limits of the Municipality and to divide it into wards. The limits of the city of Colombo were notified to be "that portion of Colombo bounded on the north by the San Sebastian Canal, up to the north and south Baseline the north and south baseline up to its Junction with the Cottah road, and Cottah road from Borella to its junction with Buller's road near the 4th mile post; and on the south and south-east by the Kirillapone Canal and Buller's road, extending from the point where it is joined by the road from Bambelapetiya and by the Bambelapetiya road"². The same proclamation divided the city into nine wards, namely the Fort, Pettah, St. Sebastian, St. Paul's, Cottanchina (Kotahena), New Bazaar, Marandahan (Maradana), Slave Island and Colpetty (Kollupitiya).

From the inception in 1865 up to the end of the 19th century only two minor changes took place with regard to the physical expansion of the Colombo Municipality or the seat of the city politics in Colombo. One was the inclusion of the lake into the Slave Island ward. The initial demarcations did not include the lake into any of the wards and in 1866 it was included to the "District No 6 Slave Island"³. A second alteration was the expansion of the Maradana ward. In 1870 on completion of the Orogodawatta (Urugodawatta) road the Municipal Council applied to the government to extend the northern boundry of the Maradana ward so as to include the portion of the new road which connected the north and south Baseline roads with the Urugodawatta bridge. The Governor and the Executive Council approved this extension and the altered limits of the town of Colombo increased the area of the Municipality by twenty acres which consisted almost entirely of grass fields.⁴

As early as 1870, there were suggestions to increase the number of wards of the Colombo Municipality⁵ and in particular to divide the Kotahena ward into two. This was by no means unreasonable when considering the fact that although smaller in area by 250 acres, Kotahena ward contained 2000 more houses than Kollupitiya, the largest of the wards which consisted of 1, 930 acres in extent. But not until the year 1910 did any major changes take place.

The Constitution

The seat of city politics was the Municipal Council. The rules and regulations related to the constitution of the council are the main features which reveals the nature of the conflict between the government and the municipal council. The Ordinance No. 17 of 1865 made provisions for a council composed of official and unofficial members. The inhabitants were entrusted with the power to elect non-official members while

the Governor was to nominate the official members. A person with a landed property worth £ 50 (Rs. 500) or in occupation on rent a house of which the yearly value is not less than £ 10 (Rs. 50), and situated within a ward of the Municipality was qualified to be elected as a Councillor for the ward where he resided or owned property. No officer in the Army or the Navy could be a candidate and no person was competent to be the councillor for two or more wards.

The women did not have the right to vote. Hence only the males, over 21 years of age, and occupied a house within any of the wards of the Municipality either as proprietor or tenant, of the yearly value or rent of not less than £ 10 (Rs. 50) were considered as "resident householders" and were entitled to vote at the municipal elections. These resident householders were entitled to vote in more than one ward provided they had property of the necessary value in every such ward⁶. The Government Agent of the Province was the ex-officio Chairman of the Municipal Council. Each ward was to be represented by one elected member and the Governor was empowered to appoint official members numbering not more than half the number of elected members. The term of the Council so constituted was two years and it was entrusted with certain amount of legislative, executive, and judicial powers.

Several features of the constitution of the seat of city politics warrant special consideration. Under this new municipal system powers were given to the inhabitants to elect their representatives and although there were government nominees in the council, the elected members were in a majority. Therefore as was pointed out by Richard Morgan, the designer of the scheme-the people who had to pay for the improvements of their town were rightly allowed to manage the means, or in other words the inhabitants of the municipal town were given the power to manage their own affairs⁷. When compared with the contemporary local government institutions in Indian Presidencies it is clearly evident that the newly established municipal institutions in Sri Lanka started much ahead towards local Self-Government. In India a local government system based on the English system had been introduced in 1687 in the town of Madras and was expanded to Calcutta and Bombay in 1726, very much earlier than in Sri Lanka⁸. But even by 1865, when a municipal system based on the English system was introduced in Sri Lanka, the elective principle was still withheld in the Indian municipalities and the official influence was almost overwhelming,⁹ whereas, in contrast, the newly established municipalities in Sri Lanka had an elected majority in their Councils.

The elected members of the very first municipal council were vested with wider powers than the non-official members in the Legislative Council enjoyed at the time. The Legislative Council in Sri Lanka was

introduced as early as 1832 on the recommendation of the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission and, was expected to serve as an organ of expressing and communicating public opinion on legislative matters¹⁰. Yet the non-official group formed only a minority with six out of fifteen members in the Council. Moreover they were not elected by the people but was nominated by the Governor. This non-official members did not have any power with regard to the financial matters and could not introduce even simple Legislation. They could only express their opinion on the measures introduced by the official members, which of course the official members were not bound to accept. Even this power of expressing opinion also was limited by the fact that they being nominated by the Governor had to keep up to his expectations. Hence they were prevented from expressing their own opinion let alone expressing real public opinion. But in contrast, the very first Municipal Council had an elected majority and they were entrusted with very wide powers, in formulating and implementing policies, of course with the supervision of the Central Government.

Hence it could be seen that these representatives of the people in the Municipal Council were their own legislators, executors, and at the end were also magistrates¹¹. The amount of money that passed through the hands of the Municipal Council was very considerable and it seemed to be that the power and influence of each individual councillor was very much greater than that of an unofficial member in the Legislative Council. Under these circumstances the inclusion of a large elected element in the Municipal Council was considered as a bold innovation, for, the legislative Council itself had only two nominated members to represent the whole of the Sri Lankan population. This situation caused the seat of city politics to be an attractive centre of public affairs since it was the only place where the public could interfere, participate and air their grievances.

The Changes Made in the Seat of City Politics During the 19th Century.

After twenty years of implementing the first ever Municipal Ordinance it was felt that some amendments were necessary so as to change the nature of the seat of city politics, and improve the efficiency of the system. Hence the Ordinance No. 7 of 1887¹² brought about some major changes in several areas of the council. The objectives of the changes as declared by Governor A. H. Gordon were "to give the municipalities a more efficient and responsible executive, to transfer to a Municipal magistrate the judicial powers then exercised by municipal councillors, to confer on the municipalities certain additional powers with regard to the sanitary matters and slightly to raise the property qualification of municipal elections."¹³ in addition to these, the Attorney

General, Samuel Grenier, explained that one of the main objectives would be "the intensifying of supervision and control of the Government."¹⁴

With these motives, several far-reaching changes were made with regard to the executive power and the composition of the council. The most important feature of the ordinance no. 7 of 1887 was the concentration of executive as well as judicial powers in the hands of the chairman appointed by the Governor. It was required that the chairman was to receive a salary not exceeding Rs. 15000 per annum out of municipal funds¹⁵.

The entire executive power and responsibility for the purpose of the ordinance should be vested in such chairman assisted, if the Governor shall think fit, by an officer who shall be styled asst. chairman. All executive acts which are hereinafter directed to be done by the Municipal Council shall unless the contrary intention appears from the context, be done by the chairman or the asst. chairman if specially authorised thereto by the chairman.¹⁶

With regard to the composition of the council, the number of councillors appointed by the Governor was increased from half the elected members to a number which may equal though not exceed theirs, subject, however, to the condition that a defined proportion of such nominated members shall be non-officials. The other important alteration was the regulation, that the councillors should be males above 25 years of age and be acquainted with the English Language. As for the voters, the property qualification was raised from £ 10 to £ 18¹⁸. Further any graduate of a university in the United Kingdom or the British Colonies or India was entitled to vote by reason of that academic distinction. The Municipal Bench of Magistrates was abolished and the magisterial functions were deligated to the chairman of the council. As for making provisions for the intensifying the supervision and control by the government, the Governor was entrusted with the power of nominating the chairman, calling for statistics connected with the working, income and expenditure of the municipalities and of appointing auditors to audit the accounts of the council. Further he was empowered to appoint a special officer to inquire into and report on omissions on the part of the municipal councils to fulfil any duty cast on them by the ordinance. An important addition, to the services of the municipalities, made provision for the maintenance, out of municipal funds, of schools where the English Language was taught.

