

SIR CHARLES EDWARD TREVELYAN, ASSISTANT SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY,

1840 - 1859

by

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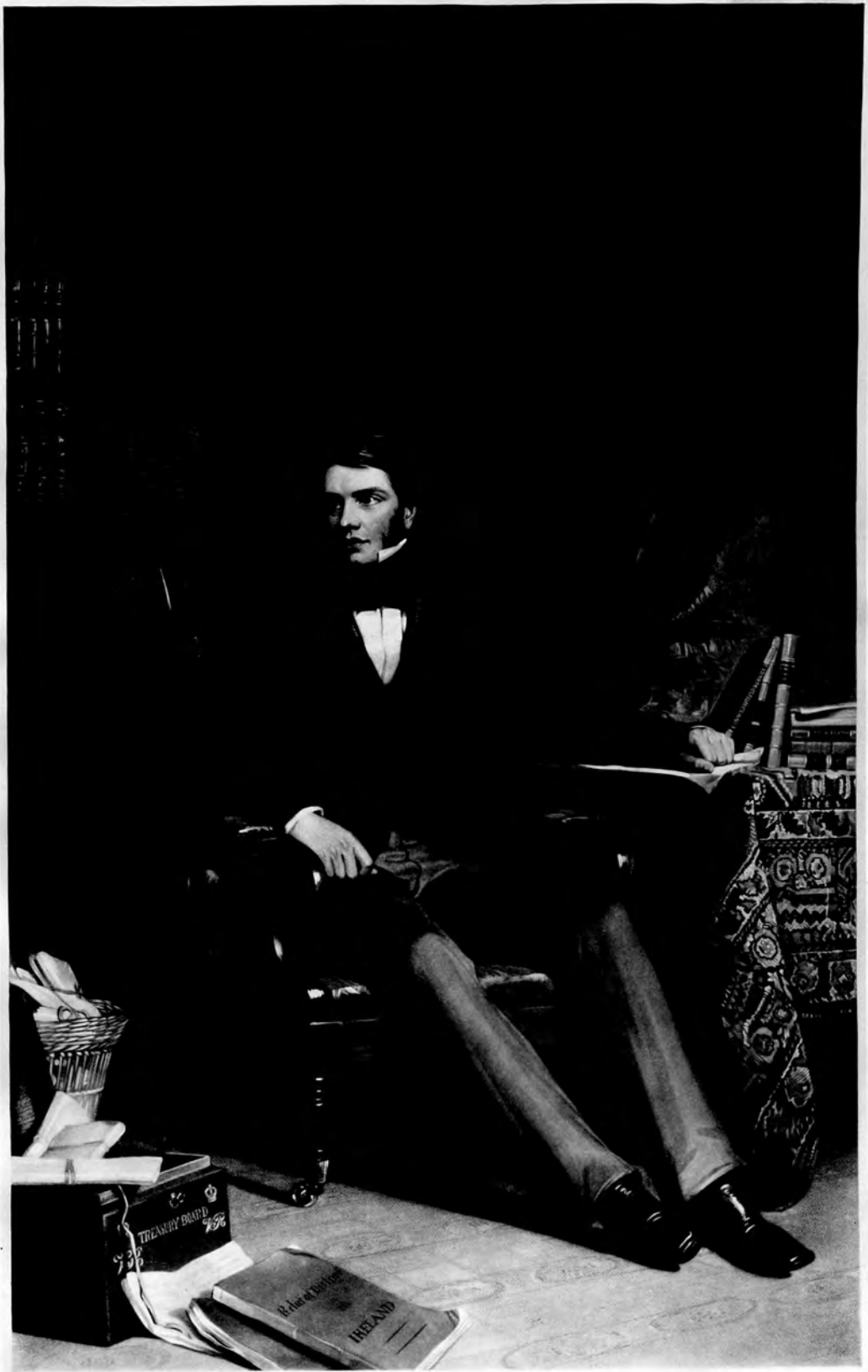
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Portrait of Sir Charles Trevelyan at the Treasury, c. 1847-50,
engraved by F. Joubert after a painting by E.U. Eddis. Trevelyan's
preoccupations with Irish relief and the Commissariat are indicated
by the titles of blue books and manuals.

Source: British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings.
The print is incorrectly named as Sir Randolph Routh, probably
due to his name appearing on the spine of one of the books. However
Routh would have been over sixty at the time of the sitting, and
the portrait is recognisably Trevelyan when compared with a later
wood engraving from a photograph (Illustrated London News, XXXIV,
1859, p.333). The Joubert engraving is also reproduced in C. Woodham
Smith, The Great Hunger (1962).

ABSTRACT

Sir Charles Edward Trevelyan, Assistant Secretary to the Treasury, 1840-59

Trevelyan brought from his early service in India a strong distrust of government intervention in economic matters and a belief in the political and administrative significance of popular education. At the Treasury he was concerned in more routine matters in the general supervision of a supervisory department and in the gradual extension to other departments of Treasury control, including improved techniques of estimate and audit. The limitations for individual influence in this work made him appreciate the scope for reform and innovation in his investigation of government departments that began in 1848 and culminated in the Northcote-Trevelyan Report of 1853. Based on his experience of the Treasury his original overall objective had been to ensure a separation between "intellectual" and "mechanical" work in the Civil Service, but Gladstone gave the question a new twist with his insistence on open competition for most first appointments. The Whigs in the Aberdeen coalition were not prepared for this proposal, and Trevelyan's critical and tactless comments on the quality of Civil Service personnel ensured maximum opposition from his colleagues. The half-hearted compromise of limited competition was a disappointment. Other related concerns were the reform of superannuation and provision of office buildings. Management of the Commissariat until 1854 gave Trevelyan scope for executive action, and provided the setting and key personnel for his single-handed overall supervision of Irish relief under the Russell administration. Here, Trevelyan had the satisfaction of applying his theories of economic non-intervention rigorously in a unique situation of administrative autonomy. His interest in the Commissariat promotion system led him to express critical concern over purchase of commissions in the army itself. Trevelyan concluded his public service by two brief periods in India between 1859 and 1865.

A NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS IN REFERENCES

Place of publication is London except where otherwise stated

Add. MS.	British Museum, Additional Manuscript
Debates	Parliamentary Debates, 3rd. series
Hughenden	Disraeli Papers
I.O.R.	India Office Records
P.P.	British Parliamentary Papers (sessional volume number followed by manuscript volume page number)
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
T.L.B.	Trevelyan Letter Books

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Charles Edward Trevelyan already exists as a substantial figure in nineteenth-century British history, and the purpose of this study is to attempt an analysis of a number of his activities and interests during his period as Assistant Secretary to the Treasury from 1840 to 1859. This period can only be adequately viewed in the context of his whole career, which begins and ends in the service of the East India Company. Indeed, without considering the place of India in Trevelyan's life it is scarcely possible to understand and to appreciate a number of the moral and administrative attitudes that he exhibited in his work at the Treasury. For this reason, the two periods of Indian service from 1825 to 1840 and from 1859 to 1865 are each given a chapter.

Trevelyan's work at the Treasury can be broken down into five main inter-related areas for thematic treatment:

- 1 The organization of the Treasury, particularly the role of Assistant Secretary within it.
- 2 The extension of Treasury influence over other departments.
- 3 The reform of the Civil Service, including reform of the superannuation system and the improvement of government office buildings.
- 4 Management of the Commissariat Department until 1854.
- 5 Army reform.

Of these, Civil Service reform is the most significant and three chapters are devoted to it. Yet the less obviously important aspects of his work, as for example with the Commissariat, shed light upon Trevelyan's attitudes to more central issues.

Furthermore it is in such unspectacular and routine activities that Trevelyan gained immense personal and professional satisfaction.

In many respects it is not too difficult to document Trevelyan's involvement in Treasury affairs. Despite the anonymity of most of the official records, Trevelyan's contribution can often be discerned in minutes and endorsements. Furthermore he was quick to offer expositions of his views on a wide range of administrative topics. Yet here very often resides the limitation of the subject; Trevelyan usually only speaks in a public or semi-public capacity and rarely (even in his semi-official Treasury letter books) does he offer any direct insight into the way his ideas developed. This is due to the absence of personal papers and diaries, and of anything approaching personal recollection on the part of his contemporaries. Thus the austere facade of the public figure - a facade that Trevelyan hardly deserved, but came to cultivate - prevails. Nevertheless there are clues to indicate that the picture of inflexible moral rigour that Trollope satirised as Sir Gregory Hardlines in The Three Clerks was overdrawn.

In order to make good this dearth of personal material, it is intended to provide an initial brief outline of Trevelyan's early life and a few indications about the nature of his family life and leisure activities.

1 Early Life

Charles Edward Trevelyan was born on 2 April 1807. He was the fourth son of George Trevelyan, rector of Nettlecombe in Devon, who was himself the third son of Sir John Trevelyan, from whom he had

received the family living. As the younger son of a younger son Charles Trevelyan had little prospect of inheritance and thus the success or failure of his career was to be determined by his own efforts and to a lesser degree by the effectiveness of his connections.

Trevelyan's education began at Taunton Grammar School and was continued at Charterhouse. Whereas the former was obscure and little-known, the latter was acquiring distinction in this period as a school for the sons of the London merchant class. Under its energetic headmaster, John Russell, Charterhouse expanded rapidly - a success that was due not only to its popularity, but also to the application to the sons of the middle class of the monitorial system that Andrew Bell had advocated for the children of the poor. This rather mechanical instructional system provided Trevelyan with the rudiments of classical education - something that he was at least able to build upon during his later service in India. It is more difficult to judge the degree to which this rather limited education enabled Trevelyan to think of administrative problems in mechanistic terms and to ignore the intangible psychological and emotional aspects of administration. In more immediate terms, Charterhouse more than adequately prepared Trevelyan for the intellectually undemanding climate of the East India Company's College at Haileybury. Consideration of this stage of Trevelyan's education will be left to the next chapter.

2 Family Life and Leisure Activities

Trevelyan was twice married. His first wife was Hannah, the favourite sister of Thomas Babington Macaulay - a connection which was to be decisive in the development of his career since it was instrumental in bringing him from India to the Treasury. It was also

through this connection with Macaulay that most light is shed on the Trevelyan household, or rather as a result of Macaulay's affection for the children of this marriage, Margaret Jean and George Otto. Macaulay's attachment to the family had the result of inducing George Otto to devote his literary talents to praise of his uncle rather than of his father. On Macaulay's death his unpublished papers, letters and journals passed first to his sister and then in trust to Margaret and George. The latter became in effect his uncle's literary executor, and he published in 1876 his Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay. It is from this oblique source that most references to the family are derived. Bearing this in mind, it is not surprising that Trevelyan appears as a shadowy figure in his domestic setting. It is unfortunate that George Otto never attempted to redress the balance in favour of his father by writing a filial biography.

The nature of this evidence makes it difficult to assess the extent to which Trevelyan's private life had a bearing on his public life, but it has been suggested that Hannah exercised a restraining influence over Trevelyan's rash and impatient temperament, and that when this influence could not be present at the time of Trevelyan's return to India as Governor of Madras there was nothing to moderate the conflict that arose between him and the Supreme Government. Hannah died in 1873 and two years later Trevelyan married Eleanor Anne Campbell, the daughter of Walter Campbell of Islay.

For most of his life Trevelyan was dependent on his salary. Only in 1876 did he acquire the status and income of a country

gentleman through inheritance from his cousin of the Wallington Estate in Northumberland. Trevelyan devoted much of the remainder of his life to improving the estate. He died in London in 1886.

There are few insights into Trevelyan's leisure activities for he neither admitted to carefree pleasures nor rejoiced in describing them. His interests were certainly serious and it is probable that he retained that characteristic, noted by Macaulay in India, of having "no small talk".¹ Macaulay himself seems to have had a considerable softening influence on the Trevelyan family, particularly as a result of his great affection for his sister, Hannah, and his niece, Margaret. Unlike Trevelyan, Macaulay had time to devote to the family, frequently visiting his niece and nephew at Clapham and Westbourne Terrace and when they were older taking them on numerous, sometimes semi-educational, visits of London.² George Otto Trevelyan describes how Macaulay also used to organize educational visits for the whole family:

Regularly every Easter, when the closing of the public offices drove my father from the Treasury for a brief holiday, Macaulay took our family on a tour among Cathedral-towns, varied by an occasional visit to the Universities. We started on the Thursday; spent Good Friday in one city and Easter Sunday in another, and went back to town on the Monday. This year it was Worcester and Gloucester; the next York and Lincoln; then Lichfield and Chester, Norwich and Peterborough, Ely and Cambridge, Salisbury and Winchester. Now and then the

1 G.O. Trevelyan, The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay (enlarged ed. 1908), p. 279.

2 Ibid., pp.485, 492. G.O. Trevelyan makes a point of describing Macaulay's extreme sensibility and modesty. Was this in contrast to his experience of his father's manner? (Ibid., 490-491.)

routine was interrupted by a trip to Paris, or to the great churches on the Loire; but in the course of twenty years we had inspected at least once all the Cathedrals of England, or indeed of England and Wales, for we carried our researches after ecclesiastical architecture as far down in the list as Bangor. "Our party just filled a railway carriage", says Lady Trevelyan, "and the journey found his flow of spirits unflagging. It was a return to old times; a running fire of jokes, rhymes, puns, never ceasing. It was a peculiarity of his that he never got tired on a journey. As the day wore on he did not feel the desire to lie back and be quiet, and he liked to find his companions ready to be entertained to the last." ¹

It is dangerous to argue from a book in praise of Macaulay about the apparently passive rôle of Trevelyan. Yet it is clear that Macaulay was the dominant figure in the life of the Trevelyans; not for nothing had he attached so much importance to finding Trevelyan a post in England in order to remain close to his sister and her children. Trevelyan respected Macaulay's intellectual interests and conformed with his plans. In 1847 this resulted in his refusing the offer of a fishing holiday - an activity which, one supposes, might have been more relaxing after the hectic activity of the Irish emergency than the proposed tour of York and Lincoln cathedrals.² When Trevelyan himself felt the need for relaxation it was often for therapeutic reasons. In July 1847 he wrote to Routh that he was taking a fortnight's holiday "in order to keep myself in

1 Ibid., II,p493.

2 Trevelyan to Rev. G.O. Trevelyan (his brother), 9 March 1847, T.L.B., XIII,p11.

good working trim."¹ In October 1848 he confessed to a Saturday afternoon train excursion to Hastings, taken only because he had not felt well.² The same attitude appears to have characterised his attitude to alcohol: while disapproving of excessive consumption of beer and cider, he remarked on one occasion: "I can testify from my personal experience that a glass of pale ale does me more good when I come home tired of an evening than anything else I can eat or drink."³ Trevelyan's total involvement in his work at the Treasury left him virtually no energy for other pursuits, even if he had felt entitled to engage in them.

One unfortunate consequence of Trevelyan's apparent small regard for social entertainment is the difficulty of determining with any accuracy his circle of friends. His letter books do not contain lists of guests at dinner parties, from which one could build up a picture of his connections. Like so much of the evidence about Trevelyan's private affairs this is negative, and one is therefore reluctant to draw any firm conclusions. Yet one suspects that Trevelyan's austere manner and constant over-work precluded the development of a large circle of friends that spanned private and public life.⁴

1 Trevelyan to Routh, 26 July 1847, T.L.B., XVI,p92.

2 Trevelyan to Palgrave, 16 October 1848, T.L.B., XXIII,p34.

3 Trevelyan to Walter Calverly Trevelyan, 27 July 1846, T.L.B., VI,p156.

4 Gladstone's lists of guests at his breakfast and dinner parties show Trevelyan attending on seven occasions in 1853 and 1854, but these were semi-official parties and often included other Treasury officials, e.g. Anderson, Arbuthnot, Stephenson (Add. MS. 44782 fs. 18-55 passim).

Chapter II

INDIAN PRELUDE

Although the tasks of an English and an East Indian Civil Servant were usually very different, Trevelyan's education at the East India Company's College and his service in India from 1826 to 1838 were decisive in forming many of his attitudes towards public business. The European Covenanted Civil Servants constituted an élite numbering between seven and eight hundred among the sub-continent's population of about 150 million.¹ Trevelyan inevitably brought to the Treasury some of the sense of moral authority that this isolation produced. When applied to English institutions, this attitude deeply offended his Civil Service colleagues. Of course it would be quite wrong to regard India as mere preface to Trevelyan's work at the Treasury. At the outset he must have expected to spend his entire working life there; furthermore he retained after his return to England an exceptionally strong interest in Indian affairs and a deep affection for the country itself. This continuing interest, and his subsequent appointment as Governor of Madras and later as Indian Finance Minister provide the subject of the final chapter.

1 East India College

Trevelyan's Indian career began with his nomination to a writership on 21 January 1824. Trevelyan had been recommended by his guardian, W, Thompson Hankey (banker, West Indian merchant and founder member of the British and Foreign Bible Society), to Neil Benjamin Edmonstone (East Indian Civil Servant, whose successful career had been rewarded by being made a director).² The details

1 P.P., 1852-53, LXIX, p64.

2 I.O.R., Committee of College References, XXXVII.

surrounding his appointment are significant in that they illustrate the twin strands of evangelical conscience and professional zeal that combine to provide the personal motivation for his entire career.

In February 1824 at the age of sixteen and a half, Trevelyan entered the East India Company's College at Haileybury. He later claimed that he had been so conscious of his immaturity that he had stayed at Charterhouse for an extra six months, rather than enter at the minimum age of sixteen.¹ Trevelyan's personal concern was matched by the controversy that was then raging in East Indian circles over the nature, and indeed the continuance, of the education he was to receive. Occasioned by the decennial renewal of the Company's Charter, it manifested itself in a debate in the Court of Proprietors which proceeded intermittently from December 1823 to March 1824. Although it was on a motion to allow nominees to be educated elsewhere and merely to take the final examination, if passed it would have resulted in the rapid decline of the small college.²

The East India College had been founded in 1806. Since 1813 no nomination to a writership (the title given to a first appointment in the Civil Service) could become effective unless the nominee attended the College for two years and received a certificate of competence. However since patronage in civil appointments was regarded by the directors and stockholders who elected them as a valuable and legitimate benefit from holding East India stock as opposed to government stocks, this educational requirement was widely regarded as an unwarrantable interference. Attempts were made from time to

1 Trevelyan to W.B. Baring, 13 March 1843, T.L.B., II, p.166.

2 The Asiatic Journal, XVII (1824), p.51.

time to discredit the college by claiming that lax discipline increased the risk of disorder among the students - hence expulsion and the loss of valuable nomination. Certainly the allegations of violent disorder and riots were exaggerated, although it is true that some schoolboy pranks were ineptly handled by the College authorities.¹ The actual risk of losing a nomination in this way was not very high, for it was pointed out in 1824 that only twenty out of 271 entrants had been expelled since the foundation of the College.² Even a survival rate of over ninety percent was not as satisfactory as absolute certainty and it was generally recognized that misbehaviour or failure at Haileybury enabled the reluctant nominee to avoid going to India. Although the motion to destroy Haileybury's preparatory monopoly was lost by 400 to 272, the debate is of interest in discussing some of the main moral and intellectual issues underlying the East India Company's Civil Service.³ For example, it was argued that if England could manage without specially trained Civil Servants, so also could India.⁴ Indeed it was suggested that this special education made for conceit. "At the Haileybury College they are all alike to be Indian statesmen." By contrast the argument in favour of the continuance of the College concentrated on the need to establish moral as well as intellectual fitness.⁵ This view had already been expressed in a pamphlet by Thomas Malthus, the Professor of Political Economy,

1 Lawrence Lowell, Colonial Civil Service: The Selection and Training of Colonial Officials in England, Holland and France (New York, 1900), pp. 281, 299.

2 Lowell calculated that 88 percent of 1985 students admitted to the College between 1806 and 1854 entered the Civil Service (p.304).

3 The Asiatic Journal, XVII (1824), p.522.

4 Ibid., p. 335.

5 Ibid., p.522.

when in 1817 he had defended the College against similar criticisms. Malthus had been anxious that any weakness should be revealed in England rather than in India, and he suggested that a salutary element of competition could be introduced if the Directors nominated one-fifth extra candidates.¹ While this formula for improving the calibre of students may seem naïve, it must be recognized that the existing system already brought forward able and conscientious students - students of the calibre of Trevelyan.

As a self-aware young man and as a pupil of Malthus, Trevelyan must have been fully aware of the wide issues that underlay his education. Of course the concept of intellectual and moral excellence attained through competition and emulation was not peculiar to the Indian Service; it was part of a wider evangelical concern for testing human worth which for India manifested itself in these educational precautions against any kind of repetition of the corruption and opportunism of the nabobs of the previous century.

The course provided by Haileybury appeared much more impressive on paper than it did in practice. A great range of subjects was taught at a fairly low standard. With European subjects, insistence on Classics, Mathematics, Law, Political Economy and History meant that there was insufficient time for any specialization. As for the classical oriental languages - Sanscrit and Persian - the standard attained was usually negligible. Examinations for all subjects were broadly assessed under the headings of "great proficiency", "proficiency" and "little proficiency". The lowest assessment, unless it occurred only once in one of the European subjects,

1 T.R. Malthus, Statements respecting the East India College ... in refutation of the charges lately brought against it, p.13. His arguments were partly based on those propounded by Wellesley in 1800 when he had attempted to found a College for Civil Servants at Fort William.

resulted in the term being repeated. In addition, numerous and lavish book prizes and medals were awarded to those who performed well in each subject, but the sheer quantity and frequency of these rewards prevented their being a serious spur to exertion.¹ Nevertheless, Haileybury provided an ostensibly systematic education which Trevelyan continued to regard with nostalgia and affection. Perhaps this was not surprising, since he was among the best pupils of his year. He gained prizes for Classics, Political Economy and Sanscrit.² In his final examinations, he was placed first equal in Political Economy, while showing "proficiency" in Law and "little proficiency" in Mathematics.³ This result placed him in the first class and first among those leaving to serve in Bengal.⁴ Trevelyan was given another, and somewhat better, opportunity to prove his academic ability when he arrived in India in October 1826. As a Bengal Civilian he was obliged to attend the language college at Calcutta. However, he went far beyond obligation in passing the courses in the shortest time on record: he passed Hindi in one month and Persian in two.⁵

2 The Colebrooke Scandal

Trevelyan was so eager for his training to be put to a searching test, that he arranged to be posted as an assistant to the Commissioner at Delhi. In this way, we would be able to serve under Sir Charles Metcalfe, who - as an outstandingly successful Civil Servant - had

1 F.C. Danvers, M. Monier Williams and others, Memorials of Old Haileybury (1894), pp. 52-54.

2 Ibid., p.374. In all Trevelyan gained eight prizes and two medals.

3 I.O.R., Examinations, 1817-25, II.

4 I.O.R., Copies of Students Certificates, 1824-31, II.

5 The Asiatic Journal, XXV (1828), p557.

become a model to emulate for the young Civil Servants of the decade. However, he soon discovered that most of his work gave little scope for emulation. He later recalled that his first task had been to keep a diary of all correspondence as a means of keeping Calcutta informed about all decisions.¹ The East India Company's administrative system demanded that each level of the hierarchy - from smallest station to presidency - should transmit its decisions in the form of diaries or general letters. Yet Trevelyan also managed to gain some active experience, when on two occasions he was placed in charge of a division of the Delhi agency. He had to assume all the functions of judge, magistrate and revenue collector.² This was a challenging situation for an ardent young Civil Servant. The Delhi territory at that time has been described as "virgin administrative soil, bereft of centralized authority, but with everywhere the signs of former systems and rulers, offering a clear field for investigation, for speculation and construction."³ Unexpectedly, Trevelyan was to conduct his first investigation into an abuse of the English, not of the Indian, administration.

In June 1827, Trevelyan's fortunes underwent a radical change. Metcalfe was appointed a member of the Supreme Council. His replacement was Sir Edward Colebrooke, a man at the close of his career with forty years' seniority. His attitude towards the ethics of administration was totally different from Metcalfe's: rather

1 Select Committee on Indian Territories, evidence of 26 May 1853, P.P., 1852-53, XXVIII, 134. For a popular account of Trevelyan's service in India see Humphrey Trevelyan, The India We Left (1972), pp.25-106.

2 Ibid., p.121

3 T.G.P. Spear, Twilight of the Mughuls (Cambridge, 1951), p.138.

than encourage reform, he was content to leave the existing system alone. All might have been well, if Colebrooke's traditional attitude had not led him into some equally traditional corrupt practices. Colebrooke's corruption was hardly monstrous, although it was not in keeping with the moral climate in the 1820s: he marked down the value of presents from Indian princes, so that his wife could buy them on advantageous terms; he accepted hospitality from Indian princes, and thus compromised his independence. Trevelyan was horrified at such iniquities. His first reaction was to ask to be posted away from Delhi, in order to avoid witnessing them. However, he was soon recalled to Delhi to be confronted by the dilemma between service loyalty and public morality. At first, Trevelyan tried to remonstrate with Colebrooke. Not surprisingly, Colebrooke declined to take Trevelyan's youthful scruples seriously. In a desperate attempt to prove that they should be taken seriously, Trevelyan finally preferred charges of corruption against Colebrooke's steward.

The methods, adopted by Trevelyan to ensure that his case would be successful, revealed his reckless impatience with formality. He realized that minor transgressions of protocol were as nothing, compared with the ruin of his career if he failed. To obtain information, Trevelyan began secret investigation. His most daring act was to force the Delhi bankers to open their books for inspection. In a letter to Colebrooke in January 1829, Trevelyan described this as "an investigation I have made on my own responsibility for whatever use it may be proper to make of it". Colebrooke indignantly replied that he was not prepared to be made a laughing-stock, and he counter-attacked by posting Trevelyan to Kotah, about three hundred miles

from Delhi. He prosecuted Trevelyan's agent; he suborned witnesses; and finally, he planned to prosecute Trevelyan for conspiracy. To protect himself, Trevelyan was forced to accuse Colebrooke directly. As Colebrooke was in control at Delhi, Trevelyan wrote to the chief secretary of the government of Bengal, suggesting two special investigators should be appointed. Despite the obvious appearance of insubordination on Trevelyan's part, the Bengal government decided to treat the case seriously. Once the investigators were at work, Trevelyan was able to produce a detailed and dramatic annotation of Colebrooke's counter-charges. Eventually Colebrooke was found guilty on twelve of the thirty charges and was dismissed from the Company's service.

Despite the vindication of the verdict, Trevelyan remained acutely aware of the risks he had run at the start of his career. He was also rather proud of himself.¹ In a letter to Lord William Bentinck on 1 May 1830, he described himself as "a boy who had been little more than two years in the country, and had never filled any situation in which his character and views could be developed". He was particularly anxious to avoid appearing an over-strict and precocious moralist - one who would seek to eliminate all feelings of friendship and gratitude. Nevertheless, he concluded his letter with the generalized moral observation that "it may also be questioned whether the real mode of raising the character of the civil-service would not be to evince to the world that we are prepared to prevent

1 It was claimed by Metcalfe's contemporary biographer that Trevelyan was sustained by the knowledge that his exemplar, Metcalfe, had incurred similar criticism in eradicating corruption among the bankers of Hyderabad. (J.W. Kaye, The Life and Correspondence of Charles, Lord Metcalfe, 1854, I, p.89.)

abuses, instead of allowing them to flourish unchecked, in order to support a pretension to unattainable purity, since all are aware that some abuses must exist in every service which is composed of men and not of angels".¹ This stereotyped attitude was one way in which Trevelyan could conceal his extreme sensitivity to the inevitable criticism by the English community of his conduct. In order to justify himself, and to guard against any attempt on Colebrooke's part to have the case reopened, Trevelyan arranged for a collection of documents to be privately printed.² Trevelyan was probably being over cautious, for the Colebrooke scandal helped to mark him out for a distinguished career. In particular, Bentinck held Trevelyan in considerable esteem and offered him a reward. Trevelyan refused anything for himself, but asked for some preferment for his elder brother who was an officer in the Company's army. Accordingly, Lieutenant Trevelyan was granted a good diplomatic appointment.³

3 Reports on Customs Duties, 1832-35

Trevelyan did not stay much longer in Delhi. After remaining to become the first assistant to the new resident, he was posted in 1831 to Calcutta. Calcutta as the administrative centre of Bengal and the seat of the Governor General, offered the best opportunities for conspicuous public service, Trevelyan first served as a deputy

1 C.E. Trevelyan, "Papers Transmitted from India" (1830), n.p. This compilation of letters and papers provides the main narrative for this episode.

2 Although Trevelyan occasionally distributed copies of his "Papers" (e.g. Trevelyan to Bromley, 9 August 1852, T.L.B., XXIX, p.217) the only copy I have located is at Wallington. Colebrooke also produced his collection in an attempt to get the case reopened: "Papers relative to the Case at Issue between Sir Edward Colebrooke Bt. and the Bengal Government" (1833).

3 G.O. Trevelyan, The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay (enlarged ed. 1908), p.278.

secretary in the General and Financial Department, and then in the Secret and Political Department.¹ While much of this work was routine, the reforming climate of the 1830s raised many issues of policy. Trevelyan's contribution to policy-making was the production of a series of reports on economic and fiscal topics.

Trevelyan's first report appeared in October 1832. It was devoted to a limited and technical topic: the opening of the river Indus to mercantile traffic. Trevelyan's main proposal was the imposition of an ad valorem duty, as opposed to one based upon weight.² On 6 February 1833, the report was published in The Bengal Hurkaru in order to sound out mercantile opinion. Trevelyan went on to defend his opinions in a series of letters to the same newspaper under the pseudonym of "Indophilus". In the absence of an official journal or of a system of formal public discussion, it was not unusual for the Indian governments to encourage Civil Servants to express an official viewpoint in this way. In this case, Bentinck gave Trevelyan every encouragement.³ In subsequent "Indophilus" letters, Trevelyan went far beyond the immediate issue in order to discuss the principles of fiscal administration. In particular, he was highly critical of the excessive amount of government energy that was absorbed by the collection of land revenue. He suggested that the work could be better and more cheaply performed by the employment of natives.⁴ These letters gave him a taste for denouncing inefficiency. Years later

1 Dodwell and Miles, Bengal Civil Servants, 1780-1838 (1839).

2 I.O.R., "Bengal Secret Consultations", CCCLXIX, 24 December 1832.

3 Evidence of J.C. Marshman before the Select Committee on Indian Territories, P.P., 1852-53, XXVIII, pp.60-61.

4 The Bengal Hurkaru, 26, 27 April 1833.

he still affectionately recalled his "Indophili" in which he had scourged the iniquities of the up country revenue system.¹

Trevelyan's zeal and ability led to his being invited to consider the customs of the whole Bengal presidency. The findings of his detailed investigations were published in two reports: the Report on Bengal Inland Customs (January 1834) and the Town Duties Report (October 1835). The former was a convincing document of 197 pages, in which Trevelyan propounded the simple theory that, as the duties were unimportant as a source of revenue, they could be abolished in the cause of free-trade. Trevelyan had sensed that the reaction to his earlier report that a free-trade proposal would be welcomed by a large part of the trading community. He had already shown his contempt for the government's preoccupation with the unnecessary complexities of fiscal administration. The result was a whole-hearted tract in favour of laissez-faire. For example, after an allusion to the impediments to economic development if Manchester had ever been surrounded by chokeys or customs posts, his tone became charged with messianic fervour: "Nature is the only true commercial legislator, and just in proportion as we interfere to interrupt the system of economy established by all-wise Providence, the freedom of exchange becomes contracted, production limited, and mutual intercourse, the appointed means of peace, improvement and civilization checked".² In more practical terms, Trevelyan claimed that the removal of fiscal anomalies would yield more revenue, as it would stimulate more trade that would in turn be liable to external duties. Another benefit of abolition would

1 Trevelyan to E. Horsman, 7 January 1858, T.L.B., XXXVI, p155.

2 C.E. Trevelyan, Report on Bengal Inland Customs (Calcutta, 1834), p.11.

be the elimination of a powerful source of official corruption.¹ In his conclusion, Trevelyan indicated his belief in the moral and religious advantages of free-trade: "England and the United States, let who will gainsay it, are the favoured instruments of God's providence in the establishment of his kingdom of peace and love. These are the two western nations whose religion is purest - where government is freest - whose fleets command the ocean, and whose commerce pervades the whole world; and they have at once the greatest amount of temporal and eternal benefits to communicate, and the most extensive and effectual means of communicating them."²

Trevelyan also spent some time in this report in developing a philosophy of administration. Leaning heavily on his Benthamite faith in collecting and disseminating information, he pointed to an essential difference between England and India: between the vast quantity of material that was readily available in English Parliamentary Papers and the tradition of secrecy in Indian affairs that often consigned reports to the obscurity of the archives. It need hardly be added that Trevelyan was an eager writer of reports, and one who was disinclined to leave his work in obscurity. Trevelyan's remedy for the Indian situation was ingenious. He suggested that Bengal Civil Servants should be encouraged to write reports on every aspect of the presidency's economy. Not only would these reports be printed, but prizes would be awarded to give added encouragement to the writers' exertions. In this way, knowledge about Bengal's economy (including such topics as soil, climate and weights and measures)

1 Ibid., pp.52-53.

2 Ibid., p.196.

could be conveniently assembled as a basis for future government action.¹

The much shorter Town Duties Report indicated Trevelyan's attitude towards the proper role of government. His main objection to the town duties - which he also sought to abolish - was that they encouraged local dependence upon the central government and discouraged civic responsibility. Conversely, the abolition of the tax would promote responsible self help in each town in place of the clumsy wastefulness of central government intervention.² Trevelyan retained this attitude as an article of faith.

Trevelyan's approach to the Bengal customs was both simple and radical, in that he believed that the principle of free-trade could cut through a tangle of tradition and technicality. His proposals were accepted by the Bengal government because free-trade seemed a logical consequence of the ending of the Company's residual trading activities in 1833. As a zealous reformer, Trevelyan found himself in an ideal position - one in which the opposition of tax collectors appeared as the selfish defence of vested interest against the victorious doctrine of free-trade. In writing these reports for a sympathetic administration, Trevelyan was able to associate what seemed to him sound, prevailing economic opinions with a wider moral purpose. In this sense, therefore, the work was too easy and too satisfying; it served to confirm those traits of character that gave Trevelyan a reputation for cock-sureness in formulating his opinions. Furthermore Bentinck did not set him an example of official caution in that he implemented Trevelyan's recommendations without any reference to London and without prolonged discussion.

1 Ibid., pp.190-191.

2 C.E. Trevelyan, Town Duties Report (Calcutta, 1835), p.24.

The reports certainly demonstrated Trevelyan's ability to master a mass of detail to support a convincing, if rather facile, argument.

Macaulay wrote of the Bengal Customs Report:

I have no hesitation in affirming that it is a perfect masterpiece of its kind. Accustomed as I have been to public affairs, I have never read an abler State paper; and I do not believe that there is, I will not say in India, but in England, another man of twenty-seven who could have written it. Trevelyan is a most stormy reformer. Lord William said to me, before anyone had observed Trevelyan's attentions to Nancy [a reference to Trevelyan's courtship of Macaulay's sister]: "That man is almost always on the right side in every question; and it is well that he is so, for he gives a most confounded deal of trouble when he happens to take the wrong one." He is quite at the head of that active party among the younger servants of the Company who take the side of improvement. In particular, he is the soul of every scheme for diffusing education among the natives of this country.¹

It was fortunate that there were plenty of outlets for Trevelyan's "correct" opinions. Following the adoption of his customs reports by the Bengal government, he was appointed a member of committees which revised customs and Post Office laws in the four presidencies and prison discipline.² This work helped to establish Trevelyan's

1 G.O. Trevelyan, op. cit., pp. 278-279.

2 I.O.R., "Personal Records", XX. Reports on the Post Office were later printed in P.P., 1851, XLI, pp. 789-835.

view that investigation and policy-making were the proper functions of able Civil Servants, while in fact he was still obliged to perform much work of an extremely routine nature. His last appointment in India was as Additional Secretary to the Sudder Board of Revenue, where he was occupied in preparing and signing official letters - a task very similar to what he was later to find at the Treasury.¹

4 Indian Education

While Trevelyan's official interests were fiscal, his main personal interest was native education. His deep concern for this was not only inspired by missionary zeal, but by a growing awareness that the administration of India required an educated native élite. Trevelyan had been trying to foster this from the time he arrived in India. On his arrival at Delhi, he had helped to found an English language College. On the strength of his slight experience of elementary school teaching in England, he even taught English and Geography himself.² The success of this venture confirmed his belief in the superiority of European culture, and the college at Delhi constituted an example for English education as distinct from the government oriental colleges elsewhere. Inevitably Trevelyan became involved in what came to be known as the Orientalist controversy: whether or not the main part of the Company's education budget should be devoted to traditional studies in Sanscrit, Persian

1 I.O.R., "Sudder Board of Revenue", Range 83, 24-27.

2 Lords Select Committee on the Government of Indian Territories, Trevelyan's evidence of 16 June 1853, P.P., 1852-53, XXXII, p.146.

and Arabic for a very small number of students, as opposed to the development of more popular education by means of English and the vernacular languages.¹ Trevelyan's part in this began with two articles (later reprinted as a pamphlet) in The Bengal Hurkaru in May 1830. He not only discussed the obvious difficulty of translating scientific works into classical oriental languages but expressed the view that the spread of English would cause the spread of Christianity. In practical terms he envisaged a system of preparatory schools and colleges teaching law, mathematics and philosophy. Among other advantages these studies would serve to strengthen British rule by providing a relevant education for potential Indian Civil Servants. Traditional Indian education was notorious in producing unemployable students and Trevelyan aimed to promote Western education by guaranteeing government employment:

For instance, the students who take a first class degree may be entitled to employment in any department of the service they may prefer on the first vacancy that occurs in it, while those who take only a second degree, high proficiency in the qualifications necessary for any particular department may entitle them to be employed in that department. To all, however, who will thus enter the service in every department, a commission should be given on behalf of the Government, pledging it, that they will not be liable to be ousted from their situations except for some sufficient offence regularly proved against them, on proceedings which have been submitted to, and been approved by the superior authorities, else the

1 For background to this question see T.C.P. Spear, "Bentinck and Education," Cambridge Historical Journal, VI (1938), pp. 78-101; G. & N. Robinson Sirkin, "The Battle of Indian Education: Macaulay's Opening Salvo", Victorian Studies, XIV (1971), pp. 407-428.

education of the young men will prove of little benefit either to themselves, or to the Government, or to the bulk of the people, but rather the reverse.¹

Trevelyan had not made the mechanism of social and educational change very clear, for he was simultaneously suggesting that education should be a means of advancement in the Civil Service, while the promise of the latter should itself be a stimulus to education. His hopes of the creation of a politically articulate middle class that would wish to share in government was of course extremely premature, but as in other colonial countries it was the emergence of this class that provided the intellectual basis for independence a century later.

In 1831 Trevelyan became more deeply involved in educational policy-making through becoming a member of the General Committee of Public Instruction. His confidence in the imminence of educational reform was encouraged by other contemporary developments: the suppression of thuggee and suttee and his own work on abolishing customs duties. However, at first Trevelyan and the "Anglicists" were in a minority on the Committee and battled to further their case, eventually resorting to a press campaign in the Calcutta newspapers to turn public opinion in their favour. As he later boasted to Bentinck this strategy produced "almost magical results".² On 18 March 1833, following the completion of his reports on internal customs duties, Trevelyan outlined his proposals for a comprehensive system of education using English and vernacular languages in a letter to Bentinck, flattering the Governor General that he would

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- 1 C.E. Trevelyan, A Treatise on the Means of Communicating the Learning and Civilization of Europe to India (Calcutta, 1830), p.8.
 - 2 Trevelyan to Bentinck, 30 April 1834, Portland MSS, quoted in John Clive, Macaulay, the Shaping of the Historian (New York, 1973), p.362.

receive the gratitude of millions if he were able to implement it.¹ Such grandiose proposals were beyond the normal resources of the government and in a subsequent letter Trevelyan concentrated his attack on the privileged position of oriental education: "India is on the eve of a great moral change. The indications of it are perceptible in every part of the country. Everywhere the same decided rejection of antiquated systems prevails - everywhere the same craving for instruction in a better system is to be perceived, and the abolition of the exclusive privileges which the Persian language has in the courts and offices of government will form the crowning stroke which will shake Hindooism and Mohammedism to their centre and firmly establish our language and learning and ultimately our religion in India."² In the meantime the conflict between the two schools of educationalists had been extended to government financed institutions where proposals had been made to introduce English as a compulsory language in the Sanscrit College and the Madrassa or Muslim College at Calcutta. These proposals finally precipitated the crisis. H.T. Prinsep, one of the leading Orientalists, claiming that they undermined the protection given to Oriental culture by the Charter Act of 1813.³

This minor legal crisis combined with sharp division in the General Committee of Public Instruction and continuing controversy in the Press clearly called for a clear and authoritative decision. Bentinck, despite his sympathy for Trevelyan's position, did not wish to appear prejudiced, and he decided to put the matter in the hands of the newly-arrived legal member of the Supreme Council,

1 18 March, Ibid., p.360.

2 Trevelyan to Bentinck, 9 April 1834, Portland MSS., quoted in G.D. Bearce British Attitudes Towards India, 1784-1858, (1961) p.161.

3 H. Sharp (ed.), Selections from Educational Records, Part 1 (1781-1839) (Calcutta, 1920), I, p.105.

Macaulay. This was not a surprising choice since Macaulay had the advantage of being both a lawyer and a man of letters. Accordingly the two parties presented their cases in January 1835 and effectively left the decision to Macaulay. In a minute of 2 February 1835 Macaulay crystallized the arguments in favour of English literature and education. He briefly, and quite unfairly, dismissed the arguments based on the Charter Act by suggesting that the government had as much discretion over the form of education as it had over such matters as the level of rewards for killing tigers or the cost of chanting in the cathedral. He claimed that Indian education could be taken to mean whatever education was felt to be in the best interests of India. His interpretation of these interests was adequately revealed by his arrogantly exaggerated assertion that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole literature of India and Arabia". This was a gloss on his argument that the encouragement of English was the only policy consistent with current legal and administrative reforms. In connection with the projected English legal code that was to replace a complexity of Hindu and Muslim laws, he claimed that it would be absurd to provide what would increasingly be seen as an irrelevant and obsolete form of education.¹

Bentinck had already been persuaded by Macaulay's arguments before the actual submission of the Minute, and he had no hesitation in adopting it as the basis of policy. He rejected a plea from the Orientalists for the co-existence of Western and Oriental studies

1 Ibid., pp. 107-117.

in government institutions, and assisted by Macaulay he drafted the Minute of 7 March 1835. This measure actively discouraged Oriental education by discontinuing students' stipends and the grant of funds for printing Oriental texts.¹ The matter was not referred to the Board of Control or to the Court of Directors for it was realized that permission for the change would have been refused. In fact, the authorities in England were incensed by the new policy and the arbitrary way in which it had been introduced, but they were not prepared to revive the controversy by attempting to re-establish the old system. They preferred to appear impartial and they made no decisive public statement.² It was in this confused situation that Trevelyan decided to restate his views in On the Education of the People of India (1838). Quoting extensively from Macaulay's Minute he contrasted the obscurantism of the Orientalists with the promise offered by the development of English education. While he was not completely opposed to the academic study of Oriental classics, he felt that this was trivial compared with larger social and educational issues.³ A compromise was provided by Bentinck's successor, Lord Auckland, who provided limited resources for Oriental studies while continuing to stress the importance of English as the official language in place of Persian.⁴

English as an educational medium was firmly established and has remained so ever since. The greatest success was among the Hindus of Bengal, and in 1836 Trevelyan triumphantly concluded an article in The Edinburgh Review on the suppression of thuggee by describing

1 Ibid., p. 129.

2 K.A. Ballhatchet, "The Home Government and Bentinck's Educational Policy", The Cambridge Historical Journal, X (1951), pp. 224-229.

