

The Foundation of the University of Ceylon

(Continued from page 162)

III. The Battle of the Sites, 1923-27

In the documents so far quoted, there was only one reference to controversy. It was made by Mr. Marrs in his letter of February 8, 1923, to the Colonial Secretary, and is quoted *ante* page 159. There was in fact a section of opinion, small but vocal, which disapproved of a University in Colombo. It was led by Mr. D. R. Wijewardena, a member of a well-known family who had been educated at Cambridge and called to the English Bar. He had returned to Ceylon, purchased a small and declining newspaper, and had gradually built up the company now known as the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, Ltd., though more popularly as 'Lake House', from the name of the building which stands on the side of the Beira Lake. The company owned two influential newspapers, the *Ceylon Daily News* and the *Ceylon Observer*. The present writer knew the late Mr. Wijewardene quite well in his later years (i.e. from 1941 to his death in 1949) and he would say of him that every scheme which he prepared or supported was thoroughly thought out and inspired by the purest of motives. He had been educated to the liberal tradition in England and founded the *Ceylon Daily News* on the model of the *Daily News* of London. He was a fervent nationalist and, even as a student, he had helped to organise the agitation for greater constitutional reform. He was in fact a very capable organiser and a most persuasive and persistent controversialist, though his weapons were the press and the private conversation, not the public speech. He deliberately avoided the limelight and was rarely mentioned even in his own newspapers, but this anonymity, and the firmness with which he stated his views, led to a considerable personal unpopularity, which he seemed not to mind in the least.

To trace the development of the Battle of the Sites would require much study of and quotation from the Lake House newspapers. The most sustained effort was in a series of articles later reprinted under the title 'Shall Ceylon have a Shoddy University?' The title was taken from a statement alleged to have been made by Lord Milner, when he was Secretary of State for the Colonies, to the effect that, though he did not wish to speak disparagingly of the universities of India, he hoped that Ceylon would not have a 'shoddy university' but a real university, in the best sense of the word. These articles were published in 1921 and were directed against the Thurstan Road site. 'Will the mouse produce the mountain?' It would be no better off than the Indian universities which were 'factories turning out myriads of anaemic

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graduates': they 'kill the body as well as the soul'. The university was to have 18½ acres: 'We propose to perform in Ceylon the miracle of a university in a cabbage patch'. Ceylon has always aimed high. It always wanted a residential university on the best models. 'Better miss a lion than hit a jackal', said the Tamil poet. The suggestion was made that the university might find a suitable home somewhere near Peradeniya. A 100 acres would be needed, and the land should be in close proximity to the river, the Botanical Gardens and the Experimental Station (presumably Gannoruwa).

'The natural features of such a situation would be admirable. The climate is good and no misgivings need be entertained as regards health. The rural surroundings will give the serenity and calmness essential for a happy and healthy student life. There will be scope for extensive playing fields and, if necessary, golf links may be laid out on a side of the Peradeniya racecourse. The river provides good bathing and possibly good boating too. Altogether the physical side of education in a university situated at Peradeniya would be ideal.

The intellectual advantages are no less attractive. Those who woo the muses cannot find a more congenial spot to do so. But what is of greater urgency in a purely agricultural colony like ours, is that the best talent should be diverted to the land. The opportunities for agricultural education, in a University at Peradeniya would be unequalled. There are the finest Botanical gardens in the East, an adequate experimental station, well equipped research laboratories, estates of tea, rubber and cocoa, vast areas of paddy fields and the rural atmosphere of the place—a combination, unsurpassed in any other country in the East. There are also the Crown reserves at Peradeniya, affording fine scope for a first-rate education in forestry'.

Some of the advantages claimed for Peradeniya were over-stated, and we now know that to build a university on 100 acres would be to 'perform the miracle of a university in a cabbage patch'. On the other hand, some of the advantages were under-stated. Though Mr. Wijewardene's papers stated the case for the fully residential university and he probably had 'the backs' of Cambridge in his mind, they did not make enough of the physical beauty of Peradeniya and the influence which it could exercise on the broadening mind.

The thesis of the articles was fully supported by Dr. S. C. Paul, who said that 600 acres were available in Peradeniya. 200 acres could be acquired in Peradeniya for the price of 3 acres in Thurstan Road. The university must be planned by a great expert like Sir Patrick Geddes. The colleges could be put up by the missionary societies. Twenty lakhs would be enough to launch such a scheme, and the lands and buildings in Thurstan Road were worth twenty-five lakhs.

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Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, too, was interviewed by the *Ceylon Daily News*. He thought the Thurstan Road scheme to be a 'poor makeshift and only to be tolerated as a beginning'. He favoured the plan of moving into the country, and wanted a residential university. With a backward glance at Sir Edward Denham, whom he did not specifically mention, he said that 'when a man who was not an educationalist tried to hustle, the results were, of necessity, deplorable'. It should be said, however, that until his death in 1924 Sir Ponnambalam was the most active member of the University College Council and did much to make the College's early years a success.

Another supporter was Mr. D. B. Jayatilaka. He thought that the Thurstan Road site would be found, in course of time, to be utterly inadequate and unsuitable. The scheme suffered from narrowness of view and a deplorable lack of imagination. The university should be established outside Colombo and two or three hundred acres ought to be acquired. If land was available in Peradeniya he was in favour of putting the university there. Dr. C. A. Hewavitarne and Principal A. G. Fraser of Trinity also favoured removal outside Colombo.

All these persons became members of the University College Council, which in due course accepted the Buller's Road site, though only Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam was a member of the sub-committee which inspected that site. It should be emphasised, however, that questions of this character cannot be settled in the abstract. The problem in 1923-24 was not to create an ideal university but to get the best that was practicable in the circumstances. It is much easier to criticise a decision a generation later than to take the decision at the time. In 1923 there was a small University College in being in Thurstan Road. It became practicable to move it to a much larger and better site in Buller's Road and to secure Rs. 4,500,000. If Sir Ponnambalam still believed—and on this there is no evidence—that it was better to build in Peradeniya, his problem was whether to accept this immediately practicable scheme or whether to oppose the Government and to support a scheme which might (and in fact did) involve ten or fifteen years of controversy, and meanwhile no university. It is easy now to say that Mr. Wijewardena was almost right; it is much less easy to say that a practical politician, or even a university administrator, ought to have supported Mr. Wijewardena and opposed the Government. A university on 95 acres in Buller's Road was better than a score of universities on paper.

The Battle of the Sites must have turned into an armed truce from 1923 to 1926, for there is no record of it in the University files. When Mr. Marrs left for England in February, 1926, for his first leave, he had (as he thought) secured the approval of the Government to the allocation of the Buller's Road site and obtained from the Legislative Council a vote of Rs. 3,000,000, with a

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promise of Rs. 1,500,000 more. He had in his luggage a copy of the recommendations of the Academic Committee on degree courses, and a draft Constitution which he had prepared at the request of a sub-committee of the University College Council, both of which he proposed to submit to the Committee appointed by the University of Oxford to advise the Ceylon Government. The University College was in a flourishing condition with a staff of eight professors and twelve lecturers, and a student body of 256.