Although some sort of step forward should be the result of the changes made after implementing the system for about 20 years, the outcome of the new legislation was on the contrary. It has drastically

curtailed the powers and privileges conferred on the voters and their representatives in 1865. The new Ordinance, by raising the property qualification of the voters, limited the right to vote established by the Ordinance 17 of 1865. However it is important to note that the draft of the new ordinance proposed to raise the property qualification only from Rs 100 in the original ordinance to Rs 120, and left it open for discussion by the public, the Municipal Councils and the Legislative Council. It could also be seen that the proposal was made in response to regular demands made specially by the English educated middle class through petitions and local newspapers¹⁸. Moreover not only the majority of the unofficial members in the Legislative Council but also the majority of sitting members of the Colombo Municipal Council in 1886¹⁹ were in favour of raising the property qualification of the voters. The opinion of the unofficial members of the Legislative Council was that, the proper measure in improving the situation of the municipal council was to raise the property qualification of the voters and enable men with calibre and respect to occupy the seats in the council. They were also of opinion that any augmentation of the control over the council by the government will serve no purpose, and hence any such wholesome control should be rightly exercised, only, if the raising of property qualification failed to achieve the desired results²⁰. Several members of the public also had expressed their views in favour of raising the qualification of voters and some even suggested to raise it as high as Rs. 150 or Rs. 250. But the Government was not prepared to exceed the amount proposed by the municipal council which was Rs. 180 and was thus regulated. As a result the number of voters was largely reduced and in some wards there were not even twenty persons qualified as voters, the minimum number required under the ordinance if a candidate was to be elected. Hence it is evident that it was not the imperial rulers but the well-to-do and the educated groups among the local population who did not like the ordinary people enjoying self governing powers in par with them and hence prompted the rulers to introduce measures where by most of the rights and privileges enjoyed by the larger section of the urban community was limited only to a well-to-do few who also enjoyed the other political, economical, and social, rights and privileges at the national level as well. As a result not only the ordinary man who had no property was kept away from city politics, but also those who had considerable amounts, and also had enjoyed the right for twenty years were driven away from participating in city politics.

With the introduction of the regulation that a Councillor should be able to speak English, most of the people who were very much interested and well acquainted with the affairs of the city were prevented from joining city politics for want of the ability to speak English. Moreover those people who were educated in Swabasha and owned,

property, and hence could afford to shoulder most of the problems of the Council were prevented from actively participating in municipal affairs for the only reason that they could not speak English. Hence unlike the first Municipal Ordinance of 1865, which seemed to be a very progressive measure the second Municipal Ordinance of 1887 could be considered a backward step which enhanced the rights and opportunities only of the English educated elite class while the general masses who should have been the pivot of the council were prevented from actively participating in city politics.

There are two more provisions in the new Ordinance, which could be considered as drawbacks when compared with the original ordinance of 1865, and thereby hindered the principle of local self-government. They are the provision of increasing the nominated element in the council and that of concentrating all executive powers on the chairman appointed by the government.

With regard to the provision for an increased number of appointed members the public opinion was divided. Although not progressive in principle, some wished to retain it as a measure representing the least objectionable form of government control²¹. Others who opposed this measure were of the opinion that equalization, as proposed, of the number of nominated and elected members alone with the undue extension of the powers of the chairman would result in a drastic undermining of the powers and privileges of the representatives of the rate payers. The Colombo Municipal Council was very much opposed to the provision of equalising and regarded it as an attempt to make the municipal council a mere government department. In commenting this provision they wrote:

The Committee thinks that clause 23 of the Ordinance 17 of 1865 is a wise precaution against the Municipal Council becoming a mere government department. If as is proposed the Governor is given the option of equalizing the elected and nominated members the administration of the municipal affairs would practically rest in the hands of the government²².

There was a great fear among a majority that the provision contained in the section ten of the draft ordinance could have an effect of discouraging worthy citizens from taking part in municipal affairs²³. Therefore on the recommendation of the sub-committee of the Legislative Council provision was made for a certain proportion of the Governor's nominees to be non-officials, so as to enable real power and not its semblance, only, to be vested in the hands of the non-officials²⁴. However it should be noted here that, although the government has tried to console the critics by pretending that they are vesting the

powers in the hands of the non-officials the real situation is that the elected element or the representatives of the people, who formed two thirds of the council under the original ordinance has reduced only to one half under the new ordinance, thereby hindering the principle of local self-government.

It is evident therefore that, although when taken into consideration the effects on local self-government, the augmentation of the nominated element in the council could be considered a backward step, the opinion of the government was that there was an urgent need to increase the control of government over the council. Therefore the ordinance provided that the number of elected members and those of appointed by the governor should be equalized.

As it is, the provision was very clear and it was expected that if there were nine elected members the Governor could appoint only nine members including the chairman²⁵. But when the ordinance went into operation in the very next Colombo Council the nominated members including the chairman exceeded the number of elected members thus giving a majority to the nominated element. A comparison of the ideas expressed on the Ordinance of 1865 and that of 1887 by M. Coomaraswamy, one of the most prominent non-official members in the Legislative Council, will explain the situation very clearly and the extent to which the government has deceived not only the ordinary people but also the well-educated, and people with calibre by exhibiting the municipal system as a means of providing for local self-government.

M. Coomaraswamy who believed on the sincerity and honesty of the government, placing high hopes of the scheme in 1865 said that the aim and objective of the British rule in the Eastern Colonies was ultimately to fit them for self-government, and that there was no reason to think that such was not the case when introducing this municipal system and therefore he cordially supported the Bill. Yet in 1887 he had to say something very different on the amended scheme and commenting on the 1887 Bill he said.

The Council under the old constitution consisted of five members nominated by the government and nine elected by the people, giving a clear majority of four to the elected element. But under the present constitution there are ten nominated members including the chairman and nine elected by the people giving a majority to the government members. The principle of self-government thus wiped off. The Governor has apparently construed the meaning of the tenth clause in a different sense. He evidently thinks that the chairman is not a councillor and has appointed not only a

chairman but also nine other members to the council and has thus made up ten nominated against the nine elected members. The principle of self-government is I say at an end in an unexpected manner. ²⁶

Under these circumstances numerous opinions were expressed on the desirability of removing these drawbacks of the municipal ordinance of 1887. A special committee of the Colombo municipal council who reported on the chairman's administration report for 1888, the first of such reports under the new Ordinance proposed that the number of nominated members should with the chairman, be not more than the number elected by the rate-payers ²⁷. More important is the opinion expressed by the chairman Hay Cameron himself, in his report for 1889. While he invited the attention of the government to the opinion expressed by the special committee of the Colombo Municipal Council in 1888, and also that of P. Coomaraswamy expressed at the first meeting of the new council on 16th November 1887, he wrote:

I think that even if it be held by the Government to be expedient that the power to appoint a number of councillors equal to that of the elected members should be retained that power might with advantage be left in abeyance and the number of councillors actually appointed be limited to eight whilst of those eight I think a larger proportion than at present might with good result be chosen from outside the official circle ²⁸.

A memorandum submitted by The Ceylon National Association also requested that section 10 of the Ordinance No. 7 of 1887 should be amended so as to make the composition of the council what it was under the original ordinance of 1865 ²⁹. It was also pointed out in the reports of the select committees of the Legislative Council ³⁰ and the Colombo Municipal Council that the chairman should be counted a member of the Council. Therefore they recommended that the number of nominated members including the chairman should be at least one less than the number of those elected. Accordingly Ordinance No. 1 of 1896, provided that the chairman should be counted as a nominated member of the Council, thus ensuring equality in number of the elected and the nominated members including the chairman. However it is evident that the desire of the Colombo Municipal Council and also of the Ceylon National Association on the one hand was to re-establish the situation that existed under the original Ordinance where there was a clear majority of elected members, and ensure a basic requirement of local self government. But on the other hand the government, although in 1865, in the midst of the desperate situation introduced a Municipal system with very wide powers of local self government, the intention in the later years was to withdraw them

little by little and augment the control of the government on municipal administration. Hence the government did not under any circumstance wish to go back to the situation that existed in 1865, and thus by the end of the century the battle between the government and the council was decided more or less in favour of the government. The same situation existed in effect until the reforms implemented in accordance with the recommendations of the Donoughmore commission, which introduced broad based changes in 1931.