3 On the Education of the People of India (1838), pp. 182-201.

4 Ballhatchet.

the overwhelming enthusiasm for English education at the newly-opened Hooghly College in Calcutta.¹ Significantly for the future development of India the Muslim population was hostile, and there was little activity in other presidencies. By contrast, development of vernacular languages was everywhere negligible. Although most money was spent on English education, Trevelyan was active in efforts to transliterate vernacular languages into the Roman alphabet. The Orientalists had described this as "ultra-radical subversion" but Trevelyan countered with the argument that text books and dictionaries would be easier and cheaper to print and that Roman letters would help to graft to the vernaculars such concepts as "virtue", "honour", "patriotism", "gratitude" and "public spirit".² Trevelyan founded a Roman Letter Propagation Society in 1836. Since its memorandum book is the only personal record of Trevelyan that appears to have survived from this period, it is unfortunate that it provides very little information. However one detail is characteristic of the optimism of the propagandist and zealot for reform: unsold copies of Trevelyan's pamphlets were to be sold to create a fund for the publication of dictionaries and elementary readers.³

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- 1 /C.E. Trevelyan/, "The Thugs or Secret Murderers of India", The Edinburgh Review, LXIV (1837), pp. 357-395. Reprinted in Hinduism and Christianity Contrasted (1882), where Trevelyan explained that he had adapted an official report for publication with the help of Macaulay. (W.E. Houghton ed., The Wellesley Index, I, Toronto 1966, p.483).
 - 2 C.E. Trevelyan, J. Prinsep et.al. The Application of the Roman Alphabet to all the Oriental Languages (Serampore, 1834), pp. 4, 13, 35, 50.
 3. Wallington, "Memorandum Book of the Roman Letter Propagation Society/Committee, dated 19 September 1836. Now among the Trevelyan of Wallington papers in the Library of the University of Newcastle.

5 Return to England, 1838

Trevelyan's Indian career was so successful that its early termination can only be explained by his personal connection with Macaulay. Macaulay came to Calcutta in 1833 as member of the Supreme Council accompanied by his sister Hannah, and within a few months she had attracted Trevelyan's attention. Macaulay did not discourage the match although he depended greatly on the support and company of his sister, and within three months Trevelyan and Hannah were married. Macaulay received a second blow at this stage through the death in England of his favourite sister, Margaret. Now as Hannah's company became even more important to him, the Trevelyans agreed to live with him as one household. An added advantage was that both Trevelyan and Macaulay were able to economize in their household expenses - a point of vital importance to Macaulay who had set himself the task of saving half his salary, £25,000, during his five year tour of duty. Neither had any taste for Calcutta society and they spent a great deal of time in each other's company, when Macaulay took the opportunity to make good the deficiencies in his brother-in-law's classical education. These arrangements appear to have worked reasonably well for Macaulay. Although he was mortified at losing Hannah to Trevelyan, the combined household provided him with the domestic environment he so much needed. Trevelyan accepted the situation, particularly as Macaulay's Whig reforming ideas so neatly coincided with many of his own. Furthermore, he agreed to postpone his furlough until 1838 when Macaulay's tour of service came to an end.

Macaulay's appraisal of Trevelyan's character and talents have a bearing on the development of the latter's career. Trevelyan

constituted the ideal of the superior young man who combined the qualities of intellectual and man of action:

As to his person, he always looks like a gentleman, particularly on horseback. He is very active and athletic, and is renowned as a great master in the most exciting and perilous of field sports, the spearing of wild boars. His face has a most characteristic expression of ardour and impetuosity, which makes his countenance very interesting to me. Birth is a thing that I care nothing about; but his family is one of the oldest and best in England. ... He has no small talk. His mind is full of moral and political improvement, and his zeal boils over in his talk. His topics even in courtship, are steam navigation, the education of the natives, the equalisation of the sugar duties, the substitution of the Roman for the Arabic alphabet in the Oriental languages.¹

While not disapproving of such highmindedness Macaulay was one who excelled and delighted in more intimate conversation with members of his family. He noted that Trevelyan's behaviour was gauche, varying at times from the extremes of roughness and sheepishness, but that it was improving under Hannah's influence.²

Macaulay, accompanied by the Trevelyans, returned to England in 1838. Freed from financial worries by his "modest competence" of £25,000, Macaulay entered Parliament in 1839 and became Secretary at War in Melbourne's cabinet. This political success did not free him from the fear that his sister would soon have to return to India with Trevelyan. Fortunately for him, this fear remained unrealized;

1 G.O. Trevelyan, op. cit., p.279.

2 Less flattering comments which were not included in Life and Letters, G.M. Trevelyan, Sir G.O. Trevelyan, A Memoir (1932), p.8.

Trevelyan was offered the Assistant Secretaryship to the Treasury before the end of the year. The detailed circumstances of this appointment are obscure. Certainly Sir Francis Baring, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, welcomed the accession to the Treasury of a man with Trevelyan's proven energy and talents; and Trevelyan always acknowledged him as the sponsor of his English career. As for Macaulay, he was so relieved that he was never able to speak about the matter without emotion.¹ It must, indeed, have seemed providential that the Assistant Secretaryship fell vacant at this time, through the premature retirement of Sir Alexander Spearman. With a salary of £2000 (rising after five years to £2,500), it was one of the few posts in England that could match Trevelyan's position in India, where his salary in 1837 had been 24,000 rupees or about £2,200.² Whatever influence Macaulay may have used in arranging the appointment, he did not need to feel any qualms when private and public interest coincided so perfectly. His colleague, Baring, was pleased at the prospect of Trevelyan extending his missionary zeal to the improvement of public departments in England.

Conclusion

One of the most significant aspects of Trevelyan's service in India was the opportunity given to him to consider larger issues like fiscal reform and the extension of popular education - issues of a kind that were seldom presented to permanent officials in England, particularly those in the Treasury.

1 G.O. Trevelyan, op. cit. p.389.

2 I.O.R., "Bengal Civil Servants (Covenanted)", XX (1837). It had risen from 3,600 rupees or £340 in 1826. (Ibid., XIII, 1826.)

Prompted by his Whig belief in progress and sustained by moral fervour, Trevelyan acquired a messianic view of Indian affairs. With the support of his Whig superior, Bentinck, he did not shrink from publicity and he made extensive use of the Press to sound out and prepare opinion for government proposals. Not surprisingly, therefore, Trevelyan's career at the Treasury was to be a series of attempts to find an outlet for the boundless energy and enthusiasm that had been nurtured in India.

Chapter III

TREVELYAN AND THE TREASURY

In becoming Assistant Secretary, Trevelyan gained one of the best paid positions in the home Civil Service, with a salary of £2,000 rising to £2,500 after five years. However, the mere fact of being the chief permanent official in the most central government department did not in itself indicate power and authority. On the contrary, Trevelyan's position can be largely expressed in terms of over-work, frustration and disappointment. The difficulties of his position can, therefore, only be appreciated after an examination of the way in which the Treasury worked. Paradoxically, the part of Trevelyan's work as Assistant Secretary from which he derived most satisfaction was strictly speaking unconnected with the main part of Treasury business. This was his responsibility for the management of the Commissariat, an activity that will be considered separately in a later chapter.

Trevelyan's responsibility for the working of the Treasury itself is the most difficult part of his work to define. Although the Assistant Secretary was the antecedent of the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, his rôle in Trevelyan's time was much more limited. This distinction between the post as it then was and what it later became is the more important since it is central to the problems which Trevelyan himself faced - problems which were further confused by his wishful thinking about the powers which he felt he ought to possess. Certainly in specific situations Trevelyan was most influential. The most notable of these was

his supervision of relief measures during the Irish famine where the authority that he obviously exercised has led to his being given a modern Civil Service status: "The official title of Trevelyan was Assistant Secretary, but he was in fact the permanent head of the Treasury, and owing to his remarkable abilities and the structure of British administration, which results in a capable, permanent official exercising a high degree of power, he was able to influence policy to a remarkable degree."¹ However, his overall control of relief operations between 1845 and 1847 was exceptional and this gives added poignancy to the way he exercised authority on that occasion. Thus the paradox emerges that whereas he often appeared powerful to outsiders, in the Treasury itself he had far less influence. It could be argued that this official impotence in his own domain explains his willingness to busy himself in all kinds of ad hoc functions. Not for nothing did Trevelyan earn the reputation of being an incorrigible meddler.

The difficulties of definition also make for difficulties of description, as the materials illustrative of the day-to-day work of the Treasury consist of the intractable mass of Treasury Board papers. The officials of the Treasury were daunted by their bulk and their miscellaneous and often trivial nature. For this reason it has proved impossible to reconstruct Treasury operations in great detail, in order to determine whether accusations of inefficiency and counter-claims of overwork had any real substance. Bearing in mind that these criticisms and vindications were the assertions of interested persons, an attempt will be made to illustrate them by

1 Cecil Woodham Smith, The Great Hunger, (1962), p.58.

more accessible types of evidence. This approach is valid as we are more concerned with the development of Trevelyan's ideas and the reactions of his contemporaries, than with an attempt to unravel the "facts" about the nineteenth-century Treasury - facts that were unknown to the men who worked there.

1 The Working of the Treasury

When Trevelyan came to the Treasury in 1840 the structure of the department was fundamentally the same as it had been since 1805. In that year the decision-making part of the business of the Treasury had been formally separated from the executive part of routine minute-copying and letter-writing. A new permanent official, the Assistant Secretary, had been appointed to provide strength and continuity at decision-making level. The main part of the department had been divided into six divisions for the execution of routine work. This fundamental reorganization had been necessitated by the increase in the volume of work brought about by the war. The first Assistant Secretary, George Harrison, undertook much of the responsibility for war finance and this, together with the participation of the six chief clerks in the preparation of mainly formal minutes, relieved the two political secretaries from the pressure of work that had led to dangerous delays. This assistance at the highest level was of fundamental importance in the development of the Treasury in the first half of the century, since it helped to develop the concept of a small elite of permanent advisers. Although the established clerks retained their clerical duties, in a relative sense they progressively suffered a decline in administrative importance. This distinction

between administrative and executive duties has parallels in other departments, but its development at the Treasury has a special importance in that it had a profound effect on Trevelyan's attitude towards a whole range of administrative problems. Moreover, it is possible to interpret Trevelyan's ambition to reorganize the Treasury as a desire to accelerate this process. Trevelyan's criticisms of the Treasury were not fundamental but were the grievance of a rigorous person who saw glaring inconsistencies in the operation of the existing system. When Trevelyan complained that the senior officers of the Treasury were inadequately supported, he meant in effect that the arrangements of 1805 had been sound and that more and better men would be needed to make it work. This failure to adopt a flexible attitude towards the system is the key to his abortive attempts to reorganize the Treasury in 1849; it is the background for his final failure in both Treasury and Civil Service reform.

The structure of 1805 had been further refined by a Treasury Minute of 17 October 1834.¹ This minute is specially useful in giving a fairly clear picture of the way in which the Treasury worked. Some additional clarification of the position of the Treasury itself will need to be added.

Theoretically the Treasury was the department of the Lord Treasurer, the royal official entrusted with the care of the king's money. However, since 1714 this and other ancient high offices had been in commission and thus the "head" of the department was her Majesty's Lords Commissioners of the Treasury or the Treasury Board. The Commissioners consisted of the First Lord, the Chancellor of the

1 Printed as an appendix to the evidence of the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure of 1848 (P.P., 1847-48, XVIII ii, pp.78-85).

Exchequer and three junior lords. The title of First Lord was that assumed by the head of an administration. Not until the present century was the position of "prime minister" given any official recognition. However, since the time of Pitt the First Lord had ceased to attend meetings of the Treasury Board.¹ Even the Chancellor of the Exchequer rarely attended, although important matters were submitted to him; occasionally he initialled a minute to show that he approved a decision. Another indication of the Chancellor's imprecise relationship with his department was the fact that he did not possess an office in the Treasury Chambers. His separation from the Treasury was partly remedied by the informal help that could be gained from the Treasury clerks who were seconded for service as private secretaries.² In contrast, the formal business of the Treasury was conducted by the comparatively unimportant junior lords. Only one was needed to attend the Treasury Board as a quorum for validating minutes; two were needed for signing warrants and constitutions.³ Although they may have been "mere signers of papers" in the Treasury, they possessed an important political function as Parliamentary whips; as Canning had once said their task was "to make a House, to keep a House, and to cheer the Ministers".⁴

The real direction of affairs came from the Secretaries, both of whom were members of Parliament. Between them they covered the

1 D. Gray, Spencer Perceval: The Evangelical Prime Minister, 1767-1812 (Manchester, 1963), p.308.

2 There was a long tradition of clerks on the general establishment qualifying themselves for Board level appointments in this way: G. Arbuthnot, W.H. Stephenson and Leake had all done so.

3 Warrants were for payments made by the Paymaster General; Constitutions were the official letters of appointment for posts under Treasury control.

4 Quoted in E.I. Barrington (ed.), The Works and Life of Walter Bagehot (1915), V, p.312.

two most important aspects of Treasury activity, finance and patronage. They "assisted" the Board together with the permanent officials. In this way most of the control of revenue and expenditure was carried out. Much of this work was the application of Treasury precedent to individual cases. Only rarely did it prove necessary to obtain the added authority of the initials of the Chancellor or of the First Lord. The bulk of the work was transacted by the permanent Board level officials. By 1834 there were four of these. In order of authority they were:

Assistant Secretary	(First appointed in 1805)
Auditor of the Civil List	(1816)
Principal Clerk for Colonial Business	(1832)
Principal Clerk Assistant to the Secretaries	(1815)

It had originally been intended in 1805 that the Chief Clerks should continue to present their minutes to the Board, but gradually they had surrendered this function to this new class of superior officers, appointed on merit rather than seniority. In practice it proved impossible to display appropriate merit in the Treasury and all the men appointed to these positions had either been drawn from outside the department or had been ministerial private secretaries. This development seemed to reflect the need for even greater professionalism and concentration of power at Board or Principal Officer level. At the same time it appeared to stress the inadequacies of the clerks on the general establishment - inadequacies, which were the result of dead-eningly laborious promotion. In running its course, the reorganization of 1805 created a self-fulfilling prophecy of an increasingly over-burdened élite and an under-employed and increasingly demoralized rank-and-file.

The Minute of 17 October 1834 defined the process so far. It prescribed that all the permanent Board officials, and not only the Assistant Secretary as formerly, should initial the minutes they presented to the Board, unless the minutes had been previously initialled by one of the Secretaries. The work of the Assistant Secretary was also defined. The Minute observed that with the transfer to him of the Commissariat Department, both he and the Auditor of the Civil List would increasingly perform analogous duties. It was also prescribed that the Auditor of the Civil List should be selected in the same way as the Assistant Secretary, and that he should rank next to him. Clearly the position of the Assistant Secretary was no longer unique as his duties were assimilated to those of the other permanent Board officers; for like them he had been given a specific field of activity. The following table shows the responsibility for preparing minutes and is based on Trevelyan's evidence to the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure in 1848:

Patronage Secretary	Patronage; Woods and Forests
Other Parliamentary Secretary	Revenue Departments; Civil Contingencies
Auditor of the Civil List	Civil List; Bills likely to interfere with the revenue; Municipal Corporations; Revenue Prisoners
Clerk for Colonial Business	Colonial matters generally
Principal Clerk Assistant to the Secretaries	Less important revenue matters; Irish affairs
Law Clerk	Legal Establishments; Compensation; Expenses of criminal prosecutions
Two clerks on the general establishment with specific responsibilities:	
Crafer	Miscellaneous Estimates
Rumsey	Fees
Assistant Secretary	Commissariat; Expenditure; everything else not assigned to another officer ¹

1 P.P., 1847-48, XVIII (i), p.140.

There was comparatively little assistance for the Board officers. Apart from a private secretary for each of the Parliamentary Secretaries and the Assistant Secretary, there were only three assistants including the Clerk for Parliamentary Returns, none of whom was permitted to deputise for their superiors.

In moving to the executive divisions it is easier to give a more precise picture of the pattern of work. Inevitably the duller and more routine any occupation is, the easier it is to regularize its predictable course. The divisions merely executed the decisions of the Board. In 1834 the divisions had been reduced in number from six to four and the Revenue Department made a fifth division.¹ Although it was integrated into the career structure of the Treasury, this division enjoyed a special status. Whereas the other chief clerks had lost their right to present minutes to the Board, the chief clerk of the Financial Division retained this distinction. The others had a much more limited responsibility to see that letters were prepared in accordance with the minutes.

As to the actual conduct of business, this can best be described (as it was by contemporaries) as the passage of papers between various parts of the department. Although the Treasury Board papers shed little

1 Some attempt had been made in 1834 to rationalize the distribution of work, rather than merely ensuring that there was a sufficient volume of work to keep its clerks employed. From 1834 to 1848 the distribution was approximately as follows:

First Division	Military, naval, foreign and colonial matters, i.e. with the departments of the Secretaries of State
Second Division	Revenue departments, including the Post Office
Third Division	Bank of England; Indian affairs; legal matters; stationery and printing; the audit of public accounts; the Mint; Scottish affairs, excluding revenue
Fourth Division	Home affairs; Crown property; Ireland, excluding revenue; Civil List; other matters not specifically allotted to the other three
Fifth Division	Revenue and expenditure accounts; preparation of warrants for the issue of money

light on decision-making processes at the highest level, they do constitute the basic material processed by the Treasury machine. Indeed, it is possible to imagine this machine put in operation by an external stimulus, such as a letter or other form of document from an individual or from another department. On its arrival at the Treasury this document would first be sent to the Registry where it would be docketed (a brief endorsement noting the subject) and an entry made in a numerical register. This record included a note of the subject and the name of the Board officer to whom the document had been sent. If it was a comparatively simple matter, a minute would be drafted and formally "read" to the Board on one of the Board days, Tuesdays or Fridays. In practice minutes were never read but copies of them were laid upon the table. Certain specified matters and others that could not be readily solved by precedent might be referred to one of the Parliamentary Secretaries or the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In this way the most important decisions concerning revenue and patronage could be made at ministerial level. Naturally, significant matters were discussed in the process of collecting information and preparing minutes, but decisions came to the Board already made; the Board was the conclusion of a process, not, as it had once been, the time and place for discussion. After the meeting of the Board, when the draft became an official minute - an administrative pronouncement of the Treasury - the papers were sent to the appropriate division. There, the necessary warrants and letters were written and a fair copy of the minute made on foolscap paper so that it could be bound in a serial volume, arranged by division for each date. The whole body of papers was then returned to the Registry and the minute given

a serial number. Probably earlier papers and minutes on the same subject had been amassed; if the matter was one requiring the examination of precedents, the resulting "bundle" might be very large. In any one year the papers - documents of all kinds including minutes - would remain grouped in this bundle out of their strict numerical sequence. A record was kept in the paper keeper's book, or skeleton Register, showing the highest number (i.e. the latest one) where all relevant material was assembled. Thus the crudity of early nineteenth-century filing and methods of indexing would be partially overcome by the physical proximity of related papers.

The volume of business being dealt with and the frequent regrouping and transfer of papers inevitably gave ample opportunity for delay and error. By the Minute of 17 October 1834 the clerk in charge of the Registry had been enjoined to report on all papers which had not been returned to him within a week. The Board officers were also instructed to draw the attention of the Board to any papers more than a week old which had not been settled. Some delays would inevitably be caused through referring matters to other departments and the Registry clerk was also expected to prepare a list of letters unanswered for more than a fortnight. To ensure that the minutes themselves were acted upon quickly, each chief clerk was to show his own Department Book to the Board every week. These regulations imposed on the Board officers the ultimate responsibility for seeing that their part of work was properly carried out; they did nothing to instil initiative and imagination in a routine operation. As a consequence of this approach, the improvement of methods was often viewed as a refinement of the techniques of registration.

2 The Assistant Secretaryship

Although the Assistant Secretary had only a limited responsibility for the work performed in the Treasury, he did have a general responsibility for the efficient working of the whole department. The Minute of 19 August 1805 which established the post of Assistant Secretary described his duties as follows:

His peculiar duties as Assistant Secretary will be to attend to the Board at every sitting; to take the Minutes, to see that the same are regularly transcribed and carried into effect without delay, by the chief clerk, or in his absence by the senior clerk in each Branch, to revise the Minutes and Drafts of Letters and special Warrants prepared in conformity thereto ... and to report upon all such matters as may be referred to him by order of the Board; and generally to take care that all the Regulations for the Conduct of Business are punctually attended to; the Assistant Secretary only to give Leave of Absence to the Clerks, and to enter the same in a Book stating the Period and cause of Absence of each Clerk.¹

This overall supervision continued under succeeding Secretaries and was exercised by Trevelyan. However, the first Assistant Secretary, George Harrison, enhanced the status of the post by proving to be extremely valuable to Spencer Perceval, and later Lord Liverpool, in matters of patronage and finance. His advice was sought when the efficiency of other departments was in question and in funding negotiations with the City and the Bank of England. He may have been contemptuously dismissed as a mere clerk at the time of his appointment, but the increase

1 P.R.O., T.1/4308.

of his salary from £2,000 to £3,500 a year was an index of his real importance.¹ If one or both of Harrison's special concerns had been developed by his successors, the Assistant Secretaryship might have become more influential. Harrison's position embryonically revealed what were to become two of the main preoccupations of the Treasury: control of the Civil Service and management of government finance. Trevelyan endeavoured to develop the former side as his own special interest, while recognizing that the latter needed strengthening by the appointment of financial experts.

Many of Trevelyan's difficulties and frustrations at the Treasury can be explained in terms of temperament. Whereas his predecessors accepted the system as they found it, Trevelyan was impatient for change. With Harrison, for example, his willingness to remain in obscurity was the main reason for his success, and such an attitude was in keeping with the unspectacular conservatism of Lord Liverpool's administration. By contrast, from 1830 onwards many of the most notable reforms and innovations were achieved by men who were not ashamed of appearing as publicists - men like Edwin Chadwick, Kay Shuttleworth and Sir John Simon, who were outsiders to the Civil Service and who worked in new, ad hoc departments. He is a "zealot" rather than a "professional"² - a classification that further distinguishes him from all his predecessors.³

1 J.R. Torrance, "Sir George Harrison and the Growth of Bureaucracy in the Early Nineteenth Century", E.H.R., LXXXIII (1968), p.57. Harrison held an additional post, that of Law Clerk, and his legal background gave him an authority not enjoyed by his successors. By 1810, Harrison's salary was £3,500, together with a further £300 for examining accounts passed at the Treasury (P.R.O., T.1/4306, "Memorandum on Salaries and Establishment of the Treasury" n.d. 1820).

2 This classification is suggested by Henry Parris, Constitutional Bureaucracy (1969), pp. 138-140.

3 Sir George Harrison had come from the Land Tax Redemption Office. William Hill had been successively an assistant clerk in the Revenue Department of the Treasury, Principal Clerk Assistant to the Secretaries and Principal Commissariat Clerk. Col. James Stewart had

3 The Inquiries of 1848-49

An opportunity for Trevelyan to publicize his views came in 1848. An economic crisis in 1847, combined with proposals for increased taxation in the following year, produced in the Commons overwhelming demands for economy. One consequence was the setting up of the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure which had a responsibility for examining methods as well as costs of civil departments.¹ Trevelyan was determined to include in his evidence a detailed criticism of the organization of the Treasury. On 4 April 1848 he argued that the public was badly served by the lack of support given to the staff at Treasury Board level: "they are barely able to get through the business they have to do; they are only able to get through it by the most constant and intense exertion. In case of their absence, there are no proper persons to take their place." While this complaint was not likely to soften the heart of the most ardent economical reformer, Trevelyan had another and more telling point: "If we had more strength in that department of the Treasury, a great deal of business, for which Royal Commissions and Parliamentary Select Committees are not appointed, would be done in the ordinary course of business at the Treasury."² He

1 For the background to this situation and the wider significance of the Select Committee, see Chapter V passim.

2 P.P., 1847-48, XVIII (i), p175. The departments he suggested as suitable for investigation were the Board of Works and Commissioners of Education in Ireland, the Board of Works and Forests, and the rate of expenditure on prisons and hulks.

been transferred from the Board of Stamps (a revenue department). Sir Alexander Spearman had held no less than four Treasury posts before becoming Assistant Secretary: an assistant clerk in the Revenue Department, Clerk of Parliamentary Accounts, Principal Clerk Assistant and Auditor of the Civil List. (P.P., 1847-48, XVIII i, p.202.)

assumed that reform could be placed on a regular and permanent basis; that a few men of integrity in the Treasury would be more effective than intermittent ad hoc investigation by committees. However, as stated by Trevelyan, this would have meant an extension of Treasury influence at the expense of Parliament, and it is not surprising that this observation found no response in the report of the Select Committee.

Trevelyan's eagerness for a stronger Board establishment was partly due to his feeling that assistance would enable the Treasury to scrutinize its decisions more carefully. Trevelyan did not feel that many of these decisions could safely be delegated to other departments, giving point to this by the standard of vigilance that he himself had exercised at the height of the Irish famine:

Merely to keep down the business which every day falls upon me, properly to investigate and dispose of the many general and special cases which have to be disposed of by me, my work is greatly to interfere with my personal comfort, and to deprive me of social enjoyment. That is to say, I begin at a very early hour in the morning. I have no time for reading long papers, or series of papers at the Treasury, and so I read all the papers before breakfast. I then go to the Treasury and work all day, till my strength is completely exhausted, and then go home to sleep the greater part of the evening. I could not describe my duties better than that. Then there came this extraordinary pressure upon me, and my wonder is that I was able to get through it alive. It exceeded anything in my experience. I went through a great deal

of wear and tear of that sort in the course of twelve years' experience in India, but I never knew of anything equal to that; ...¹

In fairness to Trevelyan one must mention that his immediate predecessor, Sir Alexander Spearman, had been forced to retire through ill-health, aggravated by overwork. Spearman in fact told the Committee how on that occasion, his absence had resulted in his work being divided between the Financial Secretary, his own private secretary and other Treasury Board officials.²

Trevelyan's zeal only added to the burdens of his office. Much of the daily correspondence with officers in charge of operations in Ireland, for example, could have been assigned to a competent clerk with precise routine instructions, or better still have been avoided by effective local delegation. The frantic and partially unnecessary industry which Trevelyan exhibited on this occasion was very satisfying to him as a substitute for the policy-making authority which he lacked. His obvious delight in attending to detail was either an unconscious act of compensation or a recognition that some power was better than no power at all. Indeed, retrospectively he was able to boast in his Edinburgh Review article on the famine (later published as a book) that never before had three million people been fed under the control of one central authority.³ Fortunately for Trevelyan, no witness thought to question his method of work. He was probably spared this embarrassment as his objectives in Ireland

1 Ibid., p.179. Trevelyan went on to say that he and some other Treasury officials had been awarded a donation of a year's extra salary on account of their exceptional efforts - an act of ministerial generosity that was later questioned in the Commons. See infra pp. 286-7.

2 Ibid., p.202.

3 "The Irish Crisis", Edinburgh Review, LXXXVII (January 1848) p.90, published separately by Longmans later in the year.

were the same as those of the Select Committee: the strict control of government expenditure. In 1848, all efforts in this direction acquired a special kind of sanctity.

In his evidence before the Select Committee Trevelyan went on from complaint to make a number of practical propositions. Naturally these had to lead to economies in order to be relevant to the Committee's purpose. Trevelyan conveniently claimed that the work of the Treasury could be better done at less cost. No more money - indeed rather less - would need to be spent on staff, but it would need to be distributed quite differently. He suggested that if the Third and Fourth Divisions were consolidated, the established clerks released by this could be used to relieve the Board officers of some of their work. The routine copying originally performed by established clerks would in turn be delegated to copying clerks. Trevelyan's proposals for the recruitment of future senior officers were much more far-reaching. He suggested that, after allowing for the promotion expectations of existing clerks to be realized, a smaller number of appointments would be required at a higher level: "instead of taking very young men, whose education is not finished, and of whose qualifications we have had no experience, I would take young men who had completed their education at the universities or elsewhere; and in particular cases I would go beyond that, and take young men who have had some experience and success in life; for I conceive that no test of fitness for public service is equal to that of a person having succeeded in some other line of life". He felt that this élite should not be bored and deadened by mechanical work but should rather "be employed from the first in superior duties; they would then acquire an interest in their business, and would enter into the spirit of their profession, and they would then become better

qualified for rendering useful services to the public, either in the Treasury or anywhere else."¹ This view was questioned by some of the other witnesses who represented a more traditional view of public service. Spearman felt that dudgey was no bad thing. He was bitterly opposed to the separation of intellectual and mechanical labour on the grounds that trustworthiness and reliability was essential even for men who were in effect copyists.² This objection did not refute Trevelyan's claim for better staff at Board level. Moreover the pattern of Spearman's own career was a good example of a man devoting most of life to superior duties. Another similar objector was George Boyd who from the start of his career in 1809 had served in every division before becoming Chief Clerk of the Second Division.³ This proponent of steady and relentless progress through all the grades of the Office was inevitably hostile towards the notion of regarding the greater part of the Treasury's work as mere routine. Trevelyan was to find it extremely difficult to prevail against these traditional and deep-seated attitudes.

Although the Select Committee did not take Trevelyan's views very seriously, the matter did not end there. The Treasury set to work to revitalize itself. In November a Treasury committee was set up, consisting of Trevelyan, W. Gibson Craig (Junior Lord) and J. Parker (Parliamentary Secretary). This was an even better opportunity for Trevelyan to press and elaborate his views, since the committee felt that the Treasury had an obligation to set an example to other departments. This was a traditional attitude for the Treasury to adopt at a time of Parliamentary pressure for economy, and it increased

1 P.P., 1847-48, XVIII (i), pp. 177-178.

2 Ibid., pp. 195, 203.

3 Ibid., p.204.

the possibility of Trevelyan bringing about some changes.¹ After a general observation that the best type of economy would be to extend the Treasury's powers of financial control, the report, dated 3 November, repeated Trevelyan's complaint that lack of support made it impossible for the Board officers to attend to "general objects". An arrangement was proposed that formally recognized the Principal Officers as a distinct class by providing both for deputies and for a succession of qualified persons. This proposal was linked with a rationalization of the duties of the Principal Clerks.² The Assistant Secretary was, however, not given additional assistance since it stated that he would be relieved of excessive work if the other Principal Clerks had more help. Trevelyan did, of course, not wish to be specifically burdened with a personal staff to help him perform precise duties. He felt that he had a particular responsibility for attending to "general objects". The new arrangements would enable him to do this without his being driven to the limits of human endurance. To provide the staff required, the Treasury committee went beyond what Trevelyan had suggested, by reducing the general divisions from four to two.

Most of the committee's proposals were put into force by the Minute of 27 March 1849, but an important reservation was made on the one point that was central to Trevelyan's view of a reorganized Treasury.³ Trevelyan later attributed this to the influence of

1 During the reductions of 1821 the Treasury had made cuts of exemplary severity in its own salaries. In 1848 the possible inconsistency between improved efficiency and reduced cost had been glossed over by Trevelyan's proposals for staff redeployment.

2 P.P., 1854, XXVII, p.37. The documents of the inquiry were printed in 1854 as part of Reports of Committees of Inquiry into Public Offices (P.P., 1854, [1715], XXVII).

3 The unexceptionable parts of the report dealt, among other things, with the consolidation of the divisions; the discontinuance of extra allowances for additional work; the prohibition of clerks holding directorships. Trevelyan was enthusiastic about these small, even if they were not radical, improvements. (Ibid., pp. 51-55.)

George Arbuthnot, the private secretary of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Charles Wood.¹ Certainly the reasons given for rejecting the notion of an élite class of clerks were traditional administrative ones as well as political:

The Report appears to contemplate that in the case of the absence of the Principal Clerks, their Assistants should act for them, but my Lords are of the opinion that a general recognition of the claims of subordinate officers, without reference to their standing in the Department, to have the management and direction of any important branch of the business, even for a short time, would be open to serious objection ...²

The Minute went on to stress that all Treasury clerks should be given an opportunity to show whether or not they were fit to occupy superior positions. Here, the old theory that the Treasury was still composed of a homogeneous body of clerks reasserted itself. In practice, usually only those established clerks who had served as private secretaries could hope for principal clerkships. Moreover, the Minute was careful to reserve the right to make external appointments when necessary. Naturally the political heads of the Treasury were reluctant to relinquish control over the appointment of their immediate subordinates. From this, Trevelyan realized that the crux of the matter lay in the initial recruitment of suitable staff. One result was the diversion of his efforts into Civil Service reform; another was to be his final attempt to implement his ideas in the Treasury in 1856.

1 Arbuthnot certainly occupied a special position. In 1850 he was commended "for his constant and zealous exertion which he /Sir C. Wood/ had received from him in times of great difficulty and on subjects of the greatest moment and importance". He was rewarded by being appointed a supernumerary senior clerk and later in the year succeeded Pennington as Auditor of the Civil List. (H.M.T., Departmental Arrangement Book, III, 22 March 1850, 12 November 1850.)

2 P.P., 1854, XXVII, p.50.

The extreme caution of the Minute was also reflected in the rejection of a related proposal to make all promotions on merit. Hitherto seniority had prevailed in promotions below senior clerk. The framers of the Minute were not anxious to introduce a competitive element and they considered that deference, obedience and sufficient ability were all the qualities needed to justify promotion.¹ In the same vein, the Minute went on to warn against the employment of copying clerks, to the extent of depriving established clerks of the experience of mastering essential business routines. It was abundantly clear to Trevelyan that these qualifications substantially diminished the force of his proposals. He had been able to expound his plans for improved staffing but he had actually achieved very little.

One projected reform was reserved for further discussion. This was the form of the official Treasury record, the Fair Minutes. It had been suggested by the Treasury committee's report that the bulk of the Fair Minutes should be reduced by the omission of matters of secondary importance and of those matters that were fully recorded elsewhere. As these minutes were prepared at an annual cost of £2,000, their reduction might produce a painless economy. The Treasury committee were asked to investigate the matter further by comparing the Treasury system with those in other departments. Ponderous as it was, the Treasury's registration system was found to be a sufficiently convenient guide to the original papers, for the Fair Minutes to be dispensed with in routine cases. In future, each class of business excluded from the Fair Minutes was itself to be the subject of a minute, setting out rules and precedents. Subsequent modifications of such general rules

1 Ibid., p.56.

were still to be recorded in the Fair Minutes. The committee felt that it was in this way that the "consolidation and classification of information" contemplated by Sir Francis Baring in 1841 could be brought about. Since there was a logical connection between indexing and selecting minutes for inclusion as Fair Minutes, the Registry was to assume responsibility for copying them.¹ Although these changes were mainly technical, they form a small but practical illustration of the need to formalize separate processes for policy and routine decisions. Trevelyan was quite satisfied with this part of the reorganization of 1848.

4 The Reorganization of the Financial Division

After the false promise of 1848 Trevelyan's concern for the reorganization of the Treasury took a new direction. From 1850 onwards he helped to make the Financial Department a useful instrument of fiscal and financial policy; having failed to remodel the Treasury, he became increasingly interested in what was becoming one of the most important parts of it. The prompting for this new development was essentially political and arose from the growing complexity of financial problems. The abandonment of most protective duties combined with the steady rise of the costs of government to make fiscal details a central concern. This fiscal reform of the fifties is inevitably associated with the name of Gladstone, and it was Trevelyan's collaboration with him that resulted in a brief period of decisive influence.

1 Ibid., p.53. In 1841, Trevelyan had himself drafted the Minute of 26 January that had placed the Principal Clerk Assistant to the Secretaries in charge of the Registry, in an attempt to improve "consolidation and classification of information" (P.R.O., T.1/4558/2045).

Consideration of these problems was precipitated in 1850 with the death of T.C. Brooksbank, Chief Clerk of the Financial Division.¹ This took the form of a memorandum by G.W. Brande, Principal Clerk for Colonial Business, with observations upon it by Trevelyan. As Brande had at one time been Secretary to the Colonial Audit Board he was one of the best qualified men in the Treasury to offer detailed advice. In the memorandum, dated March 1850, Brande contended that the Financial Division should have full information on every tax and loan. These details, many of them embedded in the records of the revenue departments, would obviously be essential to any dynamic Chancellor of the Exchequer. His suggestions about expenditure were an extension of the improved methods of accountability that Trevelyan had been helping to apply to army expenditure. In particular, Brande felt that the Treasury should be able to provide a clear picture of the actual, as opposed to the theoretical, financial situation: not only the Exchequer grants but also the expenditure of it within each year. The Treasury should also serve to indicate expenditure by the revenue departments which was not subject to Parliamentary vote.²

Trevelyan's remarks written in April 1850 concentrated on the undesirable dependence of the Treasury on the revenue departments for information about the departments themselves: "The Treasury is, however, dependent on the Revenue Departments themselves for the

1 Brooksbank's long personal involvement with all aspects of revenue, particularly with funding, illustrated the difficulty of finding an adequate replacement from within his own division. He had devoted a lifetime to the Treasury, entering as an extra clerk in 1796 and rising to become Chief Clerk of the Revenue Department (later Financial Division) in 1829. (J.C. Sainty, Treasury Officials, 1660 - 1870, 1972, p.115.)

2 Brande's memorandum and Trevelyan's observations were later included by Trevelyan in the second blue book on the Civil Service, Papers relating to the Re-organisation of the Civil Service, P.P., 1854-55, XX, pp. 432-436.

information required for the extension of this control over them, the rule being that every proposal for an alteration of the existing status would be supported by a complete examination, ab initio, of the facts of the case, as if nothing were known about them at the Treasury. In the same way, when any complaint or suggestion is received at the Treasury, it is referred to the department concerned for a report ...". Trevelyan felt that the Treasury was obliged to defer judgment to the revenue department concerned and was anxious to enable the Treasury to be something more than a rubber stamp. Trevelyan went on to repeat his view (extremely similar to that of Baring) of the need for the Treasury to be able to ensure that the fiscal machine was suited to current needs:

What takes place in the absence of this constantly-adjusting and regulating power, is that, while everything else is changing, the revenue establishments, and the rules and forms of proceeding connected with them, remain the same, until they become, by their unnecessary expensiveness on some points, their insufficiency on others, and their unsuitableness to the actual state of business on nearly all, a subject of general complaint. The Treasury is then forced by Parliament and by public opinion to appoint a Commission of Inquiry, upon whose recommendation certain remedial steps are taken; after which everything relapses into its former state of inaction, until a new clamour and pressure from without arise, and a new Commission is appointed.

This was a reasonable interpretation of the fitful evolution of institutions and methods brought about by commissions, committees

and inquiries from the time of Lord North onwards. Trevelyan preferred to regard this side of government as a machine and he developed a topical industrial analogy: "The working of these great establishments would be watched by the Treasury as a master-manufacturer watches his machinery: every redundancy would be reduced, and every defect would be supplied as soon as it was brought to light; and the inconvenience, waste, and loss of power which at present arise from long periods of neglect would be avoided." In the same way as he hoped that the Treasury could become the hub of the Civil Service, Trevelyan expected the Financial Division to become the pivot of fiscal policy.

Trevelyan believed that "correct" opinions on finance and taxation could be formed in much the same way as they could be formed on any other aspect of government. All that was needed was an impersonal mechanism to establish the truth. He accepted that a Chancellor of the Exchequer might have the advice of the revenue departments, the Board of Trade, his private secretaries and the Chief Clerk of the Financial Division, but only the Treasury - he believed - could form a detached and comprehensive view. He agreed with Brande that the Treasury should be able to prepare for the Chancellor a well-digested statement on every aspect - fiscal, political, economic and social - of every tax or proposed tax. One presumes that by this means the true interests of the nation were to be protected, and that crises of the kind brought about in 1848 by the injudicious increase of income tax at a time of economic depression would be avoided. This new kind of expertise would be complementary to the more traditional skills in the management of government borrowing. Trevelyan proposed, for example, that Brooksbank's accumulated experience should be preserved by the careful arrangement of his

fiscal and financial memoranda.

It is not clear what use was made of Brande's and Trevelyan's papers in 1850. Sir Charles Wood, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, had already shown that he was far from keen to remodel the Treasury in accordance with Trevelyan's advice. To Gladstone, however, this suggestion that the Treasury might be an instrument of policy had much more appeal, and he was later able to put Trevelyan's enthusiasm to a number of limited constructive uses.

To turn from the comparative simplicity of a theory of reform to the complex reality of the staff structure of the Financial Division indicates the practical difficulty of making any substantial change in the methods of fiscal supervision. It might be supposed that the death of Brooksbank made the reorganization of the Financial Division easier, but change was limited by a pattern of promotion which had been laid down ten years earlier. While Sir Francis Baring was Chancellor of the Exchequer between 1839 and 1841, he had been struck by the need to arrange for a successor to Brooksbank. As Treasury reorganization had opened promotion to the chief-clerkship of the Financial Division to all suitably qualified senior clerks, he had appointed C.L. Crafer and George Litchfield as senior clerks, making Crafer the senior of the two.¹ Accordingly, Crafer became Chief Clerk on Brooksbank's death. He accepted the ideas expressed in Brande's memorandum, while admitting his inexperience for the post.² Crafer was in fact more eager to become a principal clerk, and he was further promoted in February 1851 as Principal Clerk for Colonial Business in succession to Brande. With its extra £200 salary this

1 T.L.B., XXXV, p.252.

2 P.P., 1854-55, XX, pp. 438-440.

post was the reward for thirty-nine years' service. In accordance with Baring's scheme he was replaced by George Litchfield, an even older man who had entered the Treasury in 1808, and who on grounds of age alone was clearly incapable of remodelling the Financial Division. This undistinguished appointment might have conveniently been regarded as an interim measure, if it had been possible to find a suitable successor according to the usual rules of Treasury promotion. A serious effort was made by working down the list of assistant clerks eligible for promotion until a suitable person could be found. The two senior assistants in the Financial Division were eliminated: one of them, Spencer Drummond, refused; the other, Courtney, was pressed by Trevelyan to waive his claim on the grounds of inadequate qualifications and ill-health. The post finally devolved upon W.H. Stephenson, a man of ambition and ability, who was at the time serving as private secretary to Sir Charles Wood.¹ Stephenson was, however, so invaluable in this latter capacity that he did not return to take up his appointment until August 1851.² Furthermore, he did not stay long in his new post, for he, like his predecessor, was attracted by the more immediate reward of a principal-clerkship, and this led in February 1852 to his succeeding Leake as Principal Clerk Assistant to the Secretaries.³ In this post Stephenson became Trevelyan's main adviser on matters of reorganization, but of course was no longer available to improve the Financial Division.

