EVOLUTION OF THE BUREAUCRACY IN SRI LANKA : SOME ASPECTS AND CONSEQUENCES

by

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The contemporary bureaucracy in Sri Lanka which emerged over three decades ago from British colonial rule has not been able to shed some of its lingering colonial characteristics. This has prevented the bureaucracy from fully integrating itself into the social system thus keeping the bureaucrats and the clients as two distinct and sometimes antagonistic groups when in fact they need to be complementary. This paper attempts to highlight some of the factors that have contributed to this situation and concludes that a change of attitudes have to come from the bureaucracy itself without which they cannot play the development role that is expected of them in a developing society like Sri Lanka.

Introduction

The modern bureaucracy in Sri Lanka is the product of British colonial rule which began in 1796 and ended in 1948 when the island was granted political independence. In order to understand the current role of this bureaucracy one has to study its evolution during the colonial period. Awareness of this evolution helps one to understand also the basis of its current values and attitudes which influence its functioning.

This paper is an attempt to trace, in very broad terms, the proliferation of the bureaucracy in this country since the advent of British rule, its gradual but pervasive penetration of the rural community both during and after colonial rule and the nature of the relationship that exists between the bureaucracy and the people.

The needs of the colonial administration and the plantation economy brought about the need for bureaucratic structures. Their proliferation gained momentum after the introduction of the Donoughmore Constitution and during the second world war. Government intervention in new areas of activity after independence, particularly afrter 1956, brought a further increase in these structures.

New administrative structures and increased activities created the need for increased personnel. This need was at first met by the recruitment of Europeans which continued unabated till the thirties. These bureaucrats were, by their birth, upbringing, education, training and various other circumstances, far removed from the local people.

The Ceylonisation of the bureaucracy since the thirties made no perceptible change as long as old traditions persisted. The gap between the bureaucracy and the people remained wide leading to mutual misunderstanding and further cleavage. Attempts to bridge this gap is made by political intervention which has brought about a mixed reaction.

These are some of the matters that are highlighted and sought to be discussed in the following sections of this paper.[1]

Meaning of Bureaucracy

Before proceeding further it is necessary to elucidate the sense (or senses) in which the term "bureaucracy" is used since different meanings are given to it. The popular pejorative sense in which the term is used, is to depict the tortuous procedures, narrow outlook, and high-handed manner of autocratic government officials. However, Martin Albrow indicates seven different meanings of the word[2] and says that it is used to mean rational organization, administrative inefficiency, rule by officials[3], public administration, administration by officials, the organization, and modern society. It must be said at once that the word is *not* used here to mean modern society since the scope of this paper is limited to some aspects of public administration.

In the Weberian sense, bureaucracy is an organization in which the office-holders perform clearly differentiated tasks for which they are appointed on the basis of merit determined by such things as competitive examinations and educational qualifications. The official duties and the work place are separated from private activities and residence. It requires full-time attention to official duties for which the office-holder is compensated by the payment of a salary. He works according to predetermined rules, regulations and procedures which are aimed at the exclusion of personal feelings and whims in the execution of official tasks.

This 'ideal type' seems to imply a combination of Albrow's rational organization and administration by officials. This kind of definition emphasizes the impersonal aspects of organizations. Activities are carried out by officials or personnel appointed to positions within these structures or organizations. The term bureaucracy will be used in this paper to mean both the *body of officials* who are engaged in the performance of governmental activities and the *administrative structures* within which these governmental activities are performed by public officials. Which of these meanings is to be implied in a given situation has to be determined by the context.

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1. Much of the comments in this paper are based on the personal experience and observations of the writer since the early forties.
2. Albrow, Martin, *Bureaucracy* Macmillan, pp. 84-105.
3. Under colonial rule that prevailed in countries like Sri Lanka, bureaucracy can be defined as 'rule by officials,' but not under post-colonial conditions.