With regard to the provision of an executive chairman it could be seen that the experience for the last twenty years had proved the need for a full-time chairman. Hence the idea of having a Civil Servant as the full-time chairman also emanated from the Colombo Municipal Council. They recommended that

a Civil Servant of high standing should be selected for this office, receiving an adequate salary out of the Municipal funds³¹.

The declared motive of the provision was to give the Municipal Council an effective executive. Samuel Grenier, commending this provision in the Legislative Council said "I commend this clause to Hon. Members on the ground that it will advance proper action, it will advance responsible action and also effective action"³².

But from the beginning it was evident to be a step towards strengthening the hold of the government over the Council. The Attorney General, Samuel Grenier, when introducing the Bill in the Legislative Council stressed the fact that it was also their motive to intensify that control and supervision of the Government provided for by the Ordinance 17 of 1865 without practically destroying the substantial and really important right and privileges which municipal institutions of the island enjoyed³³. But it could be seen that the process of intensifying the government control automatically curtailed the powers of the council, and examining the provisions in detail it would be clear that this new ordinance took away from the elected representatives most of the important powers and privileges enjoyed by them under the original ordinance and placed them in the hands of the chairman nominated by the Governor. Thereby the elected representatives were reduced to mere advisors of the chairman who was not bound to accept their advice when tendered³⁴.

This situation is quite evident when the new situation is compared with the provisions of the original ordinance. Under the original Municipal Councils' Ordinance of 1865, the executive power was vested in the council as a whole and the chairman also was only a member of the council. The unofficial members formed a clear majority and all the decisions were to be taken with the consent of the majority of the councillors. But under the new ordinance, it was provided for

the official members to form the majority while the sole executive and judicial powers were placed in the hands of the chairman. True enough, it was an urgent necessity to vest the councils with a proper executive authority. Even the Municipal Council when proposing to have a Civil Servant Chairman expected to have a full time chairman but not an executive chairman. Hence the concentration of executive power in the hands of a Chairman nominated by the Governor could be considered a most retrograde step. Therefore the measure was opposed by almost all the unofficial members in the Legislative Council as well as those in the Municipal Council. The critics of the measure were of the opinion that it hindered the development of local self-government, and moreover as being a policy which negated the worthy objective-namely the training of the people for self-government and educating them for the exercise of greater political power in the future. The Colombo Municipal Council was of the opinion that the provision amounted to a withdrawal from the people the power of self-government entrusted to them by the original ordinance. The special committee on the matter reported thus:

Now as regards the executive power and responsibility the committee are strongly of opinion that as the Chairman will under the Ordinance be a Government nominee, the proposed change will materially take away from the elected members and therefore from the people - whose representatives the elected members are all control and management of municipal affairs, and thus the main object for which Municipal Councils were established would be defeated³⁵.

But on the other hand the opinion of the government was that the Municipal Councils under the Ordinance of 1865 has failed mainly because the government did not sufficiently supervise and control the activities of these institutions. Therefore according to them the remedy was to increase this supervision and control. In justifying this opinion Samuel Grenier said

It may probably be thought at first that the increased control and supervision intended to be vested in the government will be incompatible with the free rights and liberties of those to whom municipal institutions have already been accorded. But, sir if the rights and liberties, such as they are, are not to be made the very means of proving that the natives of the Island generally are capable of local self-government, and making any advance towards large political privileges, government control and supervision must continue to be exercised until the lower classes of electors can be gradually taught, by the example set by those above them in using their votes, and by the honest and unselfish action of their representatives in the Municipal Councils, what their municipal rights and liberties really are and how they may best be enjoyed³⁶.

Thus with the intention of making a drastic improvement in government control they bodily copied the Madras Act No. 5 of 1878 which made provision for such control and which also made the chairman nominated by the government supreme while the powers and thereby the dignity of the councillors were reduced.

It should be accepted that there were shortcomings in the working of the powers vested on the people and in the council by the Ordinance of 1865. It is equally true that these shortcomings contributed very much towards the failure of the institution. However it is unfortunate that neither the officials nor the non-officials recognized the vital role played by the financial problems towards this failure.^{36A} It was only Samuel Grenier who, while introducing the Bill in the Legislative Council expressed his doubts about the ability of the Municipal Council to pay a suitable salary for a paid chairman. But from this move, which, not only disregarded the financial difficulties of the Municipal Council and approved the measure, but entrusted the council with more and more financial obligations, one could assume that the government had hopes of augmenting the finances of the municipality through the regular collection of taxes by a full-time chairman. However it is evident that the Secretary of State for Colonies H. T. Holland had identified the potential cause of the eventual failure of the municipal system and also the shortcomings of the new Ordinance. He wrote:

Whatever may be the merits of the Ordinance, and it appears to me to have great merits, it cannot be overlooked that the real difficulties of the question of Municipalities in Ceylon are in the main financial, and I am therefore somewhat at a loss to understand why so little notice has been taken of this side of the question in your despatch. It is useless to devise reforms to be paid for by the Municipalities if they already cannot pay their way³⁷.

It is also interesting to note here that the designer of the new Ordinance, Samuel Grenier, who had been intimately associated with the leaders of the Ceylon League, nevertheless had overlooked the fact that those leaders would never have consented even in 1865, to such a Council as the one which was constituted under his Ordinance in 1887³⁸. In actual fact it should have started twenty years earlier with an equivalent of the Ordinance of 1887 and gradually come to a state of exercising the larger powers and privileges embodied in the Ordinance of 1865. Instead, what happened in 1887 was a retrogression in the measure of local self-government from what was introduced in 1865.

It is evident that the government was interested only in promoting the principle of self-reliance and not that of self-government. The interest in self-reliance was due mainly for the simple reason of

relieving the central government from the irksome burden of providing municipal services. It seems to have forgotten the fact that the training of the people for self-government formed an equally important motive of the government in establishing a municipal system. Moreover the government did not care the fact that it was on the principle of self-government that the people had much hopes and expectations. Accordingly the action taken by the government in 1887 could be identified as a rejection of the hopes of Governor Hercules Robinson who initiated the system as the first experiment in self-government which would justify the speedy concession of higher political privileges to the people of this Island. Moreover the attitude of the government in 1887 which disregarded the principle of local self-government supports the argument that the establishment of municipalities in 1865 was a measure adopted to suppress, at least tentatively, the agitation of the Ceylon League, for reforms in the legislative Council and for more and more funds to be disbursed on public works³⁹. The fact that in 1887, when the agitators were away from the scene, the government withdrew all the privileges conferred on them, proves also the point made by Harrison—the only member who opposed the municipal system in 1865— that the principle of local self-government was only a sugar plum displayed by the government to deceive the agitators, who were at the helms of their agitation⁴⁰ Hence the Ordinance of 1887 has cleared the doubts as to the sincerity of the government when it declared “ the training of the people for self-government ” as one of the motives, in establishing Municipal Councils with the answer in the negative. It also decided the conflict that existed between the Government and the Municipal Council over the principle of local self-government in favour of the government.

The Municipal Elections.

The centre, and the scene which displayed the underlying factors of the struggle, that was fought among the citizens themselves, was the several elections that were contested by various candidates. It could be seen that there were few elections which were contested by very strong candidates on various factors while there were also numerous elections where no body was interested not only in contesting but even on being elected uncontested. However on examining the few contested elections one could identify several underlying factors which prompted the citizens to contest among themselves in order to become the rulers of the city.

