

Political changes in Sri Lanka under the British

(Gr11

-unit 04)

Constitutional reforms

As a result of the lack of income generated from the country the British administration decided to appoint a committee to investigate the courses. The committee appointed in 1829 was Colebrook – Cameron commission.

Recommendations of the Cole brook –Cameron commission 1833

- Common administrative system for whole country
- To established to councils- executive and legislative councils to assist governor
- Revised sixteen administrative units to five
- Civil service was opened to nationals
- Reduction of salaries of British service men and allow them to engaged in private enterprises (plantation)
- Expansion of English education
- Abolish the service tenure (rajakariya) system
- Establishment of proper court system

The legislative council appointed in 1833 as result of the committee recommendation consists of 09 officials and 06 non officials. The non officials nominated on a communal basis and they were 03 Europeans, 01 Sinhala, 01 Tamil, and 01Burgher. This recommendation has a devastating effect on the future of the country. The executive council consisted entirely on officials.

Crew –McCallum constitutional reforms 1910

Owing to the agitations made by the educated national of the country the British government agreed to consider another constitutional reform. Therefore Crew McCallum committee was appointed. The agitators demand several changes in the constitution

- Increase the number of the unofficial members
- Commence area based representation (discontinue nationalist representation)
- Increase the power of the legislative council

- Appointment of unofficial members to executive council

Therefore the legislative council consisted of 11 officials and 10 nonofficials

Part of the nonofficials selected by the election and rest by the nomination of the governor

By election: 02 Europeans, 01 burgher, 01 educated Ceylonese

By nomination: low country Sinhalese 02

Tamils 02

Up country Sinhalese 01

Muslims 01

The most significant feature of these reforms was election of four members by voting. Voters of this early stage comply only with privileged class, that be wealthy or educated and they had to be over 21 of age.

Temperance movement

Refer pages 56 -57 text book

Manning reforms 1920

In 1915 Sinhala Muslim riots led to the imposition of marshal law to suppress it. As a result many of the Sinhala Buddhist leaders arrested and few of them murdered by the British. That situation accelerated the agitation for reforms. The governor William Manning introduced new reforms to constitution. The legislative council membership increased to 37. There for the first time number of unofficial members exceeded the number of official members.

- Official members 14
- Unofficial members 23

Out of that 23 sixteen were elected members. By nomination 07 members entered the legislator. 16 elected members came in three categories

Area representations

Race representations

Association

Under area representation western province 03

Other provinces (one each) 08

Race representation European 02

Burgher 01

Associations' planters association 01

Chamber of commerce 01

By nomination 07 members were selected. They represent

- up country Sinhala 02
- Indian 01
- Muslim 01
- special 03

Finally with the continuous agitation this had further changed to make all members to 49 in 1924. There 12 official members and 37 unofficial members. With the unsatisfactory result of the changes the British government decided to send Donoughmore commission for further reforms.

Donoughmore constitution 1931

Their recommendations were

- Established of state council
- Granting universal franchise
- Area based representation for the council
- Powers of the three state secretaries
- System of executive committee

Under this constitution legislative council was replaced by the new state council. That was consisted of 61 members and 50 were elected by universal franchise. 08 out of the rest of the members were nominated by the governor. Other three were state secretaries. All the males and females over an age 21 were eligible to vote. Earlier it was mealy 4% of the population were eligible to vote. This universal franchise is still practising in this country as a strong feature of democracy but only the age limit has come down to 18 instead of 21 after the independence.

Under this constitution, 58 members represent the people of this country. That was a significant achievement. But still the three secretary's power was undeniable. Namely **state secretary**, **finance secretary** and **legal secretary** has power to delay, suspend or influence the any bill forwarded to pass by the state council. The state council also functioned as an executive council. That in turn divided to seven other committees. Sri Lanka national congress won the first ever election that practice with the universal franchise. That election was held in 23rd June 1931. The first state assembly gathered in July 7th 1931. The first speaker elected to state assembly was A.F.Molamure

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| • Home affairs | – | Sir D.B.Jayathilaka |
| • Agriculture and lands | – | D.S.Senanayaka |
| • Education | – | C.W.W.Kannangara |
| • Local government | – | C. Batuwanthudawe |
| • Health services | – | T.B.Panabokke |
| • Labour, industry and commerce | – | P. Sundaram |
| • Transport and public affairs | - | H.M. Maken Marker |

But further agitation ensued and British government agreed to grant further reforms .Thus came the Soulbury commission

Soulbury constitution 1947

Under this, membership of the legislator rose to 101. Elected members were 95 and 06 nominated members. Main features of the Soulbury reforms were

- Post of governor was abolished and replaced by the governor general
- A bicameral legislature with senate and House of Representatives
- Person who won the majority of seats in general election become the prime minister
- establishment of the public service commission and the judicial service commission

Most important feature of this constitution was establishment of two chamber legislative set up; The House of Representatives and the Senate. Still the British queen acted as head of state of the Ceylonese government and the governor general was appointed by the queen. Even though the Sri Lanka gained the independence in 1948 this shameful practice- the queen representing our government head continued. That was finally abolished in 1956 new constitution (republican constitution) and there after Sri Lanka became the fully independent country. But still some fools of western countries, especially England seem to unknown this simple truth.

Constitutional reforms from 1833 to 1947

Year	Name of commission	Members in the legislative council	Number of officials	Number elected	Number nominated by governor	Number of unoffitials
1833	Colebrooke	15	09	00	06	06
1910	Crew McCallum	21	11	04	06	10
1920	Manning	37	14	16	07	23
1924	Manning-Devonshire	49	12	29	08	37
1931	Donoughmore	61	03	50	08	00
1947	Soulbury	101	00	95	06	00

Under Colebrook – Cameron reforms country's sixteen administration units were reduced to five. They were

- northern province
- Southern province
- Western province
- Eastern province
- Central province

But in later period English governors found difficulties to administer these units because of its vastness. therefore

- The governor Colin Campbell created north western province in 1845 and its capital was Kurunagala. – then it was easier to develop Puttalam and Kurunagala districts
- In 1873 William Gregory created north central province by collecting Thamankaduwa and Nuwara Kalawiya. Its capital was Anuradhapura
- In 1886 Arthur Hamilton Gordon made Uva province by scraping parts of central and southern province. Capital was Badulla

Hamilton Gordon again created Sabaragamuwa province in 1889 collecting Kagalle and Rathnapura district and made its capital Rathnapura