Bureaucratization will mean the process of establishing (by the government) differentiated administrative structures for the delivery of (differentiated) public services and the appointment of a body of officials to work within these structures. It implies the use of paid officials by the government to carry out its activities rather than depending on unpaid functionaries. A further implication is that these paid officials are better qualified to perform the respective tasks than primordial functionaries.

BUREAUCRATISATION IN SRI LANKA

Early stages

The process of bureaucratization in Sri Lanka, as noted earlier, can be traced back to the very early period of British rule. Until 1818 the traditional feudal aristocratic pattern of government and administration, through primordial bureaucracy, prevailed in the island except in the maritime provinces. The maritime provinces had come under the rule of three successive colonial powers — the Portuguese in 1505 replaced by the Dutch in 1656 and by the British in 1796. The first British governor of the maritime provinces established the basis for the Ceylon Civil Service (CCS) when he brought with him eight young Britons[4] to assist him in the administration. This number was later reinforced by twenty four others sent to the island in March 1801.[5] The governor started a small secretariat in Colombo and sent out a few officials to function as Collectors in the various districts in the maritime provinces around the island. These officers used indigenous chiefs and headmen to rule and administer their areas.[6]

The autonomous Kandyan Kingdom ceded to the British in 1815. But until 1818 no change was made in the traditional system of administration except to appoint a resident representative in Kandy. In 1818 after the suppression of the rebellion which started in the latter part of 1816 Government Agents (GAs) were posted to various districts in the Kandyan Kingdom. Here too, as in the maritime provinces, indigenous chiefs and headmen were integrated into the bureaucracy below the level of the GA.

Until 1832 the administration of the maritime provinces and the Kandyan Kingdom was kept separate. As a result of the Colebrooke-Cameron Reforms a unified system of administration for the whole island was established from that year. According to Sir Charles Collins the rule by the Governor was

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4. de Silva, Colvin R. *Ceylon Under British Occupation* 1796-1932, p. 250.
5. *Ibid*
6. Collins : Sir Charles, "Ceylon : The Imperial Heritage" in Ralph Braibanti (ed.) *Asian Bureaucratic Systems Emergent from The British Imperial Tradition*, Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, (1966).

autocratic upto 1832, bureaucratic throughout the greater part of British rule in Ceylon (1832-1931), and "finally much leavened with democratic theory and practice."[7]

The actual colonial penetration and bureaucratization therefore began after the suppression of the rebellion of 1818. Apart from appointing GAs to the Kandyan provinces, the indigenous system of local self-government which existed from very early times fell into disuetude because of the extension of the British judicial system and the political and administrative power vested in the GAs who at this stage were all Europeans.

The need for rapid movement of troops and the fostering of plantations brought about the need for the expansion of land surveys and the construction of roads. These activities which were formerly restricted to the maritime provinces were now extended to the whole island. This resulted in the creation of new organizations and the recruitment of technical and other relevant personnel.

Ceylon Civil Service

The most prestigious segment of the public service was the Ceylon Civil Service which was the core of the colonial bureaucracy. Besides this there were other grades of high officers who were all identified by the common designation of 'staff officers.' The middle grades consisting of clerical and technical officers were categorised as 'subordinate officers' and a third group known as 'minor employees' occupied the lowest level of the bureaucratic hierarchy.

Appointments to the Ceylon Civil Service which were done by the Secretary of State for Colonies in England began to be made on the results of a competitive examination since 1856. The examination was held in London. Therefore only university graduates in Britain could sit for them and be selected. A local division was established by the recruitment through a separate examination held in Colombo from 1863 but this was done away with in 1880. Since then the examination was held both in London and Colombo which had the same papers to be answered by the candidates. However, only or mostly British candidates could enter the service as there was no university education in Ceylon until 1921. Even if Ceylonese could sit, they had to be educated in British universities to effectively compete with British candidates.[8] (Fernando : 67).

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7. *Ibid.*
8. University education was costly. Even when it was started in Ceylon in 1921 it remained so, thus restricting it to the English-educated rich. Sinhala and Tamil educated graduates were available only in the sixties.