According to the provisions of the original Ordinance of 1865, the Government Agent of the province had to begin the election of members by calling a public meeting of the householders to appoint a committee of seven persons, who possessed the qualifications of voters. This committee, together with the Government Agent, had to

prepare two separate lists for each ward, consisting the names of those who are qualified to vote at the municipal elections and those who are qualified to be elected as councillors. The list prepared by this committee had to keep open, for inspection and amendment, at the kachehery for the prescribed period of 14 days, at the expiration of which time, separate meetings, for the election of Councillors for the respective wards of the Municipality had to be advertised in the Government Gazette and local news papers. Any objections to these lists were to be decided by the Government Agent. Subsequently these lists were to be reviewed by the council once in every two years and the final authority with regard to all matters connected with these lists rested with the Government Agent who was also the chairman of the council ⁴¹

The Government Agent or someone appointed by him was to preside at every meeting for the election of councillors. At these meetings every candidate was to be proposed and seconded by two persons qualified to vote thereat. The following account on the first election meeting of the Fort ward held on 12th January, 1866, clearly describes the manner in which a municipal councillor was elected under the Ordinance 17 of 1865.

The election began with an excited but good tempered meeting in the council chamber for the election of a representative for the Fort ward. The room was crowded and the partisans of the two candidates cheered or hissed everything that was said with a hearty good will.

Mr. R. Dawson proposed the name of Mr. J. W. Venn. Mr. Richmond seconded. Mr. W. W. Michell. proposed Mr. J. S. Armitage. Mr. J. H. Davidson seconded. Mr. A. M. Ferguson wished that before a show of hands were taken the candidates were given an opportunity to explain their views. Mr. Venn then addressed the meeting and said, Mr. Armitage said . . .

Government Agent (Mr. Layard) then proceeded to poll the elections by calling out the names on the list and asking for whom they voted and as each one named his candidate the party cheered vigorously and the other groaned as lustily The polling occupied 45 minutes and at the conclusion Mr. Layard announced the results - Venn 49 votes - Armitage 40 votes. ⁴²

The first of the municipal elections in Sri Lanka was held in January 1866 to elect councillors for the nine wards of Colombo Municipal Council. Preliminary preparations for elections to the Colombo Municipal Council commenced almost immediately after the definition

of municipal limits. The first meeting of the house holders under the Municipal Councils Ordinance to elect seven persons qualified to frame and draw up lists of all persons who were eligible to stand as candidates and to vote, was held on 8th December 1865⁴³.

The privilege of representing six out of the nine wards were to be contested. Hence there were several public meetings called by the supporters of various candidates. The first of these meetings were called by the voters of Maradana ward⁴⁴, in support of Dundas Mount, a well known merchant who was to contest against F. C. Loos and F. Mackwood. At a meeting held on the esplanade in the Fort, F. W. Venn addressed his supporters of the Fort ward and James d'Alwis C. A. Lorenz, Henry Dias and C. L. Ferdinands, all professional friends, addressed their voters at a meeting held in the supreme Court yard⁴⁵. Another interesting and important meeting was that of a group or Naddu Cotta Chetties held at Sea Street in the premises of Weena Ravena Mana Pallenneppa Chetty to pledge their unanimous support for S. Thambeyah to represent their interest in St. Paul's ward⁴⁶

However at the last moment a number of candidates, Dundas Mount of Maradana, P. Perera of St. Sebastian, C. Bawa Pulle of St. Pauls and Attapattu Mudliar Dias of New Bazaar, withdrew from the contest and therefore, only three of the wards - Fort, Pettah and Maradana- were contested. The withdrawal of Dundas Mount did not prevent a keen contest between the other two candidates in Maradana ward. The contest was between F. C. Loos and F. Mackwood, where F. C. Loos was elected by a majority of 11 votes. The Pettah election contested by J. W. Van Geysel and Cawasjie Eduljie was the most exciting of all. There was a holiday mood in the ward and people drove about with flags and Placards. The election took place on 13th Jan. at the kachcheri in the presence of some two thousand excited and enthusiastic people. Van Geysel's name was proposed by M. B. Hingert and seconded by T. Garvin. Eduljie's name was proposed by Abdul Rahiman and seconded by Ossen Lebbe Marikkar. When the polling was going on the police had to intervene twice to suppress interruptions which amounted to a riot. As the situation got hotter with the mounting tension the chairman had to ask for police reinforcements. The interruptions were believed to be intended to break up the proceedings before arriving at a conclusion. However the polling which lasted till 7 p. m. brought Van Geysel the victory by 60 votes.

The first election of the Colombo Municipality caused an amount of excitement which indicated the great enthusiasm and interest shown towards the new institution by the inhabitants. Apparently everyone seemed to be satisfied with the auspicious start taken by the

new institution and the Governor Robinson as the architect of the scheme was jubilant over the warm welcome accorded by the people to the scheme. He said,

It is a source of peculiar satisfaction to me to witness the interest which the public are beginning to evince in the Ordinance establishing Municipal Councils and which promises well for the success of the experiment we are about to try. I trust that this interest will not flag and that the care and determination with which the electors will select the councillors to represent them, and the moderation, fidelity and impartiality with which those chosen will discharge their trust will show that the inhabitants of Colombo, appreciate the privilege conferred upon them and will operate as an inducement to the inhabitants of their towns to follow the good example thus set before them.⁴⁷

The Loss of Interest in City Politics: However the interest thus shown was only temporary and very soon this enthusiasm died away. Although contested elections are a sign of healthy and successful working of any representative institution, a majority of the elections of the Colombo Municipal Council during the 19th century were not contested. Except for a few memorable occasions⁴⁸ either the sitting members were returned, enabling them to sit at the council continuously for ten to fifteen years⁴⁹ or new councillors were elected without any interest or excitement, whatsoever being manifested by the great majority of the taxpayers.

There were occasions when some wards remained vacant, for want of candidates, for several years. Generally speaking, hardly ten in a thousand taxpayers cared as to who was their representative in the Municipal Council or even whether they had any representative at all. Hence in some wards, residents did not care to participate in the election of their ward members. Usually when a seat was not contested the procedure of election went through in a most mechanical manner. On the appointed day at the fixed time a handful of voters attended the election meeting. When the Government Agent or his nominee took the chair two influential residents of the ward proposed and seconded the name of the sitting member or some other candidate and handed in a list of proxies usually collected several months beforehand. The chairman declared the candidates duly elected on the basis of this list and the procedure of electing a councillor according to the ruling statute was over. All this happened while the majority of the voters in the ward cared little or perhaps knew nothing as to who their representative was going to be. All these facts go to prove that the Colombo Municipal Council very soon lost the interest and confidence of the people and nothing can be more expressive of their dissatisfaction

than the numerous nicknames used to designate the Institution. By an easy process of transliteration they had converted the word "Municipality" into "Musalapitiya", which means the vale of lamentation.

This situation was the result of several factors. On the one hand the rate payers who generally disliked municipal taxation, when faced with the problem of paying several taxes lost the enthusiasm and interest shown at the beginning. They ascribed their financial difficulties to the Municipal Council and wished the abolition of the institution rather than promoting it. On the other hand there were many who attributed this unsatisfactory situation to the low qualification of voters. It was their argument that so long as an occupier whether as proprietor or a tenant of a house worth Rs. 100 a year was entitled to vote at the election of a councillor, the chances of the more respectable upper class citizens securing a majority against those of the lower middle class is very remote⁵⁰. Hence very many of those who were best qualified to take part often kept away from municipal elections. There was also the widespread belief that the voters were ignorant and the want of education led them to be easily misled. Hence there was great demand for raising the qualifications of the voters⁵¹.