The alarming and bewildering frequency of these staff changes was mainly due to an unusually large number of retirements at the top of the office. But they also revealed the near impossibility of

1 H.M.T., Departmental Arrangement Book, III, 25 February 1851.

2 Ibid., 7 March, 12 August 1851.

3 Ibid., 20 February 1852.

finding a qualified Chief Clerk by minor adjustments to the existing staff structure. It was clear that impetus for fundamental change could only emerge from wider political and administrative needs. Fortunately for Trevelyan he was able to channel these needs through his close links with two successive Chancellors of the Exchequer, Disraeli and Gladstone.

With Disraeli, Trevelyan became for the first and last time a close adviser to a Chancellor. Disraeli knew little about the details of finance. He had been encouraged by Lord Derby to accept the post with the famous remark: "You know as much as Mr. Canning did. They give you the figures." Unfortunately there is little to show how far Trevelyan made good the Chancellor's technical deficiencies. He was, however, accorded the doubtful distinction by Disraeli's biographers of having helped to prepare the ill-fated "compensatory" budget of 1852¹ - the desperate bid of the protectionists to find a policy to replace protection as such by extending income and house tax in order to pay for tax concessions to the agricultural, shipping and sugar interests. However this policy failed to reunite the Conservatives and offended other interests, and the ministry was defeated.² Despite the fact that Treasury officials usually had little patience with Chancellors who failed, Trevelyan was touchingly grateful for Disraeli's appreciation of his services on leaving office.³

In terms of policy, Gladstone was a Chancellor after Trevelyan's heart. With this went the difficulty, that in financial matters Gladstone - with his immense professional ability - dwarfed Trevelyan.

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1. W.F. Money Penny and G.E. Buckle, The Life of Disraeli, III (1914), p.428.
 2. S.H. Northcote, Twenty Years of Financial Policy (1862), p.193.
 3. Trevelyan to Disraeli, 29 December 1852, T.L.B., XXX, p.163.

Trevelyan was eloquent in his praise of Gladstone's budget of 1853 - a proposal which, among other things, planned the eventual ending of income tax. Trevelyan was strongly opposed to the tax and felt that Gladstone's policy was "correct" and he wrote on 21 April: "I sincerely congratulate you on the success and honour of your Budget. I say success, because whatever its fate as a Party or Political measure may be, you have been extremely successful in preparing a scheme by which the best interests of the Country are provided for to a remarkable and unexpected extent."¹ Trevelyan's respect was reflected in the first practical suggestion he made about Treasury organization. This was the essentially traditional proposal that Gladstone should select one of the best Treasury clerks to be his private secretary, but with the additional object that the clerk would bring back to the Treasury "the knowledge of the recent proceedings of the Chancellor of the Exchequer."²

From the time he took office Gladstone had been considering a reorganization of the accounts of revenue departments. This was a completely non-party issue, the need for which had been established in Brande's memorandum of March 1850. As the details of this change will be dealt with in the next chapter, it is sufficient to say that by February 1854 the transfer of the revenue departments to the estimates called for a major change in the accounts kept by the Financial Division. Fully aware of the difficulties in finding a man on the Treasury establishment capable of undertaking this work, Trevelyan had suggested that W.G. Anderson, the Assistant Paymaster General, should be added to the Financial Division.³ By this step the

1 Add. MS., 44333 f.34.

2 Trevelyan to Gladstone, 3 January 1854, Ibid., f.79.

3 Trevelyan had also been trying to ease the situation in the Treasury by pressing for the retirement of one possible claimant to head the Financial Division. This was Courtney, who had insisted in February 1852 on becoming Senior Clerk when Stephenson had been

embarrassment of making a blatantly external appointment might be avoided. There would be the added administrative advantage of formalizing the dependence of the Pay Office on the Treasury. Trevelyan was enthusiastic about this grafting on of new stock without the trouble of cutting out of dead wood. In a letter to Gladstone on 8 February 1854, he expressed his confidence that the proposed arrangement, which included two other key appointments, would be able to cope with the increased expenditure caused by the outbreak of war with Russia: "that with Anderson at the Treasury and the Pay Office, Bromley at the Admiralty and Hoffay at the Audit Board I shall have no fear of meeting, without waste or confusion or arrear, any amount of war pressure upon the Account Departments".¹ Quite apart from the wider issue of reform, the war demanded a quick and workable solution to the uncertainties surrounding the Financial Division. Trevelyan was giving the matter considerable thought and he considerably revised his opinion about the practicability of this compromise arrangement. On 9 February he informed Gladstone that after taking Stephenson's advice he was convinced that it would be desirable and feasible to retire Litchfield prematurely in order to make way for Anderson, and thereby to link the Pay Office with the Treasury. Trevelyan then went

1 Add, MS., 44333 f.150.

further promoted. From March to December he had been Disraeli's private secretary - a post which, it was felt, was consistent with his duties in the Financial Division. (H.M.T., Departmental Arrangement Book, III, 2 March, 24 December 1852.) Despite this assurance, Trevelyan was determined to get rid of him on account of his poor record of attendance since 1848 (T.L.B., XX, pp. 256, 268.) In January 1854, he was cunningly persuaded to go on extended sick leave with the vague, unwritten promise of being given any other senior clerkship that might later fall vacant. (T.L.B., XXXII, pp. 163, 210.)

on to point out the need for a salary of £1,500 for the new combined post. The existing equality in the salaries of the chief clerks was, he felt, a proof of the bad arrangement of the Treasury. He also took the opportunity of referring to Arbuthnot's opposition and his influence with Sir Charles Wood which had prevented reform in 1849.

Finally Trevelyan proceeded from the particular to the general. Naturally the salary of the head of the Financial Division had led him to consider the status of principal officers. He felt that the existing practice of selecting some of these from the offices superintended by the Treasury should be extended to make it the usual form of recruitment for all the established clerks. He was convinced that the £300 - £500 salaries of assistant clerks would serve to attract the best men from the Pay Office, the Post Office and revenue departments. He planned to convert the exceptional nature of Anderson's appointment into a general principle:

This plan properly carried out would make the Treasury really a supervising office, possessed of a firm hold of all the branches of business which it has to deal with, would introduce a powerful principle of unity into the Public Service; and would give a very beneficial stimulus to exertion in every other Department.¹

Inevitably he was tempted to twist the immediate problem to find additional supporting arguments in favour of his plans for the Civil Service as a whole - plans which had reached a crucial stage of development in February 1854.

1 Trevelyan to Gladstone, 9 February 1854, Add. MS., 44333 f. 182. Trevelyan had earlier suggested to James Wilson, the Financial Secretary, that the Treasury should confine itself to prescribing financial rules for subordinate departments and to supervising their execution. (13 September 1853, T.L.B., XXXII, p.54.) Clearly Treasury staff who were experienced in the procedures of subordinate departments might make the best watch dogs.

However, in order to complete the arrangements for Anderson's appointment, Trevelyan was obliged to attend to a number of much more mundane details. On 21 February, he reported to Gladstone that Anderson's new combined post was being opposed by Lord Monteagle, the Comptroller of the Exchequer. Monteagle represented a thoroughly outmoded view of financial propriety, but his opposition was "plausible and clever". Trevelyan encouraged Gladstone by reminding him of the advantages of radical change:

A new financial machinery has to be constructed founded on the completion of the symmetrical system of annual Estimates, and carried through books of account to be opened for the purpose, to a simple comprehensive Balance Sheet of the whole of the National income and expenditure and a separate statement of the saving or excess on each vote. Much careful manipulation will also be required to reduce the present cumbrous and complex forms of issue to harmony with this new state of things, and 3rd the ordinary duties of the Financial Room including the highly important function of assisting and advising the Chancellor of the Exchequer as Mr. Brooksbank used to do, have to be carried on.

These advantages might still be achieved by a simple modification of the plan, for since the combined post had originally been conceived as an expedient to bring Anderson into the Treasury in the least painful manner, Trevelyan was quite prepared to give up the idea that he should retain the Assistant Paymastership. Accordingly, he suggested that Hoffay (whom it was proving difficult to appoint as Secretary to the Board of Audit) should take over Anderson's Paymastership.¹

1 Ibid., f. 198.

The concluding arrangements in the Treasury were equally time-consuming. Trevelyan was anxious that the Clerk for Parliamentary Accounts, Shelley, should become the Division's Senior Clerk. This was another useful piece of consolidation, to which Shelley raised difficulties by declining to accept promotion, except on special conditions - conditions which were unspecified in Trevelyan's explanatory letter to Gladstone. Trevelyan suggested that the Chancellor should formally offer him the post, before offering it in turn to Edwin Crafer.¹ The outcome was unexpected for Trevelyan: Shelley accepted and was appointed by the same Minute of 24 March that also appointed Anderson. Possibly as a result of Shelley's initial reluctance, the Minute arranged for a further clerk to be in charge of preparing Parliamentary returns. In addition to this consolidation, another indication of the new status of the Financial Division was the description of its Chief Clerk as "the confidential adviser of the Chancellor of the Exchequer". His post was to rank with the Principal Clerk for Colonial Business and the Principal Clerk Assistant to the Secretaries, and thus was to carry a salary of £1,200. As this was the amount he was already receiving, Anderson was also to receive a personal allowance as a reward for his promotion.²

Some of the satisfaction that Trevelyan must have felt in helping to implement a small yet vital part of his scheme must have been dispelled by a well-informed attack upon him in The Times. Coming more than a year after Anderson's appointment, it served to keep alive some of the bitterness that had been aroused by disappointed expectations. On 18 June 1855, a pseudonymous letter by "Civilis", claiming to be

1 Trevelyan to Gladstone, 15 March 1854, Add. MS., 44333 f. 266.

2 Treasury Minute of 24 March 1854. H.M.T., Departmental Arrangement Book, III.

written by a Civil Servant with a quarter of a century's experience, scathingly attacked Trevelyan for his ignorance of English official practices. It claimed that it was Trevelyan's ineptitude that had made it necessary for him to go outside the Treasury in order to find a man with Anderson's qualities. It stressed the responsibility of permanent heads of departments for achieving reforms in the Civil Service. However, it pointed out that the heads of departments were usually not selected from the main body of Civil Servants:

Take the instance of Sir Charles Trevelyan ... He is a man of untiring industry, of energy indomitable, ambitious and public-spirited. How came he to be Assistant-Secretary of the Treasury? What are his peculiar qualifications for that position?

Sir Charles Trevelyan came to England on furlough, after ten or twelve years well spent in the Civil-Service of India, and when his brother-in-law, Macaulay, had a seat in Lord Melbourne's Cabinet. He had acquired a reputation for great integrity under trying circumstances, plodding industry in administrative details, and a desire to improve by education the status and prospects of our Indian fellow subjects. He was placed at the head of department requiring a thorough knowledge of finance, with the very elements of which he was unacquainted, and which he has never since shown himself possessed of any aptitude to acquire.¹

One consequence of his unfamiliarity with finance was, it was alleged, the upsetting of Baring's plans for the succession to the Financial Division. As we have seen, Trevelyan could hardly be blamed for the

1 The Times, 18 June 1855, p.9 col.e. A similar criticism of Trevelyan's professional origins had been made by George Arbuthnot in March 1854, see infra. pp. 190-191.

failure of this plan to produce the right man at the right time. He, therefore, immediately wrote to Gladstone (by now out of office) to justify himself. Although he might be over sensitive on the matter of Anderson's appointment, he was anxious to preserve his reputation and he asked Gladstone's help to prevent Anderson's appointment continuing to harm his relations with other members of the Treasury. Gladstone's help would be all the more useful, as Trevelyan did not feel that it would be either effective or appropriate for him to defend himself in the Press. Moreover, he had no wish to apologise for what had been done. Indeed his only complaint was that he had not been able to do more: "it is unfair to hold me responsible for the arrangements relating to the Treasury Establishment; for, as you well know, I have no control. If I had, many things would be different. For instance, every appointment to the Treasury would be made on the same principle as Mr. Anderson's - that is, I would have no situation on the Establishment except the Supplementary Clerks with a smaller salary than £200 a year, and would select to fill the vacancies at the Treasury the best of the Clerks of a few years' standing belonging to the Revenue and other subordinate Establishments."¹ In restating his views yet again for Gladstone's benefit, Trevelyan pathetically revealed how little he had so far achieved. The next phase of development at the Treasury was to be even less satisfactory to him.

5 The Reorganization of 1856

Shortly after the episode of the letter in The Times, Trevelyan made his last sustained attempt to remodel the Treasury. On 20 September 1855, he sent Sir George Cornwall Lewis, Gladstone's successor as

1 Trevelyan to Gladstone, 18 June 1855, T.L.B., XXXV, p.251.

Chancellor, a paper on the establishment. Describing it as the "mature fruit of many years' experience and reflection", he asked for it to be shown to Palmerston.¹ This appeal to the highest authority was linked with an attempt to win Arbuthnot over to his point of view. While on holiday at St. Leonards, Trevelyan wrote a long letter on 7 October, in which he attempted to convince Arbuthnot that the Trevelyan scheme for the reinforcement of the Treasury already existed embryonically. The letter recapitulated developments so far. He stressed that the established clerks should have every opportunity of qualifying themselves for the highest posts, including that of the Assistant Secretary, but that this process could not take place until extra clerks relieved them of excessive routine work.² This was a belated effort to allay the fears that Trevelyan's involvement in Anderson's appointment in Civil Service reform generally had aroused. Trevelyan had realized too late that his pronouncements on Treasury organization had in the main only served to create resentment.

In attempting to implement his plan Trevelyan was only able to make one or two token gestures. For example, he was anxious to exploit every opportunity to reduce the number of established clerks. Thus when in October 1855 Anderson wanted a well-qualified accountant for double-entry book-keeping, Trevelyan suggested to Palmerston through Lewis that the appointment should be as permanent extra clerk.³ When he failed to obtain any response from Palmerston, Trevelyan reminded Lewis of the paper he had written in September, referring to Anderson's book-keeper as an illustration of the practicability of what he had proposed.⁴

1 Trevelyan to Lewis, 20 September 1855, Ibid., p.272.

2 Trevelyan to Arbuthnot, 7 October 1855, T.L.B., XXXV, p.274.

3 H.M.T., Departmental Arrangement Books, III, 29 October and 22 November 1855; Trevelyan to Lewis, 22 November 1855, T.L.B., XXXVI, p.12.

4 Trevelyan to Lewis, 1 December 1855, Ibid., p.14.

The next episode in Trevelyan's campaign is described in a series of letters to Sir William Hayter, Patronage Secretary, in February 1856. On 7 February Trevelyan sent him an outline of the existing establishment and his proposals for changing it. Trevelyan's tone was almost apologetic: "As the primary duty of the situation I hold is to maintain and improve the efficiency of the Establishment and long experience and reflection have convinced me that this very important public object cannot be obtained without making the appointment with the distinct reference to the nature of the work to be performed, I feel confident that Lord Palmerston will approve of my having brought the subject fully under his consideration." Hayter in reply must have brought home to Trevelyan the strength of opposition to these pretensions - pretensions which appeared to some of Trevelyan's colleagues as claims to personal aggrandisement. In a further letter on 9 February Trevelyan disclaimed any wish to increase his won powers: "I do not ask for the confidence which has so much to the public advantage been reposed in Sir Benjamin Hawes and his Chief Clerk, Mr. Drewry. The appointments will be made by others, but I have earnestly submitted to Lord Palmerston that they should be of a kind suited to the duties to be performed." This was at least a tactful reply to a Chief Whip whose assiduity in the manipulation of patronage became almost legendary.¹ Nevertheless, Trevelyan still felt it appropriate to express his regret that Hayter had opposed the attempts by Lord John Russell to invigorate the Treasury in 1849 - as necessary then as when they were partially brought about in 1855.²

1 A month later Trevelyan clashed with Hayter over the failure to find employment for ablebodied men on the redundant list (see p.235 infra).

2 Ibid., pp. 90, 91.

It is clear from Trevelyan's further correspondence with Hayter, that Trevelyan's campaign to reduce the establishment of superior clerks prompted Arbuthnot to launch a minor counter-attack. Apparently, Arbuthnot wrote direct to Palmerston to protest against Trevelyan's criticisms of the bad effects of copying which, he felt, were a slight upon the men who had already undergone this kind of training. In his reply to Hayter on 11 February 1856, Trevelyan expressed his pain at Arbuthnot's method of airing a complaint. While rejecting the extreme interpretation that had been placed on his own observations on copying, Trevelyan cited the examples of the arrangements to employ more supplementary clerks, that had been reached with the permanent heads of the Colonial Office and the Board of Trade. He also mentioned the similar recommendations that had been made in the suppressed report on the Foreign Office. Trevelyan particularly resented Arbuthnot's assertion that the Treasury had "deteriorated" under his direction. He claimed that, as regards copying, he had only been attempting to put into force the Minute of 1849.¹ Yet, regardless of assigning personal responsibility, the prolonged state of uncertainty over the organization of the Treasury, combined with Trevelyan's own semi-public pronouncements on administrative reform, demanded an authoritative decision.

In attempting to force the pace of change, Trevelyan found himself placed increasingly on the defensive. Palmerston's scepticism of Trevelyan's proposals led to his questioning the effectiveness of Trevelyan as an Assistant Secretary. In a letter to Lewis on 19 May 1856, Trevelyan denied that the Treasury's organization was "chaotic". If it was unsatisfactory, this was due to the failure to implement the proposals of 1848.² Trevelyan made one last plea for this to be done.

1 Ibid., p.94.

2 Ibid., p.158.

His desperate persistence was due to his realization that the Treasury was about to be remodelled on principles different from his own.

The Minute of 4 July 1856 was a turning point in Treasury organization. While Trevelyan's diagnosis of the need for a proper succession to the higher posts was accepted, it was not surprising that the remedy was the complete reversal of what he had always envisaged. In essence, it was a return to the system that had existed before 1805. Instead of a horizontal division between Board level and routine work, the Office was to be regarded once more as an entity. In addition, the old formality of Board meetings was abandoned, and thus with it the cumbersome centralization of authority. The work of the Treasury was to be divided between six divisions, each headed by a principal officer. In this way all routine work, including the conversion of minutes into letters and fair minutes, was to be carried out under the direction of the officer responsible for making policy decisions. The only mechanical work that was to be separated from the rest was the making of copies of letters and other documents in a new department to be attached to the Registry. By these means the clumsy ritual of excessive written communication would be avoided. The whole office was to be regulated according to fixed rules under the general supervision of the Assistant Secretary, to whom the Principal Officers were to be responsible after reference to the Parliamentary secretaries. However, his more particular responsibility in being only one of a number of principal officers was confirmed and formalized by his being put in charge of one of the new divisions. In this way Trevelyan's scope for offering advice and for attempting to interfere in the day-to-day management of the

office was strictly curtailed.¹ However, Trevelyan derived some immediate satisfaction from the revised office establishment in that it increased established senior positions at the expense of junior ones. There were to be ten first-class clerks in place of five senior clerks (the former nomenclature) and sixteen second-class clerks in place of thirteen assistant clerks, while the number of third-class clerks (junior clerks) was reduced from thirteen to seven.²

The Assistant Secretary was instructed by the Minute to prepare new office rules in collaboration with the Auditor of the Civil List and the Principal Clerks. In view of the difficulties Trevelyan had always encountered in his dealings with Arbuthnot,³ it was clearly going to be extremely difficult for Trevelyan to introduce something of the substance of his earlier ideas into the detailed implementation of the Minute. In a letter to Arbuthnot on 22 September, for example, Trevelyan was anxious that the succession to the Principal Clerkships should be ensured, by including in the rules a provision that the First Class Clerk in each division could authenticate minutes in the absence of his Principal. This was one of Trevelyan's suggestions that Sir Charles Wood had found so objectionable in 1849. Quite apart from the practical value of this in providing for continuity, Trevelyan now felt that giving the First Class Clerks more responsibility would

1 Trevelyan's successor, G.A. Hamilton, succeeded in being relieved of Divisional responsibilities within a year of his appointment (H.M.T., Departmental Arrangement Books, IV, Minute of 20 December 1859).

2 H.M.T., Departmental Arrangement Books, III, 4 July 1856; J.C. Sainty, Treasury Officials, 1660-1870 (1972), pp. 71-72.

3 It is not easy to assess the extent of friction and conflict between two officials. After Anderson's appointment, Arbuthnot expressed discontent with his own salary. He produced a memorandum on 3 October 1855, in which he contrasted his predecessor's promotion to Assistant Secretary with his own failure to obtain an increase in salary. (H.M.T., Treasury Establishments, typescript copy.) The following day, Trevelyan wrote to Lewis asking that Arbuthnot's salary should be equal to that of the Principal Clerk and Arbuthnot, like Anderson, was awarded a personal allowance of £300 in addition to his salary of £1,200. (H.M.T., Departmental Arrangement Books, III, Minute of 27 November 1855.)

make it impossible for them to be regarded as seniority appointments.¹
This veiled attempt to extend the number of "administrative" appointments failed. In the final version of the rules there was only a general observation that the First Class Clerks were to be responsible for the transaction of business in the absence of their Principals. Neither Arbuthnot nor the political heads of the Treasury were anxious to provide Trevelyan with rules liable to the latter's highly personal interpretation.

Trevelyan had already submitted his draft of the rules to Lewis on 11 September. He said that he had consulted Arbuthnot, Crafer and Anderson. He pointed out that everyone had now been put in their proper relative position. He was particularly at pains to stress that the Assistant Secretary was equivalent to a Treasury Under Secretary.² Lewis was far from enthusiastic. He wrote to James Wilson, the Financial Secretary, thanking him for the improvements which he had made to the printed draft. He disliked formal regulations as they were either inconvenient or were disregarded: "I wish you would try when you see Trevelyan to reduce it to what is strictly necessary - if any part of it is necessary. I wish it also to be distinctly understood that no Minute on any important subject is to be passed without the knowledge and consent of one of the political heads of the Office. Trevelyan has a most dangerous love of the Press. He is unmindful of Mr. Canning's dictum that whoever prints, publishes..."³

Despite discouragement from permanent and political officers, Trevelyan presented a printed draft of the rules in the form of a minute dated 1 October.⁴ In view of Lewis's strictures on rules,

1 T.L.B., XXXVI, p.220.

2 Ibid., p.216

3 Quoted in E.I. Barrington, The Servant of All (1927), I, p.313.

4 H.M.T., Departmental Arrangement Book, III, 1 October 1856.

Trevelyan was obliged to defend it in a lengthy letter to Lewis on 6 October. His most ardent appeal was for the retention of a paragraph on rules for promotion, by which seniority was to be finally relegated to cases of equal merit. This was another of the reforms that had failed to materialize in 1849. Now, Trevelyan proposed that it should be operated by the six principal officers. In the past, promotion by merit had been vitiated by suspicions of favouritism, but this could be avoided by making use of the new structure of the Treasury. Unless appointments were made in this way, Trevelyan felt that "we should lose the fruit of all the labour and pain we have gone through, and the Office would be left worse than it was before". Indeed, to cancel the paragraph would be to "re-establish the old state of feeling in renewed strength". While he did not wish to limit the discretion of political heads of departments, he felt that the improved standards in staff selection - standards which could only be achieved by the methods he had proposed - were in keeping with the real aims of his political superiors. Finally, he argued that the Treasury had a duty to set an example to other departments.¹ This argument prevailed and the unexceptionable paragraph on promotion remained. Trevelyan had the satisfaction of seeing that correct principles were established. Yet at the same time, definitions and rules only served to define and to limit Trevelyan's functions.

The allocation of Treasury work between the principal officers further emphasized the limits of Trevelyan's influence. He was placed in charge of the First Division with a responsibility for departments which had been his concern for the past sixteen years: the naval and military departments; the Stationery Office; the Public Record Office; the Board of Control; the Irish Board of Works; the Enclosure

1 T.L.B., XXXVI, p.230.

Commissioners; and miscellaneous items. Trevelyan's influence was confined as never before, and to some extent his reforming energy was diverted towards improving the efficiency of the army; for whereas the reorganization of the Treasury temporarily ended scope for discussion and speculation, Trevelyan's continuing responsibilities for examining the expenditure of military departments combined with his earlier experience of managing the Commissariat to provide a new channel for his zeal during his last two years at the Treasury.

Following the reorganization Trevelyan remained extremely sensitive about what he considered to be the inadequate recognition of his status. He complained to Sir Benjamin Hawes, recently appointed Permanent Under Secretary to the new War Department, about a departmental regulation that had prescribed that the Assistant Under Secretary should sign letters to the Assistant Secretary to the Treasury and "other officers of inferior rank". As a former M.P., Hawes enjoyed a status which Trevelyan admitted that he had never possessed - despite the comparability of his salary and despite his being the senior permanent official in the Treasury. Trevelyan was satisfied that when the regulations were revised the offending words were omitted.¹

An alternative indication of the value and significance of the post of Assistant Secretary is provided by the circumstances in which Trevelyan relinquished it. At Disraeli's instigation he gave it up in exchange for the Governorship of Madras, and was succeeded by G.A. Hamilton, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who wanted a permanent post. Sir Stafford Northcote in turn took Hamilton's place, thereby providing a place for a Peelite returning to the

1 Trevelyan to Hawes, 21 and 23 April 1857, T.L.B., XXXVII, pp. 34, 36, 37. Even G.A. Hamilton, like Hawes a politician before becoming a Civil Servant, could do little to improve the status of the post. While he soon relinquished divisional responsibility he did not acquire the title of Permanent Secretary until 1867 (Treasury Minute of 10 May 1867, quoted in M. Wright, Treasury Control of the Civil Service, 1854-74 Oxford, 1969, pp. 363-366).

Conservative fold. The whole series of changes smacked of a political job and it clearly revealed how a man like Hamilton with limited means and political ambition regarded the Assistant Secretaryship as a desirable prize.¹

Yet despite Trevelyan's failure to improve his own status he was successful in one important respect. His constant pressure for a reduced superior establishment left a permanent mark on Treasury organization, ensuring that the economical tradition of the first half of the century moulded the administrative pattern of the second. So much so, that the Treasury was for sixty years hampered by lack of staff from exercising adequate supervision over expanding establishments. This situation was not remedied until 1919 when the Haldane Committee advocated the creation of a special "Establishments Division" within the Treasury, and a large expansion in the number of senior administrative staff.²

6 Personnel Management

While Trevelyan's views did not prevail in the reorganization of the Treasury, his influence was a little more successful at a lower level in his supervision of entrance examinations and period of probation for first appointments.

Of these two duties the most theoretical and the least practical was the examination for established clerks. In 1841 Peel discontinued the practice of limited competition established in 1834 and replaced it by a simple qualifying test to be conducted by the Assistant Secretary.³ The limited competitions had often been contrived farces,

1 "The New Treasury Appointments - Mr. Disraeli's Shifting Scenes", The Economist, 15 January 1859, pp. 57-59.

2 H. Roseveare, The Treasury (1969), pp. 243-246.

3 H.M.F., Departmental Arrangement Books, II, Minute of 3 December 1841.

but the fixed test was at such a low level that there are no recorded instances of a nominee failing it. When the Civil Service Commission (established in 1855) asked for information about the examination systems prevailing in government, they were not at all impressed by the elementary skills demanded at the Treasury.¹ By contrast, the examinations for extra clerks had not been modified by Peel, and here Trevelyan operated a limited competitive system in microcosm. For each vacancy the Assistant Secretary had the task of inviting the heads of the subordinate revenue boards and the Treasury to nominate one of their own clerks. Thus there were usually about four candidates for each vacancy: a reasonable procedure for ensuring the competence of those who had to carry on a great part of the routine work. In essence, what Trevelyan came to envisage as the best scheme for recruiting men for the higher Treasury appointments, already existed in this procedure for selecting the humbler ones. Here both limited competition and selection from subordinate departments was established in embryonic and workable form.

Trevelyan possessed almost equally little power in the matter of probation: he did not know of a single instance when an unsatisfactory clerk had been dismissed.² On the other hand his love of exhortation gave him a nuisance value greater than his real influence. He enjoyed playing the headmaster, delighting to tell fathers of their sons' misdemeanours. For example, he did not hesitate to complain to his predecessor, Sir Alexander Spearman, about his son's work. Spearman had been a clerk in the Audit Office but he had been transferred by

1 Civil Service Commission to Trevelyan, 11 January 1856, P.P., 1856, XXII, p.476.

2 Trevelyan to Major Larcom, 15 April 1854, T.L.B., XXXIII, p.134

the Patronage Secretary, Sir William Hayter, to a junior clerkship in the Treasury on the recommendation of Lord John Russell.¹ The following January Trevelyan wrote to Spearman complaining about his son's slovenly copying, and concluded by saying that he had issued a solemn warning: "what we used to call at Haileybury a solemn moneo - an official reproof intended to mark the offence, and to show that worse consequences will follow a repetition of it".² Trevelyan was perhaps rather premature in his strictures for after he was transferred from the boredom of the Registry Spearman acquitted himself well, first as one of Disraeli's and then as one of Gladstone's private secretaries.³ If anything, this incident may have been a further illustration of the harmful effect of excessive routine work on ambitious and able young men.

Trevelyan could do little except admonish and slackness could continue unpunished over a number of years. Sir George Clerk's son provides a classic case. Trevelyan first complained to Sir George Clerk in July 1848 when he informed him that his son had been given three warnings for lateness.⁴ In the following November the Chief Clerk of the Fourth Division drew attention to Alexander Clerk's unauthorized absences, and as punishment a Treasury Minute was issued formally restricting his leave to fifteen days a year.⁵ Trevelyan dutifully informed Sir George of this development.⁶ Again the measures adopted proved to be ineffective and the same sanctions were repeated a year later in a further Minute. There was no long term improvement,

1 Treasury Minute of 25 February 1851, P.R.O., T.1, 5639B/4289.

2 Trevelyan to Spearman, 28 January 1852, T.L.B., XXVIII, p.131.

3 H.M.T., Departmental Arrangement Books, III, Treasury Minutes of 2 July, 18 September and 24 December 1852, and 4 March 1853.

4 8 July 1848, T.L.B., XXI, pp. 38-40.

5 H.M.T., Departmental Arrangement Books, III, 10 November 1848.

6 10 November 1848, T.L.B., XXII, p.132.

and finally in October 1852 Trevelyan prepared a memorandum itemizing Clerk's offences. His lapses were quite amazing: he had only been present at the proper time on thirteen days in the previous year, arriving after 10.30 a.m. on 176 days (Treasury business began at 10.00 a.m.) and after 12.00 noon on 36 days; he had also taken 86 days leave instead of the regulation 48 days. Trevelyan observed that Clerk had given no explanation, while other clerks who had offended to a far lesser degree had promised to mend their ways.¹ The resulting Treasury Minute agreed that dismissal was merited but that for the sake of Sir George Clerk's service - among them that of being Financial Secretary to the Treasury from 1841 to 1845 - the disgrace was to be avoided by the forfeiture of three months' pay. Additional weight was given to this decision by a memorandum signed by Lord Derby.² The Clerks took advantage of this comparatively honourable escape and, doubtless to the relief of Trevelyan, Alexander Clerk resigned in March 1853.³

Although Clerk's case was an extreme one, this and other examples of slackness coloured Trevelyan's pronouncements on the Civil Service. His strictures did not pass unquestioned; Arbuthnot who had contended that the Treasury was badly organized rather than badly staffed was equally critical of Trevelyan's generalizations about the Civil Service.⁴ However, as the chapter on Civil Service reform will show, Trevelyan realized that staffing and organization were inextricably linked. He also appeared to adopt rigorous attitudes of the kind satirized in Trollope's portrayal of Sir Gregory Hardlines in The Three Clerks

1 Memorandum dated 22 October 1852, T.L.B., XXIX, p.278.

2 Departmental Arrangement Books, III, 4 December 1852.

3 Ibid., 18 March 1853.

4 See infra pp. 188-192.

(1858).¹ One small example serves to illustrate the superficial plausibility, if not the fairness, of this satire. At the time of Trevelyan's departure from the Treasury in January 1859, rumours were rife among the staff that Trevelyan had left a memorandum to the effect that all offices in the department were overpaid. In a letter to W.H. Stephenson Trevelyan emphatically denied this, particularly that the post of Assistant Secretary was overpaid, but at the same time reiterated his view that second class clerks should be drawn from departments subordinate to the Treasury.² Even at this late stage he was more concerned to reduce the size of the permanent establishment than to refute the implicit accusation that he had thoroughly demoralised his own department.

Conclusion

The most important consequence of Trevelyan's disappointments and frustrations at the Treasury was the diversion after 1848 of his energies towards departmental reorganization and later to the consideration of Civil Service reform as a whole. Although he was continually theorizing about the need for more senior staff to share the burden of important decisions, he himself made no serious attempt to delegate, particularly at the time of the Irish famine, when it would have been perfectly feasible to leave many of the detailed decisions to officials in Ireland. Indeed it will be clear when his management of the Commissariat Department is considered separately that Trevelyan enjoyed attending to executive details, and that the unique relationship of the Commissariat to the Treasury enabled him to do so. Apart from personal predilections, Trevelyan's experience in India had conditioned him to

1 Anthony Trollope, An Autobiography (1883, reprinted in World's Classics ed. 1953), p.96. Trollope liked Trevelyan personally despite his disapproval of competitive examinations.

2 15 January 1859, T.L.B., XXXVIII, p.58.

think in terms of rule rather than supervision. In this sense he was out of place at the Treasury.

The uncongenial nature of Trevelyan's supervisory role combined with the inherent weakness of the Assistant Secretaryship is further illustrated by his series of attempts to extend the financial and administrative supervision of the Treasury - an activity in which, as the next chapter will show, he was forced to work within existing traditions of reform where he had little opportunity for decisive personal action.

Chapter IV

THE EXTENSION OF TREASURY INFLUENCE

Trevelyan's work in attempting to extend the influence of the Treasury was closely bound up with his conventional laissez-faire opinion that government should assume as few burdens as possible. It followed from this view that one of the most important tasks of government was its strict accountability to Parliament: its need to show that public money was being effectively spent on the legitimate functions of government. This, of course, had been the main concern of those who had pressed for financial and economical reform from the 1780s onwards. During the early nineteenth century, the Treasury had sustained this concern on a technical level through encouraging, if not always acting upon, the highly technical work of obscure reforming book-keepers and accountants. It was Trevelyan's eager involvement in their work that gave him, a financial amateur, a small part in three important aspects of government accounting: reorganization of estimates; extension of estimates to more departments; and the development of techniques of post-appropriation audit. His contribution to each will be discussed in a section of this chapter.

The frustrations that Trevelyan encountered in making the Treasury a superintending office were also abundantly revealed in his attempts to control departmental establishments and departmental expenditure generally. He might often be tempted to interfere in departments subordinate to the Treasury and to offer advice in others, but these verbal excursions were generally an index of his ineffectiveness. A few examples will serve to illustrate Trevelyan's position, and to explain his enthusiasm for the exceptional opportunities granted him in the departmental investigations from 1848 to 1853. These

investigations are reserved for more detailed examination in the next chapter.

Finally, something of Trevelyan's personal need to feel that he was able to achieve some tangible economies will be shown in his collaboration with McCulloch of the Stationery Office - a collaboration which, while it did not bring about large economies, pleased Trevelyan in that it imposed a measure of centralized discipline over the spending departments.

1 Financial Control

A The Reorganization of Estimates

Trevelyan's work on the reorganization of estimates began soon after his appointment.¹ Strictly speaking, concern for the estimates in a general sense was no part of his work. Indeed, the Clerk for Parliamentary Accounts was later at pains to point out that the preparation of estimates was nothing to do with the Assistant Secretary.² However, Trevelyan derived a far more valuable insight into the problems of the military departments from his management of the Commissariat than he would have done from the routine collation of estimates in the Treasury proper. Here, as in other aspects of his work, the Commissariat provided him with real responsibilities on a small scale - responsibilities that

1 His work on estimates is only intelligible in the context of the three-fold financial process of estimate, appropriation and audit. In part, this process belongs to the history of Parliament, for it was Parliament that had demanded to control the appropriation of supplies from the reign of William III onwards. Formal appropriation could only be effective, however, if it was known whether the sums asked to be voted were adequate for legitimate needs (i.e. an accurate estimate), and whether these sums had been spent according to the separate votes in the Appropriation Act (i.e. a post-appropriation audit that would examine vouchers and bills to check actual expenditure). Estimates were being refined in the 1840s and 1850s, while - despite some pioneering developments - post-appropriation audit lagged behind. As we shall see, this was due to the survival of an older system of audit that relied on minute care in the actual disbursement of money in accordance with Parliamentary appropriation.

2 The evidence of C.L. Crafer before the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure. (P.P., 1847-48, XVIII (i), p.66.)

might prompt him to extend the scope of his duties.

When Trevelyan took over the Commissariat, the main problem that confronted him pertained directly to estimates. This was the tangle of accounts left after the abolition of the Army Extraordinaries in 1833. As its name would suggest, the Army Extraordinaries was a multi-purpose vote that had originally been intended to cover contingencies, but it had come by the end of the eighteenth century to include much routine expenditure. This had resulted in the military departments being able to provide a number of services without the necessity of preparing an estimate for them. The risks inherent in this arrangement had long been appreciated, and in 1833 the Extraordinaries had been broken up and replaced by a number of separate votes. The estimates for these votes were to be prepared by the department responsible for the service, that is by the War Office, the Ordnance and the Treasury for Commissariat services. The implementation of this dragged on for a decade as it proved difficult to reclassify the estimates satisfactorily. When Trevelyan entered this protracted discussion, he emphasized that the estimates should be produced by the department which actually provided the service. As he remarked to Sir Henry Hardinge, the Secretary at War, in 1842, "any other course must, I think, be productive of unnecessary repayments, double accounts, divided responsibility, and Estimates prepared on imperfect data by those who are not familiar with the particular service because it is not performed by them".¹ The problems inherent in applying this system to the army overseas was submitted to a specialist committee in May 1843. On 11 July 1843 Trevelyan triumphantly reported to Sir William Herries, the Chairman of the Audit, that the recommendation of the committee was a "simple, intelligent, concise system equally applicable in war as well as peace". Although the Commissariat would

1 Trevelyan to Hardinge, 18 July 1842, T.L.B., II, p.89.

provide additional services which were on the estimates of other departments, the submission of monthly accounts for final classification by the Board of Audit according to the grants and votes would ensure departmental responsibility.¹

While Trevelyan was tempted to make pronouncements on general principles, the real work of reforming the accounts of the service departments was being undertaken by a series of specialist committees. Each committee consisted of T.C. Brooksbank, the Chief Clerk of the Financial Division, and W.G. Anderson, the Assistant Paymaster General, together with a permanent official from the department whose estimates were being examined. Although these committees were engaged in work of laborious complexity, they succeeded in establishing principles of general application. For example, the committee investigating the classification of the Ordnance Estimates (set up in December 1841 and reporting in March 1844) stressed that estimates only had value as a control if they referred to actual expenditure within the year as opposed to debts incurred. This was the reiteration of a point made by the Select Committee on Finance in 1797. The Ordnance Estimates Committee pointed out that the success of post-appropriation audit depended upon the adoption of this procedure. Indeed, the failure to apply this principle in the naval departments vitiated the post-appropriation audit pioneered there by Sir James Graham. Equally important was the recommendation that the Ordnance Estimates should be broken down under nine heads instead of indeterminately showing lump sums for each station.² The importance and general applicability of all these proposals led over the next two years to a detailed examination of

1 T.L.B., III, p.36.

2 Copies of Reports and Treasury Minutes relating to the Audit of Naval and Military Accounts, P.P., 1856, XXXVIII, pp. 255-265.

the Army and Navy Estimates. These investigations culminated in the Treasury Minute of 13 January 1846, whereby a common system of estimate based on actual expenditure within the financial year was imposed on the Army, Navy and Ordnance.¹ This enabled the Treasury to insist that the accounts should be closed and unspent balances returned to the Exchequer eight months after the end of the financial year. These new rules were linked with a formal statement of the "immemorial practice" that only estimates approved by the Treasury were to be laid before Parliament. At the same time, formal recognition was given to the right to transfer, with the prior approval of the Treasury, a surplus on one Army, Navy, Ordnance or Commissariat vote to meet a deficiency on another.² In effect, this was a refinement of the concept of Treasury control: instead of a formal prohibition that would frequently be evaded, there was flexibility under Treasury superintendence. This superintendence was more to satisfy Treasury amour propre than to restrict the service departments. Although the Treasury was willing to accede to all requests, it at least recorded the extent to which Parliamentary votes were modified. Trevelyan, with his overall responsibility for the mechanics of military expenditure, operated within the system without complaint. Under the new system, the need for Treasury permission acted as a brake; in this sense, Trevelyan described it in 1848 as "a real control, and is felt to be so by all the parties

1 Trevelyan wrote to Baring in 1848 explaining to him that the work he had initiated had been continued by Goulburn and Wood (12 August 1846, T.L.B., VII, p.20).

2 P.P., 1856, XXXVIII, p.306. The power of transfer was explicitly provided for in the next Appropriation Act (9 & 10 Vic. c.116).

concerned".¹ However, his enthusiasm for these technical developments was not matched by results. He failed to notice that the excessive recourse to transfer nullified the improved form of the service estimates.² His touching faith in improved methods of accountancy was, moreover, not proof against the pressure of war expenditure from the Crimean War onwards.

Trevelyan's pride in developments in military accounting led him to make a general suggestion in 1848 that the Miscellaneous (later Civil) Estimates could profitably undergo the same kind of reform. He felt that it would be a comparatively easy task, since they had already been reclassified in 1843 by Sir George Clerk, the Financial Secretary.³ Although a few refinements were made in 1854 in the printed form of the Civil Estimates,⁴ they were not assimilated to the Service Estimates until 1866. As an outsider to these processes, Trevelyan had wanted to show that he was eager to take some small share, even if it was only as a propagandist, in the Treasury's slow and unspectacular progress towards improved accountability to Parliament.

1 Paper on the Office of Paymaster of Civil Services and the Exchequer, 1848, P.P., 1856, XV, p.519. Occasionally Trevelyan revealed his opposition to the older, formerly endemic, practice of holding balances over from one year to the next. In December 1841, he chided Sir Sydney Herbert for this on the grounds that it helped to establish a dangerous precedent. (T.L.B., I, p.164.) Trevelyan was satisfied when the Admiralty accounts were remodelled in order to conform with the Appropriation Act. (P.R.O., T.1/4658.)

2 The Select Committee on Public Accounts in their second report in 1862 was critical of the indulgence shown by the Treasury since 1846. The exigencies of war and the increasing level of service expenditure had resulted in the following transfers: Navy (1854-60) £3,000,000; Ordnance (1846/7-55/6) £440,000; Army (1846/7-55/6) £664,000. The Select Committee felt that the scale of transfer indicated that no serious attempt had been made to prepare accurate estimates. (P.P., 1862, XI, pp. 207-208.)