Persistent pressure for higher positions in the bureaucracy from the indigenous population (middle classes) continued till the nineteen thirties when ratios were established for foreign and indigenous recruits to the CCS. At the time of Independence in 1948, of a total of 169 officers in the CCS, thirty-two were British and the rest, Ceylonese (Braibanti : 645). By 1959 there were no British officers. This elite cadre which had slightly increased to 210 officers was absorbed into the wider Ceylon Administrative Service (CAS) in 1963 which initially consisted of 1100 officers at a time when the total government employment stood at 286,600—(Braibanti : 648).

The growth of the numbers in the public service and the elite cadre can be attributed to the growth of the administrative organizations to undertake various activities as the functions of the colonial and post-colonial state increased.

Expansion of provincial administration

With the increasing need for the colonial rule to penetrate into all the provinces and districts in the country the provincial administration was expanded and the number of provinces which stood at five in 1832 was increased to nine by 1887 and under these there were twenty-one districts. The extent of this penetration can be judged by the fact that the number of districts at present is only four more than in 1887 and the number of provinces remain the same. The only difference is that instead of GAs at the provincial level and Assistant Government Agents (AGA) at the district level all of them are designated GAs since 1954 and there are no GAs at the provincial level On the other hand this also indicates the fact that the structure of provincial regional administration has not undergone any significant change from the colonial times in spite of thirty eight years of independence.

The backbone of the bureaucratic system during the colonial rule was (and is so even under post-colonial rule to a large extent) the privoncial administration (Collins: 456; Kearney: 490). Till late in the colonial rlue the G.As and AGAs were British officers of the CCS. These officials were virtually the rulers in their respective areas exercising not only administrative but also political sway, the administration being politically dominant over all the groups in the colony (Wood : 308).

The secretariat of the GA/AGA was called the Kachcheri and the related system of provincial administration is referred to as the Kachcheri system. Until 1931 the GAs (of the provinces) reported to the Colonial Secretary who was the head of the public service, subordinate only to the Governor. The line of authority from the Governor and Colonial Secretary ran down to the village level through the GA and AGA below him, and through Chief and Intermediate Headmen to the Village Headman.

The Village Headman (VH) was to the people in the rural areas the direct representative of the colonial power and he performed all the political and administrative functions in his area of authority. These native officers generally belonged to the landed gentry who could and did command respect in the area. This also meant that he belonged to a powerful family in the village. His status in the 'little world' of the village was ascriptive. It was reinforced by being integrated into the colonial administration. The intermediate headmen and chief headmen also belonged to this same category although their social position, wealth and administrative power was of a higher level and degree.

All government activities were fused in these hierarchical positions running down from the GA to the VH. They performed multi-dimentional roles. While all the existing activities were performed through these officials any new activities that were undertaken by the government from time to time were also entrusted to them for execution. This system of provincial administration which can be seen as a fusion of the feudal rule (primordial bureaucracy) with the colonial bureaucratic administration existed without change till 1931.

Revival of local government

The value of the system of local self-government which fell into disuetude after the rebellion of 1818 and which had performed the useful functions of regulating agrarian life of the rural communities and settled disputes, was realized by the colonial rulers around the middle of the nineteenth century. The development of commercial centres had also created the need for the provision of basic amenities in these areas which could not be undertaken directly by the government. Therefore, since 1865, the colonial administrators initiated measures to establish and revive a system of local government in the country with the establishment of Municipal Councils (1865), Village Committees (1871), Small Towns' Sanitation Boards (1884), and Local Government Boards (1898).

These local authorities consisted of nominated and elected unofficial members together with *ex-officio* members. All these bodies were subject to bureaucratic control by the Kachcheri system since the GA, AGA, Chief Headman or the Intermediate Headman became the *ex-officio* chairmen of these various local bodies. They were able to become fully elective bodies only in the late nineteen thirties. This was made possible by the Colombo Municipal Councils Ordinance (1835), Village Committees Ordinance (1938), Town Councils Ordinance (1946), and Urban Councils Ordinance (1939). Under these ordinances four types of local authorities were established during the last decade prior to independence. But by this time local bodies had b.en subjected to control and supervision by other bureaucratic organizations such as the Department of Local Government.