It is true that there had been occasions when the voters recorded their votes for the first applicant or held them at the disposal of some influential citizens. Particularly there were occasions when poor and ignorant voters looked upon municipal elections more as a means of obliging their lawyers than as exercising a valuable right or a responsible obligation of citizenship. Yet one cannot overlook the fact that these supposed to be 'inferior' voters at the very first election held in January 1866, elected men like C. A. Lorenz, James D' Alwis, C. L. Ferdinands and F. W. Van Geysel⁵² who were highly esteemed and respected by almost everybody. It is also interesting to note that although in response to the demands made to raise the qualifications of the voters, the Municipal Ordinance of 1887 raised the property qualification from Rs. 100 to Rs. 180, and yet there was no change of the councillors except for the member for the Fort Ward who was ruled as ineligible under the new laws and the member for the Kollupitiya Ward who decided to retire. In all other wards the sitting members were elected uncontested in 1887 under the new laws as well⁵³. It goes to prove that the so-called 'inferior' quality of the voters had not caused very much to the unsatisfactory situation of the working of the Municipal System in Colombo.

It can be said that the lack of contribution, essentially required from the educated and well-to-do classes, and their reluctance to come forward as candidates, caused more to the alleged lack of quality of

the elected councillors than the lack of any discernment among the voters. In the first place the presence of a well-to-do class with means and leisure is a prerequisite for the successful working of any local government institution whose membership is only honorary. Yet during the later half of the 19th century there were only very few well-to-do locals who could afford to devote their time on such honorary work. They - and there also very few in number - had just begun to enter into business enterprises and they had earned only very little means while the whole of their time was occupied in business activities. The best group of people who could afford their time and money on municipal activities were the Europeans who were engaged only as supervisors of their business enterprises and hence possessed sufficient time and money to devote on honorary works. Yet it could be seen that the attitude of the Europeans - a small but influential class which formed the bulk of the mercantile community in Colombo - towards municipal elections were not very encouraging and caused very much to the unsatisfactory condition of the working of the municipal system. Their presence in the Municipal Council with their knowledge of the English municipal system would have afforded good guidance to the Ceylonese to whom this was an unfamiliar system. The second Administration Report of the Municipal Council pointed out the unwillingness of the English merchants and other European residents of independent means to contest elections held in 1867 and 1869 as an indication of the growing unpopularity of the Municipal System⁵⁴. However, it also has to be pointed out that the representatives of the two of the largest firms in Colombo, C. J. Armitage and F. Mackwood, contested the two Wards of Fort and Mardana at the first election of 1866. But both of them were defeated and to this defeat can partly be attributed their subsequent reluctance to participate in municipal affairs. It can be pointed out that the reluctance of not only of the Europeans but also of the few Ceylonese of independent means to come forward as candidates was partly due to their awareness of the weak financial situation of the council. The very people who could have been the mainstay of the Municipal Council were deterred from accepting the seats in it as they felt that their participation would be futile and frustrating. The following passage from a speech delivered at one of the election meetings by a leading and highly respected member of the European community, G. B. Leechman elucidates this point.

It has been remarked by the Chairman that the Municipality has of late become unpopular. It appears to me that the exact nature of the popular dissatisfaction is not rightly understood. . . . The complaint of the public is not against the Councillors but against the treatment they had received. The public feel that the Council have been

persistently kept in a false and humiliating position. . . . That this state of things is not remedied is the grievance of the public and the cause of their dissatisfaction and complaint. . . . The public are prepared to assist heartily towards the successful working of the Municipality as soon as its finances are placed on a proper footing⁵⁵.

However, it is also interesting to note the fact revealed by John Ferguson when commenting on the unfortunate situation of the Municipal Institution in 1897. He wrote thus:

.....and one reason is curiously oriental one namely that respectable Ceylonese consider it derogatory to go and ask people below them-often ignorant and poor franchise holders- for 'the honour of their votes'. Honour comes from above and not from below, they say, and so the better classes of natives abstain from the Municipal Boards and left many disreputable men to get in⁵⁶.

Besides Ferguson, many of his contemporaries too stressed it as one of the main factors that contributed to this unsatisfactory situation of the Colombo Municipal Council⁵⁷.

Moreover a seat in the Municipal Council did not inherit any dignity worth aspiring to, but for the title of a Municipal Magistrate. Even this did not invest a councillor with any of those powers and privileges which, by virtue of their office, other magistrates in the public service individually possessed⁵⁸. A councillor for instance, could not hear a complaint however trifling except with the assistance of two other councillors and could not even issue a warrant without obtaining the consent of two others. Besides, a Municipal Councillor was not conferred even with the honour of being a 'Justice of Peace', a distinction which was often conferred upon people of less importance. As matters stood the members of the Legislative Council who were appointed by the Governor were vested with all honour, while the municipal councillors who were elected by the people were confronted with only work and public criticism. Therefore the well-to-do who were seeking for honour were interested in getting into the Legislative Council and not into the Municipal Council. Hence in order to make available proper and suitable candidates at the municipal elections, the Ceylon Times at one time even suggested that the Governor should nominate to the Legislative council only those who had served in the Municipal Councils and well understood public problems⁵⁹. This was not done and there was no incentive whatsoever for the men of dignity to sacrifice their time and leisure as Municipal Councillors.

Further, the gentlemen who presented themselves for election generally were of professions which entailed numerous engagements, such as

advocates, proctors and medical practitioners⁶⁰, to whom time was money. Hence they could not devote the best of their time to municipal activities and very often were absent from the council meetings. Although there was an elected majority under the original Municipal Ordinance this indifference of the upper classes towards public activities and the lack of leisure for the councillors left most of the municipal work in the hands of the chairman and the secretary of the council⁶¹. This obviously was a self-forfeiture by the elected members of their chances of working independently and exercising the self-governing powers conferred upon them. Under the Municipal Ordinance of 1887 the elected representatives were deprived of most of the powers they were entrusted with under the previous ordinance and the councils consisted of an appointed majority, a situation which helped to reduce the self-governing powers of the councils.

The Dominant Factors of Municipal Elections.

The Colombo Municipality consists of an heterogeneous population. Within its municipal limits the city contained an area of ten square miles in 1865 where the total settled population was about 60,000 which had increased up to about 158,078 in 1901⁶². Of this number only a very few were Europeans, the rest being Sinhalese at the head with Tamils and Moormen following. There was also a considerable number of Eurasians or "Burghers" who occupied an intermediate position between the pure white population and the coloured population proper. The Fort ward was the main business quarter of most of the Europeans but few of them resided in the ward. Almost all the other Europeans in Colombo resided in places like Kollupitiya, Slave Island, and Mutwal. However the Moorish population, who spread over several other wards as well were numerous in the Fort ward. Professionally, besides being the principal officials in the government service, Europeans were found largely among the mercantile community⁶³. Some Moors too were merchants and many of them carried on their business and lived in the Fort ward.

Adjoining the Fort, on the northern side was the Pettah ward, This was one of the densely populated parts of Colombo and inhabited almost entirely by the natives of various races and the Burghers⁶⁴. However the Tamils were found to be slightly more numerous than any other community. The principal business establishments of most of the native merchants were found here. The Kollupitiya Ward where the houses of the most notable and wealthiest citizens were situated, formed the most fashionable and aristocratic residential quarter of Colombo. Most of its commodious houses were owned and occupied by Europeans, and there were also a few high class natives or Burghers. Maradana

ward was both a rich and a poor residential quarter. The portion of it known as Borella resembled the adjoining ward Kollupitiya. The other portion was packed with the houses of the poor mechanics and artisans.⁶⁵

The very large cooly population of Colombo resided in New Bazaar, Kotahena and St. Paul's Wards. The Tamils predominated in St. Paul's Ward while they were also the most numerous community in the Pettah Ward. The Moormen largely resided in St. Sebastian and St. Paul's Wards and they owned or occupied a great portion of property in the Fort Ward. In all the wards the Sinhalese were almost a majority. More Burghers were found in Maradana than anywhere else, but their numbers in Kotahena and Kollupitiya were only slightly less than in Maradana. More than half the Malays resided within the Municipality were found in Slave Island.