The reason for reopening the site question was apparently the arrival of Sir Hugh Clifford, who had assumed duties as Governor. The first step was a memorandum, ascribed to Mr. D. R. Wijewardena and Dr. S. C. Paul. The ascription seems to be accurate, for when Professor Leigh-Smith, as Acting Principal of the University College, asked for a copy it was sent to him by the Colonial Secretary as having been sent to the Governor by Mr. Wijewardena and Dr. Paul. It was discussed at a meeting of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council on the 23rd April, 1926, when the question of a new site for Queen's House—which had been condemned by the Public Works Department—was under consideration. According to the explanation given afterwards by Sir James Peiris,²⁰ Mr. Francis Molamure 'very innocently' asked whether a Memorandum signed by a 'prominent educationalist' had been forwarded to the Government in which it was suggested that the Buller's Road site be abandoned and 25 acres appropriated for a new Queen's House. Mr. E. W. Perera then suggested that 20 acres should be taken for a Queen's House and the remainder sold. Mr. D. B. Jayatilaka suggested that a Committee be appointed to look into the question of the university site. The Colonial Secretary then said that the Government would address the Finance Committee on the subject at the next meeting.

After giving a somewhat tendentious history of the adoption of the Buller's Road scheme, the memorandum said that the site was 'only partially suited for building purposes' and more land had been sought. Even if this contingency had not arisen, 'many people' would fear that the Colony was committing an irretrievable mistake in spending enormous sums for a university in Colombo, where the cost of building land was prohibitive and the land available for building was strictly limited.

A definite scheme was submitted. The assets available were the value of College House, the value of the Buller's Road site, the Rs. 3,000,000 already voted, and any further demands before the Finance Committee, e.g. for hostels. Not all the Buller's Road site should be sold, however, for 25 acres would be reserved for a new Queen's House. With the assets an estate of 1,000 acres could be purchased some 10 or 12 miles from Colombo. Of these 1,000 acres,

20. *Buller's Road Site for the University*, ed. P. de S. Kularatne, 1927, p. 5.

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250 acres would be used for buildings and the other 750 acres given on twenty-five-year building leases. This scheme would bring a revenue and even contribute to endowments. Such a site might be found in Angulana, though the possibility of a site near Kandy was not excluded.

The result of this memorandum and of discussions in the Finance Committee was that Sir Hugh Clifford summoned a Conference of the Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council on May 31, 1926. The Governor was either very ignorant or he feigned ignorance of the Buller's Road scheme; he referred to the matters which had not been decided and did not mention all the hard work which Mr. Marrs and the Council had put in. 'Up to the present moment there has been a great deal of talk about buildings, wild guesses about expenditure, generous gestures on your part about setting aside certain large sums of money to meet expenses but had at no time before you any detailed estimate of expenditure, capital or recurrent'. He wanted the Unofficial Members especially to decide what sort of university it was to be, the general scheme on which it was to be founded, and the manner in which it was to be carried on.

Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan immediately played into the Governor's hands by saying that it was never the intention to convert the University College into a university. It was to be the model College, but there were to be other Colleges in different parts of the Island. What is more, he criticised Mr. Marrs for 'trying to confine all education to the University College'. Colombo was 'saturated with sensualism, materialism and atheism and holds ideas which are even revolutionary': many parents would not dare to send their children there. Mr. D. B. Jayatilaka said that Sir Ramanathan had 'revived a somewhat ancient trouble'. His views were not shared by all the members, who thought that the University College would merge itself into the University. It was to be a teaching and residential University. On the question of site he observed 'It is perfectly true that the University College Council accepted the offer of Government of the Buller's Road site for the reason that it was better than the site previously offered, but I always held the opinion—and some others held the same opinion—that it would be the greatest pity to establish the University in the city of Colombo'. Mr. D. S. Senanayake put the matter in a nutshell. 'We assumed that the site was to be in Buller's Road. I do not mean that we should stick to that site for ever. I am in favour of going out of Colombo, but I feel that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Before we part with one site we should be given another'.

As soon as he saw the Minutes of this Conference, Professor Leigh-Smith asked for an interview with the Colonial Secretary and requested permission to send in a memorandum setting out the work of the University College

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Council from 1920 to 1926. A copy was also sent to Mr. Marrs, who sent the draft Ordinance and Statutes and a rough Estimate of the recurrent cost of the University.

In consequence of a further discussion in the Finance Committee, Sir Hugh Clifford on June 20, 1926, appointed a Committee 'to consider the question of a site for the proposed Ceylon University and to submit a report thereon'. The members were Mr. Justice M. T. Akbar, Mr. Francis Molamure, Mr. D. B. Jayatilaka, Mr. Hermann A. Loos, and Mr. W. E. Wait. They submitted a report on November 19, 1926, and it was published as *Sessional Paper No. V* of 1927. Mr. Marrs, who had returned from leave in November, 1926 and had been invited to comment on the Report, submitted such comments on January 13, 1927, and they were published as *Sessional Paper No. IX* of 1927.

The Committee felt that no report could be made on the question of site until the question of the type of the university had been considered; and this involved, in their opinion, consideration of the question whether a university was necessary at all.

Having examined the history of the matter, the Committee concluded as follows :—

'It will be seen from the above history that certain facts stand out clearly, viz. :—

- (1) That the Government stands pledged to establish a University in Ceylon.
- (2) That in the opinion of many the University should be a teaching and residential university of the unitary type.
- (3) It was assumed as a matter of course by everyone that the University should be established in Colombo.
- (4) The Government and the Legislative Council accepted the Buller's Road site as a suitable site on the assurance of a sub-Committee of the University College Council, and even on March 20, 1924, when Sir Cecil Clementi proposed the resolution for the allocation of a sum of Rs. 3,000,000 for the University Building and Equipment Fund, he referred to a contour plan which was then being prepared. This and the memorandum of Mr. Thornhill . . . show that when the site was selected by Mr. Marrs and the sub-Committee of the University College Council, they had not asked for a detailed expert report from the Public Works Department, and that they only had a plan showing the area and its acreage.
- (5) That the whole responsibility for a preliminary decision on the many points arising out of the establishment of a University has been

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put somewhat unfairly, we think, on Mr. Marrs, and that Mr. Marrs always consulted the University College Council. Thus, Mr. Marrs, with the help of the University College Council, was expected to choose the site of the University, design the buildings, estimate the cost of the buildings, draw up degree courses, choose the site for hostels, decide on the policy with regard to the management of these hostels, work up the recurrent expenditure, and actually draft the constitution of the University. We cannot but admire the energy which Mr. Marrs has brought to bear on the many questions which he was thus obliged to face. As he himself says, on certain points, 'the task has been formidable, and the work slow'. It was bound to be.