Donoughmore period

The political role of the bureaucracy began to be undermined since 1931. The Donoughmore Constitution was introduced in that year. It granted universal franchise to the people to elect their representatives to the State Council. These representatives were entrusted with the responsibility of managing the internal affairs of the colony by providing for the creation of seven Executive Committees.[9] The chairmen of these committees were appointed Ministers in charge of the respective functions. This involvement of the elected representatives of the people in the administration of the colony allowed them increasing opportunities to cater to the needs of the people. These measures also coincided with the period of the Great Depression, and the outbreak of an epidemic of malaria in the country which required a great deal of state intervention in relief work and projects for long-term economic development. Such state intervention could be justified by the Keynesian 'revolution' in economic thought that was gaining acceptance at this time.

These relief works and projects consisted largely of development of economic and social overheads involving the construction of roads, restoration of ancient irrigation works and construction of new ones, land settlement schemes for agricultural development,[10] provision of health and education facilities and expanding these services where they already existed.

These new and wide ranging activities, while creating new demands on the Kachcheri system and strengthening it, also brought about the need for new administrative structures and for new cadres not only of the traditional administrative type of bureaucrats and supporting clerical and minor grades of employees, but also an army of technocrats in the fields of engineering, medicine, health and education.

Thus began the penetration of the bureaucracy to every aspect of rural life which was later to encompass even the daily meal of rice and curry of the ordinary masses of the people. Every time the government undertook some new activity, it entailed the creation of one or more administrative organizations at the capital and carrying out these activities to the periphery through the hierarchy of the Kachcheri system.

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9. Executive Committees for Home Affairs; Agriculture & Lands; Local Administration; Health; Education; Labour, Industry & Commerce, and Transport and Communications. In addition there were three officers of state, viz, Chief Secretary, Financial Secretary and Legal Secretary who together with the seven Ministers (Chairman of the Executive Committees) formed the Board of Ministers which was presided over by the Chief Secretary.

10. One of the main strategies of the Minister of Agriculture under the Donoughmore Constitution, to divert pressure for land particularly in Kandyan areas was to start major irrigation and land development projects to settle landless peasants. This was an attempt to divert the pressure for land in the Kandyan areas.

Field organisations

Parallel with this development, however, was the creation of regional and sub-regional branches of the central government departments to carry out specialised technical activities when it was no longer possible for them to be effectively carried out through the agency of the Kachcheri system. Thus there came about a situation where, on the one hand new activities were added on to the Kachcheri system, while old activities, which started becoming more complex and technical, came to be removed out of that system.

Some of the activities to be taken away from the Kachcheri system at a very early stage were those of the Public Works Department, Post and Tele-communication Department and later those of the Police and the Prisons Departments, although the GA still retains the *ex-officio* designation of Superintendent of Police or Prisons as the case may be. The Irrigation Department which embarked on major civil engineering construction projects in the thirties opened up its divisional and sub-divisional offices at local level and operated independently of the Kachcheri. The Land Development Department and the Land Commissioner's Department, which were concerned with the clearing and development of crown land and alienation of it to landless rural people, functioned with their own District Officers under the general supervision of the GA.

Second world war

The period of the second world war brought about the need for controls in food and textiles. A campaign for the local production of food and other essential items which were hitherto imported was launched. These brought about further government intervention and the creation of more administrative structures and adding to the activities of the already existing ones.[11] Food and textile control activities were carried out through the Kachcheri system down to the village through the VH. The promotion of food production created food production and agricultural extension services in the rural areas bringing in new officers. This was also the period when the consumer co-operative movement was vigorously encouraged by the government bringing in officials of the Cooperative Department to the village. Departments were created for rural development and cottage industries. Health and sanitation needs introduced Sanitary Inspectors to rural areas. From very early times compulsory primary education in rural areas had introduced Attendance Officers, who were to check on the attendance of children at schools and prosecute parents who did not send their children to school.