3 P.P., 1856, XV, pp. 517-520.

4 From 1854 onwards, contingent expenses were printed in detail for the first time. (P.P., 1854, XL, p.361.)

B. The Extension of Estimates

Since the quality of Trevelyan's intervention was limited to generalities in this highly technical field, he was in a stronger position when it came to the extension of an administrative principle as opposed to its implementation in detail. Thus he was able to take a more conspicuous part in the extension of estimates to departments that had hitherto not been obliged to prepare them. Two groups of departments were involved: the revenue departments and a larger group of more recently formed departments. The revenue departments consisted of the Customs, Inland Revenue and the Post Office. They all deducted their administrative costs from the revenue they collected, before rendering a net account to the Exchequer. The other group was composed of departments, established by statute from the reign of George III onwards, which derived their administrative expenses from specific revenues. Since no supply needed to be voted, no estimates were presented to Parliament. Thus the Treasury stood in special relationship to these departments, for it alone could exercise any kind of economical control.

The revenue departments were particularly important as one of the largest employers in the government service and might, therefore, be considered as one of the most promising fields for economy. From a financial point of view there was also the advantage of being able to assess the gross revenue, once these departments were made subject to estimate for their own expenses. This step had originally been suggested in 1831, but it did not emerge as a serious proposition until 1852. From Gladstone's notes for a cabinet meeting in December 1852 it appears that Disraeli had begun to consider the matter.¹ As Disraeli admitted to leaning heavily on Trevelyan in the preparation

1 Notes for a cabinet meeting, 3 December 1852, Add. MS., 44636 f.1.

of his budget, it is possible that the latter had suggested the change as a long overdue improvement. Gladstone certainly saw the need for it as part of an overall scheme for the reform of national finances. He asked Trevelyan and W.G. Anderson to produce a memorandum on the feasibility of the proposal in order to counter the objections of Lord Monteagle, the Comptroller of the Exchequer, who was likely to have considerable influence with Gladstone's Whig colleagues.

The joint memorandum was a persuasive document which made a point of emphasizing the improvements already made in the service estimates. As the service departments had paid all their receipts into the Exchequer since 1848, it was felt that it would be relatively easy to extend this accounting principle to the revenue departments. This emphasis on the ease of making the change led Trevelyan and Anderson to scorn the curiously ill-informed objection of Monteagle that large sums of money would need to be circulated between departments. They ridiculed this archaic concept and pointed out that the revenue department employed commercial methods of transferring credits.

On the central issue of improved estimates, Trevelyan and Anderson tactfully concentrated on the improved accountability to Parliament that the change would bring. They pointed out the anomaly that whereas estimates were required for the smallest items of expenditure in most departments, in the Customs it was possible to "build expensive offices, purchase or erect new buildings and machinery for a distillery, establish a revenue police, purchase and equip revenue cruizers, with no other limitation of cost than that which their own discretion may impose, without going through the formality of an intimation to Parliament". Trevelyan felt that it was one of the duties of the Treasury to keep Parliament primed with information. Consequently

he did not bother to answer Monteagle's most valid point that there was already insufficient time for Parliament to discuss existing estimates business.¹

The memorandum served its purpose in showing that Gladstone's proposal was practicable. An Act was passed, whereby the revenue departments and the other group of departments financed by the revenue were made supply services, and thus subject to estimate.² Of course, it had not been difficult for Trevelyan to show that Monteagle's ideas were as out-of-date as the remaining powers of the Exchequer that he still exercised. Monteagle's powers and his exercise of them were so obviously incompatible with attempts to streamline accounting procedures that they gave Trevelyan ample scope for polemic.

C The Dispute with Monteagle

Trevelyan's long-standing professional dispute with Lord Monteagle contains an element of drama that is usually lacking in the arid discussion of financial reform. Instead of slow and laborious development in which only cautious advances could be made, there was clash of principles - a clash between the principles inherent in the old system of the Exchequer and in the newer techniques of accountability being developed in the pay offices. Although the old Exchequer had been finally abolished in 1834, a new official, the Comptroller of the Exchequer, had been created as an additional check on the expenditure of Parliamentary grants. He was responsible to Parliament for seeing that Treasury orders to the Bank of England were in accordance with supply and appropriation. He was, therefore, an auditor in the old

1 P.P., 1856, XV, pp. 575-580. The memorandum, dated 1 February 1853, was printed in the appendix to the report of the Select Committee on Public Monies.

2 17 & 18 Vic. c. 94.

Exchequer tradition of providing a concurrent audit. This form of audit was clearly of limited value, and it was in progress of being made totally redundant by the improved efficiency of the paymasters and the development of post-appropriation audit. From the outset, therefore, Trevelyan hoped to undermine what he felt were the vexatious and obsolete powers of the Comptroller.

The first round of the conflict occurred in 1848. It was proposed to amalgamate the offices of the Paymaster General and the Paymaster of Civil Services. This was to be the culmination of a long-term process, which had begun with the amalgamation of the military and naval paymasters in 1836 and the consolidation of their accounts two years later.¹ Originally numerous separate paymasters had been regarded as a crude but effective way of ensuring that grants for different services were kept distinct. On the other hand, the amalgamation of paymasters had the advantage of making it possible to work with far lower aggregate balances. Trevelyan grasped the economical importance of this development. In 1848, he produced a memorandum for submission to the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure on the benefits of the proposed amalgamation. Inevitably, the memorandum discussed the rôle of the Comptroller. However, neither was it shown to Monteagle at the time nor was it printed with other written evidence in the appendix to the Select Committee's report. Trevelyan's failure to use the material he had prepared is so out of keeping with his usual attitude to publicity that an explanation is needed. Possibly the memorandum was regarded by the Committee as an embarrassing and unsolicited observation from a permanent official who had no direct responsibilities in this field. Alternatively - and this was more likely - Trevelyan may have decided not to publicize it, so as to avoid giving Monteagle

1 Appendix to the Report from the Select Committee on Public Monies, P.P., 1856, XB, pp.501, 515.

advanced warning of an impending change in his status. Monteagle himself later virtually accused Trevelyan of having ante-dated it.¹

Trevelyan's memorandum contained a thorough discussion of the situation. It maintained that the proposed amalgamation would create a simple and effective machine for controlling the actual disbursement of public funds. The Comptroller was not only unable to augment this control, but he was quite powerless to prevent funds voted for one service being temporarily transferred to meet a deficiency in another. Trevelyan maintained that this flexibility of temporary transfer, although technically it was not permitted by the Exchequer Act of 1834, was essential for two reasons: the desirability of avoiding large, unproductive balances and the impossibility of estimating the precise sums needed to meet expenditure on particular votes on particular days. Trevelyan pointed out that the Paymaster of Civil Services - keeping a separate balance for each vote - had an aggregate balance of £295,000, whereas the Paymaster General - with four times as much money to issue out of one balance - was able to manage with a balance of only £27,000. To reduce all balances to this scale would result in an annual saving of about £9,000 in interest. The advantages were so obvious that Trevelyan hardly felt it necessary to argue in their favour. However, he could not resist a comparison between the virtues of business and the vices of the Exchequer: "Merchants, manufacturers, and railroad companies, however large their concerns may be, do not have a separate account at their bankers for every head under which their expenditure is conducted, but, as a general rule, they have a single banking account for every purpose, which they keep as low as possible, and depend upon a proper system of bookkeeping in their own office for preserving the distinction and regularity of their

1 Ibid., pp. 517-520.

various transactions."¹ By contrast, Monteagle was insistent on legalistic precision. When in 1856 he eventually saw the memorandum, Monteagle remarked that Trevelyan "must understand the word control in a totally different sense from mine".²

After dealing with the immediate question of paymasters' balances, Trevelyan turned to attack Exchequer control. He took a positive delight in a gargantuan catalogue of nine procedural stages, necessary before an issue of money could be made:

1. the Royal Order countersigned by the Commissioners of the Treasury;
2. the Treasury warrant based upon it;
3. the monthly estimate of the Paymaster General;
4. the special application for daily amounts from the Paymaster General;
5. a letter from the Assistant Secretary to the Treasury to the Comptroller of the Exchequer to ask for a credit;
6. a letter from the Assistant Secretary to the Paymaster-General advising him of the credit;
7. a letter based on the Assistant Secretary's letter from the Comptroller to the Bank of England;
8. a certificate from the Assistant Secretary to the Paymaster informing him of the actual credit;
9. (for civil departments) an order from the Treasury requesting that a specific payment should be made; in the case of service departments an order from the department concerned.

Trevelyan was convinced that at least the sixth, seventh and eighth steps could be dispensed with and replaced by one royal order. This would effectively bring to an end what was in effect a double Treasury. As Trevelyan observed, no other country was burdened with such a cumbrous arrangement. What was needed was good book-keeping, not

1 Ibid., p.518.

2 Monteagle's evidence before the Select Committee on Public Monies, 5 June 1856, Ibid., p.131.

the mediaeval type of security of a chest with many keys.¹

Initially, this improved arrangement was achieved by a Treasury Minute of 22 December 1848, which amalgamated the paymasters' offices and authorized the Paymaster General to make any credits that the Treasury thought were necessary.² Monteagle was deeply incensed to learn of this development only after the Minute had been drafted, and he succeeded in prevailing upon Sir Charles Wood to modify part of it. This lack of preliminary discussion in making an administrative change was extremely unusual and it is possible that it was intended to present Monteagle with a fait accompli. The failure to secure Monteagle's tacit acquiescence was due to his determination to preserve the prerogatives of his office and to Sir Charles Wood's caution in avoiding conflict on an issue that could only finally be resolved by legislation. In the revised Minute the statutory duties of the Comptroller were fully rehearsed. This confirmation of established practice was one of the set-backs that Trevelyan suffered in 1848 and 1849.

Sir Charles Wood's concessions placated Monteagle. However, they were more nominal than real, in that the practical rather than the legal system prevailed. The situation remained unchanged until Gladstone precipitated a reconsideration of the issue. Complaints from Monteagle in December 1853 that his authority was being flouted prompted Gladstone to seek Trevelyan's opinion. In a letter to Gladstone on 8 December 1853 he pointed out that it had been the influence of Monteagle and Spearman that had led to the modification of the Minute of December 1848. He quoted the view of the late

1 Ibid., p.520.

2 Ibid., pp. 542-546. The revised Minute ordered the Paymaster General to keep balances as low as possible, while adhering to the instructions of the Comptroller.

T.C. Brooksbank that the Comptroller's office had been "a sham and a cheat from the commencement". Trevelyan was eager to go onto the offensive once again, and flushed with the success of some of his recent departmental investigations, he proposed that a committee should be set up.¹ Gladstone, on the other hand, preferred to put Monteagle on the defensive by asking him to put his complaints in writing. In so doing, Gladstone contrived a situation in which he could make the best use of Civil Service experts. Moreover, Monteagle played into his opponent's hands by giving his case a distinctly antiquarian flavour. In his memorandum of 10 February 1854, he referred to precedents of misappropriation that went back to the seventeenth century. Obsessed by the dangers of excessive war expenditure, he pointed out that in the previous conflict there had been no less than five separate paymasters to administer military and naval expenditure. He also appeared to confuse the distinction between a number of services being included in the same vote (as in the Army Extraordinaries) and an aggregate balance being maintained by the Paymaster General. Monteagle's view of the function of the Treasury was equally old-fashioned, since he felt that its discretionary powers should be subordinate to Parliament, the Exchequer and the Auditors. This was quite contrary to the objectives lying behind the power of transfer that had been granted to the Treasury by the Appropriation Acts from 1846 onwards.²

Trevelyan was not invited to reply to this. It was a task better left to W.G. Anderson, as Trevelyan would almost certainly have introduced unnecessary animus that might have detracted from the

1 T.L.B., XXXII, p.149.

2 P.P., 1856,XV, pp. 546-557.

soundness of the Treasury's case. Anderson's memorandum of 27 March 1854 was a masterly survey of the improvements that had been made since the 1830s. By listing these developments it was not difficult to dismiss Monteagle's examples as obsolete or irrelevant. He naturally stressed that the newer and more effective method of control was the audit of vouchers after payment.¹

Trevelyan's advice and Anderson's memorandum produced no immediate result as Gladstone was preoccupied with the Oxford University bill and Civil Service reform. Furthermore the beginning of the Crimean War made major financial reorganization unrealistic. For while to Trevelyan the abolition of the comptrollership seemed a relatively simple matter, such a change would raise the whole question of accountability. In the Commons there was little enthusiasm for such a laborious and dull subject. When on 14 March Baring attempted to move for a Select Committee he was unsuccessful. On this occasion it may not have helped his case that he thought fit to quote Trevelyan's opinion on the inadequacy of the War Office post appropriation audit.² Undeterred, Baring made a further attempt a month later on 24 April, apologizing to the House for raising once more such a boring subject. He pressed for the setting up of a Select Committee: the investigation that he had in mind was not one that would attempt trivial investigations of establishments or book-keeping methods, but one that would devote its attention to the wider issue of accountability; he felt the main deficiency lay in effective control of appropriation and hence insufficient check on the Treasury. Although Cornwall Lewis countered with an energetic defence of the integrity of the Treasury, the Commons agreed to a Select Committee with Baring as its

1 Ibid., pp. 563-570.

2 Debates, CXLI, col. 185.

chairman.¹

When the Committee met, Monteagle was the principal witness. During his evidence in May 1856, he was closely and impatiently questioned by James Wilson and Sir George Cornwall Lewis on the effectiveness of the control that he claimed to exercise.² Although it was unlikely that Monteagle would be able to impress anyone with his case, Trevelyan thought it was desirable that the scholarly Lewis had not been unduly swayed by the sanctity of an ancient institution like the Exchequer. He therefore wrote him a letter, almost a lecture, on the historical and constitutional position of the Exchequer. He explained that the fiscal functions of the Exchequer had long been transferred to the Treasury and the Pay Office, and its supervisory functions to the Board of Audit. Consequently, it merely remained to recognize that the Exchequer was redundant and to combine the Pay Office with the Treasury (a proposal previously made in 1854 in the context of reorganizing the Financial Division of the Treasury) as a means of achieving administrative simplification and of forming "a Treasury school of practical Financial Officers from which selection might be made to recruit the superior Financial Department of the Treasury".³ This was clearly an attempt to exploit an impending change in the Comptroller's status in order to further the development of the Treasury's supervisory powers.

The report of the Select Committee effectively ended the Comptroller's powers as a concurrent auditor. In particular it recommended the repeal of those sections of the Act of 1834 which prohibited the minor adjustments of balances by the Paymaster General.⁴

1 Ibid., cols. 1450-66.

2 Monteagle's evidence of 30 May 1856, P.P., 1856, XV, pp. 70-73.

3 10 July 1856, T.L.B., XXXVI, p.191.

4 Treasury Minute of 15 February 1858, P.P., 1857-58, XXXIV, p.377.

In this way, the well-established practice of temporary transfer in order to reduce the aggregate balance needed by the Paymaster was at last legalized. However, the final stage of rationalization was not achieved until after the death of Monteagle. By the Act of 1866 the vestigial powers of the Exchequer were merged with those of the Board of Audit to form the new department of the Comptroller and Auditor General.¹

D Collaboration with the Stationery Office

A special case of financial control is afforded by Trevelyan's attempts to reduce the cost of stationery and printing. Waste and misuse of stationery and excessive printing were to Trevelyan symptoms of administrative laxity that was to be condemned in almost moral terms. He was able to exercise some indirect supervision since the Stationery Office was a service department, which was clearly subordinate to the Treasury. He was further helped by his close collaboration with the Comptroller of the Stationery Office, the

1 The significance of this development can only be appreciated in the context of the development of post-appropriation audit. The first such audit had been established by Sir James Graham by the Naval Audit Act of 1833. The navy audited its own detailed accounts, while a simplified post-appropriation audit was independently conducted by the Board of Audit for submission to Parliament. However, the full effectiveness of this pioneering development was not realized until after improvements in the form of estimates in 1846. In the same year the naval type of audit was extended to the army. Further improvements and the extension of audit were brought about by Parliamentary pressure: the work of the Select Committee on Public Monies and Gladstone's Select Committee on Public Accounts (made permanent in 1862) which culminated in the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act of 1866. The Comptroller and Auditor General was made responsible for auditing the post-appropriation accounts of civil and military departments, for approving transfers from the Consolidated Fund to the Supply Account of the Paymaster General and for reporting to Parliament that all issues initiated by the Treasury were in accordance with legislation. A good description of these developments is to be found in the papers of the Select Committee on National Expenditure (P.P., 1902, VII, pp. 252-255).

economist J.R. McCulloch - a man with whom Trevelyan succeeded in forming a good working relationship. Yet, while McCulloch was grateful for the support he received from the Treasury in opposing the excessive claims of other departments, he admitted that the Treasury was sometimes powerless to implement its own recommendations.¹ Trevelyan himself emphasized a range of economies of varying importance: the reduction of the rates paid to contract printers;² the tightening of control over the disposal of waste paper (over a period of ten years a saving of £2,300 was achieved);³ the reduction in the number of free copies of Parliamentary Papers and instead the encouragement of sale to the public.⁴ Trevelyan derived great personal satisfaction from achieving these small but tangible economies, which reduced the estimates for Parliamentary printing from £96,000 in 1850/51 to £75,000 in 1860/61.

2 Control of Establishments

The Treasury's responsibility for collating estimates and supervising the processes of audit naturally implied a concern for the costs of government as reflected in the size of departmental establishments. While in theory the Treasury had an immemorial right to refuse to sanction any increase in expenditure, its authority in fact depended - as Trevelyan would have been the first to admit - upon delaying tactics and persuasion. By demanding justification for any proposed increase in civil establishments or salaries, the Treasury acted as a brake.⁵ Indeed, it would have been inconceivable in the mid-nineteenth century

1 Select Committee on Parliamentary Printing, P.P. 1854-55, XI, p.18.

2 Trevelyan to McCulloch, 1 February 1853, T.L.B., XXX, p.249.

3 P.P., 1854-55, XI, p.198.

4 P.P., 1857-58, XXXIV, pp. 347-349.

5 M. Wright, Treasury Control of the Civil Service, 1854 - 1871 (Oxford, 1969), p.166.

for the Treasury to attempt to establish policy guide-lines for each department's spending; such an attempt would have conflicted with the concept of ministerial responsibility to Parliament. This then is the context in which Trevelyan's - and later Gladstone's - concern for departmental establishments has to be viewed. The Treasury might appoint committees to examine methods and to recommend economies, but it was always open to the higher level of departments - the departments of the Secretaries of State and the Service departments - to reject this advice, even to the point of suppressing a Treasury report that proved contentious. Although Trevelyan's involvement with these investigatory committees forms the subject of the next chapter, it is worth remarking that they constituted an attempt to find some general principles of economy and efficiency that could be readily applied by the Treasury.

Trevelyan's relative powerlessness in negotiations over establishments can be illustrated by a few examples of Treasury relations with departments of varying degrees of independence.

In dealing with a department that was closely related to the Treasury as the Exchequer was, Trevelyan was able to issue detailed instructions. In 1842, Trevelyan told Monteagle how to reorganize his department in accordance with the principle of promotion by merit. In so doing, he prescribed detailed promotions and defined the responsibilities of the Chief Clerk. He concluded with a brusque directive: "I have now explained at a length which may almost appear tedious the views which are entertained by the Chancellor of the Exchequer with regard to the rearrangement of Your Lordship's office and it will be gratifying to me to hear that they have Your Lordship's approval".¹ Trevelyan's bad relations with Monteagle did not help to

1 Trevelyan to Monteagle, 12 July 1842, T.L.B., II, p.72.

achieve a reduction in the Exchequer's establishment, and in 1853 Monteagle defiantly filled a senior clerkship at a time when Trevelyan was endeavouring to reduce the number of highly paid clerks.¹

Even when a department had already been subjected to detailed investigation, Trevelyan was tempted to make specific suggestions. The Post Office had been the only revenue department to be investigated by Northcote and Trevelyan. In 1858 he elaborated to Rowland Hill his views on making appointments. He assured him that the inconvenience of promoting able men from the central establishment to fill positions in the provinces would be more than compensated by the valuable incentive created by such prizes. The mechanics of the system would ensure that for every good man lost, another dozen would be found.² In the following year Trevelyan questioned the appropriateness of letter carriers' Christmas boxes. He attempted to eradicate the practice of soliciting these perquisites before agreeing to a revision of salary, but was prudently persuaded not to pursue such a trivial matter.³

In the years following his and Northcote's departmental investigations, Trevelyan was naturally anxious to sustain the general principles that had been established. The most significant of these principles from Trevelyan's point of view was the separation, and appropriate remuneration, of intellectual and mechanical labour. When, for example, modifications in the salary structure of supplementary (mechanical) clerks at the Board of Trade proved necessary on account of their assumption of increasingly important duties, Trevelyan made a grudging exception, expressing his anxiety

1 Same, 5 April 1853, T.L.B., XXXI, p.106.

2 Trevelyan to Rowland Hill, 9 February 1857, T.L.B., XXXVI, p.288.

3 Same, 13 and 15 November 1858, T.L.B., XXXVII, pp. 293, 297.

that it might be notices as precedent at the Education Department next door.¹ The same concern to avoid embarrassing precedents characterized Trevelyan's extension of the same principle to other departments. In regulating the salaries of the Public Record Department in 1855 Trevelyan explained to Cornwall Lewis that "prizes" of £500 would be quite adequate for the level of work that was demanded. Indeed, to grant more would only give rise to discontent at the Registrar General's Office.² When Trevelyan did make an exception on his own initiative it was to reward what he felt was exceptional merit, as when he suggested that William Farr of the Registrar General's Office deserved a special allowance on account of his outstanding qualifications as a statistical expert.³

As has been shown in the previous chapter, Trevelyan felt that the Treasury's influence could be usefully extended by the judicious appointment to subordinate departments of clerks and accountants who could be counted upon to co-operate with the Treasury. This was particularly true of the Secretaries of the Board of Audit, first R.M. Bromley and later C.Z. Macaulay. Their department of 150 clerks inspecting over a thousand accounts submitted by about 350 auditors provided what amounted to a Treasury intelligence service as regards public spending. When an irregularity was revealed, Trevelyan delighted to pounce upon it. Bromley's discovery in 1853 that members of the Board of Health had apparently been charging for attending expensive dinners gave Trevelyan an opportunity to press for a full inquiry.⁴

1 Trevelyan to Booth, 28 January 1857, T.L.B., XXXVI, p.284.

2 Trevelyan to Cornwall Lewis, 4 and 14 June 1855, T.L.B., XXXV, pp. 231, 250.

3 Same, 10 October 1855, *Ibid.*, p.277.

4 Trevelyan to Bromley, 28 January 1853, T.L.B., XXX, p.241;
Trevelyan to Molesworth, 17 February 1853, T.L.B., XXXI, pp.10, 15.

While Trevelyan had some success in imposing his ideas on subordinate departments, his own ambiguous status in the Treasury and his capacity for arousing enmity ensured that he would fail in his negotiations with more influential and prestigious departments. The obvious limitations of his office and his less obvious personal limitations did not discourage Trevelyan from making complaints to successive Chancellors of the Exchequer.

The Foreign Office was an outstanding case of a department that successively resisted Treasury pressure over a long period - a success that was partly due to the urgent nature of its work and the increasing volume of business. The department had grudgingly submitted to investigation in 1850 but no agreed report was produced. A request in 1852 to increase the establishment by two clerks was countered by Trevelyan's reminder that the 1850 investigation had revealed one spare clerk in another part of the office.¹ In 1854, Addington, the Permanent Secretary, submitted a plan to expand the establishment as means of coping with more work and of satisfying the demand for more rapid promotion prospects. Essentially this proposed the creation of a new class of eight assistant clerks below the senior clerks at an initial cost of £3,480.² Trevelyan opposed this in a Treasury minute which argued in favour of more fundamental and economical changes like strict adherence to the principle of promotion by merit and the adoption of a division of labour through the appointment of lower paid copying clerks, particularly in the consular and slave-trade departments.³ He appealed to Gladstone against the dangerous precedent

1 See p. 151 *infra*.

2 Foreign Office to Treasury, 9 March 1854, P.R.O., F.O., 366/499, cited in R. Jones, The Nineteenth Century Foreign Office: a Study in Administrative History (1971), pp. 32-33. I am indebted to this monograph for its study of relations between the Foreign Office and the Treasury.

3 Cited in Jones, pp. 33-34.

of agreeing to the establishment of highly paid clerks performing what he felt was routine work.¹ Gladstone felt unable to overrule the Foreign Office and he referred the matter to Aberdeen for adjudication. After consulting Trevelyan, Aberdeen devised a face-saving formula whereby the new class of clerks was not created and extra allowances were to be paid to those assisting the senior clerks.²

Yet the wider issue was only shelved, and a plan to appoint assistant clerks emerged once more in 1857. Trevelyan again suggested the appointment of copying clerks and made an indignant appeal to the Chancellor, Cornwall Lewis.³ If Gladstone had declined to take a firm line in 1854, it was extremely unlikely that Lewis would do so on Trevelyan's advice. On this occasion the Chancellor quietly accepted the new establishment, and open conflict between the Treasury and the Foreign Office was avoided.⁴

Trevelyan found his dealings with the War Office almost equally frustrating. As the largest spending department, and one with an extensive establishment, it was a worthwhile subject for economy. In 1852 the investigation of the War Office brought Trevelyan into sharp conflict with Benjamin Hawes, the Permanent Secretary, who with the support of the Secretary at War, was able to defy the Treasury.⁵ Later, when the War Department was formed by the amalgamation of the War Office,

1 Trevelyan to Gladstone, 28 April 1854, T.L.B., XXXIII, p.179.

2 Jones, pp. 36-37.

3 Trevelyan to George Cornwall Lewis, 9 January 1857, T.L.B., XXXVI, p.281.

4 Jones, p.39.

5 See infra, pp. 144-146.

the Commissariat and the Ordnance, Trevelyan felt he could offer Hawes some guidance on the running of the new department. For example, he suggested that the War Office should establish rules for the whole War Department. In particular, he was insistent that increments should not be automatic, but should rather depend on a favourable certificate from the chief clerk of each division.¹ A month later he pointed out that the Treasury and the War Office were jointly responsible for the new establishment, and observed that "we must conciliate confidence by a full and perfectly intelligible exposure of the grounds of our proceeding".² His naïve optimism in the efficacy of co-operation was not rewarded by reduction in the scale of complexity of the War Office establishment. Trevelyan was obliged to admit in December 1858 to G.A. Hamilton, Financial Secretary and later his successor as Assistant Secretary, that he had failed to control this department with its four or five hundred clerks. Indeed, he was contemptuous of its own feeble efforts "to prune the eccentricities of this monster Establishment".³

Conclusion

It is clear that Trevelyan's work was of greatest administrative significance when he was working within a pre-existing tradition, as with the reorganization of estimates. Similarly in his duel with Monteagle over the vestigial powers of the Exchequer, Trevelyan had the satisfaction of being on the winning side while realizing that his own views were not going to be decisive. Furthermore his influence and that of the Treasury in the modification and reduction of establish-

1 Trevelyan to Hawes, 28 December 1855, T.L.B., XXXVI, p.43.

2 Same, 24 January 1856, Ibid., p.74.

3 Trevelyan to Hamilton, 31 December 1858, T.L.B., XXXVIII, p.39.

ments was slight. Hence the significance that Trevelyan attached to the departmental investigations that form the subject of the next chapter. However, Trevelyan needed to be sustained by the satisfaction he derived from personal and tangible achievements, and this largely explains his preoccupation with relatively minor economies, as in the Stationery Office.

Chapter V

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM: FROM INVESTIGATION TO THEORY

Trevelyan often described how Sir Francis Baring had suggested to him that the improvement of the Civil Service should become his own special reforming mission. Trevelyan did indeed make it his mission - a mission that was increasingly strengthened and renewed by the frustrations that he encountered in attempting to impose his own ideas on the Treasury. As far as his own department was concerned the years from 1848 to 1853 constituted a period of disappointment; Trevelyan failed to bring about what he felt were essential changes in organization. In the same period, however, some compensation was offered him in the consideration of wider and more exciting issues: initially through the investigation of other departments; and later through the invitation to consider the staffing problems of the Civil Service as a whole. His involvement went through two stages of development: first an internal investigating phase from 1848 to 1853, followed by an external publicizing phase during which he presented his findings and theoretical suggestions for improvement. Each phase will form the subject of a separate chapter.

The background to the first phase of Trevelyan's activities was the extremely confused political and economic situation in 1847 and 1848. Although Peel had sacrificed his administration and divided his party in order to abolish the corn laws in June 1846 in the face of the Irish potato famine, this measure could not in itself alleviate the famine which called for prolonged and expensive government intervention from first the Peel and later the Russell administrations.¹ Furthermore it had become abundantly clear that five years of gradual

¹ See p.279 infra.

tariff reform could not in itself ensure continuous prosperity and render England immune from the acute European commercial depression of 1847 and 1848. Yet lacking an economic policy of its own, Russell's administration leaned very heavily on what it had inherited from the Peelites. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Charles Wood, consulted Peel on numerous matters, including the best strategy for the 1848 budget. Wood had the problem of obtaining sanction for a loan of £8 million to meet the cost of Irish relief and of meeting a potential budget deficit. The only solution that Wood could devise was to continue income tax at an increased rate. Peel was personally prepared to support this but he warned Wood that it was imperative to be sure of sufficient strength in the Commons, since defeat would not only mean the collapse of the administration but also undermine the principle of income tax.¹ When Russell introduced the budget on 18 February 1848 he proposed to increase income tax from 7d. to a shilling and land tax from $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. to $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. Although he gave a full explanation of the need for the increases, Russell's laborious and confused presentation led radicals to misinterpret the ministry's overall objectives. Reactions were highly critical. Joseph Hume, member for Montrose and protagonist of retrenchment, made great play of relatively minor increased military expenditure.² Richard Cobden, boasting that as member for the West Riding he represented more electors and constituents than any other M.P., denounced increased expenditure with the claim that the prices of many commodities had fallen by 25% as a consequence of tariff reform. Little was said in favour of the budget, and Wood was left with the unenviable task of winding up. Rather lamely and lacking in conviction, he asserted that the budget had not been seen in

1 Norman Gash, Sir Robert Peel (1972), pp. 622-624.

2 A Benthamite radical who questioned every item of government expenditure. He coined the term "retrenchment" which was added to "peace" and "reform" in the radical programme (D.N.B.).

perspective, particularly as regards exaggerated criticisms of military expenditure.¹ Unlike Peel, and later Gladstone, he clearly lacked sufficient confidence in his policies to justify a coherent plan for exploiting income tax.

When the debate resumed on 21 February, Wood announced that Hume had attempted to press for cuts in expenditure by requesting consideration of ways and means before supply. Since this was procedurally unacceptable, Wood proposed the establishment of a Select Committee on Army, Navy and Ordnance expenditure (this included civil establishments). Hume expressed his dissatisfaction at the matter being relegated to a select committee. Yet despite his objection he was accused by his radical colleagues of having made a secret compact with the ministers to remove some of the most contentious issues from the debate.² Certainly this respite was invaluable to Wood who on the following day moved for the two committees.³ From the government's point of view "economical" reform by select committee was a relatively harmless, time-honoured procedure which would absorb the energies of some of its most vociferous critics and produce recommendations that could be quietly ignored. Once the committees were safely established, Wood proceeded extremely cautiously to preserve his majority. On 28 February he announced that income tax would merely be renewed at the old rate of 7d. for a further three years.⁴

This financial crisis encouraged the formation of provincial Financial Reform Associations, dedicated to reduction of government

1 Debates, XCVI, cols. 900-981.

2 Ibid., cols. 987-993.

3 Ibid., col. 1063.

4 Ibid., col. 1406.

expenditure by the abolition of places and cuts in public salaries, and by the overhaul of taxation in favour of more direct, and less indirect taxation. By April 1849 thirty-six Associations had been founded. The Liverpool Association was the most notable of these, and the arguments expressed in its tracts were frequently echoed by radicals in the Commons between 1848 and 1850.¹ These views were not more widely shared and they found no reflection in articles in the reviews.² While from a fiscal point of view the Select Committees constituted a minor byproduct of the budget crisis and did not achieve anything approaching the spectacular overall cuts that Hume and Cobden had in mind, they form the background to most of Trevelyan's early involvement in Civil Service reform. The ineffectiveness of the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure was pointed out by one of its members, Dr. Bowring, who explained on 11 August 1848 that detailed examination of each vote was quite beyond the capacity of a part-time committee of M.P.s.³ Significantly the saving of expenditure of £716,000 (£235,500 from Miscellaneous Estimates) which Wood announced on 25 August 1848 in his resumed budget statement had been achieved independently of the efforts of the Select Committees.⁴ Indeed, the inherent imperfections and incompleteness of Select Committee investigation served to keep alive issues of economy and efficiency. The reports when they appeared did not

1 A.D. Gidlow-Jackson, "Public Opinion and Administrative Reform in Britain between 1848-1854" (London thesis, 1958), chs. 1 & 2.

2 W.E. Aytoun, staff contributor to Blackwood's and no friend of free-traders, commented adversely on Cobden's attack on military expenditure and Wood's incompetence (Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, LXIII March 1848, pp. 261-280). The first article on "economical" reform as such, appropriately appeared as a Whig answer to the irrelevance of Burkean attacks on civil establishments. Lord Monteagle, writing in The Edinburgh Review a year later, suggested that the Whigs had done everything possible to cut expenditure between 1835 and 1841 (Edinburgh, LXXXIX April 1849, pp. 518-537).

3 Debates, CI, col. 96.

4 Ibid., col. 543.

satisfy radical critics but rather provided an arsenal of material which was extensively employed in continual radical demands for reducing expenditure.¹ This pressure gave a sense of urgency to consideration of administrative efficiency. For Trevelyan it provided a legitimate reason for presenting his views to his ministerial superiors, who in turn gave him encouragement to develop and refine his ideas.

1 The Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure, 1848

Although the origins of the mid-century investigation of the Civil Service can be traced back to the economical reforms of the late eighteenth century, the immediate cause was the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure. Set up in February 1848 to find ways of reducing the cost of civil departments, this Select Committee furthered investigation and reform in two ways: directly, by the intensive revision of a few departmental establishments; and indirectly, by providing ammunition for those members of Parliament who continually pressed for extensive economical reforms. Trevelyan shared in both parts of this two-fold process. The earliest revision of establishments enabled him to widen his experience of their working, but only the continued political pressure that followed gave him an opportunity to formulate and present more general views - even if they remained fairly traditional ones - on the Civil Service as a whole.

The politicians and permanent officials who gave evidence before the Select Committee illustrated Civil Service practice and conditions, and at the same time indicated the difficulty of making equitable

1 The Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure reported on 27 July 1848 (P.P., 1847-48, XVIII i & ii). The Select Committee on Navy Army and Ordnance Expenditure took three sessions to cover naval, ordnance and army expenditure respectively (P.P., 1847-48, XXI i & ii; P.P., 1849, IX; PP. 1850, X). Trevelyan gave extensive evidence on the Treasury (see pp. 45-49 supra) and on the Commissariat (see ch. VII infra).

economies where traditions of promotion and methods of work had created an apparently hopeless tangle for the economical reformer. Only one radically new solution was offered - the separation of intellectual and mechanical work. As a suggestion this was in no sense original, for as early as 1831 it had been formally proposed to the Lords of the Treasury by Brooksbank, Chief Clerk of the Revenue Department. In a memorandum on the training of clerks he had emphasized the importance of a good general education, while casting doubt on the value of a training that took the form of fifteen years as a copyist.¹ An established precedent existed outside the government office, in the copying system at East India House from 1831 onwards. Trevelyan himself later used this example as a vindication of the principle.² A more useful precedent was the copying department set up by James Stephen at the Colonial Office in 1832. This speeded up business but it did not do much to free the higher established clerks from routine.³ The Colonial Office also helped to provide a notable theoretical formulation of the principle of the division of labour. One of the Senior Clerks, Henry Taylor, produced the only contemporary book devoted to the theory of administration, The Statesman (1836). He defined an administrator as one who worked through others, rather than attempting to do all the work himself. He also made the point - one that was many times repeated by Trevelyan - that dull routine work could destroy the best administrative qualities in an able man, in this connection actually using the terms "intellectual" and "mechanical".⁴

1 P.R.O., T.1/4306.

2 Report from a committee of inquiry on the Colonial Office, 15 December 1849, P.P., 1854, XXVII, p.86.

3 D.M. Young, The Colonial Office in the Early Nineteenth Century (1961), p. 25.

4 Henry Taylor, The Statesman (1836, reprinted Cambridge 1957), pp. 9 - 13, 84 - 94. The work was well known to Gladstone who had

Despite the growing currency of this idea of the division of labour, only Trevelyan brought it to the attention of the Select Committee. However, J.G. Shaw Lefevre, Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trade stated, as a result of questioning, that able men were often discouraged by being made to devote the early part of their career to copying - work that could often be better and more cheaply performed by law stationers.¹

Most of Trevelyan's evidence to the Select Committee was a criticism of the Treasury's frustratingly inadequate organization. Although this was a reflection of his own dissatisfaction, it was, at the same time, tempered by his sense of mission to improve the quality of all public departments. Essentially, Trevelyan sought to establish two principles that he himself had come to accept by March 1848: the desirability of separating routine clerical work from that of a more intellectual kind - each to be performed by a distinct class of clerks; and as a corollary of this, the need to select higher Civil Servants from the best university graduates.²

1 Evidence of 2 May 1848, EP., 1847-48, XVIII (i), p. 295.

2 Evidence of 26 March 1848, P.P., 1847-48, XVIII (i), p. 177.

read the proof. Taylor's own career is interesting as an example of how a minor literary figure could find a convenient niche within a government department. He entered the Colonial Office in 1824, having been offered a clerkship through the influence of Dr. Henry Holland. He rose slowly through the salary scales and eventually attained a salary of £900 a year. He refused promotion in succession to James Stephen as Permanent Secretary, preferring to devote his energies to poetry and verse drama. When he began to suffer seriously from asthma in 1859 he was permitted to work from home, which he continued to do until his retirement in 1872 (D.N.B.).

These twin concepts, originally thought of by Trevelyan in the context of the Treasury, gradually acquired over the next few years a much more general application. This extension of his proposals was accelerated by his eagerness to publicize his views both in evidence before Select Committees or in memoranda produced for his political superiors.

Trevelyan's outspokenness was not acceptable to the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure. In their report, they opposed the separation of intellectual and mechanical clerical duties on the rather dubious grounds that it "must, if advantageous, be extended to all other Departments of the Public Service".¹ The Committee were clearly looking for localized rearrangements calculated to reduce the estimates and not for a panacea that would inevitably arouse a general protest. Indeed, the report went on to mention specific areas where investigation had already begun or where it could prove fruitful by the consolidation of functions, or the amalgamation of offices. Trevelyan had already been involved in some of this work. He had arranged the inquiry into the Lord Privy Seal's Office and the Signet. He had drafted the report on them in which he had given vent to his scorn for wasteful, traditional procedures - the ten elaborate stages, for example, through which a document had to pass as a means of legalizing certain Treasury appointments. This quasi-legal reform was in a well-established tradition and was accepted without controversy. On a more constructively practical level Trevelyan had some influence in getting these two sub-departments of the Home Office transferred to Gwydir House, in order to improve communications with the Treasury

1 Report of 27 July 1848, Ibid., p.15.

Solicitor. On the same day as the Privy Seal inquiry was completed, Trevelyan initiated the arrangements for an investigation of the Home Office - an investigation that proved to be the first of a series of inquiries into major departments.¹

Obviously at the outset Trevelyan was aware of the significance of these developments and he was more concerned that he might have gone too far in the sweeping proposals that he had made in his evidence to the Select Committee. He realized that it was desirable to retain the support of the tradition of administrative reform as exemplified by his former political chief, Sir Francis Baring. Trevelyan wrote to him on 24 May 1848 in order to remove an evident misunderstanding that had arisen from his evidence to the Committee. He reminded him of his encouragement two years earlier to work for "the improvement of the character of the public Civil Service". At the same time he claimed that his own experience had given him an opportunity to form correct opinions and that this was an opportune moment for a general reform in which the Treasury would set the pace.² Baring's reaction is not known, but it is clear that Trevelyan was already in danger of breaking with the Whig administrative tradition that had helped to nurture him.

In its report the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure favoured detailed departmental investigations, while recognizing that they were largely irrelevant as a means of achieving large savings in expenditure. As the Committee pointed out, large savings could be made if the central government were relieved of £4000,000 of local expenditure, but that this was a political issue completely outside their terms of reference. Another general economy might have been made by a general reduction of salaries, yet here there was considerable

1 Trevelyan to Lewis, 27 June and 11 July 1848, P.R.O., F. 13/2, pp. 386, 394.

2 T.L.B., XXI, p.154.

division within the Committee, and the question was left for further consideration as "part of a general revision of all salaries, suitable to the altered circumstances of expense and condition of the country since they were originally fixed".¹

2 The First Phase of Investigations, 1848-52

The Russell administration was quite prepared to initiate departmental investigations of the kind favoured by the Select Committee. Trevelyan's enthusiasm and his ill-defined functions as Assistant Secretary made him the obvious choice as the permanent member of the main series of committees. His membership of them gave the Treasury an overall view of the whole operation. This first phase of the revision of establishments continued over the next two years, and covered the Home Office, the Treasury, the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office. The choice of starting place was probably determined by the evidence already given before the Select Committee and by the need to make exemplary economies in the most important departments. Trevelyan and Gibson Craig, a Junior Lord of the Treasury, took part in all four inquiries, together with another person from the department under review. Another committee with a different nucleus was also appointed to inquire into the Customs and the Office of Woods and Forests. The existence of this committee conducted on more conventional lines reveals the significance of Trevelyan's work in converting what could easily have become a routine investigation of establishments into an examination of general principles.

A The Home Office

In the evidence before the Select Committee the Home Office had been revealed as a department in which promotion was almost exclusively by seniority. For example, the chief clerk had risen to

1 P.P., 1847-48, XVIII (i), p.9.

the top of the office in fifty-three years. Apparently his duties could have been performed by one of the senior clerks, but to have reduced the level of this post would have diminished the promotion prospects of the whole body of clerks. There was no possibility of clerks ever attaining any of the highest permanent staff appointments.¹ Trevelyan naturally must have felt that there was ample scope here for him to try out his new principles of staff rationalization. Although the report of the investigation had not survived it is clear that the Home Secretary, Sir George Grey, firmly intended to preserve the substance of the existing arrangements while effecting a few economies. Trevelyan's share in the work is sketchily outlined by his letter book.