- (6) Even with the progress he has made—
- (a) The scheme for the entrance and degree courses has not been considered by the University College Council or the Government.
 - (b) The draft constitution has been prepared as a rough draft, which might be useful as a basis for discussion. This has not yet been considered by the University College Council or the Government.
 - (c) The estimate by the Principal of the University College of the nett annually recurrent cost of the University is admitted to be only a rough one, and that the calculation "must in all cases be approximate". This has not been revised by the University College Council or the Government. The number of professors and lecturers for the medical, legal, and agricultural courses seems to be inadequate, and the various authorities presiding over these departments have not been consulted. Some of the items under the estimates of receipts, e.g. tuition fees for the B.A. course, would appear to require careful revision. The estimates do not provide for the payment of pensions to the staff nor for their residence.
 - (d) The question of hostels has not been decided—where they are to be put up, at whose cost, and how they are to be managed. The estimated annual cost of maintenance does not provide for the salaries of wardens, tutors, and assistant tutors.
 - (e) Nothing has been settled yet as regards the actual buildings themselves, their architectural designs, the materials of which they are to be built, and the true cost.

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- (f) As regards the Buller's Road site, as we shall see later, the extent to which the marshy land on the site itself should be reclaimed and whether the swamp on two sides of the site should be treated at all are left in the air'.

This statement appears to be true in detail and yet to give a false impression. The more modern technique is to appoint an expert Commission—and there were no such experts in Ceylon—to report on the questions of principle and, when those questions have been accepted by the Government, to leave a properly constituted local committee, aided and advised by a university administrator, to work out the details. That practice was not followed in Ceylon, and Mr. Marrs had to work out both principles and details in consultation with an advisory Council. Whether the process could have been expedited is a question which cannot be answered by an *ex post facto* investigation. Mr. Marrs read this section of the Report as a criticism of himself; the present writer reads it as a criticism of the procedure followed by a series of Governors.

The Committee had no difficulty in deciding that Ceylon needed a university. Nor had it great difficulty in deciding that it should be unitary and residential. The Buller's Road site was then considered and rejected. It would not enable the university to teach Agriculture, 'the only enterprise in which the Island is interested, and will ever be interested'. Separation from the Colombo Museum would not matter because duplicate zoological specimens could be obtained. The Museum Library would be a loss but students would ordinarily require 'only a limited library'. Law and Medicine would create no difficulty because the clinical and court work would be done in Colombo. Colombo was unhealthy and very soon a university in Buller's Road would be surrounded by the city on all sides. The site was inadequate because only 50 acres was above the 10-foot contour, and it would be necessary to fill in 31 acres at a cost of Rs. 500,000. Besides, residential accommodation was provided only for 180 students. A revised scheme would require 223 acres in addition to the 95 acres and would be too costly.

A site at Ratmalana (i.e. Angulana) was quickly rejected and Peradeniya almost as quickly. Though it had advantages which were enumerated, the cost of site-work would be heavy and the central portion was liable to floods. Something could be said for the site if the racecourse and golf-links were included. Even then there were objections, detailed by the architects. Finally, the Committee approved of the Uyanwatte site in the Dumbara Valley, which was 'suitable in every respect'. Land was cheap. 'With comparatively little cost the water service and electric lighting scheme can be extended to it from Kandy. The land there is on a high level and it is undulating. It is healthy and set amidst magnificent scenery, and there is plenty of flat land

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there for playing fields'. The whole area was 1,100 acres, but if the whole were acquired many villagers would have to be dispossessed. Blocks 1, 2 and 3, comprising 253 acres, should be acquired. If additional land were required, Blocks 4, 5 and 6 could be added, to give a total acreage of 400. As a final recommendation the Committee added that 'the hospital, the law courts, and the colleges and schools in Kandy will be accessible to the medical, legal and teaching students of the University'.

Mr. Marrs, in his 'comments' agreed that the University should be unitary and pointed out that the problem was simply to convert an existing University College into a University. In respect of site and buildings, the promoters of the University scheme had underestimated the need. He admitted, too, that 'if the University is to be completely residential and is to house every soul, from the Vice-Chancellor to the last cooly, the Buller's Road site of 94 acres is probably inadequate'. But he suggested that there would be general agreement with the opinion of the Sadler Commission that it was not necessary to make the University completely residential, and he quoted the practice in Oxford and Cambridge. He concurred with Lord Chalmers' view about removal to Kandy; he thought the proposal for a residential university to be too expensive to merit serious consideration and to be intrinsically undesirable. Ceylon would be well advised to follow the modern universities of the British Empire. He asked if it was seriously proposed to direct the majority of University students to agricultural science: what was wanted was pre-university training in agriculture, not university training. The scheme proposed by the Site Committee would postpone the creation of a university. It would be 'a veritable lay monastery of colossal proportions'. Large engineering operations would have to be undertaken before there could be buildings. 'Kandy must be left to judge the Committee's statement that with comparatively little cost the water service can be extended from Kandy, with its implication that there is sufficient water in Kandy to spare for a University town'. No estimate of cost had been made, and Mr. Marrs predicted that it would be Rs. 12,000,000.

Sir Hugh Clifford said that he found Mr. Marrs' arguments in support of the establishment of the University in the near neighbourhood of Colombo more convincing than those of the gentlemen who did not share his view: but that did not in the least persuade him that Government acted otherwise than prudently in allowing the question at issue to be thrashed out, before they committed themselves to the adoption of the Buller's Road site.

Twenty years later there can be no doubt that the Buller's Road site was inadequate and that in time the University would have found itself hemmed in on an inadequate site by urban and suburban development. Not only in England but also elsewhere urban sites have been found unsatisfactory even

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for non-residential universities. In his memorandum for the Site Committee one of the professors pointed to Australian and New Zealand experience, and especially to the examples of Sydney and Melbourne. There are in fact no finer examples of urban universities, on sites which everybody now recognizes to be quite inadequate, utterly swamped by urban development. Of New Zealand the present writer cannot speak, but Western Australia has moved out, Queensland is moving out, and Tasmania has acquired a new site, though an urban one. Even Adelaide will soon be in difficulties, and it has no hostels actually on the site.

Twenty years' experience, too, has altered opinion on the subject of residence; indeed, it was altering in 1927, though this change of ideas would have been unknown in Ceylon until the Report of the University Grants Committee in 1930 was received. The old idea of a residential university was that it was an expensive luxury for wealthy students, and this idea is reflected in much of the controversy of the Battle of the Sites. The newer universities of England were established to bring 'useful knowledge' to the poorer student, who could live at home, travel by tram to his urban university, attend lectures, have a bun and a cup of tea in the refectory, attend more lectures or work in laboratories, and go home to 'work' in front of the kitchen fire. There is no doubt at all that these 'civic universities' did excellent work, and there is no need to suggest that a University in Buller's Road—or even in Thurstan Road—would be a bad University. But instruction in 'useful knowledge' was not the only, or even the main, purpose of a university, and in the early years of the present century the 'civic universities' found it necessary and desirable not only to erect expensive Union buildings, but also to purchase playing fields in the suburbs, to convert large houses into hostels, and even to erect Halls of Residence in the suburbs. It was admitted that all these ought to be on the 'campus', but none of them had room.