It is evident that from the beginning the municipal elections were not fought on any clear principles, and that the personality of the candidates played an important role at the elections. Besides, the voters were interested in electing persons whom they could approach easily. Therefore they would have preferred a Ceylonese, whether he be a Burgher, Sinhalese, Tamil or a Muslim, to a European who was a complete foreigner, as their councillor. At the very first election, out of the nine councillors elected there were five Burghers, two Sinhalese, one Tamil and one European. In occupational terms there were five lawyers, two doctors, one auctioneer and one broker. The two Sinhalese and the only Tamil who stood for election were elected uncontested. While two of the five Burghers were elected uncontested the other three had rivals who belonged to the mercantile class, two of them being Europeans and the other a Muslim. Thus the composition of the first Council of the Colombo Municipality was quite in contrast to that of British municipalities at the time, where the professional minority was almost always overwhelmed by the mercantile classes⁶⁶. It is not easy to see any clear reason for this defeat of all the three merchants who contested. The only probable reason is that the native population who predominated these three wards might have thought it better to vote for the Burghers who had more permanent interest in this country and who would be more easy to approach than the Europeans. The defeat of the Muslim merchant in the pettah may be attributed partly to the popularity of his opponent J. W. Ven Geyzel who had practised as a doctor for about twenty-five years among the Burghers and the natives of other communities.

It could be seen that the communal and class interests played an important role at the municipal elections in the 19th century. Since the two Europeans who contested in the very first election were defeated,

except on very few occasions, the Europeans did not trouble to contest the subsequent elections. But they, with others who believed that there should be more Europeans in the Colombo Municipal Council, tried to establish the tacit tradition of reserving the Fort Ward for European merchants. The Ceylon Observer throughout this period held that there were too many lawyers in the Council and that other professions were not sufficiently represented, and that more and more Europeans should be given opportunities to get into the Council⁶⁶. However it was interested only in the European merchants and often discouraged any contest in the Fort Ward. On the other hand, the Ceylon Times and the Ceylon Examiner believed that the Colombo Municipal Council would benefit very much by the predominance of Ceylonese on the Board. But they also agreed in toto that the Fort Ward member should be an European and believed that with another European, the European interests would be sufficiently represented⁶⁷. Against all these the Sinhalese papers were interested in getting more and more Sinhalese into the Council⁶⁸.

Nevertheless the Europeans were able, since Venn retired in 1869, to keep for themselves the Fort Ward till 1887, except for two short periods when A. Andree a Burgher Proctor (1870 Nov-1871 Dec) and Abdul Rahiman, a Muslim merchant and landlord (1876-May-1877 Dec.) held it. In 1887 under the new constitution the sitting member Edmund Walker was disqualified and there was not a single qualified European merchant to be elected as a councillor⁶⁹. As a result a native Tamil Tambeyah Subramaniam, was elected to the seat. But very soon he resigned and to fill the vacancy Hector Vancuylenbeg, a Burgher was elected and the Europeans did not regain the seat.

The Colombo Municipal Council elections of 1883 were outstanding for the part played by the communal factor at the election. It is at this election that the communal factor was used openly for the first time. In the Fort Ward, Hugh Ledwad, the sitting member, an European merchant, was opposed by J. W. Van Geyzel, a Burgher doctor who had represented the Pettah Ward from the inception of the Municipal Council up to 1883. The Europeans did not expect a contest at this election and at the last moment they sent round the following message:

Mr. Ledward's re-election for the Fort Ward, being opposed by a Burgher or a Sinhalese Gentleman, the electors interested in having an European member in the Municipal Council are requested to be good enough to come to the Registrar General's office to support the English candidate as soon as possible⁷⁰.

J. W. Van Geyzel won the contest. The Ceylon Observer was furious over the result and showed its impatience by publishing lengthy articles arguing that it was improper for Van Geyzel to contest the

Ward which was always represented by an European and urged for some reforms in the Municipal System. Besides, personal attacks were also made on the elected member. Although J. W. Vangeyzel was elected by his supporters who wanted him to be in the Council, he had decided that it was time for him to retire from the Council. Representing the Pettah Ward, he had served the council for nearly sixteen years and declined to sit for the Fort Ward. Therefore, those who were interested in having an European merchant for the Fort Ward, elected C. W. Horsfall for the vacant seat. Again, in the same year there was a contest for the Kollupitiya Ward between Walter Pereira a Sinhalese advocate and J. D. M. Coghill an European doctor. Walter Pereira was elected and commenting on this election as well the Ceylon Observer made it a case for a demand for raising the qualifications for voters. It stated that the well-known citizens in the Kollupitiya Ward did not vote for Pereira and only the "Appuhamy Class" voted for him⁷¹ Again when Walter Pereira resigned in August 1885, at the by-election, J. D. M. Coghill contested with C. W. Ferdinands, a Burgher proctor, and was defeated. At this election it was quite clear that the natives in a majority voted for the Burgher.

The fact that, the community which predominated any Ward very often made it a point to elect one from among the same community to represent the Ward, can be taken as another instance when communal feeling was active at the elections. For instance, St. Paul's Ward where Tamils predominated, always had a Tamil representative except for the two years from December 1869 to December 1871 when W. W. Beling was elected against S. Tambeyah⁷² and for the six years from December 1879 to December 1885, when D. A. Dissanayaka was elected uncontested. But Dissanayaka who contested the same Ward against P. Coomaraswamy in 1877 was defeated. P. Coomaraswamy, a Tamil Proctor served the Ward for nearly 21 years elected uncontested save only once when D. A. Dissanayake contested against him and was defeated. Likewise the Pettah Ward which consisted of members from almost every community, who were engaged mainly in business activities was represented by J. W. Vangeyzel, a Burgher, Medical Practitioner from 1865 to 1883 and by M. J. M. Haniffa a Muslim, Businessman from 1883 to the end of the century. The Kollupitiya Ward which formed the most fashionable and aristocratic residential quarter of Colombo, consisted of Europeans and high class natives, mostly of Burghers, and they made it a point to send a Burgher as their representative from the inception of the council until the end of the century except on two occasions for very short periods when J. C. Walter Perera a Sinhalese was elected in December 1883 and served until August 1885, and when in 1887 William Maitland an European was elected uncontested and served until April 1889.

In the early years of the Council very few natives except the Burghers contested the elections or represented the Wards. However it could be

seen that during the last decade of the century many Sinhalese made their appearance at the Municipal elections. The election held in 1883 is remarkable for the fact that it sent in Sinhalese members for six of the nine wards and all of them were elected uncontested. It is interesting to note here the changes that had taken place in the trend of electing members within the period of 18 years from 1865-1883. In 1865 five Burghers were elected with only two Sinhalese, one Tamil and one European. But by 1883 the trend had changed so much that six Sinhalese were elected with one European and two Muslims while not a single Burgher was elected.

However subsequently when more and more Sinhalese presented themselves for elections and many contests took place, factors other than the communal, began to play an important role at the elections. Caste and religious factors in particular were in the fore front. From about 1885, sharp and strong antagonism based on caste were evident among the upper strata of the Sinhalese community. Charges were levelled even against the Governor, Arthur Gordon, that under the influence of Mudliyar Bandaranayake, the Governor favoured the Goigama caste at the expense of the Karawa and Salagama caste⁷³.

By the turn of the century this struggle spread into the Municipal elections as well. The election of the Kotahena Ward, held on 5th December 1902 and contested by Soloman Fernando and J. P. Salgadoe was a clear instance where caste played an important role at the Municipal elections. The canvassing carried through the news papers by the supporters of both the candidates, clearly reveals that their arguments were mainly based on caste differences⁷⁴. Soloman Fernando who was elected by a majority of 128 votes, speaking at the end of the election has clearly referred to caste, as one of the deciding factors of his victory.