Trevelyan started the process of investigation in July 1848 by writing to Sir George Cornwall Lewis, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, asking him to obtain approval from Sir George Grey for an inquiry into the duties of Home Office clerks.² Further letters enclosed an offprint of the evidence given before the Select Committee, outlined the questions to be asked of the clerks and promised the attendance of a confidential shorthand writer to keep a record of the verbal evidence. Trevelyan suggested to Lewis two specific fields of economy. He referred to the excessive contingent expenditure mentioned in the Select Committee's report and doubted whether anyone had ever taken the trouble to consider reducing it.³ He also advised Lewis to check with the Office of the Commissioners of Woods, Forests, Land Revenues, Works and Buildings about the extent of the accommodation actually being used by officekeepers and other ancillary staff.⁴ After

1 P.P., 1847-48, XVIII (i), pp. 295, 377.

2 Trevelyan to Lewis, 7 July 1848, T.L.B., XXII, p.36.

3 18 and 21 July 1848, Ibid., pp. 66, 80.

4 2 August 1848, Ibid., p.123.

prompting the production of evidence and attending meetings at the Home Office, Trevelyan drafted a report, On 18 September he wrote to Lewis enclosing his work and describing his methods: "First of all I read the evidence quite through - then I made the rough draft of my paper and then I looked over the evidence again to make sure that I had not omitted anything of consequence. If any of my conclusions do not at once obtain your concurrence, pray suspend judgement until we can go over the subject together. This paper is entirely bare of explanation and argument, but as I shaped it according to what I believed to be your views as well as mine I am in hopes that we shall arrive at a satisfactory result." Trevelyan was probably aware that Lewis was the last man to be impressed by novel schemes and he turned in his letter to the practical problem of implementing them. He stressed that if Sir George Grey could make up his mind to carry out administrative changes during the Parliamentary recess, confusion and the resultant discredit upon the cause of reform would be avoided, "whereas if this is carried through as it ought to be I expect it will be a great help to us in dealing with other offices which want a thorough revision as well as the Home Office". The preoccupation with secrecy in all this is illustrated by a postscript assuring Lewis that Trevelyan's amanuensis could be trusted and that no one else had seen the report.¹

The Home Office was slow in bringing about changes. Those that were eventually made certainly did not go as far as Trevelyan had hoped. He even had to press for the simplest kind of economies. At the end of September he was contesting the appointment of extra clerks and demanded that the Secretary of State should address a formal

1 Trevelyan to Lewis, 18 September 1848, Ibid., p.244.

letter to the Treasury before increasing them. Such a letter, he felt, would be a check upon casual extravagance.¹ A few days later a formal Treasury letter instructed Lewis to remind Grey to make economies consistent with efficiency, "as timely arrangements will render reductions more easy, with less hardship to individuals and with greater facility for making due provision for the public service". The concluding mention of the "advantage of the active co-operation of the Secretary of State" shows the strain that existed between the two departments.² When Sir George Grey reformed the Home Office in January 1849 a few anomalies were eliminated and promotion was no longer to be so strictly governed by seniority. There was no attempt to introduce division of labour.³ In fact promotion by seniority continued to be the norm. Furthermore, the distinction between intellectual and mechanical work was at variance with the traditions of the office which accorded the highest status to those working in the ancient core of the office (the Chief Clerk's Department). The Home Office clerks did not regard routine work as demanding per se and they possessed a camaraderie and cohesiveness that was incompatible with Trevelyan's simplistic formula.⁴ However, one important effect

1 Trevelyan to Lewis, 30 September 1848, Ibid., p.281.

2 P.R.O., T.13/2, p.416.

3 Grey's reforming minute sent to the Treasury, 22 January 1849, P.R.O., H.O. 36/29, cited by Donajgrodzki p.84.

4 A.P. Donajgrodzki, "New roles for old: the Northcote-Trevelyan Report and the clerks of the Home Office 1822-48", pp. 84-85, 102-104, in G. Sutherland (ed.), Studies in the Growth of Nineteenth-Century Government (1972). Subsequent developments showed immunity from Treasury harassment. The Home Office was investigated again in 1856 by a committee in which George Arbuthnot was the permanent member. (Arbuthnot would be less likely to estrange the Home Office as his administrative orthodoxy had already been proved by his frequent clashes with Trevelyan.) Arbuthnot's committee made a number of detailed recommendations about the Office's establishment and organization. Over the next four years and without the prompting, or indeed the knowledge, of the Treasury, the Home Office implemented those recommendations that laid down rules for probation and promotion by merit. On the other hand the new salary scales for established and supplementary clerks were quietly ignored. (P.R.O., T.1/6258A/13006, quoted in M.Wright, Treasury Control of the Civil Service 1854-1874 Oxford 1969 .)

of this bureaucratic conservatism was the development of more innovatory areas, such as the inspectorates of mines and factories and the central administration of the Poor Law, outside the Home Office proper.

B The Treasury

The Treasury report was the first to be published, although some of its recommendations were not accepted and others remained a dead letter. Even so it was essential for the investigating department to set its own house in order. For Trevelyan the Treasury investigation was an opportunity to reiterate his views and to offer constructive innovations in the context of his own department. The report exists as a manuscript and is also printed among the Reports from the Committees of Inquiry into Public Offices, the collection of departmental reports presented to Parliament in 1854.¹ In many respects the scope of this inquiry is similar to earlier routine examinations of Treasury business, notably that of 1834.² The inquiry was set up by a Treasury Minute of 3 November 1848 which asked for an investigation, "into the present state of the establishment of the Treasury, and into the arrangements and regulations for the distribution and conduct of the business, in order that such changes may be made as may be required to secure the highest practicable degree of efficiency, combined with a careful attention to economy". Parker, one of the Parliamentary Secretaries, was nominated as the additional member of the committee to serve with Trevelyan and Gibson Craig.³

The report was completed in March 1849. Trevelyan repeated in more immediate and practical terms his earlier suggestions that

1 P.R.O., T.1/5533/27830; P.P. 1854 [1715] XXVII.

2 The Treasury Minute of 1834 that culminated this inquiry was part of the written evidence submitted to the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure. P.P., 1847-48, XVIII (ii), p.78.

3 P.P., 1854, XXVII, p.35.

better qualified superior staff were needed and that intellectual and mechanical work should be separated. His general view that graduates should be employed in the higher posts was transmuted into the training of an élite to assist the Principal Clerks at Board level, "and the junior members of the establishment would be gradually trained under the immediate supervision of the Principal Clerks, for the more responsible duties which will ultimately devolve upon them".¹ Sir Charles Wood, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, admitted the need for more assistance at the top of the office but he was suspicious of creating a class of clerks with the right of succession to higher posts. One consequence would have been the strengthening of the position of the permanent officers at the expense of their political superiors. The implementing Treasury Minute therefore took the traditional view that all clerks should be given a chance to prove their fitness for higher work by gaining experience in every branch of Treasury business.² However, once Trevelyan's concept of a superintending class was safely disposed of, the Minute went on to accept his arguments for a separation of intellectual and mechanical work: "that the gentlemen ... should be employed in copying for a much shorter period than has hitherto been the practice, that future appointments to the superior of the Treasury should be regulated with a due reference to the quantity of business which has to be transacted, and that merely clerical duties should, as a general rule, be performed by persons who make this their profession and are paid at a lower rate".³ The Minute therefore agreed to the appointment of additional

1 Ibid., p.37.

2 Ibid., p.51.

3 Ibid., p.44.

permanent extra clerks. Although these clerks constituted a step towards the gradation of clerical duties, their appointment would not in itself undermine the traditional concept of a homogeneous body of established clerks.¹ Nothing was said about their number and in fact the structure of the Treasury remained substantially unaltered until 1856.² Trevelyan later claimed that it was the influence of George Arbuthnot (Wood's private secretary and later Auditor of the Civil List) with Sir Charles Wood that had prevented the Treasury from being reorganized as the Board of Trade was to be. In 1853 Trevelyan told Gladstone about the episode as an illustration of the innate conservatism of Civil Servants whose careers had followed the older, traditional pattern.³ As one who had risen from post to post, Arbuthnot resisted any attempt to introduce a shorter route to higher positions.

C The Colonial Office

While the Treasury report was still being deliberated, the investigating committee turned to the Colonial Office. It appears that Herman Merivale, the Permanent Under Secretary, was anxious for the inquiry into his department to begin. Trevelyan explained to him that he would have to wait until the final reports and minutes on the Treasury had been completed.⁴ Merivale's eagerness can partly be explained by the Office's pre-existing tradition of organic reform and by the revelation of its inadequacies in the evidence given before the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure.

The Select Committee had shown that in many respects the Colonial Office suffered from defects similar to those of the Treasury: its

1 Ibid., p.57.

2 See supra, pp.70-71.

3 T.L.B., XXXII, p.16.

4 Trevelyan to Merivale, 1 December 1848, T.L.B., XXII, p.195.

senior officer, the Permanent Under Secretary, was inadequately supported and both he and another senior official, the Précis Writer, had been appointed from outside the department.¹ Yet these external appointments had been constructive. Merivale and his predecessor, James Stephen, had been practising lawyers and they had brought from their former profession a critical attention to detail in administration: Stephen had set up a copying department and Merivale was eager to extend and refine this development.

The committee, with Merivale as its additional member, made two main recommendations on the division of labour and the selection of superior staff. After alluding to the earlier establishment of a copying department its report observed that too much routine work was still being done by the established clerks: "The first years of official employment are those in which the knowledge, the self-confidence, and the aptitude for business required for proper discharge of difficult and responsible duties should be obtained; and it is to be regretted that persons likely to succeed to important situations in the public service should have the occupations assigned to them at this initial period of life which are unimproving and unsuited to their education and prospects, and as such likely to give them a distaste for their profession". Linked to the need to reduce the amount of deadening routine was that of providing prizes or incentives in the form of good career prospects.² As at the Treasury, lip-service was paid to promotion by merit rather than by seniority but every clerk still had to work his way through each clerical class in turn. The solution, as suggested by the report, was the formation of two distinct classes

1 P.P., 1847-48, XVIII (i), p.222.

2 Report on the Colonial Office, 15 December 1848, P.P., 1854, XXVII, p.82.

of clerks - "intellectual" clerks and copyists. The "intellectual" clerks were to assist the senior officers and to be recruited by examination from among young men aged between twenty and twenty-five. It was expected that these new positions would be suitable for those who had received a university education.¹ Since there was no reluctance on the part of the Colonial Office to accept these proposals, Trevelyan had the satisfaction of seeing some of his general ideas embodied in the policy of one department. However, in a strict sense Trevelyan's two-tier type of establishment had not been formally recognized, in that the copyists were - like earlier "extra" appointments - still unestablished.

D The Foreign Office

Trevelyan's last inquiry under the Russell administration was less successful. When Trevelyan had to deal with a department possessing the eminence and social prestige of the Foreign Office, the weakness of the Treasury committee was revealed. Moreover the Treasury had already been weakened in that the Foreign Office had been favourably regarded by the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure. The Committee had heard evidence from Conyngham, the Chief Clerk, who maintained that the sudden variations in the volume of work made it impossible to observe the customary hours of attendance, and consequently to determine whether the department was over-staffed. In many respects the Foreign Office was a self-regulating clerical community. It appeared from Conyngham's evidence that he visited his colleagues' rooms in a social rather than an advisory capacity. It was the loyalty and chivalry of the gentlemen of the department

1 Ibid., p.87.

and not conventional notions of official discipline that had established a high morale and prevented idleness. This aristocratic homogeneity of the Foreign Office was not likely to be disturbed, as Conyngham had maintained that the confidential nature of the work precluded the employment of extra clerks.¹ All this evidence was accepted by the Select Committee which in its report only criticized the excessive sums claimed by Foreign Office messengers.²

The Foreign Office was further safeguarded by the strong opposition of Palmerston to any kind of Treasury investigation. Only with reluctance did he give way.³ Even when this was accepted in principle, the Permanent Under Secretary, Addington, was profoundly suspicious and slow to co-operate. The Chief Clerk, Lennox Conyngham, shared this attitude and deeply resented Treasury intrusion: "I wish to God we had the overhauling of the Treasury - there should be proper work cut for every man and every man should do his own work and not meddle with the work of others".⁴ In this climate it is not surprising that an agreed report was not produced, yet it is not clear what the main disagreements actually were.⁵ There is a printed draft in the Foreign Office records but since it is undated and unsigned its status is uncertain.⁶ Possibly one of the main disputes was over the Treasury's wish to discontinue Foreign Office

1 Evidence of 7 April 1848, P.P., 1847-48, XVIII (i), pp. 213-220.

2 Ibid., p.15.

3 The Times, 19 January 1849, p.5, col. f.

4 Conyngham to Addington, 16 April 1850, P.R.O., F.O. 366/375, quoted in R. Jones, The Nineteenth Century Foreign Office (1971), p.25.

5 Addington to Malmesbury, 17 July 1852, P.R.O., F.O. 366/449, cited in Jones, pp. 25-26.

6 Reprinted in Jones, pp. 148-164.

agency (a system whereby Foreign Office clerks obtained commission through acting as diplomatic bankers). More significant from the point of view of Civil Service reform was the admission in the draft that the division between intellectual and mechanical work was inappropriate in the Foreign Office. It seems unlikely that Trevelyan would readily have conceded this point, particularly as he vainly urged Addington that agreement would serve as a valuable example to the other Departments of State.¹ To Trevelyan's annoyance the draft was completely ignored by the Foreign Office, as instanced by a request in 1852 for two more clerks on the establishment without reference to the draft.² When two years later there was further discussion of increased establishments, Gladstone asked Trevelyan whether he was willing to take part in a completely fresh investigation.³

E Other Inquiries: the Customs and the Office of Woods and Forests

The two other inquiries already referred to sought a limited, practical improvement in the method of transacting business. The report of neither inquiry presumed to formulate a general theory for the improvement of staff or for their better deployment. However, in terms of composition these investigating committees had something in common with those on which Trevelyan served, since they consisted of a nucleus of two Treasury nominees - Sir William Hayter (Financial and later Patronage Secretary to the Treasury) and Sir Alexander Spearman (Chairman of the National Debt Office and a former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury) - together with a person from the department under review. The two permanent members possessed a very different outlook from Trevelyan. Spearman had clearly shown that he was opposed

1 Trevelyan to Addington, 23 October 1850, T.L.B., XXVII, p.42.

2 Trevelyan to Gibson Craig (a junior Lord of the Treasury and a member of the investigating committee), T.L.B., XXIX, p.212.

3 See pp 151-2 infra.

to Trevelyan's theories by his evidence before the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure. Hayter not only had a practical interest in estate management - a good qualification for work on the Woods and Forests - but as Patronage Secretary and Chief Whip he came to have an interest in not interfering with established patronage. Indeed he has been cited as an M.P. whose solicitude to find places for his constituents went too far. He was reported to have boasted to his constituents that he had provided positions for no less than 300 of them.¹

The Customs committee had Lord Granville as its additional member. It examined the central offices of the Board of Customs - the Long Room, the Receiver General's Department and the Controller General's Department. A report appeared in March 1850 which was referred to the Commissioners of Customs. The final agreed arrangements were embodied in a Treasury Minute in March 1851. By recommending a reduction of twenty-eight persons in the Long Room an average annual saving of £5,900 was made possible. Some wasteful routine work was also eliminated.²

The establishment of the Office of the Commissioners of Woods, Forests, Land Revenue, Works and Public Building had already recently been examined in two parts. The general working of the department had been the subject of a Select Committee on Woods and Forests which

1 Debates, CXC, col. 43.

2 Report of Customs Inquiry Commissioners, 8 March 1850, P.R.O., T.1/5695B/23864. A year later Spearman in his evidence before the Select Committee on the Customs remarked that the system, which had been devised by Lord Liverpool, of confining patronage to first appointments had worked extremely well (P.P., 1852, VIII (ii), pp. 123 - 128). This complacent view was not shared by Gladstone who had already gained some insight into the working of the Customs by his membership of a committee which had in 1843 investigated a series of frauds. The scandals that were then revealed led to widespread criticism of the whole system (P.P., 1843, XXIX, pp. 78-127; P.P., 1843, XXX, p.589; P.P., 1844, XXXI, p.353). The evidence led Gladstone to think that Customs patronage was more pernicious than that of any other department. Not surprisingly, Customs mismanagement was a major grievance of financial reform associations (Gidlow-Jackson, op. cit., pp. 115-128).

had reported ineffectually in 1848 and 1849.¹ The Office of Works had been considered by the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure in 1848.

The committee, with the Hon. Charles Gore as its additional member, was formally appointed by a Treasury letter on 11 October 1850 and reported on 25 March 1851. It suggested one immediate economy: the reduction of the establishment by ten in order to make an annual saving of £2,870. Only two general principles were mentioned - the ending of additional payments for extra work and the end of promotion exclusively by seniority. An attempt was also made to strengthen the Board by appointing a secretary to the Board itself, as opposed to an official secretary to the First Commissioner. But this implicit formalization of professional assistance at decision-making level did not lead to any consideration of the kind of career structure that would ensure the emergence of the right kind of administrator. By contrast, Trevelyan in discussing the Treasury tended to exaggerate the degree to which the Board officers were unsupported, in order to strengthen his case for a new class of "intellectual" officers. In some other respect the framers of this report were very cautious: they dutifully adhered to their terms of reference. When the question arose of dividing the department into two the committee refrained from making any comment and remarked that the decision properly belonged to Parliament.² Trevelyan would not have been inhibited from offering his opinion. Moreover when he and Northcote later came to examine the Office of Works as a separate department in 1853, they were able to apply to it most of the administrative concepts that they had developed elsewhere.

1 P.P., 1847-48, XXIV (i) &(ii); P.P., 1849, XX.

2 P.P., 1852, LIII, pp. 304-313; J.M. Crook and M.H. Port, The History of the King's Works, VI, 1782-1851 (ed. H.M. Colvin 1973), pp.235-237.

3 Continued Demand for Economy, 1849-50

A The Debates of 1849

The inconspicuous reforms of the Russell administration did not help to dispel criticism in the Commons. To many M.P.s the cost of the Civil Service was so great that the only effective way to bring about a significant economy was by means of a general reduction in salaries. This crude method of economizing was a constant threat that prompted more subtle efforts in the direction of Civil Service reform. It had the effect of making an alliance between politicians and permanent officials, since a Commons resolution to reduce salaries was as much an attack on the competence of the administration as it was on the purses of Civil Servants. The common danger enabled Trevelyan to gain the attention of his political superiors by developing his arguments for a total reform of the staff structure. In the process he brought into the open the ideas that had been implicit in the Treasury and Colonial Office reports. Trevelyan felt that instead of merely informing Parliament of the net financial result of any administrative reform, the political officers of the Treasury would have to be able to explain a new concept of efficiency that was truly economical. Moreover as Trevelyan's view of staff efficiency was - at least as far as most M.P.s were concerned - an original one, it would be necessary to provide detailed explanations. A brief narrative of the successive attempts to force economies upon the administration will show Trevelyan's contribution.

Towards the end of the decade the pressure for economical reform remained fairly constant. The Report of the Select Committee on

Miscellaneous Expenditure served to strengthen rather than reduce this pressure. The Select Committee's two volumes of evidence and appendices enabled Parliamentary pressure to be amply documented and to strengthen the demands for drastic retrenchment. A symptom of this was Cobden's resolution on 22 February 1849 for a return to the level of expenditure of 1835.¹ Of course it is doubtful whether radicals really believed that this was possible. For Hume in particular, 1835 had the almost mystical virtue of being the post-war year at which government expenditure had been at its lowest, and consequently the level of 1835 had become the ideal for economical reformers. It was not difficult for Cobden - much experienced in hyperbole during the Anti-Corn Law League's campaigns - to take up this exaggerated demand. Yet on 1 June 1849 even Cobden was outdone in ruthless zeal by J.W. Henley, the Conservative member for Oxfordshire. Henley had served on the Select Committee and he now proposed in a debate on the Civil Service estimates a reduction of £5,040 in the cost of the Treasury establishment on the grounds that the cost of living had fallen by ten percent.² Henley went beyond this on 16 July when he suggested that this ten percent reduction should be extended to all official salaries. Although Cobden appreciated the unfairness of applying this cut to lower salaries, he supported the motion as a positive step towards economical reform. He also proposed an amendment calling for the appointment of a further Select Committee on all public salaries, to be independent of the government and with the power of "rigid supervision".³ This proposal was not accepted, for despite its

1 Debates, CII, cols. 1234-35.

2 Debates, CV, cols. 1045-53.

3 Debates, CVII, cols. 408-452. Henley claimed that prices had fallen by between 20% and 30% since 1831 (Ibid., col.411-416).

weakness in the Commons the Russell administration was not sufficiently unnerved to surrender authority over civil expenditure to a Committee with quasi-executive powers. However pressure on the government at this stage provided Trevelyan with occasion to marshal information and develop his ideas on a number of aspects of Civil Service organization.

B Trevelyan's Memorandum on Appointments, 1849

It was in answer to Henley's superficial scheme that Trevelyan produced his first memorandum on Civil Service appointments. He prepared this with the help of Macaulay who was asked to check his paper for style and content.¹ When Trevelyan submitted it to Lord John Russell in August he went out of his way to express his enthusiasm for further investigation of the subject.² Entitled "Memorandum on the Examination and Probation of Candidates for Public Employment", the paper offers a digest of the arguments and influences that formed Trevelyan's opinions. The memorandum began with a brief reference to the recent over-simplified demands for economy and then turned to what Trevelyan felt was the real cause of expense - inefficiency. He claimed that it was the lack of an effective system of selection by merit that had resulted in the idleness and incompetence of which the Civil Service were sometimes accused. He then offered a few practical examples of what he believed could be an alternative system. A well-established example was the practice of the East India Company of eliminating the very worst nominees by putting them through a compulsory course at Haileybury. While this negative restriction was in fact of questionable value, Trevelyan also brought forward the more recent example of the fixed standard examinations that had just been introduced for entrance to Sandhurst. It was an important commendation

1 Trevelyan to Macaulay, 17 July 1849, T.L.B., XXV, p.16.

2 Trevelyan to Russell, 7 August 1849, Ibid., p.65.

that this development had been welcomed by the Secretary at War "as a great step towards the improvement of the Military Service". It was even more encouraging that an examining board had been set up to ensure that potential officers had received a gentleman's education. (Under the purchase system there was no doubt that an officer was a gentleman in the current sense of the word; only the appropriateness of his education was in doubt.) The examining board consisted of a panel of part-time examiners and a clerk, costing in all £400 a year. Trevelyan drew the simple conclusion that if an entrance test of literary skills was necessary for the army, it was equally necessary for civil appointments.¹ Unfortunately he had selected a bad example: attendance at Sandhurst was purely optional and one contemporary critic in The Quarterly had suggested that it might be far better to encourage education elsewhere and to examine applicants for commissions by means of a commission of three examiners.² Although Trevelyan had failed to see the limitations of what was to him an encouraging development, it is clear that examination and selection schemes were becoming a topical and much discussed issue.

Trevelyan was equally dissatisfied with the great range of ages

1 The memorandum forms part of Papers, originally printed in 1850, respecting the Emoluments of Persons in the Permanent Employment of the Government as with those of Joint Stock Companies, Bankers, Merchants etc: and Three Papers on the Superannuation Question, p.87. This octavo pamphlet was printed by Eyre and Spottiswoode for the Stationery Office in 1856, probably for circulation among Civil Servants at the time of the Select Committee and Royal Commission on Superannuation. It is laid out in the form of a Parliamentary Paper with a series of twenty-two numbered examples. It runs to a total of 101 pages and concludes with Trevelyan's memorandum of August 1849. I have not succeeded in locating manuscript versions, and the copy used is among the Chadwick Tracts in the British Library (CT 299). It is subsequently referred to as Papers 1850.

2 Two articles attributed to George R. Gleig, Chaplain General, The Quarterly Review, LXXVII (March 1846), pp. 526-563; LXXXIII (September 1848), pp. 415-450. For two further contrasting descriptions of Sandhurst see J. Morton Spearman, Notes on Military Education (1853) and Anon., Complete Guide to the Junior and Senior Departments of the Royal Military College Sandhurst by an Experienced Officer (1849).

for admission to government departments and the largely nominal probation arrangements for first appointments. Not only was there no consistency between one department and another, there was a marked reluctance on the part of heads of departments to end the careers of men with whom they were often intimately acquainted on account of the smallness of each office or department. In Trevelyan's own experience at the Treasury he could not recall a single instance when a clerk had been refused a certificate of competence from his superior, despite the fact that some of these probationers had proved to be highly unsatisfactory. In effect, the permanent head of an office was powerless to improve the quality of his junior staff. He made an exception, however, for his personal - and to a great extent, unfettered - control of Commissariat clerks. He was able to claim that since 1839 ten out of 144 clerks had been dismissed after an unsatisfactory period of probation as extra clerks. His achievement had been due to the use of an indefinite period of probation and annual reports on each probationer under no less than five heads. Trevelyan made no effort to conceal the relish with which he operated this ruthlessly effective system.¹

With examinations Trevelyan could find nothing satisfactory within the home Civil Service. Earlier attempts to introduce limited competitive examinations at the Treasury had resulted in entirely bogus competitions. In 1841 Peel had replaced these by single nomination and a fixed test of literacy. Yet neither had this fixed test proved very effective, for the standard had been set too low, and the conduct and content of the examinations had been left in the hands of senior permanent officials when extended to offices subordinate to the Treasury. As in the case of probation these officials had a conflict between duty

1 Papers 1850, pp. 91-93.

and personal feelings towards friends and relations, in which the former had almost invariably been sacrificed.

Trevelyan hoped to improve matters by means of broader recruitment combined with impersonal and objective examination. He hoped, for example, that the intellectual level of entrants might be raised by recruiting men from college rather than boys from school, but he failed to make it clear how this could best be done. He was equally vague in his suggestions for a fixed test preliminary examination on which might be grafted "the emulation and opportunities for careful selection combined with competitive examination". To implement this Trevelyan outlined an arrangement which was to be a feature of his later, more detailed proposals. Initially a committee would be needed to determine the regulations for each type of appointment, the nature of the preliminary examination and the form of probation. Once these principles had been established, the conduct of examinations ought to be left to a permanent board, "composed partly of men of letters and partly of experienced public officers, the former of whom would ordinarily examine the candidates, and the latter would act as referees in all matters requiring a knowledge of official business."¹ This system was perfectly consistent with patronage, and Trevelyan went on to suggest ways in which patronage could still be exercised, but exercised impersonally. It seemed quite logical that patronage, like examination and probation, could be freed from any trace of corruption. Trevelyan proposed that appointments should be made by the government - in other words by the Patronage Secretary to the Treasury, as with the Revenue Boards:

The appointments are made by the Government as a responsible act of administration; the public patronage helps, as it ought to

1 Ibid., pp. 95-98.

do, to strengthen the head of the Government for the time being; and the appointments to the Public Service, being under the superintendence of the Prime Minister, through the medium of the members who support him in Parliament, are more equally diffused through the country, reach on the whole a superior class of persons, and give more general satisfaction than when they are in the hands of a single individual at the head of a department, and are bestowed by him, on the footing of private patronage, on his family, friends and dependants.

Trevelyan did not entirely exclude provision for sons and relatives of Civil Servants except that this patronage would indirectly stem from the Prime Minister.¹ Trevelyan claimed that this form of centralized nomination would be analogous to the practice of the East India Company.² Furthermore there was the advantage of removing the popular impression that patronage was being used for purely private advantage. Although Trevelyan pointed out that the political importance of patronage had diminished, there was some force in his proposal in that it would give additional influence to the head of an administration at a time when party allegiances were weak and confused, and when as a consequence the survival of an administration was often dependent upon a prime minister's skill in accommodating the interests and ambitions of his colleagues and supporters in the Commons. Trevelyan's paper acts as a reminder of his Whig politics - an attitude that was ingeniously presented to a Whig prime minister as a possible antidote

1 Ibid., pp. 98-99.

2 Although the Directors' exercise of patronage was impersonal as far as administrators in India were concerned, there were frequent allegations (never in fact proved) of bribery to secure cadetships and writerships. Certainly money and connections with the Indian service and not political allegiance were the determining factors. Accusations of bribery were later extensively discussed in the debate on the India Bill in 1853 (Debates, CXXIX, cols. 669-772.)

to radical clamourings. Ruseell's reactions to the memorandum are not clear. Even if the effect of his proposals had been as predictable as Trevelyan had maintained, it was impossible that they could help to produce the rapid reduction in costs for which the radicals pressed. Trevelyan's ideas were not taken up at this stage but there was soon to be a further opportunity to bring them to the notice of the government.

C The Debates of 1850

Fortunately for Trevelyan the question of salaries remained a live issue in the Commons. On 8 March 1850 Cobden spoke in a debate on the estimates. He was particularly critical of the rise in the Miscellaneous Estimates from £2,144,000 in 1835 to £3,911,000 in the current year. He therefore proposed that total civil expenditure, of which Miscellaneous Estimates covered a part, should be reduced by £650,00 or about ten percent - the first step in a return to the level of 1835. From the example that he gave of the cost of the establishment of the Master of the Queen's Buckhounds it was obvious that he was attacking aristocratic privilege embedded in the civil list, and not the Civil Service. This distinction was ignored by Henley who proposed a ten percent cut in all government salaries.¹ In answer to this new threat, or possibly in anticipation since it is dated 8 March, Trevelyan produced another memorandum in which he argued that Civil Servants did not receive salaries that were at all comparable with those in the professions, and that a levy of ten percent would be an unjustly selective and confiscatory tax.² In making the analogy

1 Debates, CIX, cols. 542-563.

2 "Memorandum of Sir Charles Trevelyan on the Proposal to make a General Reduction of 10 per Cent in the Salaries of the Permanent Civil Servants of the Public", Papers 1850, pp. 5 - 8.

with a tax, Trevelyan was able to exploit the contemporary argument against income tax that it was particularly unfair to men in the professions.

After Cobden's motion had been defeated, the Russell administration attempted to regain the initiative. Trevelyan helped to strengthen the ministers' resolve by assembling all the material he had available on the question of salaries, including his memoranda of August 1849 and March 1850, and addressing it to Wood. In the meantime Russell diverted attention from the Civil Service by setting up a Select Committee to examine political, higher judicial and diplomatic salaries. In proposing the Committee on 12 April, Russell referred to two amendments, put down by Disraeli and Henley respectively, that aimed to achieve immediate reductions on the strength of the evidence in the Report of the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure and that sought to extend the proposed Committee's terms of reference to an examination of salaries of every kind. Russell rejected this approach and at the same time took the opportunity to mention the economies that had already been achieved.¹ Although the total saved was nothing approaching £650,000, it was an indication of the administration's good faith. Moreover, Russell asserted that the accusations of maladministration and inefficiency had been grossly exaggerated and that there were no Augean stables in need of cleansing. (This was a reference to Carlyle's recent tract, Downing Street.) Russell was anxious in the face of these criticisms to re-establish Civil Service morale. "Never", he claimed, "were public duties performed more zealously and efficiently, and yet at a similar cost or with greater energy, than by those who

1 The Treasury (£5,345); the Irish Board of Works (£1,500); the Paymaster General's Office, the Audit Office and the Home Office (£23,000).

hold permanent offices". He also maintained that salaries outside the Civil Service were higher - an observation based on some of Trevelyan's research - and that inquiries had already been made into salary rates. In defending these inquiries at the Treasury and the Home Office, Russell said that they had been made "by efficient persons, and made minutely, by going through the work of each clerk in those offices". As a year and a half had already been devoted to inquiries on this basis, Russell would certainly not consider assessing salaries with reference to the cost of living. By contrast, Russell viewed his Select Committee as part of the established tradition of economical reform and in keeping with the spirit of the inquiries of 1798, 1807 and 1830.¹ This approach was more acceptable to the Commons than that of Disraeli and Henley. After a spirited debate, Disraeli's amendment was defeated by 250 to 159 and Henley's withdrawn.² The Committee on Russell's terms was appointed on 22 April.³

Russell's manoeuvre to parry attacks on Civil Service salaries was only partly successful. Henley made a further attempt to subject salaries to Parliamentary scrutiny, when on 30 April he moved for a reduction of official salaries. He referred to the unimplemented recommendations of the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure, and alluded once more to the fall in prices brought about by Free Trade. It was at this stage that Trevelyan's papers really proved their worth. In his reply Sir Charles Wood adopted a number of Trevelyan's arguments and quoted verbatim a number of the examples he had collected.⁴ In fact it turned out that the threat was illusory. Cobden himself opposed

1 Debates, CX, cols. 219-231.

2 Ibid., cols. 279, 290.

3 Ibid., cols. 668 -669.

4 Ibid., cols. 981-1009, particularly 1003-04.

the motion in order that the odium attached to a general reduction of salaries should not be associated with the beneficent concept of Free Trade. The motion was resoundingly defeated. Yet this relatively minor Parliamentary episode helped to enhance Trevelyan's status as an adviser on Civil Service affairs. It is also interesting that this debate brought from Hume a constructive suggestion similar to one made by Trevelyan in his 1849 memorandum: the establishment of an examining board as the best means of eliminating ineffective Civil Servants.¹

When the Select Committee on Political, Judicial and Diplomatic Salaries reported in the following year, Trevelyan gained some Parliamentary notoriety over the level of his own salary. In the debate on the report which proposed among other things to reduce the salaries of the political secretaries to the Treasury to £2,000 a year, Trevelyan's salary of £2,500 was scathingly called in question by Major Beresford (Conservative M.P. for West Essex): "It seemed that this Assistant Secretary was a great favourite with the Whig Administration, because while he received this large salary for the duties of his office, he had also received a large gratuity for certain extra duties he was said to have performed in Ireland; though how he could have performed those extra duties without to some extent sacrificing his regular duties, he (Major Beresford) could not see". This accusation of Whig jobbery should not be taken too seriously except as an indication that Trevelyan was recognized as a conspicuous favourite of Sir Charles Wood. In the ensuing debate it was only with difficulty that Wood prevented discussion of Trevelyan's merits, and succeeded in establishing the principles that in some situations it was appropriate for permanent heads to receive political salaries, and that it was quite improper to consider reducing the salaries of men already in post.²

1 Ibid., col. 1017.

2 Debates, CXVII, 16 June 1851, cols. 834-842.

D Trevelyan's Memoranda on Civil Service Reform

While on the one hand Trevelyan used the debates in the Commons as an excuse to go beyond the older tradition of economical reform, he was equally anxious in his memorandum of March 1850 to convince Russell and Wood that his views had respectable, non-radical origins. Trevelyan's ostensible objective was to defend his colleagues but in the process of doing this he found that he had an opportunity to make general criticisms. He first made out a good case for not making indiscriminate reductions by establishing comparisons with rates of pay in other public organizations and in commerce. He qualified his defence of existing salaries by admitting that all staff ought to be fully and appropriately employed. In conclusion he cited as an example to the home government the concern displayed by the East India Company in the welfare of its Civil Servants.¹ He was hard pressed to find an indigenous tradition of rational and equitable payment for Civil Servants without having recourse to historical examples. The selection of quotations which he appended started with Macaulay's History of England on the corruption of the reign of Charles II, allegedly caused by derisory salaries and dependence on fees.² A further example indicated how this situation had been remedied by Pitt by the general substitution of salaries in place of fees in 1783.³ These salaries had in turn been reduced in the 1820s, and in 1829 superannuation deductions had been imposed on the salaries of those appointed to any position in the public service after that date.⁴ In opposing any more general and indiscriminate reductions Trevelyan's most prized

1 Papers 1850, pp. 9-10.

2 Ibid., p.18.

3 Ibid., p.21.

4 Ibid., p.14.

authority was Burke. Trevelyan referred to a speech in 1780 in which Burke himself had opposed a reduction of twenty-five percent. Burke took the hypothetical instance of two men receiving £800 and contended that the reduction then proposed would leave the sinecurist £600 overpaid and the conscientious official £200 underpaid. The moral was simply drawn that, "no man knows when he cuts off the incitements to a virtuous ambition and the just rewards of public service, what infinite mischief he may do to his country".¹ This was a useful indication that in the mainstream of economical reform general reductions had no place. Indeed, this kind of argument opened the way for a moral and practical reconsideration of every Civil Service activity.

While Trevelyan was anxious to show that his views had a traditional basis that would be readily intelligible to the Russell administration, he did not conceal that he believed that commercial methods were superior to those prevailing in the public service in such matters as the division of labour and staff selection.² To support this view Trevelyan presented in tabular form information on salaries in mercantile and insurance companies. Both comparisons helped foster the notion of an élite, since only very few men could ever hope to compete sufficiently successfully in order to rise to a salary of £1,000 or more.³ Trevelyan also drew particular attention to two recent investigations of the administration of railway companies.

1 Ibid., pp. 25-26.

2 Ibid., p.5.

3 Ibid., pp. 28-31. 63-66. Trevelyan wrote personally for some of this information and he had to assemble it very hurriedly, On 2 April he asked Lord Overstone, an eminent banker, for a comparison between mercantile and Civil Service salaries (T.L.B., XXVI, p.130). On 10 April Trevelyan signed his memorandum.

These investigations, conveniently for Trevelyan's case, laid stress on ability and conduct rather than length of service in assessing salaries, and on salary scales which were dependent on merit for each increment. It also appeared that railway companies, like insurance companies, possessed a sharply tapered career hierarchy with 298 secretaries and managers compared with 4442 clerks - a ratio of one prize for fifteen initial appointments.¹ As railway companies were never private firms, these figures provided a valid illustration of providing incentives for employees. These examples also showed that companies could encounter problems of organization not dissimilar to those of the Civil Service, even though these problems were caused by rapid expansion rather than adherence to tradition.

Two institutions performing functions analogous to those of the Civil Service - the London Office of the East India Company and the Bank of England - supplied even better ammunition for Trevelyan's argument in favour of a pronounced differential between clerks and higher officers. The East India Company's system embodied some of the features that later came to be incorporated in the Civil Service Commission. The Company controlled admission to their service by restricting the age of admission to between eighteen and twenty-five, by insisting upon a certificate of moral character, by an examination of commercial skills before appointment and by a year's probation. The Company's salary scale was modest, ending at £400 except for the few who were promoted to the most senior posts.² The Bank of England had a basic scale rising to £300.³ From these examples, Trevelyan was

1 Ibid., pp. 56-57, 61. The statistics of employment on railways from a Commons return (P.P., 1850, LIII, pp. 308-309).

2 Ibid., pp. 31-34.

3 Ibid., pp. 39-40.

able to argue that in institutions analogous to the Civil Service moderate salaries with the prospect of a few better prizes were perfectly adequate.

Trevelyan produced one piece of evidence to prove the practicability of a complete restructuring of salaries. Willia, Farr, actuary and compiler of abstracts at the General Registry Office, prepared for him a paper which demonstrated the actuarial feasibility of contracting the top of the salary scale. Farr divided the Civil Service into three classes - senior officers, established clerks and non-established clerks. He advocated that the established clerks should reach a lower ceiling more rapidly. In this way the maximum would be reached during a man's fifties, rather than be laboriously attained after half a century's service. Farr also maintained that if the age of appointment could be restricted to between eighteen and twenty-five, an adequate salary would be attained at the probable age of marriage. The absence of a high ultimate salary would deter clerks from extravagance and debt.¹ This was the germ of those realistic prospects that Trevelyan later hoped would prove so attractive to the middle class. However, the immediate importance of Farr's paper was to show that the kind of changes that Trevelyan wanted could be made without any extra cost.

In producing his memoranda and in assembling a great range of precedents and contemporary examples for use, if necessary, by his political superiors, Trevelyan had shown that he had a case that could not be ignored. He was conscious that the issues had been brought out into the open. For the next four years Trevelyan concentrated on converting at least some of his theories into practical terms.

1 Ibid., pp. 66-80. This paper was based on one produced in connection with superannuation and given to the Statistical Society of London in December 1848. Trevelyan also included an outline tabulation of an unofficial census of Civil Servants' families and a family budget to illustrate the circumstances of a clerk on £150 p.a. Papers No. 18 and 19 by M.J.T. Hammack (April 1850), pp. 81-82. See also infra pp. 226-227.

4 The Second Phase of Investigation, 1852 - 54

The appointment of the Derby-Disraeli administration in February 1852 led to a second phase in the investigation of offices. Although administrative reform was not a party matter, Trevelyan's new Chancellor, Disraeli, displayed more obvious interest than his predecessor. Disraeli had of course already spoken in favour of economical reform but he pointed out in December 1852 that efficiency could not be achieved by mere reductions since retrenchment was easy to demand while difficult to achieve.¹ Two departments were investigated - the War Office and the Admiralty - and one - the Board of Trade - was on the point of being examined when the administration fell. The Irish departments were also investigated by a separate committee. Reports on these latter departments were eventually published, but little is known about the Admiralty inquiry,² and information on the inquiry into the War Office is confined to a catalogue of the difficulties that Trevelyan had to contend with in an obstructive department.

The pace of investigation was further increased with the formation of the Aberdeen administration in December 1852. Gladstone took over Disraeli's projected inquiry into the Board of Trade. From this time onwards, however, every investigation was productive in that they all led to a published report. It may be argued that the most important departments and those best able to defend their interests had already been examined under Russell and Derby. Alternatively, Gladstone's greater determination may provide the explanation.

1 Debates, CXXlii, col. 894.

2 On 14 October 1852, Trevelyan wrote to Lord Chandos suggesting that the Admiralty committee should consist of them both and one other official from the Admiralty (T.L.B., XXIX, p.264).

A The War Office

As a major spending department, the War Office was an obvious subject for economical investigation. However, as Trevelyan later explained to Disraeli when the completion of the report ran into difficulties, the immediate occasion of the investigation had been a request for an increased establishment.¹ Although the report never emerged, more is known about the problems of its production than any of the others. Trevelyan set the pace. On 7 October 1852 he wrote to Benjamin Hawes, Parliamentary Under Secretary, to arrange the first meeting of a committee consisting of Lord Chandos, R.M. Bromley and Hawes himself.² Within two months the work had been completed, and by December only two points remained at issue - the reorganization of the Registry and the proportion of superintending clerks to the total number of clerks. Hawes at this stage objected to what he felt had been the undue haste in preparing the draft report so far. In reply, Trevelyan declined to reopen the investigation. He pointed out that he had already invited Hawes to examine the working of the Treasury Registry and that Hawes had not complained about the speed of the investigation at the time it was being conducted. Trevelyan maintained that, as far as he was concerned, the committee's sitting for two hours a day for many days and the examination of a great volume of written evidence had been quite sufficient to form a correct view of the matter.³ A few days later, Trevelyan again pressed Hawes to complete the report. The report was then completed to Trevelyan's satisfaction after the

1 15 December 1852, Hughenden, B/IV/C/14.

2 T.L.B., XXIX, p. 251.

3 Trevelyan to Hawes, 15 December 1852, T.L.B., XXX, p.115

latter had agreed to raise the age of admission for clerks from between fifteen and twenty to between eighteen and twenty-three.¹ This was a compromise that Trevelyan could readily agree to, provided that it did not imply an upgrading of the entire staff.