Owing to the war of 1914-18, the rapid development of university education for poorer students, which was implicit in the reform of secondary education under the Education Act of 1902, was delayed. The first step, under the Education Act of 1918, was to provide scholarships and maintenance grants for poor students. Some of them went to Oxford and Cambridge and received the best education that England could provide; the rest took trams to the 'civic universities', where 'useful knowledge' could easily be imparted but where education could be obtained only under difficulties. The greater the deficiencies of home education, the narrower the circumstances of the 'red-brick' secondary school, the more important it was that at the university level the best education should be given—education which consisted not merely in acquiring 'useful knowledge' or degrees but in physical, mental and moral development of a type not easily available in a non-residential

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university. It was, of course, impossible to convert a non-residential into a residential university; all that could be done was to make increased provision for Halls of Residence and other student facilities; and the University Grants Committee which distributed public funds laid increased emphasis on this need in their successive quinquennial reports. The newest universities and most of the newest university colleges—at Bristol, Reading, Exeter, Southampton and Stoke—are mainly residential and in fact more residential than Oxford and Cambridge, though it must be remembered that Cambridge is still a 'university town' and that both in Oxford and in Cambridge a student is a member of a College or non-collegiate organization.

The Colonial Office had no policy on university education until 1945, and in fact it was the sad experience of Ceylon which gave rise to a policy. Through the Asquith Commission (1945), the Carr-Saunders Commission (1947) and the Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies, it found that academic opinion was unanimous in favour of universities which were autonomous, unitary and residential; and such universities are being established in Malaya, the West Indies, the Gold Coast, Nigeria, the Sudan and East Africa.

We must beware of assessing the Report of the University Site Committee and Mr. Marrs' comments by means of experience which was not available in 1927. Nowhere was the case for a residential university properly put, simply because it was not fully understood: and some of the arguments used on both sides will not bear scrutiny. On the one hand the Site Committee placed too much emphasis on agriculture (which ought to be taught, though the number of students will always be few), minimised the problem of the Medical Faculty, and perhaps underemphasised the value of a non-residential university. On the other hand Mr. Marrs and the professors overemphasised the advantages and underemphasised the disadvantages of Colombo and did not appreciate the real case for a residential university in Ceylon conditions. Professor Suntharalingam in particular produced a case for a non-residential university in Colombo, based on the poverty of the students, which was almost a perfect case for a residential university outside Colombo.

The Report of the Site Committee and Mr. Marrs' comments necessarily aroused controversy. The only unofficial document in the University files is a report of a meeting held in Bonjean Hall on June 16, 1927.²¹ Sir James Peiris presided, and among those on the platform were the Right Rev. Carpentier-Garnier (Bishop of Colombo), Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, Sir Marcus Fernando, Mr. T. B. Jayah (Principal of Zahira College), Mr. C. H. Z. Fernando, Mr. A. Mahadeva, Mr. I. X. Pereira, Mr. G. A. Wille, the Very

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Rev. Father M. J. LeGoc (Rector of St. Joseph's College), Gate Mudaliyar A. E. Rajapakse, the Very Rev. Father M. Y. Le Jeune, the Venerable F. L. Beven (Archdeacon of Jaffna), the Rev. Kenneth McPherson (Warden of St. Thomas' College), Mr. P. de S. Kularatne (Principal of Ananda College), Mr. Donald Obeyesekere and Dr. V. R. Schokman (President of the Burgher Recreation Club). As the names suggest, the purpose of the meeting was to support the Buller's Road site.

Sir James Peiris, after a review of the history of the question, said that but for the fact that there was a change in the Government the agitation would never have been started and but for the open sympathy shown by the Governor (Sir Hugh Clifford) and his lieutenant (Mr. Mark Young) it would have died a natural death. The appointment of the Akbar Committee was recommended at a meeting at which 19 out of 37 Unofficial Members were present, and 16 members voted in favour. The Site Committee contained Messrs. Molamure and Jayatilaka, who were in favour of removing the University from Colombo. Why the others were appointed Sir James did not know. He then criticised the Committee's Report. The Buller's Road site could be worked for many years to come. A cost of less than Rs. 2,000,000 would give a very splendid site, what the Committee had called an ideal site. No better site could be desired. Sir Marcus Fernando, who moved the main resolution, said that the Buller's Road site was ready for building at once : any other site would require an indefinite postponement. He emphasised the advantages of Colombo in respect of Medicine, Law and Engineering. He claimed that the Dumbara Valley was malarious. The villages around were 'notorious for the presence of women of very loose morals'. It was also the driest place in the whole Kandy District. Discussions about the deficiency of the Kandy water supply had gone on for 20 years without a solution (25 years later they are still going on!) The cost in Buller's Road would be Rs. 4,500,000 ; in Dumbara it would be Rs. 10,000,000. If the London examinations continued the students would stay in Colombo for their degrees and none would go to Dumbara except a very few for Honours degrees. Mr. A. Mahadeva seconded and the Rev. A. E. Restarick supported. Mr. T. B. Jayah moved that a committee be appointed to take such steps as might be expedient to further the objects of the meeting. The Very Rev. Father M. J. LeGoc seconded and the Venerable F. L. Beven supported.

After the Report of the Site Committee was published, alternative sites in the Dumbara Valley were suggested and examined, reports on them being published in *Sessional Paper XXVIII* of 1927. The first was the Mawilmada site on the right bank of the river, within the Kandy municipal area, and

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opposite the Uyanwatta site. It contained only 100 acres and was occupied by 60 houses and so the proposal was dropped. The other was the Aruppola site, also on the right bank. Three schemes were suggested, that prepared by the architects being No. 1; but it contained 102 houses; and the scheme eventually favoured was scheme 3, which contained 223 acres. It was this scheme which was usually known in subsequent discussions as the Aruppola site.

The problem came up to the Legislative Council and was debated on October 27 and 28 and November 3, 1927. The first proposal put to the vote was one by the Colonial Secretary that the whole question be placed before the Governor (Sir Herbert Stanley) in order that a complete scheme be formulated and a Government motion put down. It was lost by 23 votes to 19, all the officials (except the Officer Commanding the Troops) and the nominated members voting in the minority. The next motion was that before allotting a site the Council should consider whether a University should be established at all: and this motion (technically an amendment) was rejected by 37 votes to 4, three Europeans and Mr. C. E. Victor Corea being the minority. The debate was continued on November 4, 10, 11 and 25, and December 1 and 2. On the last of these dates an amendment by Mr. E. R. Tambimuttu, that the Buller's Road site should be allotted, was put to the vote and lost by 30 votes to 16, those in the minority being Sir James Peiris, Mr. N. H. M. Abdul Cader, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, Mr. E. R. Tambimuttu, Mr. C. W. W. Kannangara, Mr. K. Balasingham, Mr. A. Canagaratnam, Mr. C. E. Victor Corea, Mr. C. H. Z. Fernando, Mr. T. B. Jayah, Mr. H. M. Macan Markar, Mr. A. Mahadeva, Mr. I. X. Pereira, Mr. M. M. Subramaniam, Mr. G. A. H. Wille, and Mr. W. A. de Silva. The officials voted in the majority. On December 15 Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan's motion confirming the action of the Government in allotting the Buller's Road site was lost by 26 votes to 15, the minority being the same except for Mr. Tambimuttu.