The Maradana election held in the same year and contested by J. E. Richard Perera and Charles Perera was clearly a contest between a Catholic and a Buddhist. The Ceylon Independent writing on the candidature of Richard Perera stated that,

He is a staunch Buddhist and it is mainly on their request... that he has come forward⁷⁵.

At this election Charles Perera's name was proposed by the editor of the Catholic Messenger, and Richard Perera's by James Peiris. This election proved to be one of the most excited and thrill-packed Municipal elections ever held up to then and at the polling the Catholic was elected over the Buddhist, polling 401 votes against 359 for his opponent.

The Consequences of City Politics in the 19th Century.

One of the declared objectives of establishing Municipal Councils in Sri Lanka was to train the people for self government, and it also formed to be the major conflicting factor in city politics between the government and the Municipal Council. Hence it is interesting to examine how far the system of Municipal Government actually contributed in any wide measure to the political education of the people. This may well be debatable. In the 19th century the framers of colonial policy believed that, the sphere of local government could be advantageously used as a place of education for the electors who will be called upon to vote in relation to issues that are readily comprehensible to them. Equally they were of opinion that it will be a training ground for the councillors who could gain experience in the art of responsible leadership without being confronted with issues which might be beyond their grasp before they had gained experience. Ever since 1840s the demands of the Sri Lankans for wider powers in the Legislative Council were rejected on the argument that the Sri Lankans were not ripe for self-government⁷⁶. Hence, the Municipal bodies were in fact established as a training ground and as an alternative to the demands made by the Ceylon League at the national level.

Therefore it has to be asked, how far the system did actually meet this test. The question might be simpler if it could be put in another form. That is, How far did the experience of the organization of Municipal Government help to produce a level of political capacity in Sri Lanka, which eventually contributed to the concession to her of a status of self-government? If the Municipal system in the 19th century Sri Lanka did in fact provide any liberal education in the principles and practice of self-government, that advantage might well be judged to outweigh any other consideration.

On the one hand it is evident that in the early twentieth century the leaders of Sri Lankan Nationalist Movement very often boasted of the experience gained by the people through local bodies in the Island and hence their capacity of responsible government.⁷⁷ On the other hand it is evident that most of these leaders, as for example James Peiris, P. Coomaraswamy, P. Ramanathan, Charles Vanderwall, P. D. Anthonise, A. de A. Seneviratna and many others started their political careers at the stage of municipal institutions. Further there were occasions in the late 19th century itself when municipal councillors were considered more suited and qualified than anybody else to fill the vacancies in the Legislative Council because of their experience gained at the Municipal Councils. In 1897 the Lakrivikirana arguing the case of reelection of P. Coomaraswamy to the Legislative Council wrote:

The person appointed to this office (vacancy in the Legislative Council) should be a recognized person well acquainted with the wants of the country and with gained experience through a local body such as a Municipal Council. The Legislative Council is not a training ground for the Councillors but a place for well informed delegates to discuss their views and decide on policy matters. The government has so far followed a practice of appointing to the Legislative Council persons who have trained themselves in the municipalities and hence government may follow these good precedents and appoint in future also persons with good experience who have done some service to the country⁷⁸.

However there did not exist any regular system of appointing Municipal Councillors with experience, to the Legislative Council or a system of representing the local bodies at large in the Legislative Council as was the practice in India. Moreover the number of elected members which formed the majority in the Municipal Council ever since 1866 was reduced to a minority in 1887 by increasing the number of official and nominated members. Further the status of the council was degraded by centralizing the executive powers, so far enjoyed by the council, in the hands of the chairman appointed by the government. Hence the younger generation of ambitious politicians tended to loose interest in municipal government and to aspire directly to the Legislative Council which carried more dignity and popularity than the Municipal Council, which on the contrary was always open to public criticism.

Accordingly opinion may differ as to the extent of the political training that the system of municipal administration provided to the people and also on the extent to which it served to develop a political and administrative sense both among the councillors and among the voters. Although the municipal rules and regulations disregarded social differences such as caste and class, it is evident that in practice such factors were the decisive forces at the elections. In the absence of a system of political parties or any other political organizations, and in the midst of implementing the principle of communal representation by the government itself⁷⁹ it is no wonder that the people tended to be organized along social differences. Therefore it could be seen that the municipal system has influenced more in widening the social differences of the people than building a united self to govern through the right of self-government.

Yet with fairness it could be said that the Municipal Councils afforded some practical education in the techniques of democratic elections, of administrative and legislative procedures, (through the council meetings) and the responsible management of public funds. Many outstanding Sri Lankan politicians had their start in public life in the

Colombo Municipal Council. The sense of enjoying self-governing powers, though limited, provided through the Municipal Council whetted the appetite and helped in some measure to attract more and more into the folds of the Nationalist Movement.

Abbreviations.

AR.	Administration Reports.
CMC.	Colombo Municipal Council.
Col. Sec.	Colonial Secretary of the Ceylon Government.
GA.	Government Agent.
Ord.	Ordinance.
PCMO.	Principal Civil Medical Officer.
Sec. of State.	Secretary of State.
SLNA.	Sri Lanka National Archives.
SP.	Sessional Paper.
WP.	Western Province.

Notes.

1. Ord. No. 17 of 1865, "An Ordinance to Establish Municipal Councils in this Island.
2. Government Gazette, 25 Nov. 1865.
3. Government Gazette, 7 May 1866.
4. SLNA 6/3546, From CMC to Col. Sec 2 Jan. 1870.
5. SLNA 33/1326, Correspondence regarding the expansion of the CMC.
6. Ord. 17 of 1865, Sections 7, 8, 14.
7. Ceylon Times, 21. Nov. 1865.
8. Tinker Hugh, Local Government in India, Pakistan and Burma, (London-1954) p. 25.
9. Ibid p. 37.
10. Mendis. G. C, The Colebrooke Cameron Papers Vol. 1, p. 56-
11. Ord. No. 17 of 1865, Sections 24, 34, 35.
12. Ord. No. 7 of 1887, An Ord. to Amend the Municipal Council, Ord. No. 17 of 1865.
13. Governors' Addresses, Vol. III, p 223.
14. Hansard, 1885 - 86 p 48.
15. Ord. No. 7 of 1887, Section 47.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid Sections 10, 11.
18. SLNA 6/3751, Petition presented to the Governor by certain inhabitants of Colombo, 14 Dec. 1872.
Ceylon Times, 8 Dec. 1883, 26 July 1885, 20 Dec, 1885.
Ceylon Examiner, 5 Jan. 1886, 2 July 1886, 8 Oct. 1886.
19. SLNA 6/7536, Report of the Special Committee of the CMC on the new Ord. 13 Oct 1886. The Committee was not unanimous. The dissentents being Vincent W. Pereira, M. I M. Haniffa, Chas Perera, Jas Perera.
20. SP 31, of 1856. Hansard, 1885-86 pp 10 - 12.
21. Ceylon Examiner, 20 Dec. 1885. Ceylon Times, 20 Oct. 1886.
22. SLNA 6/7536, Report of the Special Committee of the CMC on the new Ord. 13 Oct. 1886.