Trevelyan's satisfaction was shortlived. His insistence on completing the report prompted Hawes to produce a counter-report which was accepted by Sidney Herbert, the Secretary at War.² Trevelyan was not prepared to accept this flouting of Treasury authority without a struggle. He wrote to Lord Chandos and, while admitting that there might have been some inaccuracy in their report, maintained that there was a need "to speak out". Trevelyan's first reaction was to mobilise opposition to the War Office and he arranged to meet the other member of the committee, Bromley, at the Treasury.³ However, Trevelyan's political superiors realized that this kind of inter-departmental feuding would be unproductive. James Wilson, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, persuaded Trevelyan that no official notice should be taken of the counter-report.⁴ Presumably the counter-report served its purpose in that the main report was suppressed. It was never published and no copy survives.

Trevelyan did gain one minor victory. In February 1853 he wrote to Chandos, telling him how he had at least managed to place a financial restriction upon the pretensions of the War Office: "I have also had a hard battle to fight to prevent Sidney Herbert from taking a sum on account in the War Office Estimate, to defray the cost of their

1 Ibid., pp. 129, 148.

2 Ibid., p. 190.

3 Ibid., pp. 260, 265.

4 T.L.B., XXX, p.267.

proposed increase of Establishment, This was intended as a salve to the wounded Amour Propre of the War Office, but it would have prejudged the case, and would have the worst possible effect on the other Public Departments, and on the efficacy of the future Committees of Enquiry." ¹ From these remarks it might appear that even if Trevelyan had been given the chance to publish the War Office report together with the others in 1854, he would have preferred to leave in obscurity an episode that was not a successful example of his reforming schemes.

B The Irish Offices

Trevelyan played no part in the investigation of the Irish Offices, except insofar as it arose from Treasury resistance to increased salaries. The clerks of the Chief Secretary's Office in Dublin asked that their salaries should be raised to the level of those in the Home Office, the corresponding office in England. This request provided an excellent opportunity for an inquiry, in which R.M. Bromley represented the Treasury. He must have shared some of Trevelyan's views as he helped to produce a report that was very pleasing to him. On the same day on which the report was officially signed, 9 December 1852, Trevelyan wrote to congratulate Bromley on the way in which career prospects had been improved by the report's recommendations.² The appointment of a stranger to the post of Assistant Under Secretary had been one of the grievances that had precipitated the request for a salary increase. The report's recommendations aimed at removing the need for such an appointment in the future. It maintained that promotion by merit throughout the office was the key to more efficient senior appointments. Two other features of the Irish reforms - stricter rules for attendance

1 14 February 1853, T.L.B., XXXI, p.18.

2 T.L.B., XXX, p.109.

and an improved system for registering papers - were in keeping with Trevelyan's views. In addition to all these fundamental improvements, the amalgamation of the Office of the Auditor of Fines and Penalties with the Commissioners for Auditing Public Accounts achieved an immediate saving of £5,178 in a total salary bill of £21,738.¹ Disraeli singled out this saving for comment on 16 December 1852, pointing out that the amalgamation of departments on economical grounds had resulted in greater efficiency.²

C The Board of Trade

Until December 1852 the investigating committees had consisted of Trevelyan and various other persons drawn either from the Treasury or from the Treasury and from the department under review.³ The procedure was further professionalized on the formation of the Aberdeen coalition in December 1852 when Gladstone added to the team his former private secretary, Sir Stafford Northcote. A serious illness had kept him out of public life for some time, and on his recovery he approached Gladstone for some unpaid and not too vigorous work: "I should much like", he remarked, "to be employed on odd jobs of any kind".⁴ Gladstone appreciated the ability of his former secretary and appointed him to counterbalance Trevelyan, although he was not at the time an M.P.

The first department which Trevelyan and Northcote examined together was the Board of Trade. Work had been about to begin on it when the Conservative administration fell. Northcote had even been

1 RP., 1854, XXVII, pp. 122-125.

2 Debates, CXXIII, col. 1662.

3 The original committee formed by the Derby administration contained two political figures, Henley and Chandos. Northcote took the place of both and joined Trevelyan and Booth (Permanent Secretary) in the Board of Trade inquiry (Trevelyan to Henley, 10 December 1852, T.L.B., XXX, p.131).

4 Add. MS., 44216 f. 192.

aware of this and referred to it in his letter to Gladstone. Towards the completion of their joint labours in 1853, Trevelyan described this report as their masterpiece, the Board "having been recast on a good model, with a considerable pecuniary saving, a great increase of efficiency, and, so far as we know, to everybody's satisfaction."¹ In this report the remodelled Board of Trade bore traces of the ideas that Trevelyan had been fostering since 1848. It is therefore not surprising that he was eloquent in expressing his satisfaction, particularly as it demonstrated that both Booth and Northcote essentially shared his views. That this remodelling was possible was largely due to the Board of Trade's own tradition of change which had gone on since 1830 with the continual adding of new business.²

The report considered the multifarious business of the Board under three headings: the subordination of the whole department to the chief authority; the proper division of work; and the need for a uniform system of transacting business. All these aspects were made relevant to general Civil Service considerations. Starting at the top of the office, the recommendation that the three joint permanent secretaries in charge of the three regrouped departments - General, Mercantile Marine and Railway - should be directly responsible to the President of the Board of Trade, presupposed that the assistant secretaries would in turn be competent to manage the correspondence of each of the three departments. The secretaries in effect constituted an administrative élite, forming policy and ensuring its consistent execution. This was the strength at Board level which Trevelyan had been prevented from achieving at the Treasury

1 Trevelyan to Gladstone, 15 September 1853, T.L.B., XXXII, p.59.

2 Roger Prouty, The Transformation of the Board of Trade (1957), pp. 99-101.

itself. It was possible here since the Board of Trade was a ministry with the President as its sole head, the Board having ceased to meet in 1850.¹

To ensure that this reorganization would be on a secure foundation, great importance was attached to the actual methods of office administration. Trevelyan himself described routine registration as the "lore of the office" and the essential basis for its efficient operation. In the report it was recommended that the Registrar, who was in future to combine the functions of précis writer and librarian, should be in charge of all clerks in the correspondence departments. One of his duties would be to transfer them from one department to another so that they would gradually acquire experience of all kinds of work. Naturally much of this work would be routine copying and it was therefore proposed to establish two distinct classes of clerks. Thus for the first time copyists were recognized as part of the establishment; they were to pay superannuation deductions, to be granted paid leave, and to be paid according to a salary scale (£80 x £5 - £180, with extra additions for merit). At the same time it was made quite clear that these clerks were to have no claim to promotion to senior positions. The committee was even tempted to extend this arrangement by considering the establishment of one large copying pool for the whole of Whitehall. Prudently they left this for separate consideration, for Trevelyan was on safer ground when he was expounding his views on the correct method of selecting the two classes of clerks. He pointed out in the report that the feasibility of his examination scheme would have to be the subject of a separate study, embracing the whole Civil Service and not just one department. He repeated his view that a central body of

1 P.P., 1854, XXVII, pp. 163-167. By contrast, both Baring and Wood had insisted on preserving the Board structure of the Treasury as they felt that Junior Lords exercised a salutary political control over much routine business (P.P., 1847-48, XVIII i, pp. 419, 428).

examiners was needed in order to issue certificates of qualification before a clerk could take up his duties.¹ While it was not difficult to define what the education of the copyists should be, it was almost impossible to define the qualities needed in intellectual clerks. Indexing and registering was included in this category in that these activities involved an understanding and analysis of day-to-day business. The report also stressed the need for detailed supervision of each clerk's career. In future the Registrar was to keep a record of each man's progress, so that merit would not go unrewarded. For the intellectual clerks the report offered a new incentive for official virtue: a new class of six senior clerks to be appointed exclusively by merit.²

Apart from improved efficiency, an immediate saving of £5,000 was achieved to help satisfy demands for economy. The report therefore demonstrated that a major department could be economically, and at the same time fundamentally, reorganized. Trevelyan's personal satisfaction was partly caused by the eagerness with which the President of the Board of Trade had accepted the proposals with one minor exception.³ The way in which Trevelyan's and Northcote's first joint venture was accepted was due to the skillful way in which the committee discovered some sound features in the department that could be extended throughout the Board of Trade as a whole.

D The Foreign Office and the Treasury

The settling of the final details of the Board of Trade report and the drafting of a Treasury Minute to sanction the new establishment

1 P.P., 1854, XXVII, p.173.

2 Ibid., pp. 172-178.

3 Ibid., p.168.

took until the beginning of May 1853. Before these processes were completed Trevelyan took a short holiday in Paris. On his return, he was confronted with the possibility of re-examining the Foreign Office and the Treasury. Trevelyan certainly did not welcome a protracted, and almost certainly unproductive, involvement in the affairs of these two departments. In a letter to Gladstone on 31 March, he agreed that the Foreign Office should be asked to revise its establishment and undertook to draft a minute on the subject.¹ This was in connection with plans being produced by Addington, the Permanent Secretary, for the creation of a new grade of assistant clerks below the senior clerks as a means of improving the flow of business and of providing improved promotion prospects for the junior clerks. Trevelyan drafted a Treasury Minute, in which he argued that the separation of intellectual and mechanical work was a far more appropriate remedy to problems caused by an increased volume of work than the mere creation of a new class of superior clerks.² This conflict of views continued to be discussed and is briefly dealt with in connection with establishments.³ In the context of Civil Service reform, however, the Foreign Office could not be exploited as an example to other departments. Addington's views on the Northcote-Trevelyan proposals were invited and he revealed himself as one of the hostile departmental critics.⁴

As far as the Treasury was concerned Trevelyan was quite opposed to engaging in a stale conflict with his colleagues at this stage, while there were more promising fields for inquiry elsewhere: "I

1 Trevelyan to Gladstone, 31 March 1853, Add. MS. 44333, f.30.

2 Treasury Minute, 5 April 1854, in F.O.366/499, quoted by R. Jones op. cit., pp. 33-34.

3 See pp. 102-103 supra.

4 Addington to Treasury, printed in P.P., 1854-55, XX, pp. 348-360.

should be disposed to be content for the present with the degree of Improvement which has been obtained, on the ground of the recency of that reform, of the disproportionate expenditure of time and feeling necessarily incident to the revision of one's own Office, and of the fact that there are several other Offices which stand in more need of Enquiry and therefore require our earliest attention".¹ Although he had been frustrated in 1848, Trevelyan realized that any attempt to subject the Treasury to the same treatment as the Board of Trade would have resulted in a drawn out dispute with men of the stamp of Arbuthnot. Probably his reference to "feeling" in the letter indicated that he was aware of the need for great tact and sensitivity. Trevelyan had frequently mentioned that the Civil Service should be regulated in an impersonal manner and it might have struck him that his own approach as a member of the committees of inquiry disqualified him from an examination of the Treasury on the same terms as other departments.

E The Remaining Reports, 1853-54

Five more reports were produced very rapidly during the summer of 1853 - three of them dated within a few days of each other in August. Finally two more were produced at the end of 1853 and one in 1854. All these reports recommended separation of intellectual and mechanical work; none revealed any new principles. However, in the course of suggesting economies and making detailed improvements Trevelyan and Northcote had opportunities to illustrate the validity of the theories that they had already presented. For this reason only a few of the points raised in these eight reports are worth mentioning.²

1 Add MS., 44333 f. 30.

2 Science and Art Department (25 May 1853); Poor Law Board (20 July 1853); Privy Council Office (6 August 1853); Copyhold, Enclosure and Tithe Commission (17 August 1853); Colonial Land Emigration Board (16 August 1853); Ordnance (17 December 1853); Board of Works (14 January 1854); Post Office (30 January 1854).

In the Office of the Poor Law Board, for example, the investigating committee found ample scope for insisting that much of the routine work should be done by clerks, paid on the same scale as that laid down for the extra clerks in the Board of Trade.¹ In the education department of the Privy Council, on the other hand, the report laid greater emphasis on the career structure of the Office and the way in which this could encourage effort and appropriately reward talent.² The Office of the Copyhold, Enclosure and Tithe Commission was singled out for praise on account of the clerks being held individually responsible for the accuracy of their work, not to mention the annual saving of eighty-two reams of paper each year by the use of half sheets.³ The Ordnance, as it had already been the subject of an inquiry by both a departmental and a select committee, appeared to the Treasury committee to be admirably regulated - it having already achieved an exemplary reduction of £17,500 in its estimates between 1850 and 1853, despite a considerable increase in the volume of business.⁴ In the Office of Works the appointment of an Assistant Secretary and the payment of higher salaries at the top of the department strengthened the principle of the division of labour.⁵ The final report, that on the Post Office, only appeared in May 1854, six months after the general report, The Organisation of the Permanent Civil Service, had been completed. As the Post Office was the only "revenue" department reported on by Northcote

1 P.P., 1854, XXVII, p.238.

2 Ibid., pp. 256-263.

3 Ibid., p.289.

4 Ibid., p.307.

5 Ibid., p.355.

and Trevelyan, and thus its activities essentially localized with extensive employment of semi-skilled non-clerical labour, its problems could not so usefully be discussed in the terms that had already been developed. Apart from a number of detailed changes, the report recommended such traditional economical improvements as the abolition of extra payments for additional work and the establishment of a system of promotion by merit based on improved staff records.¹

Conclusions

Although Trevelyan covered a great deal of ground in his fifteen departmental investigations (nine of them in collaboration with Northcote), he did little to refine or develop his views. From his experience of the Treasury he was convinced that division of labour was the key to virtually all problems of departmental organization. Naturally he came to examine methods of staff selection, but the problems inherent in this remained of secondary importance. The eagerness with which Trevelyan wished to impose this preconceived system brought him into conflict with the most powerful departments. Yet he remained undismayed, content for a time to work in comparative obscurity, improving office methods wherever he could by suggesting unexceptionable modifications and improvements in office routine.

1 Ibid., pp. 432-433.

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Chapter VI

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM: FROM THEORY TO COMPROMISE

In the second phase of Civil Service reform, Trevelyan's position was fundamentally different. The Parliamentary pressure for economy had abated. But a far more potent and sustained impetus came from the interest of Gladstone. Gladstone, by his eagerness to strike a blow at patronage through the complete adoption of open competition, made Civil Service reform a public issue. Trevelyan, therefore, interpreted his new task as one of winning over public opinion for a reform of profound moral and educational significance.

1 The Northcote Trevelyan Report, November 1853

The year 1853 was not only the most productive in terms of completed departmental reports, it at last saw the formal step of proceeding from piecemeal inspection to a general survey and evaluation of the Civil Service. This process was formally initiated by a Treasury Minute on 12 April. This Minute established the terms of reference which had already been applied in the five inquiries that had taken place before: an inquiry into salaries, redundant offices, the need for clerical assistance and the general improvement of working methods. It also added the question of the feasibility of separating intellectual and mechanical work. This in itself was an invitation to consider general principles rather than particular instances. Moreover the Minute went on to ask the committee to consider features common to all departments and to examine the methods of selection. Now, for the first time, Trevelyan received an open invitation to do what he had been hinting at since 1848. The position of the committee itself was formalized by the recognition of Northcote's position at a salary



of £1,000.¹

Trevelyan and Northcote completed their first version of the general report on 23 November. Despite significant revisions it retained this date in the published version. Its title, The Organisation of the Permanent Civil Service, was equally misleading. The contradiction of the title by the contents probably did not matter initially, since Gladstone envisaged the report as a confidential one for his own consideration.² However, as the subsequent development of Civil Service reform took place in the light of the report as a public document, it will be necessary to consider, and perhaps explain, the report's shortcomings in its changed context. Moreover some of the confusion that ultimately arose from the report's ambiguity will be seen as the results of hurried attempts to make fundamental alterations at the insistence of Gladstone.

The report opened with yet another restatement of Trevelyan's views on existing methods of selecting and encouraging staff. Since the criticism implicit in this was in general terms and did not refer to a single instance or class of instances, it had the appearance of being a very unfair condemnation. After stating that the Civil Service failed to attract the best talent, Trevelyan and Northcote launched a general attack on the quality of Civil Servants:

Admission into the Civil Service is indeed sought after, but it is for the unambitious, and the indolent or incapable, that it is chiefly desired. Those whose abilities do not warrant an expectation that they will succeed in the open professions, where they must encounter the competition of their contemporaries,

1 Printed in P.P. (Lords), 1854, XLV, p.53. For some reason the Minute was not printed with the published collection of reports. It was requested as a Lords return in order to satisfy Lord Monteaule's suspicions about the propriety of the inquiries. It eventually appeared as a Commons return in the following session (P.P. 1854-55, XXX, pp. 375-376).

2 Gladstone to Russell, 20 January 1854, Add. MS. 44291 f.93.

and those whom indolence of temperament or physical infirmities unfit for active exertions, are placed in the Civil Service, where they may obtain an honourable livelihood with little labour, and with no risk; where their success depends upon their simply avoiding any flagrant misconduct, and attending with moderate regularity to routine duties; and in which they are secured against the ordinary consequences of old age, or failing health, by an arrangement which provides them with the means of supporting themselves after they have become incapacitated.¹

Trevelyan admitted that the system did produce better people than might have been expected. He was, however, emphatic that the usually routine nature of the work they had to perform, together with the secluded environment in which they worked, deprived men of the character-forming experience of professional competition. Naturally this moral observation was likely to arouse the resentment of those Civil Servants who had quietly and faithfully served for a lifetime.

Trevelyan offered a remedy for this lack of character-testing. He first dismissed, as being too expensive, the notion of recruiting the Civil Service from among men who had already proved themselves in other fields. Apart from the expense, he realized that maturer men would be less amenable to discipline. Trevelyan decided, therefore, that the only practicable scheme was to continue to recruit docile young men at a low salary, but to take more care over selection and promotion.² In turn this led to a consideration of the kind of education that potential Civil Servants ought to receive, its relevance to intellectual

1 P.P., 1854, XXVII, p.4.

2 Ibid., p.8.

and mechanical work and the form of examination needed to test qualifications.

In considering the examination system that was eventually proposed, it is necessary to note that at the time of the report's original composition, neither Trevelyan nor Northcote envisaged going beyond what Trevelyan had suggested in his memorandum of 1849. Under this arrangement, patronage was to be centrally exercised by the Patronage Secretary to the Treasury. Gladstone, by contrast, was anxious to destroy Civil Service patronage; he wanted no privileged position for his own and succeeding administrations. On 3 December he wrote to Northcote, asking that two important changes should be made in the report: that competitive examination should be free from any patronage restriction, and that it should be extended to a whole additional class of departments.¹

Although Trevelyan's main concern had been to devise a way of selecting men for the highest posts, he had hesitated to remove the ultimate right of selection from political hands. It is unlikely that he was restrained from going too far by the fear of giving offence to his political superiors, for this is the kind of strategic tact that Trevelyan never displayed on other occasions. On 28 November Trevelyan sent Gladstone some more copies of the report and in his letter continued to press his case for the beneficent exercise of patronage. As the tone of the letter is consistent with Trevelyan's enthusiasm when he finally began to advocate open competition, he was probably in the process of changing his position:

I send two spare copies of our General Report on the Civil Departments and the same number of my paper on the Superannuation question, in which I have made a few amendments. The political

1 Add. MS., 44529 f.11.

bearing of these proposed changes will, I think, strike you as extremely important. The Government Patronage is habitually employed in influencing, or according to a stricter morality, corrupting Representatives and Electors at the expense both of their independence and of the public interests. Even the establishment at the Board of Trade for protecting our lives and limbs when travelling by railway is not exempt from the blight of this system. The defence usually made for it is that it is doing evil that good may come. However this may have been heretofore, both means and ends are now equally bad. It is time that the Government should rest its claim to support upon simply and directly consulting the public good. The experience of last Session shows that this is quite practicable. The Government which began with a narrow majority, acquired, by the general approbation with which its measures were regarded, a strength and stability exceeding what had been known for many years. Following out this principle, we cannot doubt that no distribution of the Government patronage would benefit the Government so much as the general confidence that all appointments to the public service were made solely with a view to the public good, without any indirect personal or interested motive whatever.¹

Whatever Trevelyan's precise position, Gladstone soon precipitated its change.

Gladstone's share in extending the scope of the report is made clear in his letter to Northcote on 3 December.² He admitted that

1 Add. MS., 44333 f. 65.

2 Add. MS., 44529. f. 11. This is the copy of the letter in Gladstone's letter book (Iddesleigh Papers, add. MS., 50015 f. 76). It is discussed by Jenifer Hart, "The Genesis of the Northcote-Trevelyan Report", in G. Sutherland (ed.) Studies in the Growth of Nineteenth Century Government (1972), pp. 73-77.

he was "keenly anxious to strike a blow at Parliamentary patronage". He was, therefore, suspicious of a proposal that qualified open competition:

You recommend in p. 12 that the clerkships in the higher offices should be disposed of by selection among the successful candidates and that this selection should rest with the First Lord of the Treasury, who would give due weight to the recommendation of his colleague and also of his Parliamentary supporters. Pray let this disappear. To me it seems at least that having slain Patronage in principle by your admirable opening statement and your first recommendations, you revive it by these words and give it a standing ground from which it would wriggle itself once more into possession of all the space from which it had been ejected. The recommendations of Ministers may be supposed to rest on their knowledge: I would give to them and not to the Treasury, these appointments; probably with the check you recommend of a list annually presented to Parliament. But the recommendations of members of Parliament I think can find no place, if the principles of your report are to be maintained.

With these words, one of Trevelyan's few pieces of apparent political realism was dismissed by Gladstone's moral idealism. There was also the practical point - later expressed in some of the papers on Civil Service reorganization - that Treasury patronage exercised at a distance had often resulted in unsatisfactory appointments.¹ In the final version of the report, therefore, Trevelyan and Northcote made no attempt to outline an alternative arrangement. They left the actual distribution of appointments undecided and pretended to see no real difficulty

1 Papers of R.M. Bromley and Edward Romilly, P.P., 1854-55, XX, pp. 57, 277-278.

in whether they were to be allotted by the examiners or by the heads of departments.

In the first draft of the report, Trevelyan had wisely decided not to attempt detailed suggestions for the Customs and the Inland Revenue. Neither he nor Northcote had any experience of these and other departments that employed large numbers of non-clerical, and often unskilled, staff at local level. Therefore, they decided to leave the existing system of patronage untouched, except for the addition of a qualifying examination. It was Gladstone who insisted in his letter of 3 December that these departments should be subject to open competition like the central departments. He realized that it would be a considerable task to work out a detailed scheme for them, but he felt confident that Northcote and Trevelyan would undertake it. Gladstone never suspected that the superficial alteration that was in fact made would create serious ambiguities and raise additional issues that proved to be prejudicial to the success of the whole scheme. It is possible to see how this came about by comparing the two versions. Fortunately a copy of the earlier one exists among the Gladstone papers. The paragraph referring to revenue appointments reads:

There are many situations in which character is more important than ability, and in such it will generally be prudent to rely more upon the testimony of those by whom the candidate is recommended, or to whom his merits are well known than upon the results of an examination by those who are strangers to him. Persons recommended for such appointments as these ought indeed to undergo an examination calculated to prove whether they are capable of discharging the duties which are assigned to them; but it will be far below what we think should be required of those who offer themselves as candidates for admission into offices where

they may be expected to rise in due time to very arduous positions.¹

This was replaced in the final version by a very general requirement:

We are of the opinion that this examination should be in all cases a competing literary examination. This ought not to exclude careful previous inquiry into the age, health, and moral fitness of the candidates, where character and bodily activity are chiefly required, more, comparatively, will depend upon the testimony of those to whom the candidate is well known; but the selection from among the candidates who have satisfied these preliminary inquiries should still be made by competing examination. This may be conducted as to test the intelligence, as well as the mere attainments of the candidates. We see no other mode by which (in the case of inferior no less of superior offices) the double object can be attained of selecting the fittest person, and of avoiding the evils of patronage.²

The extension of open competition in place of patronage to virtually the whole Civil Service satisfied Gladstone. There now could be no suspicion that the scheme was designed to strengthen Treasury patronage. However, in extending the social range of candidates for the new kind of examination, it became possible to consider the relevance of every type of education to the needs of the Civil Service. As a consequence the arguments of educationists became an additional complicating factor. At the same time the vagueness of the modified proposals invited misinterpretation, particularly from hostile critics. Although Gladstone had prevented patronage from wriggling its way back into a

1 Add. MS., 44579 f. 142.

2 P.P., 1854, XXVII, p.11.

reformed Civil Service, he had helped to create a series of immediate tactical problems that Trevelyan and Northcote were slow to solve. Trevelyan lost sight of these problems because from this time onwards he became an ardent propagandist against patronage and in favour of open competition.¹ Never before had he received so much encouragement to extend his ideas. Never before had he been so confident that a fundamental reform of the Civil Service was imminent.

The other recommendations of the report did not require modification. Most of them were consistent with the general principle of open competition, even if they had originally been conceived in a different context. One such recommendation was for the establishment of a new central examination system. Essentially what was outlined was the same as the arrangement proposed in Trevelyan's memorandum of 1849. In future, entrance to the Civil Service was to be superintended by a specially created impartial and independent board. This board was to be headed by a Privy Councillor and was to be composed of, or at least able to obtain the assistance of, men who had experience in organizing upper-class and middle-class education. To these were to be added men with experience of the management of public affairs. This body of examiners was to set a competitive literary examination and to assess the character and physical fitness of candidates before issuing a certificate of competence to serve. These examinations were to be conducted on at least two levels. For the higher level of intellectual posts, candidates aged between nineteen and twenty-five were to engage in a competitive literary examination. It was intended that this high upper age limit should enable graduates to compete with boys straight from school.² This was perfectly consistent with Trevelyan's long-

1 Trevelyan had been rather cynical about patronage for some time. In January 1853 he speculated with R.M. Bromley whether the increased demand for clerkships "was owing to the Great Country Party coming into office with all their large families and numerous dependants" (T.L.B., XXX, p.131).

2 P.P., 1854, XXVII, pp. 11, 16-17.

standing interest in establishing an administrative élite. However, he had never shown so much concern for and interest in the lower levels of work. Partly perhaps as a result of the modifications already described, the report was less clear in outlining the appropriate examination for those aged between seventeen and twenty-one who were to fill posts in the executive and account departments, and for those who were to perform mechanical work generally. As Trevelyan had no experience of examinations on a large scale, the report was only able to make the vague suggestion that for the numerous appointments in the Customs, examinations should be organized on lines similar to those already adopted by the Education Department. This lack of precision gave rise to several misunderstandings that Trevelyan and Northcote spent the next three months endeavouring to eradicate.

The most serious misunderstanding as far as serving Civil Servants were concerned was the impression that the new examination would have the effect of depriving the middle class of appointments for the benefit of those with an upper class, university education. The first draft of the report had drawn a sharp distinction between the levels of examination for intellectual and mechanical work.¹ However, this disappeared in the final version, when consideration of the examination needs of the revenue departments obscured the original proposal for two main grades of clerks in central departments. Trevelyan endeavoured to correct this impression in a memorandum of 28 February 1854 in which he stressed the importance of elementary skills like good handwriting, arithmetic and book-keeping for clerks engaged in mechanical work.² Trevelyan elaborated his expectations to Gladstone a few weeks later, when he pointed out that the majority of posts would be open to those

1 Add. MS., 44759 f. 142b.

2 Printed in Papers on the Reorganization of the Civil Service, P.P., 1854-55, XX, pp. 427-431.

who had received an improved "commercial" education. Trevelyan hoped that these opportunities would prevent jealousy of "our Oxford and Cambridge men"¹ - a jealousy that had partly been fostered by Trevelyan's preoccupation with a new class of university-trained intellectual clerks.

Another of the report's main proposals was for a new method of making promotions on the basis of merit. This was as difficult to describe in effective concrete terms as a comprehensive examination system. Quite apart from the obvious practical difficulties, it was most important in the context of the ending of patronage that any new system should be seen to be scrupulously impartial. It would clearly be dangerous for it to appear that the principle of strict seniority was being replaced by the favouritism of heads of departments. Suspicions of jobbery would be confirmed if it seemed that the patronage in first appointments was being taken away, only to be restored in the guise of unlimited departmental discretion in making promotions. It was fortunate for Trevelyan that he could claim experience of selecting men according to merit as a result of his management of the Commissariat.

The report therefore recommended that the Commissariat system should be followed. Each clerk's record was to be kept by his head of department in a departmental record book, together with details of each clerk's probationary service. In his 1849 memorandum, Trevelyan had envisaged that this would be done by the central examining board. Now he felt that probation would be better left to the departments, as he realized that departments themselves ought to be made more responsible for properly regulating their affairs. The record book system had, in Trevelyan's view, one great disciplinary advantage over any other method

1 Trevelyan to Gladstone, 10 March 1854, Add. MS., 44333 f. 255.

of making promotions. It provided heads of departments with a less severe and therefore more credible sanction than dismissal. Particularly as it was proposed that even incremental additions to salary were to depend upon a satisfactory certificate of conduct from one's immediate official superior.¹

2 Educational Aspects of Civil Service Reform

Trevelyan and Northcote increasingly spoke of the educational implications of their proposals and these require explanation. The crude distinction between intellectual and mechanical work was reflected in an equally crude distinction between university and elementary school education as the two levels appropriate for consideration in the context of the Civil Service. Each level was represented by a prominent educationist: Benjamin Jowett, Fellow of Balliol, and Richard Dawes, Dean of Hereford. Both men had been introduced to Trevelyan and Macaulay by R.W.W. Lingens, Secretary to the Education Department of the Privy Council and a former pupil of Jowett at Balliol.² From his experience in India Trevelyan was able to appreciate the interconnections that were possible between education and social, political and administrative policies, and he was fundamentally sympathetic to educational arguments. In a less explicitly utilitarian fashion, Gladstone provided a link between educational and administrative reform in his concern to eliminate "restriction and private favour" at Oxford in addition to ending patronage in Civil Service appointments.³ This desire to open institutions to freely competing talent constitutes

1 P.P., 1854, XXVII, pp. 19-21.

2 E.A. Abbott and L. Campbell (eds.) The Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett (1897), II, pp. 185, 197.

3 Gladstone to Graham, 3 January 1854, Add. MS., 44163 f. 109.

a powerful common ideology, and makes it difficult to accept Edward Hughes's stricture that Civil Service reform was given an "irrelevant educational twist".¹ At the same time it can be argued that it was a tactical blunder to give unnecessary prominence to the educational aspects at a stage when it was important to convince Civil Servants and politicians, notably the Whigs, of both the wisdom and necessity of the proposed changes.

Benjamin Jowett epitomised the movement for reform of the University of Oxford.² As fellow of Balliol he had helped to create an enviable intellectual reputation for his college by efficient and stimulating teaching for the honour school. Jowett's success at Balliol caused him to appreciate the wasted educational potential of the colleges with their large incomes and obsolete and restrictive practices, and to consider ways in which the University could once more become a truly national institution. In his evidence to the Royal Commission on the University (established by Russell in 1850 and

1 Edward Hughes, "Sir Charles Trevelyan and Civil Service Reform", E.H.R., LXIV (1949), p.62.

2 The teaching system had not kept pace with the honours degree system set up in the first quarter of the century. Professional lectures were usually perfunctory and largely ignored. Fellows were in most colleges (Balliol and Oriel being notable exceptions) elected without reference to academic ability and with no obligation to teach. As a consequence undergraduates depended on coaching (some said cramming) by private tutors. The colleges as mediaeval corporations were mainly concerned to preserve their ancient privileges and their extensive revenues by literal interpretation of their statutes. Furthermore as the heads of colleges collectively controlled the University through the Hebdomadal Board it was impossible to effect reform by any kind of internal pressure alone. The university was severely criticised by radicals and dissenters, who claimed that the State had an obligation to intervene to free a national institution from the obscurantist domination of the colleges, and also to abolish the religious tests that kept it a preserve of the Church of England. See J. Sparrow, Mark Pattison and the Idea of a University (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 69-70; W.R. Ward, Victorian Oxford (1965), Chs. V-X.

reporting in 1852) he proposed to break the monopoly of heads of colleges in the government of the University, to free undergraduate education from religious tests and to open fellowships to competition. He suggested that surplus college revenue should be devoted to providing a rational teaching structure of properly paid professors, supported by college lecturers. He also hoped to reduce the expense of university education and thereby to open "to the lower and middle classes an honourable way of advancement in life and a means of entering the professions".¹

The report of the Oxford University Commission, while not accepting all of Jowett's views, was emphatic in recommending major reforms. So strong were its arguments and the evidence brought forward in support of them that Gladstone, who had originally been opposed to investigation of the university, devoted himself in 1853 to collaboration with Jowett in formulating a bill. During its passage through Parliament under the guidance of Russell and Gladstone between May and August 1854, the measure was extensively mutilated. The main provision that survived was the opening of the B.A. degree to dissenters, while other more fundamental reforms were to be achieved gradually through a new government structure for the university and a permanent supervisory commission.² While Jowett's hopes for the extension of university education to a wider range of classes were not significantly realized, the principle of state intervention had been established. Although Gladstone had failed to establish open academic competition for fellowships, he had at least devoted three months of Parliamentary

1 Jowett's written evidence, Oxford University Commission. P.P., 1852, XII, evidence pp. 30-40.

2 J.B. Conacher, The Aberdeen Coalition, 1852-1855 (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 332-334.

effort to the attempt. As we shall see he was unable as a consequence to find any time for legislation on the Civil Service.

In the sphere of elementary education Dawes was a leading propogandist. As vicar of King's Somborne in Hampshire he had established a flourishing parish school. His work had been praised in The Edinburgh Review as a good example of self-financing elementary education.¹ His school became a show place for progressive educationists including Jowett. His services to education were rewarded by Lord John Russell by appointment of Dean of Hereford in 1850.²

Dawes's ideas and interests are extensively documented in his pamphlets. He was convinced that elementary schools could be self-financing from fees,³ and he also favoured support from local taxation.⁴ Of greater social significance was his concern to educate working and middle class children together (e.g. at King's Somborne the children of labourers and farmers) and to charge crudely differentiated rates according to means.⁵ He saw the need for non-sectarian general education, including some natural science, and contrasted this approach with the preoccupation of the National Society of teaching Church of England doctrine to the poor.⁶ Dawes was not only an enthusiastic supporter of the pupil-teacher system as an outlet for more able pupils and an inexpensive means of developing a teaching profession, but he also argued that if merit were to be encouraged in schools it ought to be formally rewarded by the award of public appointments. He had

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- 1 [Henry Moseley H.M.I.], "Church and State Education", The Edinburgh Review, XCII (1850), pp. 94-136.
 - 2 Trevelyan to Russell with enclosures from John Wood and Dawes, 2 February 1854, Add. MS., 44333 f. 127.
 - 3 R. Dawes, Hints on an Improved and Self-Paying System of National Education (4th ed. 1850).
 - 4 R. Dawes, Observations on the Working of the Government Scheme of Education and on School Inspection (1849), p.32.
 - 5 R. Dawes, Remarks occasioned by the present Crusade against the Educational Plans of the Committee of Council on Education (1850), pp. 7-8.
 - 6 R. Dawes, Suggestive Hints towards Improved Secular Instruction making it bear upon Practical Life (1849).

been involved in a single token project that had pointed in this direction: John Wood, Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, had arranged with him that an exciseman's position should be available annually for competition among his pupils.¹ Rather naively, Dawes supposed that this example would be followed by others in the Civil Service.

While official patronage of the products of publicly financed education remained an unrealized dream, central government involvement in elementary education continued to increase. In 1853 Russell introduced a bill to empower corporate towns to levy an education rate. After it became evident that this would lead to bitter disagreement in some towns over the principle of financing sectarian education, the measure was quietly dropped in April.² At the other extreme, the National Society was deeply suspicious of any move, whether local or central, that might increase secular control of its schools. Despite this failure to extend urban education, the corresponding measure for rural schools went ahead, since it did not require legislation to increase the Privy Council grant - in this instance by 50%. Yet enthusiasts like Jowett and Dawes still felt the need of a comprehensive bill as means of indicating central government commitment to a national system of elementary education. The failure of the Aberdeen administration to produce any kind of bill in 1854 led them to view proposals for Civil Service appointments as a surrogate educational reform.

The production of the Northcote-Trevelyan report was the occasion to link education with public service in general terms. Trevelyan welcomed Jowett's offer to produce an open letter on the feasibility

1 Remarks, pp. 60-61

2 Conacher, op. cit., pp. 110-113.

of large-scale examinations and he arranged for it to be appended to the published version of the report. While Jowett was mainly concerned to discuss the merits of a broadly based examination that would favour the honours graduate and tend to exclude the crammed candidate, he also mentioned the desirability of competitive examinations on literary subjects for posts of the level of exciseman and tidewaiter.¹ Dawes was sent an advance copy of the report and the letter by John Wood, and he enthusiastically acclaimed them as doing more for the cause of education than any other single measure could have achieved.² Jowett felt that more weight would be given to the proposals if they had backing from Dawes, and he suggested that he should write to Lord John Russell on the bearing of Civil Service examinations on the education of the lower classes. Jowett also optimistically hinted that the lack of an education bill for that session might lead the administration to stress the educational aspects of Civil Service reform.³ While Trevelyan welcomed support from Dawes he was aware of Russell's opposition and tactfully advised that an open letter to Aberdeen might be more effective.⁴ Dawes accordingly summarised his views and made the additional point that Parliament was inconsistent in voting money for education while disregarding educational merit in making public appointments. He also hoped that corporate towns would accept the same principle in making their appointments.⁵

1 Jowett to Trevelyan, January 1854, P.P., 1854, XXVII, pp. 24-31.

2 Dawes to Wood, 30 January, 1 February 1854, Add. MS., 44433 fs. 127, 129.

3 Jowett to Dawes, 5 February 1854, *Ibid.*, f. 142.

4 Trevelyan to Dawes, 6 February 1854, *Ibid.*, f. 143.

5 R. Dawes, Remarks on the Re-organization of the Civil Service and its bearing on Educational Progress (20 February 1854).

Such educational arguments and pressures, however valid in the long term, could do nothing to prompt the Aberdeen coalition to take resolute action in 1854. The educationists were more concerned with future developments while politicians were more involved in the solution of immediate practical problems. There was no immediate problem of a surplus of educated talent at either university or elementary school level - if anything the educationists were proposing to create a "problem" by further stimulating academic endeavour with the promise of public appointments.¹ To pragmatists like Palmerston and Russell these were absurdly visionary schemes, which through their association with clergymen and academics were vulnerable to cruel but effective ridicule.

3 The Indian Precedent, 1853 - 1854

While Trevelyan and Northcote were preparing and revising their report, a parallel development had been taking place in connection with the East India Company's Civil Service. The success of the proposals to replace Indian patronage by open competition, and the committee that was subsequently set up to work out the details of an examination system contributed to the optimistic mood for reform which Trevelyan sensed in the beginning of 1854. This encouraging development was due to the renewal of the Company's charter in 1853. As on the previous occasion in 1833, Parliamentary discussion had included consideration of the Civil Service and the qualifications necessary for serving in it. Furthermore the Select Committee on the renewal bill provided Trevelyan with opportunity to express his views on this and other aspects of Indian affairs.

1 It has been pointed out that unlike continental countries, England did not have a surplus of educated men vainly seeking entry to the professions. English parents were more likely to match the level of education with realistic vocational possibilities (Leonore O'Boyle, "The Problem of an Excess of Educated Men in Western Europe, 1800-1850", The Journal of Modern History, XLII, 1970, pp. 471-495).

Essentially Trevelyan was in favour of preserving control by the directors over the East India Company. In his evidence on 26 May 1853 he argued that the directorate was the best independent governing body for India: "They include a fair representation of the important middle classes of bankers, merchants and persons in business generally; they belong neither to the political aristocracy nor to the class of Parliamentary politicians; they have the English element without any objectionable admixture of English party spirit. It is not the practice for them to take office under the Queen's Government. It is eminently a government of the middle classes, and of the best portion of them."¹ Moreover Trevelyan felt that any blemishes of corruption could be removed and the merits of the system further strengthened by an improved system of appointments to writerships and cadetships. He also spoke of society appearing "to be putting forth a remedial power" and of measures "being taken to cut up this corruption by the roots". This process of purification would eventually make it safe for Indian affairs to be entrusted to other hands - at least by the time the proprietors' stock was redeemed.²

When this decision was officially announced to the Commons by Sir Charles Wood on 3 June, it led three days later to a debate in which Sir Charles Wood elaborated the advantages that the change would bring for the upper classes. He expected that it would lead to a more distinguished and widely recruited Civil Service for India, in which the aristocracy would be able to participate on the basis of merit rather than privilege and patronage as in England. Wood claimed that this innovation would be in the nature of an experiment, asserting that if it failed, little would have been lost as the old

1 P.P., 1852-53, XXVIII, p.138.

2 Ibid., p.139.

system could be restored with little disruption.¹ For this reason he did not find it difficult to reconcile the ending of the directors' patronage with his later opposition in the cabinet to extending the same principle to the home Civil Service. As the distribution of patronage was confined to a small part of the middle-class, the political repercussions of the proposed change were negligible.²

The distinction between the Indian and English situation was also stressed by Macaulay but in different terms when the debate on the East India Bill was resumed on 24 June. Although he admired the Indian Civil Service, he admitted that directors' patronage and the form of education provided at Haileybury had allowed a few incompetent men to enter the Service. In this he drew a distinction between England and India: "Now you can do very well with this in this country. You don't want all your clerks in the War Office or the Treasury to be superior young men. There is plenty of routine business to be done in those offices which a man of no great ability can transact. The men of small ability do that routine business, the men of great ability rise in position. But the case is different in the Indian service. You have there 800 men charged with the happiness of 120,000,000 of people".³ Macaulay described how previous attempts to introduce open competition in 1813 and limited competition in 1833 had been frustrated. A further advantage of open competition was that it provided a legitimate

1 Debates, CXXVII, cols. 1155-58.

2 B.S. Cohn, "Recruitment and Training of British Civil Servants in India, 1600-1850" in R. Braibanti et al., Asian Bureaucratic Systems Emergent from the British Imperial Tradition (Duke University, Durham N.C., 1966), pp. 109-111. It is suggested that the directorate consisted of an upper middle-class group of fifty or sixty interconnected and extended families, some with evangelical affinities, all centred on London and the home counties. This banking and commercial middle class was distinct from both the landed aristocracy and the newer manufacturing middle-class.