On February 16, 1928, Mr. M. T. Akbar moved (*a*) that the University be unitary and residential, (*b*) that it be built on the Aruppola site, and (*c*) that a Commission be appointed to work out the details. Numerous amendments were moved, and the debate continued on February 17 and March 1. On the latter date there were six divisions, the votes being 19 to 13, 13 to 29, 6 to 34, 11 to 30, 11 to 31 and 12 to 29. On March 2 there was an amendment in favour of a Kalutara site, moved by Mr. C. W. W. Kannangara, but defeated by 29 votes to 9. The Council came back to the substantive motion on March 8 and continued on March 9, when voting took place. The motion for a unitary and residential University was carried by 38 votes to 5, Messrs. E. R. Tambimuttu, K. Balasingham, A. Canagaratnam, S. Rajaratnam and M. M. Subramaniam being in the minority. The motion for Aruppola was carried by 23

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votes to 18, and the motion for a Commission was carried by 25 votes to 16, the division on the crucial site question was as follows :

Ayes—23	Noes—18
M. T. Akbar, K.C.	Sir James Peiris
F. J. Smith	W. W. Woods, C.M.G.
F. A. Stockdale, C.B.E.	N. H. M. Abdul Cader
W. Duraiswamy	Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan,
D. H. Kotalawala	K.C., C.M.G.
E. W. Perera	E. R. Tambimuttu
A. C. G. Wijeyekoon	C. W. W. Kannangara
N. J. Martin	K. Balasingham
D. B. Jayatilaka	A. Canagaratnam
O. E. Madawela	C. E. Victor Corea
A. F. Molamure	C. H. Z. Fernando
F. A. Obeyesekere	T. B. Jayah
S. Rajaratnam	H. M. Macan Markar
D. S. Senanayake	A. Mahadeva
V. S. de S. Wikramanayake	I. X. Pereira
P. B. Rambukwella	M. M. Subramaniam
T. M. Saba Ratnam	G. A. H. Wille
T. L. Villiers	H. B. Lees
K. Natesa Aiyer	
W. E. Wait	
L. Macrae	
S. Obeyesekere	
M. J. Cary	

The Commission was duly appointed with Sir Walter Buchanan-Riddell as Chairman. From the majority were Messrs. Akbar, Wijeyekoon, Molamure, Jayatilaka and Villiers. From the minority were Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan and Messrs. Balasingham, Jayah and Wille. Two other members from the Legislative Council were Sir Marcus Fernando and Mr. W. A. de Silva, who had favoured Buller's Road. There were six officials, including Mr. Marrs, Sir Stewart Schneider (Puisne Justice), the Very Rev. Father LeGoc, the Rev. J. M. Campbell, and Drs. Paul and Nell. The Commission reported on January, 1929 (*Sessional Paper IV* of 1929). A draft Constitution was included in the Report and formed the basis for a Bill which was read a second time in 1930, but proceeded no further.

In 1931 the Donoughmore Constitution came into operation. This complicated the problem, for the very odd system invented by the Donoughmore Commission placed the responsibility for university education in a committee of seven members who, so far as can be judged, rarely agreed.

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What is more the responsibility for planning and erecting a university rested with the Executive Committee of Communications and Works, which rarely (if ever) agreed with the Executive Committee of Education. The acquisition of land for a university was the responsibility of the Executive Committee of Local Administration while the responsibility for medical education was vested in the Executive Committee of Health. When at a later stage the problem of enlarging the Peradeniya site came under discussion, it was found to be a matter for the Executive Committee of Agriculture and Lands. Strangely enough, the Executive Committees of Home Affairs and Labour, Commerce and Industry seem not to have been concerned. In any case, though, no money could be obtained without the sanction of the Board of Ministers, of which Sir Baron Jayatilaka was vice-chairman.

The growth of the University College did not wait for constitutional changes. On the 17th July, 1931 Mr. Marrs drew attention to the problem of accommodation. After explaining the deficiencies he said that it would be unreasonable to erect new buildings in Colombo if there was a prospect of the University being built in Kandy. He considered the settlement of the University question to be a matter of urgency. The Minister for Education replied that it would be necessary to initiate legislation over again, and he asked for a memorandum on the proposed Ordinance. Mr. Marrs, in his memorandum of the 10th August, said it would be possible to pass the Ordinance and then await an improvement in the financial situation. It was unlikely that in present conditions—the depression of 1931—more than the Rs. 4,000,000 (including accumulated interest) of the University Building and Equipment Fund would be forthcoming. He therefore set out five possibilities :—

- (1) to accept the Dumbara decision and wait for improved financial conditions ;
- (2) to revert to the Buller's Road proposal, modifying the Commission's scheme to suit the available funds ;
- (3) to bring the University into being in Thurstan Road and adding buildings in Buller's Road ;
- (4) to use some of the income of the Fund for recurrent expenditure ; and
- (5) to abandon the University project for the time being and to concentrate attention on the needs of the University College.

He asked for a decision of the Executive Committee.

The deepening depression, followed by the great malaria epidemic, must have delayed further action. There is nothing more about the University project in the University College files until 1934, except a curious document, dated February 21, 1933, from the Registrar of the Ceylon Medical College. It said that the Medical College Council was anxious to press for the early

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establishment of the university, since the status of the medical qualification would be greatly improved and funds urgently required for building and equipment could be released. The Council considered it 'technically impossible' to teach any part of the medical course elsewhere than in Colombo. The Council would be glad to hear the views of the University College Council, since it considered concerted action by the two Councils desirable. The Council wished to urge :

- (1) that Ceylon wants a University.
- (2) Rs. 4,500,000 available in University fund.
- (3) This is more than sufficient to set up a University in Colombo but is quite insufficient to set up a University in Kandy.
- (4) There will never be enough money for the Kandy scheme.
- (5) If the present fund is not utilised soon, the Government will raid it to make up deficits in revenue'.

It was a strange document to emanate from a Council, consisting mainly of Government servants, presided over by the Director of Medical and Sanitary Services, and responsible to the Executive Committee of Health. Mr. Marrs showed it to the Minister for Education informally and then sent it formally with a suggestion that it be considered by the Executive Committee in connection with his memorandum of August 27, 1931. While willing that part of the University Building and Equipment Fund should be utilised for the Medical College, he considered that the University College had stronger claims. But the use of moneys from the Fund should not precede a definite decision on the University project. The Minister's reply was that the letter need not be discussed by the University College Council, since the Executive Committee was discussing the establishment of the University. We hear nothing more of the University project until September 1, 1934, when the Battle of the Sites restarted in the Executive Committee itself. Mr. Marrs was asked to report on the estimated capital cost and recurrent expenditure on the Kandy site and the Buller's Road site respectively. After consulting the Director of Public Works, he reported on September 27. He assumed that the University in Buller's Road would be fully residential but that there would not be 'the same formidable provision' of staff quarters. The number of students in the University College had risen from 315 in 1928-29 to 450 in 1934-35 and an extra Hall of Residence was required. It had to be decided whether the Buller's Road site was adequate and whether to acquire more land or to use the Thurstan Road land. Finally, he assumed an all-round reduction of 10 per cent. in cost, and the deletion of the Faculty of Engineering and the Anatomy and Physiology buildings. The result was to reduce the cost of the Kandy scheme from Rs. 10,586,000 to Rs. 8,917,000, while the Buller's Road

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cost would be Rs. 6,771,000, not including the cost of more land. If the Thurstan Road buildings were used, however, the cost would be Rs. 5,126,000 ; and if the partially residential scheme assumed before 1926 was put into operation the cost would be Rs. 2,947,000.

