

this Island, subsequent to the establishment of the Legislative Council, and on the advancement of the native races of Ceylon during this period, which is a period of political, social and intellectual advancement in all parts of the great British Empire, that His Excellency the Right Hon'ble Sir J. West Ridgeway should have in the year 1898 thought it necessary to allow a distinguished and faithful servant of the Government to retire on pension and appoint him to be an Un-official Member of the Legislative Council, to represent the Tamil community of Ceylon. Unless his Excellency was under the impression that the representation of the Tamils in the Legislative Council for the last half a century by gentlemen chosen from the un-official ranks of the community has not answered its purpose, or that there is no one outside the Government Service who would be able worthily to represent that community, he would not have resorted to the expediency of appointing Dr. Rockwood as Tamil Member of the Legislative Council. But it is an undeniable fact that Ceylon has not produced abler and more brilliant Legislators than the last three Tamil Members of the Legislative Council—Sir Coomara Swamy, Mr. Ramanathan C. M. G., and Mr. P. Coomaraswamy—and that there are even at this moment, at least, half a dozen Tamil gentlemen outside the Government Service who would worthily represent the interests of the Tamils in the Legislature.

His Excellency the Governor has, therefore, revolutionized the system of appointing Un-official Members which has been in vogue for the last half a century, particularly in regard to the Tamil Seat, and has incurred a serious responsibility by it. Even if Dr. Rockwood would prove a most useful and successful Legislator, as he is the most distinguished Surgeon in the Island, the un-constitutional manner in which the appointment has been made is a serious invasion on the rights and privileges of the people.

Professionally and personally Dr. Rockwood is a gentleman of whom the Tamils as a nation should be proud. No one would be more pleased than we would be if he would prove a useful and successful member of the Legislative Council. But a grave constitutional principle is involved in this appointment, and no personal or private considerations should prevent the Ceylonese from protesting against it.

In the neighbouring Continent of India where the people are not generally so advanced or loyal as we are, the natives have been granted the privilege of electing a certain proportion of their Representatives in the Provincial and Supreme Legislative Councils. But here the Governor has not only refused to appoint to the Tamil Seat in the Legislative Council the nominee of the vast majority of the Tamils themselves, as his predecessors had done, but has given the appointment to a Government servant who had retired from the service on the day previous to his appointment as an Un-official Member of the Legislative Council.

The only remedy for the present state of things is the expansion and reform of our Legislative Council on a partly elective basis, as has been conceded to our brethren in India. We hope to revert to this subject on a future occasion. In the meantime we commend to the serious attention and consideration of our readers the following communication from a leading Tamil gentleman whose words are entitled to very great weight. We gladly give editorial prominence to it as we endorse our correspondent's views and opinions on the subject.

"The Tamil Inhabitants of Ceylon number close on one million persons. The energy, intelligence and wealth of the Tamils are among the principal factors and mainstays of the prosperity of the Island. The Tamils are allowed but one representative in the Legislative Council out of eight unofficial members. It is therefore of vital importance to the Tamils that their single representative should be one who is in perfect touch and sympathy with them, who will accurately and truly voice their wishes and feelings to the Government, and advise and if necessary criticize Government boldly and without fear or favour.

"In the selection of Dr. Rockwood His Excellency the Governor has altogether ignored the wishes of the Tamils. For many months past this community has been greatly excited, and naturally so, considering the importance to them of the issue involved—in discussing the merits of rival candidates and submitting their names and claims to His Excellency by

means of public meetings and petitions. Dr. Rockwood was not one of the persons whose names were so submitted, nor if his name had been put forward would it have been supported by any appreciable section of the Tamils. Yet His Excellency has selected him to represent the Tamils. We assert that it is not conducive to the public interest or to the interest of good Government that the wishes and opinions of the Tamil community as constitutionally and publicly expressed should be contemptuously set aside and a person who is a nominee pure and simple of the Governor appointed to represent them *volentes*. If the Tamils of Ceylon had, like the European Colony, three unofficial representatives in the Legislative Council in addition to eight official representatives or if even like the Sinhalese inhabitants the Tamils had two unofficial members, the appointment of a mere nominee of the Governor might be endured so long as at least one member was selected by the Tamils. But for the local Government to select for them the only representative allowed to them by the Imperial Government is to take away with one hand what the other has given, to reduce representation to a farce, to defeat the policy of the Imperial Government, and inflict a grave injury on the Queen's loyal and devoted Tamil subjects.