23. SP 30, of 1886, SP 31, of 1886.
24. SP 30, of 1886.
25. SLNA 6/7761 Minutes of the CMC held on 16 Nov. 1887.
26. Endagama. M, Vidyodaya Journal of Social Science
Vol. 2. Nos. 1 - 2 Jan. - July. 1988: pp 79 - 120.
27. Report of the Special Committee of the CMC appointed to report on the
Chairman's AR for 1888
28. AR of the CMC for 1889.
29. SP 26, of 1894.
30. SP 10, of 1895.
31. SLNA 6/7536 Report of the Special Committee of the CMC on the new Ord.
13 Oct. 1886.
32. Hansard, 1885 - 86 p 49.
33. SLNA 4/256 Despatch from the Sec. of State H. T. Holland to Governor
Gordon No. 171 of 30 May 1887.
34. Sp 31 of 1886. Hansard 1885 - 86 p 9.
Ceylon Examiner 24 Dec. 1885. 16 July 1886.
35. SLNA 6/7536 Report of the Special Committee of the CMC on the new
Ord. 13 Oct. 1886.
- 36A. Hulugalle H. A. J. Centenary Volume of the Colombo Municipal Council 1865-1965
pp. 82-93.
36. Hansard. 1885-86 p 50-51.
37. SLNA 4/256 Despatch from the Sec. of State H. T. Holland to Governor
Gordon No. 171 of 30 May 1887.
38. For the factors which led to the introduction of the municipal system and the
involvement of the League, See, Endagama M. Vidyodaya Journal of Social
Science. Vol. 2 No. S. 1-2 Jan. July 1988 pp. 79-120.
39. Ibid
40. Ibid
41. Ord. No. 17 of 1865 Sections 6, 11, 45.
42. Ceylon Times 16 Jan. 1886.
43. Ceylon Observer 11 Dec. 1865, The seven members chosen were A. M. Ferguson,
James de Alwis, C. Dias Attapattu Mudliar, Oseen Lebbe Abdul Carder Markir,
F. W. Willsford, S. Sanmoogan.
44. Ceylon Times 6 Jan. 1866.
45. Ibid 8 Jan. 1866.
46. Ibid 9 Jan. 1866.
47. Governors' Addresses Vol. 2 p 78.
48. 1871 St. Paul's - C. Britto, Advocate vs. W. W. Beling, Proctor.
1883 Kollupitiya-Walter Pereira, Proctor vs. Dr. J. D. M. Coghill.
1885 Kollupitiya-Dr. J. D. M. Coghill vs. C. W. Ferdinands, Proctor.
49. See Annexure ii.
50. Ceylon Times 8 Dec. 1881, 7 Dec. 1883, 26 July 1885.
51. Ceylon Times 8 Dec. 1883, 26 July 1885, 20 Dec. 1885,
Ceylon Examiner 5 July 1886, 2 July 1886, 8 Oct. 1886.
52. C. A. Lorenz, James D' Alwis and C. L. Ferdinands were very prominent Advocates
and members of the Legislative Council. F. W. Van Geyzel was a very prominent
Medical Practitioner with a long standing practice.
53. SLNA 6/7761, From Acting Chairman of CMC to Col. Sec. 5 Nov. 1887.
54. AR of the CMC for 1869-70.
55. Ceylon Observer 6 Dec. 1867.
56. Ferguson John. Ceylon in the Jubilee Year. p 168.
57. Hansard 1872-73 P 21, SP 31 of 1886, Ceylon Times 7 Dec. 1883.
Ceylon Examiner 22 Dec. 1885.
58. AR of the CMC for 1868, 1869. 1870.

59. Ceylon Times 1 May 1875.
60. Lakrivikirana 3 Feb. 1883, SLNA 1/3751. Petition from the inhabitants of Colombo to the Governor 14 Dec. 1872. SLNA 6/3751. From CMC to Col. Sec. 26 March 1872.
61. Census Report 1901.
62. Wright Arnold. Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon. Denham E. B. Ceylon at the Census of 1911 p 133.
63. Ibid p 132.
64. Ibid p 130.
65. Ceylon Times 18 Jan. 1866.
66. Ceylon Observer 5 Nov. 1877, 6 Dec. 1883.
67. Ceylon Times 29 Nov. 1877, Ceylon Examiner 7 Dec. 1883.
68. Lakrivikirana 19 Jan. 1884, 7 Oct. 1892.
69. SLNA 6/7761 From Acting Chairman CMC to Col. Sec. 5 Nov. 1887.
70. Ceylon Examiner 7 Dec. 1883.
71. Ceylon Observer 6 Dec. 1883.
72. The Ceylon Observer, 4 Dec. 1869, reporting the election results of the CMC held on 2nd and 3rd Dec. says that Mr. Tambeyah, the sitting member of the St. Paul's ward declined re-election and no one else stood for election. But the AR of the CMC for 1869 reveals that W. W. Beling successfully contested the ward against the sitting member, Tambeyah and was elected by a majority of votes.
73. Ceylon Times 29 Nov. 1887, Ceylon Independent 6 Dec. 1890.
74. Ceylon Independent 10 Sep. and 12 Sep. 1902, 2 Dec. 1902.
75. Ceylon Independent 6 Dec. 1902.
76. Endagama M. Vidyodaya Journal of Social Science Vol. 2 Nos. 1-2 Jan.-July 1988 pp. 79-120.
77. Papers relating to the Constitutional History of Ceylon 1908-1924 The Year Book of the Ceylon Reform League 1917-18 p 86. Special Commission on the Constitution of Ceylon 1927 Vol. 1 p 34.
78. Lakrivikirana 1 Dec. 1897.
79. Although the principle of communal representation was not introduced into the municipal system it was the governing principle adopted by the government in selecting non-official members to the Legislative Council.

Annexure i

THE NATURE OF MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS 1865 - 1900.

Table i — The Same Members Representing the Wards For Several Terms.

Name of the Ward & the Representative	Term Contested	Term Not Contested	Total Period Served
<u>Pettah Ward</u>			
J. W. Van Geysel *	1866 Jan. - 1867 Dec.	1867 Jan. - 1883 Dec.	18 years
M. J. M. Haniffa *	1890 Jan. - 1893 Jan.	1884 Jan. - 1890 Jan. 1893 Jan. - 1900 March	16 years
<u>Kotahena Ward</u>			
A. de A. Seneviratna //	— — —	1883 Dec. - 1902 April	14 years
<u>St Paul's Ward</u>			
P. Coomaraswamy □	1877 Dec. - 1879 Oct.	1873 Jan. - 1879 Oct. 1885 Nov. - 1899 Dec.	21 years
<u>New Bazaar</u>			
James de Alwis ×	— — —	1866 Jan. - 1877 July	11½ years
Vincent W. Perera	— — —	1881 Aug. - 1895 Nov.	9 years
<u>St. Sebastian</u>			
H. D. Gabriel	— — —	1868 Jan. - 1877 Dec.	10 years

* The two representatives have served the whole period of 34 years from 1865 to 1900

// Altogether he has served the council for 16 years which includes the 14 years in the 19th century and the two years continued in the 20th century.

□ He left the Island in 1899

× He died on 5th July 1877.

Table ii— No of Elections Contested and not Contested in the 9 Wards from 1865 - 1900

Name of The Ward	Number of Elections Held.	Number Contested	Number Not Contested	Number When The Sitting Member was Elected	Longest Term Represented by the Same Member
Fort	17	02	15	07	* 06 years Arthur Alwis 1893 Dec-1902 Dec.
Pettah	16	02	14	14	18 years Dr. J. W. Van Geysel 1866 Jan-1887 Dec.
Kotahena	16	None	16	10	19 years A de A Seneviratna 1883 Aug - 1902 April
St. Sebastian	18	03	15	10	10 years H. D. Gabriel 1868 Jan - 1877 Dec.
St. Paul's	17	03	14	11	21 years P. Coomaraswamy 1872 Jan. - 1879 Dec. 1885 Dec. - 1899 Dec.
Maradana	17	03	14	06	// 24 years Charles Perera 1882 Jun - 1907 Nov.
New Bazaar	19	02	17	12	12 years James de Alwis 1866 Jan - 1878 March
Slave Island	19	02	17	09	09 years D. M. S. J. Akbar 1882 Feb - 1890 Sep.
Kollupitiya	18	04	14	10	08 years each C. L. Ferdinands 1866 Jan - 1873 Aug. R. H. Morgan 1890 Dec - 1902 Oct.

* Arthur Alwis represented the same ward during the 20th century from 1908 Jan - 1922 April for 14 years.

// His 24 years include 17 years in the 19th century and the 7 years continued in the 20th century.