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11. The war also gave an impertus to the establishment of a few small industrial projects some of which were to expand and become public industrial corporations, in the post Colonial era.

BUREAUCRACY AND RURAL POPULATION

A boon or a burden ?

This plethora of public officials who were sent to the rural areas to be of 'service' to the rural people were in general unable to integrate with the village. The services they rendered were something that were imposed on the rural people. Even if the services were for the benefit of the rural people they were found to be burdens since non-compliance brought in punishments by way of fines which they found difficult to pay. An unofficial way to avoid fines was to render some personal service to the officials if the latter needed such services. This unofficial relationship together with the gap in education, social standing, and incomes between the officials and the villagers created in the minds of both groups the sense of a superior-subordinate (if not master-servant) relationship.

In a sense this was only a logical extension of the position of the rural people in a colony as subjects of imperial masters the meanest of officials being the local representative of the imperial power. One cannot help recalling with amused rage the pompous demeanour of even the village postman going round his tour of duty, with the upper part of his body covered with a khaki tunic with brass-buttons (this being the official uniform) which evoked in him a sense of pride and superiority over his fellow villagers. If the behaviour of this servant of the colonial regime who was closest to the rural people was this, one does not need much imagination to picture the behaviour of the hierarchically superior functionaries towards the rural people.

After independence

The penetration of the rural areas by the bureaucracy which gained momentum in the nineteen thirties continued unabated in the forties and after independence (in 1948). Later there was no sphere of life of the rural people which was untouched by the bureaucracy. One indicator of the extent of this penetration is provided by the fact that the number of government departments which was forty in 1931 had gone up to about 150 by 1961. (Kearney : 490). The Salaries Commission reported in 1961 (after 13 years of independence) that the almost primitive and simple administrative organization inherited from colonial times could hardly be recognized wihtin the vast network of governmental organizations.[12] While bureaucratic structures proliferated the number of bureaucrats also increased. "In the first decade of Independence the bureaucracy doubled in size, and costs of salaries and allowances increased three-fold" (Kearney : 486).

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12. Perera Report (1961) quoted by Kearney : in Braibanti, *op. ict.* p. 486.

The modern bureaucratic element in the system of provincial administration (which combined both feudal and bureaucratic elements) shifted down to the level of Chief Headman when in 1938, they were replaced by Divisional Revenue Officers recruited through a competitive examination. Thus gradually, public office by achievement rather than by ascription, was rolling down to the village level. But this process was not completed until 1963 when the Village Headmen system was replaced by the *Grama Sevaka* (village servant) system. The *Grama Sevakas* were also recruited on the results of a competitive examination.

Undisturbed existence

The first eight years after independence saw no radical changes in the policy followed by the government in social, political, and economic spheres except that the pace of infrastructure development was speeded up. The bureaucracy was undisturbed and continued a life more or less similar to that which it was used to during the colonial period, especially that between 1931 and 1948.

The political elite who inherited power at independence were more or less the same set of people who held ministerial office and served as representatives of the people during the period of the Donoughmore Constitution. This was a period of transition to independence from crown colony status. The transition period saw the participation of indigenous political elite belonging to the propertied classes (feudal landlords, proprietory planters who were a product of the colonial capitalist system, and compradore bourgeoisie) in the control of the internal administration of the country, having been elected to the State Council.