The Executive Committee considered the matter on October 25, 1934. The Minister said that the best plan would be to establish the University at once with the present buildings and staff, and to begin erecting buildings on the Dumbara site on a modified plan. The Executive Committee provisionally agreed that—

- (1) The Ordinance be drafted to constitute the University College as a University.
- (2) The College Council be asked to report whether the present degree courses were adequate, and if not to suggest suitable courses.
- (3) Revised plan for buildings at Dumbara be prepared.

For this last purpose a sub-committee consisting of Messrs. A. Ratnayake (chairman), G. R. de Zoysa and H. W. Amarasuriya was appointed. Mr. Ratnayake, as Member for Dumbara, was a supporter of the Dumbara scheme ; Mr. Amarasuriya had been a supporter of the Buller's Road scheme.

In a memorandum dated November 22, 1934, Mr. Marrs asked that certain preliminary questions be settled. These were :—

- (1) Whether the Commission's scheme should be adhered to ;
- (2) Whether a five-year grant would be given.
- (3) Whether the London examinations were to be withdrawn.
- (4) If not, whether the University should forbid its students to take the London examinations ;
- (5) Whether it would not be advisable to have external examiners.

A later generation may suggest that Mr. Marrs was being unusually difficult, perhaps because he feared that when the University was established in Thurstan Road both the Buller's Road scheme and the Dumbara scheme would be postponed to the Greek Kalends. In 1941 the Bill of 1930 was brought up, debated in the Executive Committee, provided with transitional clauses, and passed. The other questions answered themselves.

On December 3, 1934, Mr. Marrs made a further report after a meeting of the College Council. The Council agreed that the University should be created forthwith and that the scheme of studies accepted by the Commission should be brought into operation. In order to avoid ' renewed dissension and controversy ' the Council suggested that the Ordinance of 1930 be introduced with suitable transitional clauses. It was suggested, too, that the Medical

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College should be included in the University and that reference be made to the Executive Committee of Health.

The Executive Committee of Education agreed, and in a memorandum dated January 29, 1935, Mr. Marrs suggested the necessary minor alterations and transitional clauses. There was also correspondence about the inclusion of Medicine and Law. The Medical College Council agreed to the inclusion of the Medical College as the Faculty of Medicine, but the Council of Legal Education went back on an earlier decision and decided only to grant exemptions to law graduates.

The sub-committee of the Executive Committee reported on the University scheme at the end of January, 1935. The majority, consisting of Messrs. Ratnayake and G. R. de Zoysa, considered that provision for Engineering, Physiology and Anatomy should be postponed. This would bring the cost down to Rs. 8,414,100, but the sub-committee thought that Rs. 7,500,000 would suffice. It recommended that Rs. 2,500,000 be set aside from the Special Reserve Fund which, with the Rs. 5,000,000 in the University Building and Equipment Fund, would enable a start to be made. Mr. Amarasuriya agreed but reserved the right to reopen the question of the site and said that the needs of the country could be met more cheaply. The Executive Committee postponed the matter until March and in fact never discussed the report at all and meanwhile continued examination of the draft Ordinance. There is no record in the University College files of what took place at the meeting of March 25, 1935, and the next document was a letter from the Chairman of the Kalutara Urban District Council to the Minister, dated November 6, 1935, asking for a detailed report on the sanitary conditions of the Dumbara site. Instead of telling the Chairman to mind his own business, the Minister referred the letter to Mr. Marrs, who said he did not know of any such report and suggested that it was a matter for the Executive Committee. The Minister then replied that no detailed report was available. The Chairman then asked whether any investigations at all had been made by the Government with regard to the health of the site. This, too, was referred to Mr. Marrs, who suggested that a report from the Director of Medical and Sanitary Services be called for. Apparently such a report was requested for it came up in the next State Council. It is, however, difficult to believe that Mr. C. W. W. Kannangara and Mr. Marrs did not engage in this correspondence with their tongues in their cheeks.

This brought the proceedings of the Executive Committee to an end, for the State Council was dissolved and a new Executive Committee appointed. The Minister on May 29, 1936, asked for 20 copies of 11 documents, for

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submission to the Executive Committee. A resolution was submitted to State Council on February 10, 1937, in the following form :—

‘ That in the opinion of this Council early steps should be taken for the establishment of a University in Colombo by utilizing the existing site and buildings of the University College and the site south of Buller’s Road proposed for the University in 1923 and referred to in *Sessional Paper V* of 1927 as the Buller’s Road site ’.

There was also a motion by Mr. George E. de Silva ‘ In the opinion of this Council, a University should be immediately established in Kandy ’. On this motion the Executive Committee of Education had simply reported that it was not in agreement. Mr. de Silva claimed priority on the ground that his motion had already been under discussion. Without further debate his motion was put and carried by 30 votes to 18, two members declining to vote. The voting was :—

AYES

Hon. Sir D. B. Jayatilaka
 Hon. D. S. Senanayake
 Hon. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike
 Hon. G. C. S. Corea
 Hon. W. A. de Silva
 Hon. J. L. Kotelawala
 Mr. E. W. Abeysundera
 Mr. B. H. Aluwihare
 Mr. C. Batuwantudawa
 Mr. G. E. de Silva
 Dr. A. P. de Zoysa
 Mr. Francis de Zoysa, K.C.
 Mr. H. A. Goonesekera
 Mr. F. H. Griffith
 Mr. D. D. Gunasekera
 Mr. R. S. S. Gunawardena
 Mr. J. H. Ilangatileke
 Mr. A. P. Jayasuriya
 Mr. R. C. Kotelawala
 Mr. K. R. Natesa Iyer
 Capt. E. A. Nugawela
 Mr. G. C. Rambukpote
 Mr. A. Ratnayake
 Mr. H. L. Ratwatte

NOES

Hon. C. W. W. Kannangara
 Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya
 Mr. S. O. Canagaratnam
 Mr. Susanta de Fonseka
 Mr. H. R. Freeman
 Mr. A. E. Goonesinha
 Mr. D. P. H. Gunawardena
 Mr. T. B. Jayah
 Mr. D. P. Jayasuriya
 Mr. A. Mahadeva
 Mr. S. Natesan
 Mr. H. F. Parfit
 Diwan Bahadur I. X. Pereira
 Dr. N. M. Perera
 Mr. A. E. de S. W. S. Rajapakse
 Mrs. N. Saravanamuttu
 Mr. E. R. Tambimuttu
 Mr. G. A. H. Wille

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AYES

Mr. S. Samarakkody
Mr. Dudley Senanayake
Mr. R. C. Tennekoon
Mr. S. Vytillingam
Mr. D. Wanigasekera

It will be seen that all the Ministers except the Minister of Education were in favour of Kandy, that two members of the Executive Committee of Education voted for Kandy, and that nearly all the Ceylon Tamils voted for Buller's Road.