"The necessity for allowing the people a voice in the selection of their representatives has become imperative since the term of appointment of the un-official members has been limited to five years. This rule is one which we approve and desire to see continued. But not being coupled with the right of popular election, the rule has worked harm contrary to the instructions of the Secretary of State. Formerly even when the appointment was made by the Governor the tenure of office being for life, an unofficial member was at least after his appointment independent of the frowns or smiles of officials and could do his duty to his constituents without fear or favour. But since the new rule came into operation a sure passport to retention of the seat is to make himself agreeable to the Government and as sure a way of losing it is to do his duty boldly and fearlessly. We do not assert that this is the aim or the wish of the local Government. But it is human nature to be biased in favour of a person who gives no trouble and against one who does. The result is seen in the marked contrast which the unofficial side of the Legislative Council presents to what it did even so recently as ten years ago, in point of independence and public spirit. The only two independent members are those who do not owe their nomination to the Governor—viz the members who are nominated by the Planters' Association and by the Chamber of Commerce. Moreover Dr. Rockwood has been for the last 31 years a subordinate member of the Government Medical Department, from which he retired on pension on the 13 Instant. On the following day he was appointed to the Tamil Seat in the Legislative Council. It is not easy to change in a day the habits of a lifetime, and he can hardly be expected freely to criticize the conduct of his lifelong superiors. Such an appointment is in principle and policy bad and its radical defect can only be cured by the voice of the people publicly expressed in support of the appointment, which is peculiarly unfortunate in view of the present personnel of the Council so far as its Ceylonese members are concerned. Out of five Ceylonese representatives, one, the Muhamadan Member, has but an imperfect knowledge of the English language in which the proceedings of the Council are conducted and is old and infirm; another, the Kandyan Sinhalese Member, is a Government pensioner; and the Burgher Member recently held an acting appointment under the Crown without permanently vacating his seat. By the addition of another Government pensioner in the person of Dr. Rockwood and one too who owes his seat entirely to the Governor's nomination, the Government lays itself open to the imputation that they desire to noble the opposition in the Council though we are willing to believe that it is the wish of His Excellency the Governor as it is undoubtedly the wise and generous policy of the Imperial Government to have in the Council an effective and not a weak opposition."

MR P. COOMARASWAMY.

We have great pleasure to give insertion to the following letter addressed to Mr. P. Coomara Swamy by His Excellency Sir West Ridgeway, conveying to him the thanks of His Excellency and of the Legislative Council for his eminent services as an unofficial Member of

the Council for the last five years, and offering to him a seat in the Central Irrigation Board, which Mr. Coomara Swamy has accepted. In view of the fact that Mr. Coomara Swamy has not been re-appointed Tamil Member of the Legislative Council, although the vast majority of the Tamils had nominated him for re-appointment, an impression gained ground that His Excellency the Governor had not appreciated Mr. Coomara Swamy's ability and independence as a legislator at their true worth. This letter dispells all such doubts and expresses in graceful and unmistakable terms how highly His Excellency values Mr. Coomara Swamy's services in Council. It, however, remains yet to be known why the Tamils in particular and the Colony in general should have been deprived of the services in Council of so able and tried a Representative as Mr. Coomara Swamy, in spite of the preponderant wish of the most influential and enlightened Tamils, in all parts of the Island, to have him re-appointed for another term of five years.

"March 11 1898"

Dear Mr. Coomara Swamy

I cannot allow your term of Office as a Member of the Legislative Council to expire without expressing to you my regret at parting with so valuable a colleague. I am sure that I speak for all Members of the Council as much as for myself when I express my appreciation of the ability and independence with which you have represented the Tamil Community in the Legislative Council.

I trust that your zeal and public spirit will find scope in other directions and I should be very pleased if you would accept the seat in the Central Irrigation Board which has recently been vacated by Sir John Grinton. It will give you the opportunity which I am sure you desire of working for the benefit of your fellow countrymen in this Colony.

I am, dear Mr. Coomara Swamy

Yours Truly
WEST RIDGEWAY."

THE JAFFNA RAILWAY.

The Hon'ble Sir Frederick Saunders, the Treasurer of the Colony, Mr. W. Cantrell, acting General Manager of Railways, and Mr. T. A. Wylie, Accountant C. G. R. arrived here on Friday last by the "Lady Havelock" from Colombo and have been engaged with Mr. R. W. Ievers another Member of the Commission in collecting the necessary information as to whether a broad gauge Railway from Kankasanturai to Elephant Pass costing Rs 58000 a mile would pay *ab initio*. Our readers are aware that this Commission composed of Sir F. Saunders, Mr. Cantrell and Mr. Ievers has been recently appointed by His Excellency the Governor to inquire into and report upon the probable traffic of this Peninsular section of this Railway, and Mr. Wylie acts as Secretary of the Commission. From the day of their arrival the Commissioners have been engaged in taking evidence. On Saturday the 26th instant the Commissioners had a long conference from 2 to 5 P. M. with the Jaffna Railway Committee. On Sunday they visited Kankasanturai. On Monday Mr. M. Chinnappa of Moolai who had at the instance of the Committee gone to different parts of the District and collected various useful informations touching this subject submitted his return of the probable traffic which would go by this section of the railway. The Commissioners left yesterday for Pallai and are expected to return here today. Sir F. Saunders, Mr. Cantrell and Mr. Wylie are likely to leave this for Colombo on the 1st proximo.

LOCAL AND GENERAL.

The Registrar-General—Mr. Arunachalam arrived here on the 25th instant by the "Lady Gordon" on his way to Colombo from Batticaloa. He left by the same steamer the same evening.

The Magistracy of Kaitis—Mr. T. M. Tampo J. P. Crown Proctor, who had been acting as Police Magistrate of Jaffna for about two years and was relieved from that duty in the beginning of this year, has been appointed acting Police Magistrate of Kaitis in the place of Mr. Kathiravalpillai who has retired. We hope Mr. Tampo will be soon confined in this office.

The Attorney-General—Mr. C. P. Layard having left the Island on four months leave Mr. P. Ramanathan C. M. G. has been gazetted acting Attorney-General and Mr. Advocate Joseph Grenier acting Solicitor-General.