The elite cadres of the bureaucracy were increasingly recruited from the locally educated groups during the period 1931-1948. They gradually replaced the dominance of British Officers at the higher levels. These bureaucrats belonged predominantly to the propertied classes or were absorbed into it by matrimonial alliances. Thus their economic, social and political interests coincided with those of the political elite. Therefore it was in the interests of the politicians to preserve the bureaucracy undisturbed and for the elite cadres of the bureaucracy to assist faithfully in the pursuit of policies which would reinforce and consolidate their common class interests. This aspect of the matter is conveniently ignored by Sir Charles Collins who is eager to highlight the efficiency of the CCS (to which he himself belonged) as the major factor which helped the smooth transition of the island to independence (Collins : 444).

Changes after 1956

The peaceful and easy pace of life of the bureaucracy was 'rudely' disturbed after 1956 when a new wave of nationalism overthrew the conservative government of the dominant westernized elites and replaced it with a government claiming to represent the underprivileged masses of the people in the country. It is significant that the lower rungs of the bureaucracy were also very enthusiastic supporters of this new government until this enthusiasm was frittered away by the divisive tendencies that emerged in the subsequent socio-economic upheavals.

After getting over the initial 'shock' the bureaucracy settled down to its normal pattern of life since the 'radicalism' of the government was only apparent and not real. In fact most of the ministerial cadres in this government were later to join the more conservative sections of the national bourgeoisie which brought back to power the rightist political parties in 1965. In this the elite cadres of the bureaucracy played no small role although their actions are hidden behind the facade of the 'neutrality' of the bureaucracy.

The period after 1956 was to witness some attempts at radically changing the socio-economic pattern of society to give a place for the economically deprived masses of the people and to bring them closer to the government and administration. But this ironically created more and more problems for the people. The inevitable result has been the super-development of the already over-developed bureaucracy in relation to the underdeveloped structure of the society inherited from the colonial past.

More power to the bureaucracy

The creation of new ministries and departments to undertake new functions and the creation of public corporations and boards to manage nationalised services and the already existing industrial projects brought about a proliferation of the bureaucracy. The numbers in the elite group within the bureaucracy remained more or less stable. This meant that the limited number of elite cadres came to control more and more socio-economic activities. Therefore they acquired unprecedented authority and influence over these areas of activity both in the formulation of policies and their implementation.

While the radical political elements who came to power in 1956 were very critical of the bureaucracy as a whole they did not hesitate to make use of the elite cadre of this bureaucracy for the formulation and implementation of public policies. This was nowhere more prominent than in the newly emergent public corporations which were created to run the industrial and commercial enterprises undertaken by the government. In almost all cases

the traditional bureaucracy was involved not only in their creation and initial organization but also in the subsequent management either as chairmen, members of the directorate, general managers or as functional managers.

This bureaucracy "neither selected, trained nor organised for development activities" (Kearney: 485) were never temporamentally suited or ideologically committed to the operation and management of industrial and commercial enterprises in the public sector. Much of the ills of public corporations can therefore be attributed to their management, a style of management which is only suited to "upholding the majesty of the government preserving the peace and gathering of taxes" (Kearney: 485).

Frustration of progressive measures ?

The radical (although limited) nature of the governments that came to power in 1956 and from time to time thereafter and the activities they sought to push through were unsettling for the elite cadres of the bureaucracy and even detrimental to their class interests, individually and collectively. The elite groups of the bureaucracy being connected to the propertied classes in various ways, including education and training which also condition their attitudes, had vested interests in maintaining the *status quo* and therefore nationalization, threats of nationalization, restriction of predatory activities of the private entrepreneurial class and plantation owners, measures to safeguard the rights of tenants and plantation and industrial workers were all unsettling and detrimental to them. In such a situation it is foolhardy to assume that they will enthusiastically formulate or help to formulate policies and implement them to liquidate themselves.

The measures to change the official language from English to Sinhala and admission to the public service of persons educated through the medium of Sinhala and Tamil (whose admission was hitherto restricted to the teaching profession only) in place of English-educated (and therefore to a large extent western-oriented and urban) was also a challenge to their position and status so much so that they contrived to make subtle discriminations against these new entrants.[13]

These discriminatory measures were to have their repurcussions on the popularity of the government amongst not only these 'new entrants' but also among the rural people from where the Sinhala and Tamil educated recruits were drawn into the public service.