On February 25, 1937, the Minister for Education reported to the Board of Ministers the following decisions of the Executive Committee :—

- (a) to take steps to establish a unitary residential university on the Aruppola site at a cost of Rs. 10,436,000 ;
- (b) to draw attention to the modified scheme suggested by the sub-committee of 1935 (estimated to cost Rs. 7,500,000 but not considered by the Executive Committee);
- (c) to ask the Board to release funds for the acquisition of the site ;
- (d) to instruct the Public Works Department to furnish revised estimates.

The Board at its meeting on March 3, 1937, agreed to place a supplementary estimate before the State Council for the acquisition of the site. Mr. Marrs proceeded to get an estimate of cost. The Ratemahatmaya, Kandy Gravets and Gangawata Korale, produced an estimate of Rs. 569,000, which was placed before the State Council.

Meanwhile the Director of Public Works was investigating the cost of the buildings, obviously with the assistance of the new Minister of Communications and Works, Major J. L. Kotelawala. Reductions were made in almost all items, though a gymnasium, six sports pavilions and a swimming pool were added without explanation. The cost was brought down from Rs. 10,027,000 to Rs. 5,932,000, the cost of the site being excluded. Meanwhile, too, the health conditions of the site were being examined. There was apparently an interim report which is not in the University files, for on June 4, 1937, the Executive Committee decided that, until the full report was received, the questions would be dealt with ' as if the site was not seriously affected by malaria '. On this basis it was decided to purchase the whole area of 340 acres—the original 223 acres of the Aruppola site, Aruppola village and the surrounding lands (31 acres) and the Esparaya-Talwatta section of 86 acres.

On August 20, 1937, however, the full report came from the Ministry of Health. It showed that malaria was endemic in the area, and that Rs. 275,000

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would be needed for permanent control measures. The Executive Committee, apparently by a majority of 4 to 3, nevertheless decided to proceed with the acquisition, and asked for a release of Rs. 500,000 on the assumption that the estimate of Rs. 569,000 already made was 'too generous'. The Government Valuer was then asked to value the site, and he placed it at Rs. 640,000! Nevertheless, a vote of Rs. 500,000 was passed by the State Council on a supplementary estimate on December 7, 1937. On January 20, 1938, Mr. Marrs was directed to take steps to acquire the Aruppola site. The Government Agent, Central Province, drew the attention of the Director of Public Works to the fact that at least Rs. 600,000 was necessary and asked if he was prepared to provide the additional amount, if necessary; the Director of Public Works asked the Principal, University College; the Principal, University College, asked the Minister; and the Minister replied, somewhat testily, that it was not understood 'why this question be raised now'. The survey would take at least six months, and then the Government Agent would re-value the lands. It would then be time to ascertain whether additional money would be needed. The Principal, University College, informed the Director of Public Works, who presumably informed the Government Agent.

Perhaps tempers were getting short because the Battle of the Sites was on again. On September 27, 1937, Dr. S. C. Paul and Dr. Andreas Nell submitted a memorandum to the Board of Ministers asking for reconsideration of the Peradeniya site on the following grounds:—

- (1) The failure to approve the Peradeniya site in 1927 was due to the unsatisfactory report of the architects, who inspected the site with an urban outlook and a previously conceived notion that two-storeyed and three-storeyed buildings could not be erected in Kandy.
- (2) The anti-malarial measures on the Aruppola site would cost three lakhs initially, half lakh annually, and occasionally one and half lakhs for renewal.
- (3) The cost of cutting and filling on the Aruppola site would exceed that on the Peradeniya site.
- (4) It would be unnecessary to displace villagers from the Peradeniya site, as it would from the Aruppola site.
- (5) The Peradeniya site could be enlarged by the acquisition of more estate land, but not the Aruppola site.
- (6) The healthy character of the Peradeniya site, its proximity to a main railway station, its rural surroundings and its spacious outlook were ignored by the architects.

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- (7) The students in Peradeniya would be acquainted with the agricultural activities in their period of study and would retain an interest in agricultural projects.

This memorandum was tabled at the meeting of the Executive Committee of Education on the 15th October, 1937, at the same time as the full medical report on the Aruppola site. It was resolved to ask the Principal to report and to consider the matter at the next meeting. Six days later, Mr. Marrs reported that Peradeniya had obvious advantages over Dumbara. He did not think there would be much difference in cost. He suggested that the Director of Agriculture be consulted whether there was any objection to placing the University in close proximity to the Department's activities. Mr. Edmund Rodrigo, Acting Director of Agriculture, replied with the only touch of humour in the whole correspondence 'The University by reason of its prestige and importance in the eye of the public will probably overshadow the Agricultural Department. This will wound the departmental vanity a little'. Also, the Department would have no room to expand: but these disadvantages would be offset by the advantage of having their men 'breathe the academic scientific air' of the University. Truth to tell, the Acting Director let the fresh air of the open field into a stuffy and overheated atmosphere.

Meanwhile, the Principal had consulted the Government Agent, Central Province, about the cost of the land and the Chief Architect about the cost of the buildings. Evidently, though, the Battle of the Sites was going on in the Executive Committee, for on December 20, 1937, the Minister informed the Principal that, since the State Council had in effect approved the acquisition of the Dumbara site, the reports requested were not necessary for the present.

So far as the University files show, nothing whatever happened until the meeting of the Executive Committee on May 17, 1938, when a communication from the Board of Ministers about the Peradeniya site was considered. It was resolved by a majority that the possibilities of the Peradeniya site be investigated and that the acquisition proceedings in Dumbara be stayed pending a further communication. Evidently the Member for Dumbara had lost his battle. At this stage, too, the Minister of Communications and Works, Mr. J. L. Kotelawala, was taking a hand. He said that the site referred to by Drs. Paul and Nell was not the same as that discussed in the University Site Report, but was the adjoining one comprising Augusta, Prospect Hill and Mount Pleasant Estates.²²

He was proposing to inspect both sites with Dr. Nell and would welcome the company of the Minister for Education. Actually, the site referred to in

22. Part of this site has since been acquired for the University. The University would like the whole, if some generous benefactor would present it.

the letter from the two doctors was quite clearly the New Peradeniya Estate—now the main University site—since they discussed the architects' report on it.

A preliminary inspection was made by the Director of Public Works, the Chief Architect, and Drs. Paul and Nell on the 5th June, 1938. As a result, Drs. Paul and Nell withdrew their Augusta proposal but continued to support the New Peradeniya site. A larger party, including the two Ministers, Mr. A. Ratnayake (M.S.C. for Dumbara), the Government Agent, Mr. Marrs, and a collection of other officials, inspected both the New Peradeniya site and the Aruppola site on the 20th June. The New Peradeniya site as now proposed included only the land to the south of the railway. Major Kotelawala's memorandum, drawn up on the 11th July, was strongly in favour of the Peradeniya site. Communications were better; there was more building land; acquisition would be easy because there was single ownership; no villagers would be displaced; expansion was possible; the playing fields were compact and more were available across the river; the site was open and healthy; good water was available in the Hantane range; it was a more beautiful site; and it was close to the School of Agriculture and the Botanical Gardens. It was, in short, so admirable a site that it passes comprehension that the architects had reported against it in 1927.