3 Debates, CXXVIII, cols. 755-756.

way in which Indians could be introduced to the higher ranks of the Civil Service: "... he would in the most honourable manner, by conquest, as a matter of right, and not as a mere eleemosynary donation, obtain access to the service".¹ These and other arguments prevailed and the government's proposals were adopted. An amendment by Joseph Hume to reserve a third of appointments for directorial patronage on the grounds that the change was an untried experiment was conclusively defeated by 93 to 39.²

Trevelyan played an important part in putting the Indian scheme into practice.³ He was asked by Wood to find out whether Macaulay would be prepared to serve on a commission to work out the practical details for the new examinations.⁴ Trevelyan hoped for a Royal Commission to do this, both to guard against a change of heart that might result from a change of administration and to enhance the status of the proposed reform. Nevertheless he was satisfied with the commission appointed in February 1854 by the President of the Board

1 Ibid., cols. 758-760.

2 Debates,^{CXXIX,} 21 and 22 July 1853, cols. 582, 668.

3 In some ways the pace was set by the educationists. For example, Trevelyan and Wood originally intended to preserve the system whereby all East Indian Civil Servants spent two years at Haileybury (P.P., 1852-53, XXXII, p.223). When Jowett and Dr. Vaughan, Headmaster of Harrow, got wind of this, they objected to the preservation of Haileybury's privileged position, and stressed the resultant difficulties in obtaining a high standard in examinations unless competition were really open. Both Trevelyan and Wood were persuaded to change their minds and the India Bill was amended to allow men not educated at Haileybury to take the final examination. This in turn meant that the second examination could no longer be professionally specialized; a further consequence was the inevitable eventual closing of Haileybury (R.J. Moore, Sir Charles Wood's Indian Policy, Manchester 1966, pp. 88-90; R.J. Moore, "The Abolition of Patronage in the Indian Civil Service and the Closure of Haileybury College", The Historical Journal, VII, 1964, pp. 246-257).

4 Trevelyan to Wood, 11 November 1853, T.L.B., XXXII, p.104.

of Control. It contained three men of whom he approved: Jowett, Shaw Lefevre and Macaulay. If Jowett represented Oxford and Shaw Lefevre Cambridge, Macaulay, he thought, as "a universal genius will represent all the world".¹ Macaulay was appointed chairman and it was he who wrote the report. In it he recommended the kind of competitive literary examination that Jowett had earlier suggested to Trevelyan. Although the age of entry was set between eighteen and twenty-five, the marks in the examination were to be weighted in favour of those who had studied classics or mathematics. In this way graduates from Oxford, Cambridge and the Scottish universities were given a pronounced advantage.² On 9 July Macaulay read the draft of this to Trevelyan who was naturally pleased to hear a cogent restatement of his own and Jowett's views on examinations for intellectual Civil Servants.³ To this extent the movements for the reform of the two Civil Services were intertwined. However, as the report was not officially completed and signed until November 1854, it could not advance the cause of reform at home. This was a campaign that Trevelyan had to conduct himself, using his own methods for getting publicity and securing support.

1 Trevelyan to Wood, 2 February 1854, Ibid., p.273.

2 An analysis of the reports of the Civil Service Commissioners (they took over the management of the examinations in 1858) shows that until 1860 the system worked roughly as its inventors had intended. After the Mutiny, India became obviously less attractive to those with an "intellectual" education, and the service became increasingly filled with men from "crammers" and public schools. Later attempts by Wood to secure a preponderance of "gentlemen" only resulted in weighting the examinations even further in favour of public school men who were "gentlemen" without being "intellectuals" (J.M. Crompton, "Open Competition and the Indian Civil Service", E.H.R., LXXXIII, 1968, pp. 278-279).

3 G.O. Trevelyan, Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay (enlarged ed. 1908), p. 609. G.O. Trevelyan served as his father's private secretary in India from 1862 to 1865 and wrote an amusing and perceptive account of the style and attitudes of the new Civil Servants in The Competition Wallah (1864).

4 Publicity and Controversy, January to May 1854

Even if the Northcote-Trevelyan report had not required so much elucidation Trevelyan would have been disinclined to allow the reform of the Civil Service to take its own course. Initially his opportunities to exert pressure were limited by the confidential nature of the report but from Gladstone's interest in its revision Trevelyan inferred that it would eventually have a wider circulation and that he was to be responsible for achieving this. Although Gladstone's eagerness to go further than Trevelyan and Northcote spurred the former on, there was no guarantee that the whole report might not still be shelved as a result of opposition in the cabinet. Trevelyan hoped that he could reduce the risk of this happening if he devoted himself to amplifying and spreading the ideas contained in the report at two levels: at a political level in his correspondence with Gladstone; and at a public level in his dealings with Delane, the editor of The Times. At the political level Trevelyan did his best to sustain Gladstone's enthusiasm by writing to him almost daily between January and March 1854. At the same time he was hoping to prime public opinion by keeping The Times well informed.

The revised report, in making the eradication of patronage one of its main recommendations, had made itself far less politically acceptable than before. Trevelyan was aware of this for although he had Whig sympathies, he was at the same time scornful of the "Great Country Party" when they were concerned to find posts for their political dependants. He hoped, however, that he could persuade Gladstone to share his optimism in an improved national moral climate which would prefer politicians to offer sound measures instead of public appointments. Trevelyan had no sound political evidence for forming this view. Like most judgements about public opinion it was highly intuitive. He was

naturally anxious to share his views with Gladstone who, he sensed, would be very sympathetic towards them. On 17 January he summarized his views in a memorandum entitled "Thoughts on Patronage". He particularly deplored the way in which the making of appointments was sometimes used to secure the allegiance of M.P.s and constituencies, as well as the deleterious effect of this on the quality of public service. The Patronage Secretary was singled out for blame in this connection - a change of position from 1849 when Trevelyan had recommended that this official should control all patronage. When listing a few of the categories of what he considered to be incompetent public servants, Trevelyan inexplicably mentioned the colonial service, generals and admirals (areas in which he had no experience whatever) as well as "the idle, useless young man who is provided for in a Public Office because he is unfit to earn a livelihood in any of the open professions...". Trevelyan was optimistic that the improved state of public morality would put an end to patronage, particularly as many M.P.s "never cross the threshold of the Patronage Room and many others would gladly be released of asking for places for them and their Dependants." Trevelyan used the example of the ending of East India patronage to support this argument and ended with an exhortation to England to display her superior morality and intelligence.¹ Although only a month or so earlier he had suggested incorporating some aspects of patronage in his examination scheme, he now denounced patronage with the combined fervour of a convert and a missionary. It was clearly a satisfying document for him to write but it had little practical purpose. Gladstone did not need pious comments that he could equally well compose himself. Something more than generalized moral arguments would be needed to

1 Add. MS., 44333 f. 91.

convince the Whigs in the cabinet.

From the time of this memorandum Trevelyan wrote a continuous stream of letters to Gladstone. One the following day, 18 January, he presented him with twenty copies of Jowett's letter on the practicability of competitive literary examinations.¹ As a publicist he expected that Gladstone would like to circulate this document. He failed to appreciate that such a letter was but a dubious recommendation in the eyes of professional Civil Servants and of most of Gladstone's colleagues. Trevelyan was almost unaware of the strength of the opposition. His rash and over-simple attitude was revealed in a letter of 20 January which accompanied his replies to a series of objections made by Sir James Graham's private secretary, Capt.

H.H. O'Brien:

We have now worked up to the standard prescribed by Parliament last session for India; and the selection for the Home and Indian Services may be made by the same Examiners from the same Body of young men - such additional arrangements being made in respect to the Indian service as the peculiar circumstances may require.

I do not know that anything more can be done at present except to draw up a short Act of Parliament authorizing the formation of an Establishment for the purpose of testing the qualifications of Candidates for Civil Employment and directing that the rules under which it is to act shall be sanctioned by Order in Council and be submitted to Parliament.²

1 Ibid., f. 95.

2 Add MS., 44333 f. 103.

In pressing for a bill Trevelyan was forcing the issue into the open and simultaneously making it more difficult to arrive at a less formal, yet practicable resolution of the patronage question.

Trevelyan did at least display greater realism in his answers to O'Brien's objections and two of them are worth mentioning. When O'Brien stressed the value of the great sense of honour to be found among the upper classes, Trevelyan countered with the assertion that the proposed examinations were "decidedly aristocratic" in that they would eliminate "those of our inferior rank of society" who until then had been brought forward by patronage.¹ It could at least be argued from this that Trevelyan's aims were consonant with Whig philosophy. O'Brien also suggested that patronage and competition should be combined. A little earlier Trevelyan might have accepted this but now his opposition was vehement. He pointed out that something like this had been introduced in the Treasury by Melbourne, found to be ineffective and discontinued by Peel who reverted to patronage alone. As evidence he produced for Gladstone's perusal a letter from Stephenson, the Principal Clerk Assistant to the Secretaries, who described how such limited competitions had been rigged.² Although Trevelyan was being a little more down to earth, his overconfidence led him to commit the impropriety of circulating O'Brien's memorandum in order to obtain further comments. Like many of the documents connected with Civil Service reform, Trevelyan had it printed for limited circulation.)

1 The notion that aristocracy of birth and talent coincided was a current one. It had for example been mooted in Fraser's Magazine a few years earlier in answer to middle class attacks on aristocratic privilege ("The Aristocracy of Rank: Is it the Aristocracy of Talent?", XXXIV, August 1846, pp. 159-166). In the first half of the century, success in university honour schools and greater involvement than before in philanthropy and the details of local government were given as instances of the way in which the aristocracy held its own in competition with the middle class (David Spring, "Aristocracy, Social Structure and Religion in the Early Victorian Period", Victorian Studies, VI, March 1963, pp. 263-280).

2 Confidential blueprint including Stephenson's letter of 18 January 1854, Add. MS., 44580 f. 103.

When reproved by Gladstone he was most indignant, claiming that he had been unaware of the confidential nature of the document. However, he did assure Gladstone that he would recover all the copies that he had distributed.¹

At this stage Trevelyan was more successful in creating a sense of urgency in his correspondence with Gladstone, keeping him primed with additional arguments in favour of open competition. In breathless haste he sent a short letter on 24 January enclosing a note from Jowett and two scraps from Northcote and Lingen which described their conversion to open competition. "Every scrap on this subject from Persons whose opinions we value," wrote Trevelyan, "is of importance at the present time."² Lingen's autograph comment had been cut from the copy of O'Brien's memorandum which, one presumes, Trevelyan had seen when he had asked for the copies of this document to be returned. This enthusiasm concluded the dense body of correspondence that formed a prelude to the discussion of the reform proposals in the cabinet. In his final brief note on 25 January, the day before the cabinet meeting, Trevelyan promised to print no more on the subject nor to ask for any more opinions. He agreed to this restriction on his activities since he felt that he had sufficient evidence to establish the case for reform.³ Furthermore Trevelyan had probably been reproved for the embarrassment he had caused Gladstone in his relations with Russell. In an exchange of correspondence on 20 January, Russell had protested about the premature discussion of the ministry's plans in the newspapers and announced his intention to oppose any change in making appointments.⁴

1 Ibid., f. 107.

2 Add. MS., 44333 fs. 113, 115, 117, 118.

3 Ibid., f. 119.

4 Russell to Gladstone, 20 January 1854, Add. MS., 44291 f. 91.

Gladstone, while defending the policy, apologised for premature disclosure of the contents of the Northcote report and attributed the error directly to Trevelyan: "I understand from Sir C. Trevelyan's account of the matter that this plainness of allusion arose from inadvertence."¹ While such an excuse might be presented it is doubtful whether it restored harmony between cabinet colleagues.

When the cabinet met on 26 January to consider Civil Service reform, the Peelites supported and the Whigs (among them Sir Charles Wood) opposed the proposals. Gladstone's deep interest in the decision is indicated by a note which he kept of how the members voted.² On the following day Trevelyan wrote to congratulate him, prefacing his letter with the words: "I thank God for this decision." He immediately undertook to frame a bill in collaboration with Northcote and Jowett.³ A copy of Trevelyan's draft probably exists among the Chadwick Tracts, for while there is no direct evidence for associating it with Trevelyan, the bill dates from about this time, follows the correct format and is printed on blue paper. Entitled "A Bill for Regulating the Appointment of Clerks in the Civil Service", its proposals are roughly in line with Trevelyan's views. Three examiners were to operate a two-stage examination of an elementary fixed-test followed by competition in general subjects and those specific to particular departments. Whenever there was a vacancy to be filled, the post was to be offered to the man with the highest number of marks on the panel of competitors.

1 Gladstone to Russell, 20 January 1854, Ibid., f. 94b.

2 Add MS., 44778 f. 157. Of the Whigs, only Palmerston had not revealed his attitude since he had been at Windsor at the time of the meeting.

3 Add. MS., 44333 f. 121. A fortnight later Trevelyan sent Gladstone two copies of a draft and offered to discuss it (Add. MS., 44333 f. 164). On 4 March Northcote wanted to know whether he should get on with the bill or complete the report on the Post Office (Add. MS., 44216 f. 250). The indecision indicates that the bill was no longer being seriously considered.

The bill made no attempt to differentiate between levels of first appointment except insofar as heads of departments would specify the qualifications for particular posts.¹ There was clearly much more work to be done on this copy of the draft if this bill was to be a comprehensive measure.

Leaving aside the draft bill it is difficult to determine the extent of legislation agreed to by the cabinet. Only two reliable sources survive: a letter from Trevelyan to Northcote written after the cabinet meeting and Gladstone's memorandum written for the benefit of the Queen. Trevelyan was extremely optimistic and described how the recommendations of their report were to be applied without dilution to all first appointments. An additional feature was to be the submission of promotion records to the examiners. At Gladstone's suggestion the proposal to reserve some places for the sons of Civil Servants was abandoned, "before we have weakened our cause by the odium it would bring upon us." Trevelyan was immensely gratified at the rapid and deserved success of the scheme. He began to envisage the extension of open competition to military appointments so as to form one superintending or examining body for the whole public service. He had of course already linked in his own mind the examination arrangements for the Indian and English Civil Services. By contrast, Gladstone's version for the Queen was far more cautious. Although the essential principles were the same, Gladstone was anxious to stress the limits of their application. He pointed out that the heads of departments would retain the right to appoint anyone who was approved by the examiners. They would also continue to regulate promotion themselves.

1 British Library, Chadwick Tracts, CT 227 (4a). Since the bill was not introduced into the Commons no copy exists among the Parliamentary Papers. See appendix for full text.

2 Trevelyan to Northcote, 28 January 1854, T.L.B., XXXII, p.265.

Another restriction was that posts requiring specialist qualifications were to be excluded from the scope of the bill. The bill was also not to apply to the lowest posts, candidates for which were either not to be examined or were only to take a qualifying examination.¹

Gladstone wanted to limit controversy by destroying the basis of some practical objections. He also did not want to touch upon any aspect of departmental administration that might even remotely impinge on the royal prerogative, particularly as he did not have the support of the whole cabinet.

As soon as it was decided to mention the bill in the Queen's speech, Trevelyan was able to busy himself with preparations for the publication of the Northcote-Trevelyan report together with Jowett's explanatory letter and the departmental reports. In a letter to Gladstone on 31 January Trevelyan outlined the strategy that he felt ought to be pursued. He agreed to remove the privileges for the sons of Civil Servants from the report in order to prevent suspicion of bureaucracy. He justified the inclusion of Jowett's letter on the grounds that it made good a deficiency in the report. Naturally he did not say that the report's limitations had already become apparent but delicately suggested that the letter was important in "solving by anticipation numerous difficulties which arise in people's minds and showing that the revision of the first appointments to the Public Service may be extended with appropriate modifications, to the large subordinate classes of Letter Carriers, Lockyers, Weighers, Messengers, etc., and that in its application to the lower ranks of society it is likely to be productive of very beneficial effects by promoting education, and impressing the rising generation with the value of character." Trevelyan even went so far as to suggest to Gladstone what

1 Draft of memorandum for the Queen, January 1854, Add. MS., 44743 f. 132.

he ought to say when he laid the reports on the table of the House. He proposed that the scope of Civil Service reform should be further widened by raising another issue that affected efficiency: the question of superannuation deductions. Trevelyan felt that if Gladstone decided to abolish them, it would be a good opportunity to introduce compulsory retirement at sixty-five. His concluding remarks were at least more immediately relevant when he pressed for the reports to be printed as a command paper rather than have them "moved for and ordered to be printed". This procedure would save the costs of double printing. It would also have the effect of confirming the policy of the administration.¹

Trevelyan had not been content to allow Gladstone to develop his Civil Service policy at a gradual pace. He was anxious to accelerate this process by using the Press to inform and, as he hoped, to mobilize public opinion. In this, he was fortunate in being able to exploit the close liaison that existed between the Aberdeen administration and The Times.² This liaison lasted until the outbreak of war with Russia in March 1854, long enough for Trevelyan to publicize the report before and after its presentation to Parliament. Furthermore with a daily circulation of about 40,000 copies - at least ten times greater than that of any other newspaper - The Times was undoubtedly the best medium for spreading ideas.³

The first reference to Civil Service reform appeared in a leader

1 Add MS., 44333 f. 123. Two command papers were presented: Report on the Organisation of the Permanent Civil Service [1713] and Reports of Committees of Inquiry into Public Offices and Papers connected therewith [1715]. The second paper also included the first at the end.

2 The History of the Times (1939), II, pp. 109, 117.

3 In 1853 The Times paid stamp duty on 13,909,670 copies as compared, for example, with The Morning Post's 829,125, giving an approximate daily average of 40,000 and 3,000 respectively.

on 12 January.¹ After alluding to the introduction of open competition in the Indian Civil Service, it went on to characterize the English Civil Servant "as one whose unambitious youth preferred a small certainty and the routine duties of an office to the enterprise and perseverance which have led his school fellows and acquaintances to prosperity". It was clear from the remedies proposed - the separation of intellectual and mechanical labour and the establishment of a central examining body - that the paper possessed a copy of the report, particularly as the article referred obliquely to an "inquiry". A further conclusive clue was mention of the educational implications. This last point was enthusiastically taken up a few days later in a letter signed "Oxoniensis".² When other newspapers made use of the same material and it was evident that a confidential government report was better known to the Press than to the cabinet, Gladstone was embarrassed in his relations with his colleagues.³ On 17 January Gladstone urged Trevelyan to prevent further Press discussion.⁴

Once the matter had been discussed in the cabinet and alluded to in the Queen's speech on 31 January, Trevelyan was able to renew his efforts. On 6 February he wrote to Delane returning a printed series of letters on Civil Service reform.⁵ As a copy of this letter exists

1 The Times, 12 January 1854, p.6, col.c. Ironically this issue contained an advertisement offering a third of the first three years' salary in return for post under government (p.3, col.d).

2 Ibid., 16 January, p.9, col.d.

3 Gladstone to Graham, 14 January 1854, Add. MS., 44163 fs. 120-123; Gladstone to Russell, 20 and 26 January 1854, Add. MS., 44291 fs. 91-98, 117.

4 Add MS., 44529 f. 37b.

5 These were presumably letters on Civil Service reform which had been printed or were about to be printed in The Times.

in Gladstone's correspondence, it seems that from this stage Trevelyan was keeping him informed about the publicity he was arranging. Trevelyan's letter contained comments which readers of The Times would like to hear: that opposition to reform would come from aristocratic families who used the Civil Service as a form of indoor relief and also from the managers of small Parliamentary boroughs who regarded a few appointments as a cheap and effective form of patronage. Although Trevelyan was, as he claimed, concerned to spare personal feelings, he mentioned one conveniently scandalous set appointment: the long-standing provision made for the illegitimate sons of the Dukes of Norfolk, one of whom - an epileptic - had been placed in the Treasury.

Trevelyan could only see political advantage in the abolition of patronage for as a result M.P.s would become more disinterested and vote according to their opinions. This in turn would improve the quality of government, since administrations would no longer be able to buy support but would have to depend entirely upon the effectiveness and popularity of their measures. None of these points was closely argued for Trevelyan was merely suggesting the kind of ideas that he felt would be appropriate in The Times. He also maintained that the quality of political life might be improved by a totally new concept: the use of the reformed Civil Service as a training ground for politicians. As he observed to Delane: "The want of a preliminary training of this sort is at present very perceptible in political official men. The virtue of the new régime would, therefore, come back through Parliament to our administrative system; and while two of the parts of Government would be alike raised to a higher standard, they would be reduced to harmony with each other."¹ As with educational hopes it was tactless

1 Add. MS., 44333 f. 138.

to give utterance to such naïve, if legitimate, and far-fetched possibilities. It was fortunate that The Times made no use of the idea for it would have been difficult for politicians to enthuse over this by-product of reform as educationists had done over theirs. While The Times did not echo all Trevelyan's opinions it presented sympathetically the proposals of the Northcote-Trevelyan report. Trevelyan remained grateful to Delane for this support.¹

An immediate effect of Delane's support was to provoke reaction from Civil Servants. A leader on 9 February concentrated on the abolition and the resultant incentive to education, particularly university studies. It pointed out that as the defects of the Civil Service were not spectacular, a complete breakdown could be beneficial if it led to an improved system.² (A week earlier this same argument that disaster might provide the road to reform had been used in connection with inefficiency and anomalies in the armed services.³) George Arbuthnot, Auditor of the Civil List and a Civil Servant of thirty-four years standing, immediately complained to The Times about the attributes of "incapacity, indifference and idleness" being generally applied, only to be told that the words were those of Trevelyan. Arbuthnot then protested to Gladstone that even if Trevelyan had not wished to give such an adverse impression, he had been guilty of impropriety. Trevelyan's prime responsibility, he claimed, was to protect his subordinates. By contrast, to malign them as part of an agitation for reform was to imperil harmonious relations between colleagues.⁴ As a result of this letter Gladstone interviewed Arbuthnot

1 Trevelyan to Robert Lowe, 19 December 1855, T.L.B., XXXVI, p.36.

2 The Times, 9 February 1854, p.6 col.c.

3 Ibid., 2 February 1854, p.8 col.e.

4 Arbuthnot to Gladstone, 10 February 1854, Add. MS., 44096 f. 24.

on 11 February, when he gave the impression that he disapproved of Trevelyan's Press publicity and that it would not be repeated.¹

Trevelyan himself was far from disturbed by his colleague's attitude, rather welcoming the opportunity it provided to extend discussion. On 13 February he informed Gladstone that he had invited Arbuthnot to amplify his views in a further letter.²

Arbuthnot accepted Trevelyan's suggestions and produced the first of two lengthy letters addressed to the Lords of the Treasury. In the first of these, dated 22 February, he pointed out that the faults of the Civil Service were faults of organization, rather than faults of personnel. He also stressed that in the Customs, a department into which Northcote and Trevelyan had not enquired, Lord Liverpool had ended political patronage for senior appointments and had arranged that these promotions should be made from among clerical staff. This was the kind of organic reform that Arbuthnot wished to see and not a major change in the methods of initial selection by the use of a competitive literary examination. Arbuthnot cited the Foreign Office under Palmerston's reorganization as a good example, whereas Trevelyan's own department, the Treasury, had remained very inefficiently organized.³

Gladstone took great exception to this letter as it concerned ministerial policy already outlined in the Queen's speech. In his letter of rebuke he wanted to know what precedent there was for a

1 Ibid., f. 144.

2 Trevelyan to Gladstone, 13 February 1854, T.L.B., XXXII, p.16.

3 Arbuthnot to Gladstone (printed as a confidential paper), Add. MS., 44581 f. 102.

Civil Servant addressing the Lords of the Treasury in such a manner. If Trevelyan had indeed committed a grave impropriety in communicating with the Press, his main opponent from within the Civil Service had been equally at fault in choosing his method of criticism.¹ Nevertheless, although policy was immune from comment by Civil Servants, it was desirable that Arbuthnot should be given some legitimate scope to express his indignation. He was therefore invited to write a further letter which was to avoid discussion of the proposed method of selection and to concentrate instead on the qualities of the existing system. It was this letter that Trevelyan and Northcote later used as a basis for their replies. When Arbuthnot had completed his letter he was more circumspect in presenting it to Gladstone, writing in advance to his private secretary to inform him that he expressed himself "in as strong language as civility would permit". Having shown the letter in advance to Northcote, he had toned down the language at his suggestion.²

Arbuthnot opened his second letter, dated 6 March, with the observation that now the report had been presented to Parliament it was at last properly open to public comment. As a senior Treasury official he felt that it was his duty to express his colleagues' indignation at the slur cast upon them by the report. He pointed out that it had been composed in haste, despite the long interval between its official signing and its appearance as a command paper at the end of February. One indication of its hasty composition was the intemperate language of condemnation which appeared to ignore the good qualities of the Civil Service. Part of this implicit contradiction could be illustrated from Trevelyan's own career, by the way in which he had

1 Gladstone to Arbuthnot, 27 February 1854, Add. MS., 44529 f. 117.

2 Arbuthnot to Lawley, 8 March 1854, Add. MS., 44096 f. 28.

himself, as a stranger to the Civil Service, depended on the qualities of his subordinates. Clearly the language of the report had served little purpose except to cause deep offence at the Treasury - an act made worse by the ingratitude of an arrogant outsider.¹

Arbuthnot felt that the existing system could be made to work more efficiently. He cited himself as an example of one who had survived the rigours of long routine, clerical training in order to become a senior official. While accepting that stricter probation and better rewards for exertion would be beneficial, he strongly opposed any separation of intellectual and mechanical work, utterly rejecting the idea that departmental specialization created a narrow outlook. Arbuthnot suspected that this separation of function was part of a plan to introduce something like the Indian system of administration - a system more appropriate to "subjected provinces" than to England, where the Civil Service had to work in liaison with ministers responsible to Parliament.²

Most of Arbuthnot's letter was thinly veiled commentary on Trevelyan's ambitions - ambitions which had proved so disconcerting to traditionalists like Arbuthnot. Trevelyan ignored most of this and thought, as he pointed out in a letter to Spring Rice, that only one criticism was of any importance: Arbuthnot's misunderstanding of the kind of examinations proposed for the lower grades of the Customs.³ Trevelyan and Northcote had already been prompted by Arbuthnot's earlier letter to correct this by means of their explanatory memoranda

1 For criticism of Trevelyan's management of the Treasury, see pp. 64-65 supra.

2 Printed, together with Trevelyan's and Northcote's replies in Papers relating to the Re-organisation of the Civil Service, P.P., 1854-55, XX, pp. 405-413.

3 Trevelyan to Stephen Spring Rice, 10 March 1854, Add. MS., 44333 f. 262.

dated 28 February. This very limited range of official discussion had been partly determined by Gladstone's refusal to allow open competition - by now an essential feature of the proposed reform - to be criticized by Civil Servants. In turn, the resulting ineffectiveness of Arbuthnot's emasculated letter helped to confirm Trevelyan's belief in the inherent strength of his own arguments.

Arbuthnot further weakened his position by complaining once more to Gladstone about Trevelyan's methods; he protested that Trevelyan had circulated to the Press and to the heads of departments a pamphlet printed by the confidential Foreign Office printer, contrary to the undertaking that Gladstone had given on 11 February that Trevelyan's Press campaign would be ended. However, by this time Gladstone was fully aware of Trevelyan's activities in obtaining a range of opinions on the reform proposals. He was therefore extremely indignant at what seemed to him to be yet a further attack on government policy.¹

Trevelyan was for once in the exceptionally advantageous position of being on the side of a minister against the pretensions of a Civil Servant; it was more usual for him to be stretching official propriety to its limits in pressing his own views on his political superiors.

Trevelyan was opposed to any form of apology for the tone of the report. He insisted that the honour of the Civil Service depended, as in India, upon revealing abuses rather than glossing them over, but he was prevailed upon by Northcote and Stephenson to accept some form of apology.² When Northcote and Trevelyan finally completed their reply

1 Arbuthnot wrote Gladstone no less than three brief letters of complaint on 1, 3 and 4 April (Add. MS., 44096 fs. 44, 50, 54). One was testily endorsed by Gladstone: "Does Mr. Arbuthnot know that this letter was printed by the Govt. printer at the cost of the public as part of his Govt. business?"

2 Trevelyan to Gladstone, 2 March 1854, Add. MS., 44333 f. 241.

on 10 April, they began with a qualified apology for the false impression that their report could have created among those unacquainted with the Civil Service. Their regret that they had not mentioned the merits of the Service was qualified by the assertion that it had been the defective system of appointments and the means of remedying it that had formed their terms of reference. Even this grudging apology was a tacit admission that it had been a mistake to use what had originally been intended as a private document as the material for wide publicity. Not surprisingly, Trevelyan made a point of denying any personal responsibility for articles in The Times by referring to the wide circulation of the report before presentation to Parliament.

One purpose of the letter was to reassure Civil Service opinion that the Northcote-Trevelyan proposals were not opposed to the best traditions. Earlier improvements, like those made in the Customs by Lord Liverpool, were cited. Arbuthnot's own career was tactfully used to illustrate the advantages of promotion by merit from one office to another.

No serious attempt was made to substantiate the case that the Civil Service was a haven for invalids. While examples could have been found in the Treasury itself, the letter merely referred to correspondence with the Master of the Rolls about absenteeism in the Record Office.

Finally Northcote and Trevelyan made an attempt to rid the scheme of some of the secondary issues that had caused so much indignation. They stressed that the essentials were an improved examination system on entry and subsequently promotion by merit, not purely seniority. Interdepartmental transfers and the separation of intellectual and mechanical labour would be a consequence, not a precondition of these reforms.¹

1 Later printed in Papers on the Reorganisation of the Civil Service, P.P., 1854-55, XX, pp. 415-427.

These explanations were far too late to avert politically-motivated misinterpretation of the proposals as a counter-attack to publicity in The Times. The most violent criticism appeared in The Morning Post in February and March in articles which have been attributed to Palmerston's inspiration.¹ The first appeared on 11 February. After teasing The Times for setting itself up as the expositor of government policy, it perversely exploited confusion over the nature and scope of examinations to include political appointments: "Professor Faraday and Mr. Babbage are very eminent for their scientific attainments, yet it would hardly be satisfactory to the Sovereign, or to the country, that they should select and appoint the Prime Minister or the Chancellor of the Exchequer, both of whom must be among the sixteen thousand." The expectation that able men would compete for a Civil Service career was scorned as Trevelyan's naive optimism.² Following discussion in the Lords a further article on 4 March argued that the onus was on the reformers to prove that the existing system was harmful and that examinations offered any remedy for the alleged defects.³ Finally on 20 March the most splenetic piece defended political patronage in appointments and scorned the alternative:

1 These and other hostile pieces from The Daily News, The Morning Chronicle and The Morning Herald were reprinted in a pamphlet, Civil Service Reform: Observations upon the Report by Sir G. Trevelyan ... and Sir S.H. Northcote ... by a Civil Subaltern (April, 1854). Hughes (p.65) quotes from this source an article which is a conflation of the articles of 11 February and 20 March.

2 The Morning Post, 11 February 1854, p. 5 col. c.

3 Ibid., 4 March 1854, p. 4 col. f.

"Sir Charles Trevelyan and his brother commissioner think otherwise, and propose that the Crown should be divested of the patronage which it has thus administered, and that it should be transferred to a junta of fifth-rate Privy Councillors, and a mixture of academical pedants and theoretical educationists." It concluded by whipping up prejudice against what it described as Jowett's meddling attempt to establish atéliers nationaux for the benefit of boys educated at normal schools and who were dissatisfied with their lot as schoolmasters.¹ In exaggerating the educational aspects Palmerston had evaded consideration of the immediately practical issues. Although Trevelyan was partly to blame, Palmerston's behaviour was reckless. He was publicly attacking the policy of the cabinet which had been agreed by a majority of ministers despite Whig opposition. One correspondent to The Times pertinently asked why Civil Service reform should be proposed by the government and attacked by its Press organs. His survey of the situation was pessimistic: "As we might expect, the scheme has been assailed with various merit and uniform hostility. It is threatened by official contempt, by ministerial timidity, and by public apathy."²

The virulence of Whig opposition to the proposals was acutely sensed by Macaulay through his political connections. He had first enthusiastically discussed the report with Trevelyan in January 1854 when his only reservation was the fear that highly paid examinerships might become political jobs. However by 4th March he was in no doubt about the virulence of Whig hostility: "I went to Brooks's ... and found everybody open-mouthed, I am sorry to say, against Trevelyan's plans about the Civil Service. He has been too sanguine. The pear

1 Ibid., 20 March 1854, p. 4 col. b.

2 The Times, 20 April 1854, p. 12 col. d.

is not ripe. I always thought so. The time will come, but it is not come yet. I am afraid he will be much mortified." Macaulay also expressed fears about dangers to Trevelyan's career but was confident that he would survive, noting that he appeared remarkably impervious to the opposition he had aroused.¹

At the level of lower paid Civil Servants, the recently founded Civil Service Gazette voiced suspicion of the proposals. In its first issue on 1 January 1853 it had announced its policy of encouraging developments towards merit appointments as opposed to venal patronage.² After the Northcote-Trevelyan report appeared, the issues of 25 February and 4 March reprinted the text in full together with Jowett's letter. An editorial article drew attention to the opposition that was mounting in the Civil Service, and gave currency to a rumour that Trevelyan was about to retire as a result. It was particularly critical of the report's failure to discuss the great variety of posts in the Customs, pointing out that the bottom two-thirds of the total of 16,000 Civil Servants enjoyed an average salary of £86.³ To these lowest paid men, among whom the journal sought its readership, the notion of competitive examination was a mockery. The following week, Jowett was criticised for failing to appreciate distinctions between excisemen and tidewaiters. However, in the same issue Trevelyan allayed some fears in a letter under the pseudonym of "Civil Servant". At last he made clear to rank-and-file Civil Servants that he had from the outset envisaged three classes of

1 G.O. Trevelyan, The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay (enlarged ed. 1908), pp. 611-612.

2 Despite these high motives the Gazette was prepared to accept advertisements offering bribes for nominations (e.g. 7 October 1854, II, p. 640; 17 February 1855, III, p. 112) - a failing criticised by The Times (12 March 1855, p. 6 col. e).

3 The Civil Service Gazette, II, p. 139.

appointments for the central offices, the executive and account offices and for the dispersed personnel employed by the revenue departments. He confidently stressed the wealth of opportunities that would thereby become available to all who had enjoyed a middle-class or an elementary education.¹ Such opportunities, if they really existed, were certainly consistent with the avowed policy of The Civil Service Gazette.

As to The Times which had been first to publicize what might have languished as an obscure internal report, its support of the Aberdeen administration effectively ended with the outbreak of war. Apart from a few pseudonymous letters during the remainder of 1854 and 1855 it remained silent.² It made no comment on future developments and merely noted the appearance of the Reorganization of the Civil Service in February 1855 and the Order in Council of the following May.³ By this time it was to be involved in reporting the conduct of the war and the activities of Administrative Reform Association - two sustained news features which had the effect of keeping the possibility of administrative reform before the public without giving any support to the government.

5 Parliamentary Discussion, March 1854 - June 1855

The bill for which Trevelyan had been campaigning never materialized. It was obvious from the controversy aroused in government departments and among politicians that a bill would have a difficult

1 Ibid., pp. 153, 156-157.

2 Apart from letters cited elsewhere, the most important contributions were made on 17 March 1854 (p. 9 col. c), 24 March 1854 (p. 12 col. e), 14 March 1855 (p. 12 col. e), 2 June 1855 (p. 9 col. f).

3 3 February 1855, p. 6 col. f; 23 May 1855, p. 10 col. b.

passage and consume a considerable amount of Parliamentary time. Aberdeen's wish to avoid cabinet discussion and the risk of a defeat in the Commons was illustrated by his attitude over Russell's Parliamentary Reform Bill, which was first postponed and then in April 1854 abandoned.¹ Furthermore the administration had to contend with another controversial measure, the Oxford University Bill, which Gladstone and Russell were concerned to steer through its committee stage in May and June. It was not surprising, therefore, that Gladstone announced on 5 May 1854 that there would be insufficient time to give a Civil Service bill the attention it deserved.² Whig members of the cabinet were relieved that a largely unnecessary, and possibly embarrassing, Peelite measure had been dropped.

With the abandonment of legislation, no significant discussion of Civil Service reform took place in the Commons until the following year. The Lords, however, had taken notice of the Northcote-Trevelyan report. On 13 March they had debated an allegation of Lord Derby that diplomatic secrets had been betrayed and that as a result details of Anglo-Russian negotiations had been published in The Journal of St. Petersburg and later in The Times.³ In an extremely vague reply, Lord Aberdeen referred to a rumour that a former clerk in the Foreign Office had been responsible, but he knew neither the clerk's name nor whether he had been dismissed for this breach of faith. Lord Derby immediately remarked that if the man had not been dismissed the head of department had been neglecting his duties. Lord Malmesbury who had

1 J.B. Conacher, The Aberdeen Coalition, 1852-1855 (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 298 - 302, 308 - 311.

2 Debates, CXXXII, cols. 1305-07.

3 The Times, 11 March, p. 8 col. f.

been named as the Foreign Secretary in Derby's administration and responsible for appointing the alleged delinquent, asserted that such junior personnel should not have the responsibility of copying confidential documents. Thus two of the central issues of Civil Service reform were brought into the open obliquely: the method of appointment and the division of clerical duties.¹

Lord Monteagle took the opportunity offered by this discussion of the probity of Civil Servants, to introduce a motion on the Northcote-Trevelyan report and the separate departmental reports which had been presented to Parliament on 24 February. Monteagle pointed out that the special commissioners had themselves been at fault where leakages of official information to the Press were concerned. His main positive criticism was that five years had been devoted to inquiries that covered only eleven public offices. He wanted to know whether other reports had been suppressed or withheld. He was even more interested to see the evidence upon which criticism of the Civil Service had been based, particularly as he felt that he could cite a number of contrary examples. Accordingly, he asked for the production of the instructions given to the commissioners and a copy of the evidence they had collected.² Apart from the return in answer to Monteagle's inquiries, nothing more came of discussion in the Lords.

In the second half of 1854 Trevelyan hoped to retain Parliamentary and public interest by having a series of comments made by public men

1 Debates, CXXXI, 621-640. When the former clerk denied the allegation, Derby accepted this and then went on to attack the gentlemen of Whitehall who were in the habit of communicating with the Press. (Ibid., cols. 882-883.)

2 Ibid., 640-645. P.P. (Lords), 1854, XLV, p. 53 contains the Trevelyan Minute setting out the terms of reference, and Trevelyan's explanation of the lack of recorded evidence: that in the early inquiries it had been found that the keeping of a shorthand copy had discouraged free communication and had therefore been discontinued.

presented as a command paper. He felt that the strength of informed opinion could indicate to Parliament a new public awareness of the importance of Civil Service reform. Since January 1854 Trevelyan had been soliciting opinions, but largely from those with an interest in education or who were in some sense sympathetic with the scheme. In July he invited more views, and in the following month urged Gladstone to have them presented to Parliament as a command paper.¹ At about the same time, he wrote to Lord Granville asking him to present the paper in the Lords. He claimed that it contained papers written at Gladstone's request, and which provided a range of opinion on the scheme.² Publication was, however, deferred until the beginning of the next session, and Trevelyan used the interval to obtain at least six more papers. Significantly some of the later ones are the least favourable to the Northcote-Trevelyan report. When the second blue book, Papers Relating to the Reorganisation of the Civil Service, eventually appeared in January 1855, there was no immediate Parliamentary reaction of the kind that had greeted the appearance of the first blue book a year earlier. This was doubtless due to the lack of advance Press publicity and the fact that the subject had become a little stale at a time when the choicest epithets could be used to describe the misfortunes of the army wintering in the Crimea.

The Reorganisation of the Civil Service presents the views of 39 persons and fills a substantial volume.³ Eleven of them were educationists

1 Trevelyan to Gladstone, 8 July and 4 August 1854, Add. MS., 44334 fs. 61, 71.

2 Trevelyan to Granville, 5 August 1854, T.L.B., XXXIV, p. 152.

3 P.P., 1854-55 XX, [1870].

of one kind or another, including four headmasters, four dons, one H.M.I. and the principal of a normal school (training school for teachers). All of them were in favour of the proposals for open competition, particularly as regards its educational implications.¹ The remaining views were contributed by Civil Servants, if J.S. Mill and W. Spottiswoode may be loosely included in this category. Of the Civil Servants, twelve were favourable. J.S. Mill undoubtedly saw the widest implications in the proposals when he asserted: "A man may not be a much better postman for being able to draw, or being acquainted with natural history; but he who in that rank possessed those acquirements had given evidence of qualities which is important for the general cultivation of the mass that the State should take every fair opportunity to stamp with its approbation."² On a more down-to-earth level were some of the men with whom Trevelyan had worked most harmoniously, John Wood (Inland Revenue), W.G. Anderson (Treasury) and Shaw Lefevre (Clerk to the Lords).³ Eight contributors revealed mixed opinions.⁴ Among them was Edwin Chadwick who produced a very confusing 93 page paper in which he accepted the principle of open competition, while stressing the importance of practical as opposed to academic tests. He claimed that such tests had already been put to good effect in making appointments in the General Board of

1 Rev. W.H. Thompson (Regius Professor of Greek, Cambridge); Rev. H.G. Liddell (Headmaster of Westminster); Rev. C. Graves (Professor of Maths, T.C.D.); Rev. F. Temple (Principal of Kneller Hall Training School); Rev. Canon Moseley (H.M.I.); Rev. A.C. Tait (Dean of Carlisle); Rev. E.H. Gifford (Headmaster of King Edward School, Birmingham); Rev. Dr. Jeune (Master of Pembroke College, Oxford); Rev. G.E.L. Cotton (Master of Marlborough College); Rev. Dr. Jelf (Principal of King's College, London); Rev. Dr. Vaughan (Headmaster of Harrow).

2 P.P., 1854-55, XX, p.100.

3 In addition Lt. Col. Larcom, Alfred Power, R. Griffith (Irish officials); Major Graham (Registrar General); Rowland Hill (Post Office); Henry Cole, Lyon Playfair (Science and Art Department).

4 R.R. Lingen (Committee of Council on Education); Sir Geirge Cornewall Lewis (former Poor Law Commissioner); James Booth (Board of Trade); Edward Romilly (Board of Audit); Sir Thomas Freemantle (Board of Customs); Rt. Hon. H.H. Addington (formerly Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office); Edwin Chadwick.

Health. The remaining seven papers were written by opponents of open competition.¹ The most authoritative came from Sir James Stephen, upon whose support Trevelyan had originally counted.² From his experience as permanent secretary at the Colonial Office, Stephen doubted whether the Civil Service could ever provide a satisfactory career for talented university graduates. He went so far as to hint at an inherent constitutional risk in such a proposal: "You stand in need not of statesmen in disguise, but of intelligent, steady, methodical men of business."³ He skilfully presented open competition as an eccentric notion by emphasizing that other professions did not apply educational tests. The criticisms proved harmful to the cause of Civil Service reform, since Stephen's views were often singled out for comment in later review articles.

The weighty arguments contained in the second blue book were not discussed in Parliament, and the next mention of Civil Service reform in the Commons on 23 March 1855 was largely incidental. Northcote who had just entered Parliament as member for Dudley contrived to make a brief mention of the separation of intellectual and mechanical work in a debate on the army's transport services - a bitterly contentious issue in view of lack of transport in the Crimea. It was possible for Northcote in a maiden speech to air any topic of his choice, but it was extremely unlikely that this would be followed up by other speakers.⁴ Yet this speech was significant in that it was the first to link the conduct

1 Sir T. Redington (Board of Control); T.W. Murdoch (Emigration Board); Herman Merivale (Colonial Office); B. Hawes (War Office); H. Waddington (Home Office); Sir Alexander Spearman (National Debt Office and Trevelyan's predecessor at the Treasury); Sir James Stephen (Professor of History at Cambridge and former Permanent Secretary to the Colonial Office).