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13. For example the (Sinhala and Tamil medium) new entrants were allowed only third class railway warrants for holiday travel and season tickets while (English medium) 'old entrants' in the middle grades were entitled to second class travel.

It must also be remembered that upto about the seventies the higher positions of the bureaucracy at the level of Heads of Departments and Secretaries to the Ministries were held by Civil Servants who had entered the service during the colonial era and therefore were educated and trained under the influence of the colonial masters. Even those who joined the service after independence could not be completely free from these influences which were inherited from their senior colleagues. Any departures from the customs and traditions were visited with a kind of 'excommunication' of the deviant members. Therefore conformity with the bureaucratic system rather than with the political system was in their long-term interests. The political masters were in any case a transient phenomenon under the parliamentary democratic system.

Elite Cadres, Subordinates and the Masses

These traditions and customs have always kept the elite administrators apart from the subordinate clerical, technical and manual grades of public servants, because of their education, official status, incomes and social position and the resultant attitudes and values. The subordinate grades in their turn were so eager to emulate their hierarchical superiors that they could maintain their distinction only by behaving as a class above the ordinary masses of the people in the towns and countryside. This alienation of the middle grades, especially the office workers, from the masses of the people was even more marked than those of the higher officials. The latter had some contact with the people at least in their official activities and visits to the rural areas and worksites. But their distance from the people in all respects is so vast that these contacts could not possibly bring them together.

The only people with whom the bureaucrats could have some social contacts were the elites in the rural areas rather than the ordinary masses of the people.[14] Therefore, between the bureaucracy and the people there was and continues to have a mutually perpetuating and widening gap of misunderstanding and distrust. Robert Kearney notes that (even) after a decade of independence bureaucracy has been criticised for its elitism and colonial attitudes. He goes on to conclude that "the question is whether the sense of distance and impersonal guardianship can be replaced by a sense of identification with the people and responsiveness to their desires without sacrificing the quality of duty, integrity and responsibility which were a heritage of the public service." (Kearney: 549).

But after three decades of independence so far it has not been able to develop the required sense of identification with the people and responsiveness. The quality of duty, integrity and responsibility among some sections of the public service seems to have positively deteriorated.

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14. This point is made clearly by H. U. E. Thoden van Velzen, in his article "Staff, Kulaks and Peasants" in Cliffe and Saul (eds) *Socialism in Tanzania*, vol. 2, Dar-es-Salam, 1973.

Emergence of political intervention

This incapacity to identify with the people and respond to their needs has necessitated the introduction of formalized political intervention at various levels in the provincial administration and more specifically at the Kachcheri level. Since the early fifties Members of Parliament and Senators residing in the district could participate in the meetings of the District Coordinating Committees and District Agricultural Committees. These meetings were presided over by the respective GAs. These were administrative arrangements dominated by the bureauicy. The politicans had only deliberative rights. They had no directive authority. Although the G.A. was the district coordinator of government activities his authority did not pervade all governmnet departments operating in the district and therefore the coordinating function was not very effective.

In 1973, a Member of Parliament was appointed to each district as the 'Political Authority' to coordinate and expedite decision-making for agricultural development but later this sphere of decision-making was extended to other areas of governmental activity.

This innovation placed the Political Authority as the coordinator at the district level and helped to expedite decision-making. The GA and his Kachcheri served, as the administrative arm for the execution of these decisions. The arrangement was such that at least once a month meetings were held which were attended by all the district heads of the various government departments and parastatal organizations in the area. The Members of Parliament in the district and a few chairmen of local authorities also participated in these meetings. The meeting was presided over by the Political Authority and problems were discussed and quick decisions arrived at.[15] These decisions had to be implemented by the respective district officers, the GA serving as the coordinator of this implementation.