The Executive Committee of Education was not satisfied with an inspection by the Ministers, and five of them, including the Minister and Mr. Ratnayake, inspected both sites, with Mr. Marrs and Drs. Paul and Nell, on the 21st July. 'Mr. Ratnayake explained to the party that although the Aruppola site did not contain as much flat land suitable for building as the Peradeniya site, the scenic beauty and seclusion of the former presented advantages not offered by the latter'. These reports were considered by the Executive Committee on 4th August.

Strangely enough, the result does not appear in the University files, but meanwhile the process of valuation was going on. That made by the Rate-mahatmaya, Kandy Gravets and Gangawata Korale, in June had shown an estimate of Rs. 1,123,325 for the whole estate, including what came to be known as Block B north of the railway, which contained 40 acres and was estimated to cost Rs. 212,000. The Government Valuer in July gave a valuation of Rs. 970,000, including Rs. 250,000 for Block B. On the 17th September Mr. Marrs was instructed to request the Government Agent to enter into negotiations for purchase, excluding Block B, and three days later the acquisition proceedings at Aruppola were stopped. In October the Government Agent offered Rs. 743,270 for Block A, excluding certain lands which did not belong to the estate. The offer was accepted and at the same time Block B—which had been valued at Rs. 250,000,—was offered for Rs. 180,000. This offer, unfortunately, was refused, though Mr. Marrs and the Minister quite

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rightly recommended that it be accepted. We have since had to purchase it at a much higher price. The Board of Ministers, having swallowed the camel, strained at the gnat and let the future Government in for a great deal more expenditure.

The Battle of the Sites, which began in 1926, thus ended in October, 1938, subject to a good deal of guerilla warfare which continues even in 1950. Strangely enough, the vote of the State Council which gave the necessary authority was passed in a silence and a unanimity so profound that some of the guerilla troops seem to think it never was passed. It was, however, passed as an amendment to the Appropriation Ordinance on 20th September, 1938.²³

It may be helpful to list the various sites which came under consideration :

1. Thurstan Road, 18½ acres.
2. Thurstan Road *plus* Royal College, about 35 acres.
3. Lunatic Asylum, Buller's Road, 24 acres.
4. The same, enlarged, 50 acres.
5. Buller's Road (including Infectious Diseases Hospital), 95 acres.
6. The same, enlarged, 223 acres.
7. Ratmalana (opposite Railway Workshops), size unknown.
8. New Peradeniya Estate, including Block B, Racecourse, etc., 470 acres.
9. The same, south of the railway only, 343 acres.
10. Dumbara Valley, left bank, Uyanwatta site, 253 acres.
11. Mawilmada, 100 acres.
12. Aruppola, Scheme 1, 390 acres.
13. The same, Scheme 2, 291 acres.
14. The same, Scheme 3, 223 acres.
15. Kesbewa,²⁴ size unknown.
16. Kalutara, size unknown.

The fundamental conflict was not over site but over type. The Governors who dealt with the matter were studiously vague until Sir Hugh Clifford came on the scene. All they knew was that a university college could be placed in Thurstan Road without much cost and they used vague phrases about the future. Mr. Marrs and the College Council worked out a complete scheme which assumed that a student who did not live with his parents would spend

²³ cf *Hansard*, 1938, p. 3280.

²⁴ This site was suggested by a petition presented to the State Council by the Member for Panadura. Mr. Marrs suggested that it might be considered if neither Kandy nor Colombo was thought suitable.

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two years in a hostel. It was a perfectly good scheme on their own assumptions and the Buller's Road site was adequate for the purpose at the time, though it would be inadequate today. One may note incidentally that one great advantage of the Battle of the Sites was that it took planning out of the hands of the Public Works Department, for one cannot look at any of the plans, from Buller's Road onwards, without a sense of relief that these plans remained unfulfilled. The Public Works Department at that period was badly bitten by the symmetrical bug and most of the plans look like kapok trees.

What Mr. D. R. Wijewardena wanted was a wholly residential university, though strangely enough he seems never to have made a really good case for it. His wide reading did not give him that case, because in fact it has never been written. Probably even in 1926 an experienced university administrator from the United Kingdom would have written it, and perhaps such a case would have been so convincing that even the professors would have cheered. On the other hand, it is possible that he would not have seen that the needs of Ceylon could not be met by a partially-residential university, for the university college was still drawing students only from the wealthier population of Colombo, Jaffna, Kandy and Galle. As the educational system becomes more democratic and poorer students are admitted it becomes evident that residence is essential. A student from a wealthy home, who has been properly fed and had some cultural background, who has been to a good school and taken an active part in expensive extra-curricula activities, who has been taken about Ceylon and seen things with an observant eye, can do very well in a non-residential university. A poor student of high academic quality—and poor students usually do not get to universities unless they are of that quality—is probably lacking in physique, has had a defective home education because of his poverty, has not been to a good school or taken an active part in out-of-school activities which he could not afford, and generally lacks a foundation on which success as an undergraduate and a graduate can be based. He is excellent raw material and a university can do much for him if it takes him out of his environment and puts him into a Hall of Residence. The student (whether he comes from Colombo or from Jaffna) who lives in a slum or a cheap lodging gets very little in Thurstan Road, except lectures and a degree. In Peradeniya he will stand every chance of getting a belated education. Naturally, steps must be taken to see that he can get to Peradeniya, and strangely enough little was said on this subject except the Site Committee's vague recommendation of 'scholarships'.

Another factor which dominated discussion was cost, not to the student but to the Government. A university is always expensive; and a residential university is the most expensive type. If there were three or four hundred acres of undulating land with adequate water supply and other services, a

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residential university might be no more costly than a non-residential university in Buller's Road. Nobody has ever pointed to such a site because, even if it existed, it would be densely occupied by cultivators. All the sites in the hills are expensive because they require much cutting and filling to enable them to bear large buildings. Also, they had to be large sites, for generally buildings could be erected on plateaux and substantial engineering works became necessary.

Actually, none of the sites selected was large enough. The advantage of the New Peradeniya Estate was that more land could be brought in. If the 900 acres of Old Peradeniya Estate—which was bought for the protection of the water supply—and also the Experimental Farm of the School of Agriculture be included, the University will eventually have some 3,000 acres, and it could not do with less. Every time the Public Works Department was asked to plan for a limited number of students. Up to 1938 the number was 500; in 1938 it became 800; and in 1940 it was 1,000. In due course there will no doubt be 3,500, and Peradeniya has been planned—since the creation of the University—on that basis. Very likely university development will not stop there, but when the demand is reaching 3,500 steps must be taken in Thurstan Road to start a second unit.

W. IVOR JENNINGS