However, the Political Authority system was not everywhere an unqualified success. It received a mixed reception from the various bureaucratic elements in the districts. Some found it a very convenient means of taking quick decisions, the responsibility of which would not rest with them individually. Some district officers considered it as a device to undermine their authority and an interference in their normal official duties. In certain districts there have been open disputes between the Political Authority and the GA or other officers.

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15. The writer (together with a group of students) had the opportunity to be an observer at such a meeting in one of the remote districts (Moneragala), and was impressed by the speed with which certain decisions were taken.

But on the whole this appeared to be the result of a clash of interests and personalities, and resentment on the part of some bureaucrats facing the gradual encroachment on their domains and the fear of loss of status, power and prestige. On the other hand, there are also charges that the Political Authorities themselves turned out to be a new breed of bureaucrats using their position for self-aggrandisement and for personal and political profit.

The benefits of the system has been slow to seep down to the rural people. They and the bureaucrats remain in the separate worlds of their own. Nevertheless, the Political Authority system has been able to give a new orientation to the provincial administration inherited from colonial rule and infuse into it an element of popular control.

The fact that the system was of positive value seems to have been appreciated by various shades of political opinion in the country, so that the government which came to power in July, 1977 raised the position of the Political Authority to the level of District Minister with much more power politically, constitutionally as well as administratively, whereas earlier the power was largely (or only) political. How far the District Ministers have been successful in meeting the needs of the people is material for another paper.

CONCLUSION

During the colonial era the need for political control over the whole society brought about the need for the creation of a bureaucratic structure. It integrated within it the feudal administrative structure at the provincial level going down to the village. The bureaucratic part was staffed by an elite cadre of civil servants. They controlled the feudal part and through it the rural population as subjects of the imperial power. This relationship of the bureaucracy with the people during the colonial times seems to have left a lingering attitude of superiority still dominant among many of the elite and middle cadres of the bureaucracy.

The increasing activities of the government since 1931, still under colonial rule but with the involvement of elected representatives of the people increased the proliferation of bureaucratic structures and officials gradually touching an increasing number of aspects of rural life. This trend continued at an even pace till eight years after independence.

The proliferation of bureaucratic organizations gained further momentum after 1956 with the government venturing into the industrial and commercial activities and intensifying the scope of its activities into those that were already undertaken. All this meant an increase of authority and influence of the bureaucratic elite.

The limitation of access to the civil service to English-educated propertied classes made it an elite cadre not only because of the official position held by the members of the civil service but also because of the social position. They kept themselves apart from the people even after independence. The subsequent relaxation of access to the elite cadres in the late fifties and thereafter has also had no significant effect since the traditions, customs and attitudes that were deeply ingrained earlier seem to give way only painfully and slowly.

Since entry into the middle grades of the bureaucracy was also limited, till the late fifties, to the English-educated, their desire to emulate their hierarchical superiors, their social origin (coming largely from urban middle classes and in some cases from rural elites) this grade of public servants also could not integrate with the ordinary masses of the people either in the urban or rural areas, but more particularly in the rural areas.

The formal domination of the bureaucracy by the political elite has had mixed results. The forces of bureaucratic tendencies seem to be more powerful and longlasting than the transient political pressures.

The causes of the (problem of the) gap between the bureaucracy and the ordinary masses of the people are therefore to be found in the historical situation; the contemporary factors of education, income, social standing, power, authority and influence which perpetuate the gap; and the system of power relationship which helps this perpetuation.

The remedy seems to lie not in an unidirectional attack on the problem, but by a multi-directional one-a simultaneous attack from within and without. But the attack from within the bureaucracy will have to be the more lasting and effective one. Attack of the problem from outside both from the political elites and from the public, though necessary, cannot bring about a complete change within the existing framework. Further such an external attack may either be too harsh or too mild, which are both inimical to the bureaucracy in different ways.

The need for bridging the gap between the bureaucracy and the people is not to be sought for its own sake but for the purpose it serves—the purpose being the more effective and beneficial service to the people whom the bureaucracy should be committed to serve.

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