2 Trevelyan to Gladstone, 10 March 1855, Add. MS., 44333 f. 264.

3 P.P., 1854-55, XX, p.78.

4 Debates, CXXXVII, cols. 1033-35.

of the war with some of the principles of administrative reform.

It was pressure from outside Parliament that brought the Civil Service once more under active discussion. The mismanagement of the war led some radicals to question every aspect of government. The most notable symptom of this disquiet was the foundation of the Administrative Reform Association at a public meeting on 5 May 1855. The Association was formed on the initiative of radicals like Samuel Morley, Henry Layard and William Tite, the architect, and later M.P. for Bath following a by-election in June. Its object was the reform of government generally and did not draw a distinction between political and strictly administrative functions. During 1855 the Association held public meetings in London and published a series of ten official papers on aspects of public administration.¹ The Association professed to deplore exclusiveness - whether patronage in Civil Service appointments, purchase of military commissions or the restricted franchise - and assumed that as regards the Civil Service, the introduction of open competition for first appointments would help bring in more able men and lead to a more businesslike approach to public affairs. Encouraged by the mounting indignation at the Crimean campaign which followed the endless disasters detailed by the Press, the Association believed that its radical programme could be realized through educating public opinion and securing the election of sympathetic M.P.s.

In the meantime, the compromise Order in Council of 21 May 1853

1 The Administrative Reform Association: Official Papers, Nos. 1-10: Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 6 concentrate on Civil Service matters, Nos. 7 and 10 on voting behaviour and the electoral system. For a recent discussion of the Association's work, see Olive Anderson, "The Janus Face of Mid-Nineteenth Century Radicalism: the Administrative Reform Association of 1855", Victorian Studies (March, 1965), pp. 231-242.

was promulgated. Far from establishing open competition, the Civil Service Commissioners were only empowered to issue certificates stating that men appointed by patronage met the requirements of their departments in respect of age, health, character and education. This new and untried machinery did not satisfy the Association, particularly as it was unfairly interpreted as a sop to placate them.¹ Yet this seemed a relatively minor issue compared with spectacular mismanagement in the Crimea, and the Association preferred to concentrate on this as an interesting and topical subject as opposed to the duller technicalities of Civil Service appointments. The matter was never raised at the Association's public meetings, Layard devoting the meeting on 13 June to the War.² However, when Layard raised the matter in the Commons two days later he linked the two aspects. His resolution expressed concern at the "state of the nation" and attributed its ills to the "manner in which merit and efficiency have been sacrificed in public appointments, to party and family influences."³ Although the resolution was heavily defeated, it served to give immediacy to a subject that was in danger of dropping out of sight. Moreover in

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- 1 W.S. Lindsay, Confirmation of Admiralty Mismanagement (1855). A large part of this pamphlet was taken up with Lindsay's grievance that the Admiralty had failed to take up an offer to freight supplies to the Crimea at highly competitive rates - an interesting example of the convergence of commercial and public interests that underlay some of the thinking of the Association.
 - 2 The second meeting on 27 June had Charles Dickens as its main speaker. He diverted his audience with a completely irrelevant instance of administrative incompetence - the burning down of the Palace of Westminster in the process of destroying obsolete Exchequer tallies (The Times, 28 June 1855, p.12 col. d). His most scathing satire of bureaucratic nepotism and incompetence appeared as the Tite Barnacles and the Circumlocution Office in Little Dorrit (Introduction and Ch. X) published in instalments later in the year.
 - 3 Debates, CXXXVIII, cols. 2040-2133, 2154-2222.

linking the spectacular ineptitude of the War with Trevelyan's blue books, Trevelyan was himself brought into the fringe of political controversy. At the same time, Layard's extremism discredited the Association. For example, the Tory Fraser's Magazine veered from sympathy to hostility in June and July issues.¹ Furthermore there was no likelihood of any effective collaboration between the Association and Northcote and Gladstone, both of whom disapproved of the tone of its criticism.

Northcote was one of the speakers in the debate on 15 June. He emphasized that reform of the Civil Service could not be achieved in a piecemeal way by the political heads, as changes of administration would prevent the formulation of a consistent departmental policy. Indeed, if the heads of departments possessed this power, it might lead to the American system of ejecting the defeated party's nominees. It was equally undesirable to establish a bureaucratic system by giving this power to the permanent heads. He admitted that at one stage in the preparation of the report on the Civil Service both he and Trevelyan had contemplated giving control over all appointments to the Patronage Secretary to the Treasury because his patronage in the Customs and Excise had appeared to them so beneficial: "In no other department was there a more perfect system for division of labour, or a better system of promotion by merit, or so good a system of appointments." The Patronage Secretary nominated candidates for vacant first appointments

1 D. Masson, "The Administrative Reform Movement - An Attempt to put in on Wheels", Fraser's Magazine, LI (June 1855), pp. 605-627, LII (July 1855), pp. 115-122. The first article was favourable to open competition for Civil Service appointments and regretted that this had been confined to India. It even envisaged a national index of talent illustrated with daguerrotypes. The second deplored Layard's tactics and spoke of the need for men of authority, experience and good sense to implement any reforms.

and the department concerned examined them. Northcote had realized that to extend this kind of arrangement to the whole Civil Service would have aroused immense jealousy. Northcote also recognized the important difference between these and higher appointments, in that those in the Customs were filled by persons of low social rank.¹

Gladstone, who in February had resigned from the newly-formed Palmerston administration in opposition to setting up a Select Committee on the conduct of the War, also spoke. Not only did he oppose the motion's pessimism but what he rightly discerned as an attack on aristocracy and privilege. Like Trevelyan, he valued aristocracy and the need for continual recruitment from the "very best of the people". He felt that revitalization rather than complete condemnation was needed. He dismissed a supplementary motion by Sir Bulwer Lytton for a full investigation of the Civil Service, on the grounds that this had already been done and the results published in the Blue Books of February 1854. Moreover he did not feel that an amendment of the Order in Council would be significant as "it leaves it perfectly open to any government that might be disposed to surrender that right to initiate any system of admission that might be desired." Obviously he believed, as indeed was shown in 1870, that the next stage in Civil Service reform could be achieved by administrative action without legislation and with minimum Parliamentary controversy. Gladstone was now eager for the new situation to be stabilized, and he was anxious to take any possible political heat out of the debate by pointing out that the origins of the Civil Service reform lay equally in Derby's administration. In addition he was able to claim that Aberdeen's aristocratic cabinet had

1 Debates, CXXXVIII, cols. 2087 - 88.

originally accepted a far more far reaching scheme of reform than the Commons was prepared to do. Gladstone concluded with other arguments that were equally Trevelyan's. He stressed the importance of first appointments, otherwise promotion by merit would be regarded as jobbery. In turn the education received by potential Civil Servants would become increasingly significant. Finally, he dismissed as illusory the notion - firmly believed by the Administrative Reform Association - that the patronage that remained was an important source of political strength.¹

Vincent Scully, M.P. for Cork, accepting the Order in Council, provided that it could be extended to provide for open competition. This proposal was rejected by Sir George Cornewall Lewis, Gladstone's successor as Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the grounds that a bill would be necessary. Northcote joined the debate to introduce a note of moral indignation by citing a current example of corruption: a newspaper advertisement offering £500 for a situation. The most telling speech was one that was very hostile to Trevelyan. Sir Francis Baring, who had not before made any public comment on Trevelyan's plans, made it clear that he was totally out of sympathy with his approach. He expressed "surprise and pain" at the way in which Trevelyan had described the Civil Service. Moreover he implicitly attacked Trevelyan's management of the Treasury in suggesting that the lack of suitable men for the higher posts had been due not to lack of talent but to bad promotion arrangements.² After favouring the traditional way of rewarding deserving officers by giving places to their sons, he made a personal

1 Debates, CXXXVIII, cols. 2098-2114.

2 As Chancellor, Baring had made arrangements for succession to the chief clerkship of the Financial Divison. These had not worked out very satisfactorily. (See pp. 57-59 supra.)

thrust at Trevelyan: "He had a high respect for the ability and integrity of Sir Charles Trevelyan, with whose appointment he had something to do, but he should be very sorry to have a whole office of Sir Charles Trevelyans. Sir Charles was now the right man in the right place; but he was sure that no office would work in which all the clerks possessed Sir Charles's ability and anxiety to do work."¹ This must have been very annoying to Trevelyan as he had always claimed that Sir Francis had exhorted him to improve the standard of public offices. However it seemed that Baring would have preferred to concentrate on a procedure for dismissing unwanted staff rather than concerning himself overmuch with selecting the best qualified. For this reason he approved of supernumerary staff who were readily subject to dismissal. This commercial approach whereby staff were viewed as expendable was the reverse of Trevelyan's ambition to make the Civil Service a profession.

Finally Gladstone re-entered the debate to defend Trevelyan. He considered that the need to appoint outsiders was an indication of the inefficiency of the whole career structure. Nevertheless, outstanding men had been appointed in this way, and he instanced John Wood, Herman Merivale and Trevelyan himself. Palmerston, on the other hand, naturally defended the Order in Council as it stood, and said that he wished to experiment with closed competition before attempting anything more ambitious. The House took the same cautious view and by a majority of fifteen Scully's motion was defeated.² It was, however, appropriate that both Gladstone and Northcote voted in favour of the motion.³

6 Comment from the Reviews

As we have seen Civil Service reform became at once narrowed

1 This criticism may have made Trevelyan more than usually cautious in avoiding any new embarrassments. On 11 July, he refused to comment on the draft bill of the Administrative Reform Association. (T.L.B. XXXV, p. 267.)

to a consideration of first appointments and dangerously widened and confused with schemes for extending education and with general criticism of government mismanagement. As additional issues accumulated it had become increasingly obvious that Trevelyan's more modest, original ambitions could not be realized in the short term. Yet these confusions in their turn brought the longer term advantage of intelligent comment from the reviews. The complexity and problems of the Civil Service were brought into the open, not merely the consideration of particular points of view. This is in marked contrast to the period before 1853, when Civil Service affairs received virtually no public notice. During 1854 Press comment had been mainly hostile apart from The Times, but from 1855 onwards constructive criticism created a climate of public opinion in which the Civil Service Commission began to work.

One of the first reactions came from the utilitarian Westminster Review in June 1854. In an article, the authorship of which has not been subsequently identified, it welcomed the Northcote-Trevelyan report while sensing that the government appeared to be ahead of public opinion in its wish to end patronage. It was suspicious that competitive examinations might fill the Civil Service with clever rather than really able men, and lead to the formation of a bureaucratic caste of men of

- 2 James Acland, "Parliamentary Incongruities and Election Anomalies", The Administrative Reform Association: Official Papers, No. 10, p.13. Those in favour of the motion represented 60,000 more voters and 1,350,000 more population than the government majority. Liberals who voted with the government and those who were absent are listed.
- 3 Debates, CXXXIX, cols. 675-745.

"small and crippled original power and strong conservative tendencies - conservative we mean, in the genuine and not the party sense of the word." The article went on to suggest that the most novel and creative ventures were best left to private individuals, echoing the fear of government coercion for one's material good which had been expressed in The Westminster Review a year earlier. A really useful development, it was felt, would be a Benthamite analysis of the functions of existing departments.¹ While this was not a surprising utilitarian reaction, it does indicate a fear that government might become too efficient and that cleverness (particularly that kind of cleverness of an élite as indicated by the examination systems of the time) might be employed to establish an administrative tyranny.

A year later Blackwood's Tory political commentator offered a more down-to-earth appraisal of Civil Service reform as seen in the confused political situation following the debate of 15 June 1855. While not prepared to accept sweeping attacks on the quality of the Civil Service, the writer was broadly in favour of open competition for men with adequate testimonials, although he felt that examinations ought to be on a departmental basis. He suggested that the Derby-Disraeli administration had been keener on this than Aberdeen, who had been hampered by the "hereditary Whig" attitude of Palmerston. He concluded by pointing to the irony of the debate in which many liberals had voted against open

1 "The Civil Service", The Westminster Review New Series, VI (July 1854), pp. 68-95; Herbert Spencer, "Over-Legislation", Westminster, IV (July 1853), pp. 54-84. The Benthamite model of investigation which was recommended is in Arthur Symonds, Papers relative to the Obstruction of Public Business and the Organization of the Civil Service (1853). This reprints a letter to Gladstone of 23 February 1853 in which the writer pointed out the need for a proper survey of the Civil Service.

competition or had been absent: "We appeal again to all the honest men of the Liberal party, whether they contemplated such a state of things when they made their great effort to get rid of what was called Tory corruption."¹

In May 1855, another Scottish review, the liberal North British, welcomed the Northcote-Trevelyan report and accepted its strictures on the Civil Service. The writer, David Masson, rejected patronage and agreed with W.R. Greg's One Thing Needful (which was being reviewed together with the second blue book and regulations for open competition in India) that the country's salvation depended on mobilization of the country's talent. Education as a form of intellectual husbandry has now become so commonplace that it is difficult to grasp the relative originality of this suggestion. Masson welcomed the idea that the government should vie with commerce in picking the fittest men for its purposes, rather than at random. Once given an objective of this kind, education would itself be encouraged. The only limitation to competitive examinations would be staff appointments where clearly previous merit ought to be the determining factor.² This enthusiasm also extended to one of the tory reviews, Fraser's, when in June Masson spoke of the possibility of a national index of talent illustrated by daguerrotypes.³

A further indication that attitudes to Civil Service reform

1 W.E. Aytoun, "Administrative Reform - The Civil Service", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, LXXVIII (July 1855), pp. 116-134.

2 David Masson, "Reform of the Civil Service", The North British Review, XXIII (May 1855), pp. 137-192.

3 See note 2 p.205 supra.

could not be predicted on normal political lines is provided by a series of articles in The Economist from March to August 1855. Although dedicated to Free Trade it was opposed to open competition. The tone of its rejection was perhaps due to the editor, James Wilson, who accepted that the plan for examinations was understandable from a headmaster or a Balliol tutor but incredible from men with any experience of the realities of official life. He took the pragmatic view that it was sufficient to eliminate the least able from public service, and merely to ensure an appropriate standard of dull competence. Competitive examinations were an alien idea borrowed from Berlin and Peking, and what was required were sensible and steady men, not "learned, clever and crammed men".¹ One of the few original suggestions brought forward was for three levels of appointment, the highest devised to attract men of the calibre of staff appointments with a starting salary of £500 a year.² This was equivalent to an Oxford or Cambridge fellowship and a logical development of the separation of intellectual and mechanical labour, but one which Trevelyan could not have attempted to explore in the "economical" reform context that surrounded his own efforts. Yet The Economist in the final article of the series remained convinced of the harmful effects of excessive competition and instanced the continual raising of standards for honour degrees which, it suggested, frequently overtaxed the physical and mental constitution of candidates. This may have been an overstatement, but the state of university education and examinations at that time rightly provoked a number of doubts about the educational

1 The Economist, 3 March 1855, pp. 221-222; 17 March 1855, pp. 278-279; 14 July 1855, p.755.

2 Ibid., 21 July 1855, pp. 755-756.

panacea that Trevelyan and Jowett were offering. After inconclusively discussing the problem of promotion which was at one and the same time more important and more difficult than making first appointments, the article concluded that ministerial nomination, objective certification and promotion in the hands of permanent heads of department was the most realistic combination of practical alternatives - the first two elements were in effect provided by the Order in Council of July 1855.¹

Conclusion

The sudden change of fortune in 1853 and 1854 was a mixed blessing for Trevelyan. At last he could feel that what he had to offer as a reformer was considered to be of real value at ministerial level. At the same time, enthusiasm prevailed over common-sense, since the Northcote-Trevelyan report was quite unsatisfactory as a document for publication. If its language had been more moderate, and if political reaction had been awaited before leaking the report to the Press, much pain and embarrassment might have been avoided. Little was gained by Trevelyan's haste, except the adherence of The Times, a few headmasters and Civil Servants - allies, who did not possess the power to bring about an administrative change which had political repercussions. For Gladstone, who had only just managed to get the tentative support of the cabinet and who had to contend with the irascible Trevelyan's maladroit manoeuvres created an impossible situation. Although Gladstone remained convinced of the value of open competition, the distraction of the Crimean War, the innate inertia of the Aberdeen coalition, and finally his resignation spared him the political and administrative difficulties of attempting to achieve open competition in the glare of publicity that Trevelyan had created.

1 Ibid., 4 August 1855, pp. 839-841.

Chapter VII

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM: EXAMINERS, PENSIONS, BUILDINGS

After receiving so much encouragement from Gladstone, Trevelyan was at first bitterly disappointed at the failure to implement the main proposals of the Northcote-Trevelyan report. Macaulay succinctly summed up the situation in March 1853: "He had been too sanguine. The pear is not ripe. I always thought so. The time will come, but it is not come yet. I am afraid that he will be much mortified."¹ Fortunately Trevelyan was able to continue his efforts in more immediately practicable directions: in the development of the Civil Service Commission; in the reform of the superannuation system; and in the improvement of office buildings. The Civil Service Commission was an extension of his earlier interests, while superannuation and office buildings were aspects of Civil Service reform that became prominent once the question of first appointments was temporarily settled.

1 The Establishment of the Civil Service Commission

The collection of expert opinions that Trevelyan assembled to support the Northcote-Trevelyan report served to point the way to a working compromise. Trevelyan assured Gladstone in October 1854 that he had taken pains to consult every worthwhile authority and the resulting replies were published in the blue book, Papers Relating to the Reorganization of the Civil Service.² Even where the writers were hostile to Trevelyan's censorious attitude there was an acceptance of the need for some kind of independent body of examiners. This was one

1 G.O. Trevelyan, op. cit., p.612.

2 Trevelyan to Gladstone, 24 October 1854, Add. MS., 44334 f. 117.

of Trevelyan's earliest suggestions, and it was the only one that could be implemented at this stage without raising a storm of controversy. Trevelyan was quick to collaborate actively with Gladstone on this, for the adoption of part of his proposals was certainly not inconsistent with their eventual adoption in their entirety. Trevelyan's main practical contribution was to ensure that the men appointed to operate the examination system were dedicated to its success. Although the Order in Council setting up the Commission had not been promulgated before Gladstone left office in February 1855, Trevelyan had already succeeded in determining the principal appointments.

Initially Trevelyan was anxious to appoint educationists as Commissioners. He approached Jowett and the Rev. Frederick Temple, Principal of Kneller Hall, but both refused.¹ He was however satisfied with his second choices: Sir Edward Ryan, Assistant Comptroller of the Exchequer and formerly Chief Justice of Bengal; and Sir John George Shaw Lefevre, Clerk of the Parliaments, - one who since the time of the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates had been sympathetic towards Trevelyan's views on administration and who also served on Macaulay's committee on Indian Civil Service examinations. Sir Edward Romilly, Chairman of the Audit Board, was the third member of the Commission. It was probably fortunate for the success of the Civil Service Commission that these senior Civil Servants, rather than clergymen or academics, were appointed. In making the appointment of the two permanent examiners, Trevelyan persuaded Jowett to recommend to Shaw Lefevre Theodore Walrond, Fellow of Balliol, "as the best man for the job".² Walrond was to make the Civil Service Commission his career, becoming

1 Trevelyan to Temple, 21 February 1855, T.L.B., XXXV, p. 110.
In his eagerness to secure the services of an active educationist Trevelyan assured him that he could remain Principal of Kneller Hall.

2 Trevelyan to Walrond, 27 February 1855, Ibid., p. 115.

Secretary and finally a Commissioner. The other examiner, Edward Headlam, Fellow of St. John's College Cambridge, was chosen to complete the representation of the two ancient universities.

The selection of the Commissioners was an essential preliminary to the setting up of the Commission. It was a task that was left to Gladstone's successor as Chancellor, Sir George Cornwall Lewis. He had accepted Gladstone's plans for the Commission as they stood but he insisted on presenting the Order in Council to Parliament himself.¹ The Order in Council of 21 May 1855 established a Commission roughly on the lines that Trevelyan had suggested. Essentially the new body was intended to allay fears about the competence of the Civil Service, without at the same time arousing political and professional jealousies. The Commission was limited to setting a test examination appropriate to the posts being filled in each department, and to ensuring that candidates were within the prescribed age limits for the department and that they were able to produce satisfactory references as to their age and character. It remained open to heads of departments to appoint those who had not received the Commission's certificate of competence, although after 1859 any person appointed in this way would be ineligible for a pension.² Furthermore, patrons were still able to nominate only one person for each vacancy and thus to rule out the possibility of competition.

1 Trevelyan to Granville, 28 February 1855, *Ibid.*, p. 119.

2 Superannuation Act 1859, see *infra* p. 240.

Despite these limitations, Trevelyan was soon impressed by Ryan's tact and persuasion in getting heads of departments to co-operate.¹ By asking for details of existing examinations and by undertaking to set and administer them the Civil Service Commission rapidly began to acquire the respect and confidence of departments. Additionally the Commission prepared the way for further changes by means of its first few annual reports, in which it assessed the educational attainments of entrants to the Civil Service and thereby pointed out the inadequacies of the system it had to operate.² The first report of the Commission had the effect of briefly reviving the discussion of open competition in the Commons. Lord Goderich, in praising the first report, moved on 24 April 1856 a humble address to the Crown for the extension of open competition. This was an unusual procedure which was opposed by the Palmerston government on the grounds that it was either devoid of real meaning or intended to force their hand. The motion was supported by Northcote and Gladstone - the latter asserting that he would not be opposed to any increased administrative expenses that might arise from running open competitions - and carried by 108 to 87.³ Although the government was not obliged to take any action, it could not flagrantly ignore the feelings of the House. Gladstone

1 Trevelyan to Lewis, 13 October 1855, T.L.B., XXXV, p. 277.

2 Edwin Chadwick brought the work of the Civil Service Commission to the notice of British Association in papers delivered in 1857 and 1858. Although he had earlier been lukewarm about the Northcote-Trevelyan report, he mentioned Trevelyan as among those Civil Servants with the best understanding of the situation (The Journal of the Statistical Society, XXI, 1858, pp. 18-50; XXII, 1859, pp. 44-75). A decade later, Horace Mann, Registrar of the Commission, gave a further report which showed how little progress had even been made in extending limited competition (Ibid., XXXI, 1868, pp. 407-414; XXXII, 1869, pp. 38-60).

3 Debates, CXLI, cols. 1401-1444.

attached importance to the motion, since he alluded to it in his article, "The Declining Efficiency of Parliament", in the September issue of The Quarterly, as an example of effective Commons action in compelling "a sluggish functionary of state [Palmerston] to move onwards, even when he had mustered all his vis inertiae for somnolent resistance."¹ The Civil Service Commission might as a consequence be safe from direct interference, but Palmerston did not feel inhibited from insisting on his own rights of nomination in the Treasury, as Trevelyan discovered in the following year. Furthermore no help at ministerial level was given to the Commission, and consequently open competition was extremely rare until it was formally established by Gladstone in 1870.

Naturally Trevelyan was anxious to give the Civil Service Commission as much help as possible, but he found this most difficult in his own department.² When he attempted to reduce the number of separate competitions for supplementary clerks (numerous competitions for each vacancy or group of vacancies were producing an unsettling effect in the revenue departments that put forward the candidates) he encountered the resistance of Palmerston, who insisted upon his

1 The Quarterly Review, XCIX (September 1856), p. 555.

2 He also hoped to give some encouragement to recruitment from elementary schools for low level posts by publishing a letter to Dawes in The Times (19 December 1855, p. 9 co. b). It was accompanied by one from John Wood which much more specifically thanked Dawes for finding deserving Excise candidates, and undertook to provide a place annually. Dawes was active and wrote the preface to the Manual of Educational Requirements necessary for the Civil Service (1856), giving details of departmental tests and reprinting the first report of the C.S.C.

right to nominate candidates for each post.¹ While there was no question as far as the Treasury was concerned of the Commission not administering examinations for these competitions, they could only become effective in establishing a consistent standard if they were conducted on a larger scale. However, when he was free from the surveillance of political superiors Trevelyan was more effective. For example, in 1856 he pressed Monsell, Clerk of the Ordnance, to dismiss some clerks who had been employed without a certificate.² In 1858 he resisted an attempt by Sir Edward Romilly, Chairman of the Audit Board, to select permanent clerks from among the temporary clerks without any reference to the Civil Service Commission.³

While Trevelyan did not have an opportunity to mould the future course of Civil Service reform, the principles which he established eventually became the ideal of Civil Service management. In 1860, even George Arbuthnot, one of Trevelyan's sternest critics on Civil Service matters, was forced to admit that the standard of clerks recently appointed had greatly improved, yet insisting that many supplementary clerks were too well qualified for the posts that were in fact open to them.⁴ This provides a clue to what proved to be a perennial problem of drawing effective and equitable boundaries

1 Trevelyan to Ryan, 29 July 1857, T.L.B., XXXV, p. 99. He asked him to grant a certificate to a clerk who although unsuccessful in an earlier competition, had gained higher marks than successful candidates in other competitions. Palmerston reacted to this in a Minute of 10 November 1857 that insisted on the full procedure of revenue department nominations that had been established in 1840 and administered by the C.S.C. since 1855 (P.R.O., T.J/6092/17960).

2 Trevelyan to Monsell, 9 and 10 January 1856, T.L.B., XXXVI, p.53.

3 Trevelyan to Romilly, 27 June 1858, T.L.B., XXXVII, p. 244.

4 Select Committee on Civil Service Appointments, Arbuthnot's evidence of 22 March 1860, P.P., 1860, IX, pp. 101-103.

between the various classes of clerks. It remained a problem after the Order in Council in 1870 had introduced open competition to most departments. Indeed Trevelyan's last contribution to Civil Service reform was his evidence before the Playfair Commission of 1875 - a Commission that had as its main objective the expression in practical terms of Trevelyan's over-simple theory of the division of labour.¹ Until the end of the First World War many problems of Civil Service management were the result of desperate shifts to make the theory fit labyrinthine complexities of departmental staffing. In this sense, therefore, Trevelyan's influence survived until the Fulton Report of 1968 re-unified the career structure of the Civil Service.

2 Superannuation

The controversy in the 1850s over superannuation differed from other aspects of Civil Service reform in one very important respect: it would almost certainly be in their favour, as opposed to the very problematical advantages to be derived from the reform of the procedure for making first appointments. Trevelyan, although he was preoccupied with the problems surrounding the latter, appreciated the importance of an efficient termination of Civil Service careers. In developing his views in this field, he found himself in partial agreement with a large body of Civil Service opinion. For Trevelyan this was a unique position - a position brought about by the confusion and unfairness of the existing system of awarding pensions. It will be necessary to explain the background to these existing arrangements, before examining Civil Service grievances and Trevelyan's attempts to put the granting of pensions on a totally new basis.

¹ Second Report of the Civil Service Enquiry Commissioners, Trevelyan's evidence of 19 March 1875, P.P., 1875, XXII, pp. 556-567.

A . Background

The origins of Civil Service pensions lie in the eighteenth century; from the informal arrangements made by office-holders to provide for their predecessors there developed particularly in the Customs, the notion of collective responsibility as exemplified by the payment of contributions to superannuation funds.¹ The first comprehensive non-contributory scheme, however, was the result of government action. A Treasury Minute and later an Act of 1810 made the provision of pensions a public responsibility. The Act provided that pensions, like salaries, should be met from the Civil List whenever departmental fee funds proved insufficient.² Six year later, a further Act ordered that this charge should be specifically voted, so making the cost of pensions, for the first time, the subject of Parliamentary scrutiny, and thus vulnerable to pressures for economy.³ This inevitably resulted, during the economical drive of the early 1820s, in pensions being made contributory once again. By a Treasury Minute of 1821, confirmed by an Act in the following year, salaries of less than £100 were exempt from deductions, those between £100 and £200 were subject to a deduction of $2\frac{1}{2}\%$, and those above £200 to a deduction of 5%. Half the cost of pensions was to be paid from the fund produced by these deductions, and half from the Consolidated Fund. This was the first attempt to impose deductions on the salaries of all existing Civil Servants and it aroused a storm of protest. The government

1 The origins are described in M. Raphael, Pensions and Public Servants: A Study of the Origins of the British System (Paris, 1964).

2 50 Geo. III c. 117.

3 56 Geo. III c. 46.

was accused of breach of faith towards Civil Servants, because they had entered public service on the assumption that they would receive their full salaries, and with the expectation of an eventual pension. Parliament accepted the force of these arguments; the Act was repealed in 1824 and the deductions ordered to be repaid.

The perennial pressure for economy could not allow the matter to rest. In 1828, the Select Committee on Public Income and Expenditure recommended that deductions should be reimposed. Earlier embarrassments were avoided by the careful framing of the Treasury Minute of 1829, which excluded existing Civil Servants from its provisions. Only those persons appointed after August 1829 were liable to pay. In its turn, this new system was embodied in an Act in 1834. The Act repeated the detailed scale of deductions, but it did not provide for them to form a fund. Since 1829 the Treasury had kept the deductions distinct from other funds by investing them in Exchequer Bills, with the intention that Parliament should eventually decide what should be done with the money. The Act of 1834 regarded the deductions as normal revenue, and it directed that the amount already collected and all future sums should be paid into the Consolidated Fund.¹ This arrangement, with its attempt to harmonize vested interests with the need for economy, was to be a major source of misunderstanding and grievance over the next thirty years.

B Service Grievances

As a result of the confused situation between 1829 and 1834, many Civil Servants appointed after 4 August 1829 believed that a fund actually existed. In common parlance men continued to speak of

¹ Trevelyan's evidence of 4 March 1856, Select Committee on Superannuation, P.P., 1856, IX, pp. 17-29.

deductions for the Superannuation Fund; even a financial expert like W.G. Anderson did so, although he had no doubts about the real situation.¹ If many Civil Servants believed that a fund existed, they naturally came to feel that they had some claim upon it. This impression that the government owed something to contributors was confirmed by the generous provision for pre-1829 Civil Servants, who continued to be eligible for pensions under the provisions of the 1810 Minute. It was possible for these men to retire on full pay after fifty years, whereas men appointed later could expect at the most forty-sixtieths after a minimum service of forty years. An even greater anomaly was that, provided service was continuous, employment in any position at any salary before 1829 could secure exemption from deductions. Thus an extra clerk with £100 a year might eventually secure a permanent position with a large salary and still not pay deductions. It often happened that of two men in the same office on comparable salaries, one paid deductions and the other not.² It was felt to be particularly unfair that premature retirement or death resulted in the loss of deductions paid; widows often felt that they had a claim, and consequently addressed pathetically futile appeals to the Treasury.³ In this connection it was often claimed that the lower paid clerks paid in deductions the money that they should have used in insuring their lives. The overall sense of grievance was increased by a conviction that the system operated at a profit to the government. While the proponents of economical reform often maintained that Civil Servants were overpaid, the Superannuation Question presented them as the

1 Ibid., p.30.

2 Ibid., pp. 17-22.

3 Ibid., p.30.

victims of parsimony, rather than as the beneficiaries of administrative inefficiency.¹ As the proportion of post-1829 Civil Servants progressively increased the Superannuation Question became more acute. Mounting discontent resulted in 1846 in the foundation of an association under the chairmanship of R.M. Bromley, Secretary of the Board of Audit and later Accountant General of the Navy. The association was managed by a committee of deputies representing thirty departments - all the main departments except the Customs. Its main objectives were the collection of data on the Superannuation Question and the preparation of papers in support of claims for an increased scale of pensions and the application of abatements to form a widows' and orphans' fund. A petition was presented to Lord John Russell in March 1848, but the budget crisis and the ensuing economical investigations ruled out its serious consideration.²

It was not until 1852 that the matter was brought before the public. A series of sympathetic letters was printed in The Times in October and November.³ These were supported by an outspoken leader of 16 October which described existing superannuation arrangements as "a gigantic swindle perpetrated by the State upon a body of defenceless men".⁴ Interest within the Civil Service was further stimulated by the first issue in January 1853 of the Civil Service Gazette (a weekly newspaper aimed at the lower-paid) which understandably devoted an article to the injustice of deductions.⁵ There was a further spate

1 Ibid., p.33.

2 William Farr, Remarks on a proposed scheme for the conversion of the assessment laid on public salaries ... into a "Provident Fund" for the support of the widows and orphans of civil servants (1849).

3 The Times, 2 October 1852, p. 6 col. b; 5 October, p. 5 col. f; 8 October, p. 6 col. d; 2 November, p. 4 col. e.

4 Ibid., 16 October 1852, p. 4 col. c.

5 The Civil Service Gazette, I (1853), p. 10.

of correspondence in The Times in November 1853 which served to illustrate a wide division of opinion over the desirability of a dependants' fund.¹ Yet the association felt sufficiently confident to present the Aberdeen ministry in December 1853 with a petition containing between three and four thousand signatures. Thereafter, superannuation became enmeshed in wider consideration of Civil Service affairs and the consequent publicity ensured that the matter was kept under consideration until the appointment of the Select Committee in 1856. At this stage the association tactfully decided to disband, trusting that its overwhelming case would be recognized by the Committee.²

The professional way in which the committee of the association undertook its work indicates the increasing capacity for analysis of organizational problems. This was largely due to the work of William Farr and the actuarial resources of the Registrar General's Office. In order to make out an effective case for dependants' benefits, it was decided to quantify the family responsibilities of Civil Servants. This was done by means of a voluntary census requesting information on the number and age of dependants. No less than 7962 returns were made and the findings tabulated. On 18 December 1854 Farr presented his conclusions in a paper to the Statistical Society of London. He pointed out, for example, that the average salary of Civil Servants who paid income tax (i.e. those with salaries of £150 p.a. or more) was £346 as compared with the average professional salary of £496. This disparity was in itself a compelling reason why deductions should be

1 The Times, 19 November 1853, p. 10, col. c; 22 November, p. 8, col. d; 23 November, p. 12, col. d; 24 November p. 10, col. b.

2 Bromley's evidence of 7 March 1856, Select Committee on Superannuation, P.P., IX, pp. 94-95.

ended, and for the government to set an example of fair treatment of its employees by acting as guarantor of a dependants' fund. Even on incomplete information this was shown to be feasible, and with full data available it would be perfectly straightforward. Farr had little enthusiasm for alternative systems of private life assurance since the rates were likely to be 25% higher than those calculated from the life-table.¹

This preoccupation with a dependants' fund was part of wider concern at this time with the improvement and extension at this time of life assurance. A Select Committee on the subject reported in June 1853 and recommended a more effective system of registration, together with the security of more detailed accounts.² Farr gave evidence of how life assurance had developed from speculative ventures into providing security for families. He suggested that there was considerable scope for growth in business, particularly with the reduction of stamp duty to one shilling percent and the income tax allowance on premiums granted by Gladstone's 1853 budget. Farr was anxious that more effort should be made to provide cover for those with income of less than £200 p.a. Furthermore, if policy contributions were started at the average age of 25 instead of 35 the volume of business could be doubled.³

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- 1 "Statistics of the Civil Service of England, with Observations on the Contribution of Funds to provide for Fatherless Children and Widows", Journal of the Statistical Society of London, XII (1849), pp. 103-150. Trevelyan included an abstract of these tabulations in his collection of material about salaries, see supra p.142. Farr was a pioneer of statistical analysis. He prepared the vital statistics for J.R. McCulloch's Statistical Account of the British Empire (1837) and wrote the Reports of the 1851, 1861 and 1871 censuses. See Victor L. Hiltz, "William Farr (1803-1883) and the 'Human Unit'", Victorian Studies, XIV (1970), pp. 143-150.
 - 2 P.P., 1852-53, XXI, p.7. The report and evidence was sympathetically discussed in Blackwood's (W.E. Aytoun attr., "A Chapter on Life Assurance", LXXIV, July 1853, pp. 105-116).
 - 3 P.P., 1852-53, XXI, pp. 317-332.

This evidence was consistent with the view that Farr had expressed in 1848, that it was desirable to give Civil Servants a realistic salary at the probable age of marriage in order that they should be able to make adequate provision for their families. As part of this provision it was argued that Civil Servants should be put in a position to buy their own life assurance - a view that was to be strongly expressed by Trevelyan.

C Trevelyan's Attitude

Trevelyan had gained some insight into the procedure for granting pensions by his attendance at the Treasury superannuation committee. This committee consisting of two junior lords had been set up in 1831 to revise proposed superannuation allowances, but its function was mainly one of granting formal approval. As with many of Trevelyan's other duties, this experience only served to reveal the impotence of the Treasury and of Trevelyan's own position. Apart from the award of premature pensions or of extra allowances for specially meritorious services, the discretion of the committee was severely limited. Trevelyan was appalled at what he suspected was the jobbery in arranging many premature retirements. He was particularly incensed by the Foreign Office; with pensions, as with establishments, this department felt free to do as it pleased. When the Treasury stood firm, he was clearly delighted. In a letter of 1 October 1847, he approved the refusal of a maximum pension to Adolphus Turner - a man who, he said, had been a mere subordinate and who had never shown any real merit.¹ Piecemeal control of this kind could not be really effective. Nine years later, in January 1856, Trevelyan complained to James Wilson of what he felt was an improper grant of a pension: £300 a year at the age of thirty-one

1 Trevelyan to H. Rich, T.L.B., XVII, p. 51.

after only twelve years' service. As the Foreign Office had made no mention in its letters of the prospect of re-employment, Trevelyan suggested that it was a matter that ought to be laid before Parliament.¹ From incidents like these, Trevelyan was forced to the view that if men were incompetent or chronic invalids, they ought never to have been appointed; if, on the other hand, they were still useful, they ought to be re-employed. Unfortunately the Treasury superannuation committee was unable to take consistent notice of these two related aspects of its work.

Even more harmful than the wastefulness of jobbery was the damage done to Civil Service morale by the lack of a compulsory retiring age. The only escape for the senile was the provision in the Act of 1834 that permitted retirement for anyone under the age of 65, provided that he could obtain a medical certificate stating that he was "incapacitated through age or infirmity" from carrying on his work. The lack of compulsion, combined with the impossibility of granting a full-rate pension - only pre-1829 Civil Servants aged at least 66 could ever expect this - ensured that the highest posts on many office establishments were filled with elderly men. This lack of mobility was frustrating to junior clerks, who had to perform much of the work of their seniors without a measurable prospect of their own eventual promotion. Trevelyan so often talked of "prizes", or departmental promotions, as a spur to exertion, that he obviously recognized that the Superannuation Question was not only concerned with justice for Civil Servants, but was an issue that could effect the "future efficiency and spirit" of the

1 T.L.B., XXXVI, p.280.

whole Service.¹ When he expressed this view to Sir Francis Baring in November 1852, Trevelyan was not aware that he was on the threshold of a major investigation of the Civil Service. Most of his efforts were to be concentrated on the improvement of first appointments, but he also was to begin to clarify and elaborate his views on superannuation.

The Northcote-Trevelyan report made only a passing reference to superannuation. It observed that effective control over pensions was handicapped by lack of proper records of staff performance, and suggested that the proposed examiners might also collect this information. However the wider aspects of superannuation were not properly within the committee's terms of reference and the report mentioned that it was receiving separate consideration.² Trevelyan had devoted himself to this task on his own, and on 8 November 1853 - a fortnight before the completion of the first printed draft of the Northcote-Trevelyan report - he completed a "Memorandum on the Superannuation Question".³ This was the first of four papers on the subject which he wrote over the next two years. Like the Northcote-Trevelyan report, it made no attempt to provide an impartial analysis; it was obviously Trevelyan's first opportunity to offer his opinions. He immediately sent copies of the Memorandum to Gladstone and to James Wilson.⁴

After explaining the cause of Civil Servants' discontent with

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- 1 Trevelyan to Sir Francis Baring, 10 November 1852, T.L.B., XXX, p.48.
 - 2 P.P., 1854, XXVII, p.21.
 - 3 Papers, originally printed in 1850 ... and Three Papers on the Superannuation Question, pp. 126-138.
 - 4 Trevelyan to Gladstone, 18 November 1853, T.L.B., XXXII, p. 114. A printed copy on blue paper is among the Gladstone Papers (Add. MS., 44579 f. 135).

the system of deductions, Trevelyan was mainly concerned to dismiss as irrelevant Bromley's arguments in favour of a widows' benefit fund. He suggested that the only criterion was the efficiency of the Civil Service. This could best be achieved by making pensions the explicit reward for satisfactory service. He felt that the prospect of a pension would be very encouraging to men in their fifties - men who were some of the most valuable because they had the benefit of experience without being worn out.¹ With a fixed retiring age, it would be possible for them to remain fully active until the end of their careers, before enjoying the deserved benefits of a reasonable span of retirement. It was, therefore, necessary to establish a fixed age for retirement, and to end deductions in order to give unfettered discretion in awarding pensions. The idea of a retiring age is now commonplace, but - probably fortunately - the award of pensions on a professional judgement-day has never materialized. If pensions could be regarded in this way, provision for widows would be impossible. It might appear legitimate to reward or punish - the latter by means of a reduced pension - the Civil Servant himself, but it would have been intolerable to punish his family as well. Trevelyan often commented on the influence of ordinary humane feelings which made heads of departments reluctant to dismiss incompetent men. These feelings would have been even more powerful if widows' pensions were at stake. Although this consideration was in his mind, Trevelyan argued that it was morally desirable that the individual, not the State, should be responsible for the welfare and security of his own family. He was hostile to the State's assumption of any more administrative burdens, when widows

1 William Farr had worked out the details, see supra p.142.

and families could be provided for by means of life insurance.

Trevelyan, who had hitherto been guarded in his response to Bromley's overtures for support for the widows' fund, now openly refused to help.¹

Trevelyan went on to clarify for Gladstone's benefit some of the points raised by his Memorandum. He suggested sixty-five as a compulsory retiring age, with an option at sixty. However, he stressed that he wanted this to be flexibly interpreted, in order that the services of men like Brooksbank and Archer, Chief Commissariat Clerk, could be retained. Compulsory retirement would, he felt, speed up promotion and rid the Service of disappointed men. He reiterated his opposition to a new version of the proposed widows' pension fund suggested by Sir James Graham, whereby part of the deductions should be devoted to this purpose.²

In the early months of 1854 both Trevelyan and Gladstone were more immediately concerned with the implementation of the Northcote-Trevelyan report. Yet as Gladstone remarked to Russell, he regarded superannuation as being closely linked with wider issues of efficiency. He was convinced that an improved superannuation system required an improved Civil Service, since he saw no other way of solving the problems caused by incompetent and worn-out men clinging to their posts in order to become entitled to a pension.³ Only when it became apparent that no progress was likely with a general Civil Service measure, did Gladstone decide to deal separately with superannuation, announcing in the Commons on 5 May that there was the possibility of a bill to reform the system.⁴ The bill which he began to prepare left the basis of the 1834 system intact, and merely aimed to facilitate the

1 Trevelyan to Bromley, 26 November 1853, T.L.B., XXXII, p.133.

2 Trevelyan to Gladstone, 18 December 1853, Ibid., p. 173.

3 Gladstone to Russell, 20 January 1854, Add. MS., 44291 f.95b.

4 Debates, CXXXII, col. 1305.

retirement of aged or incompetent men. Trevelyan was not discouraged, for he knew that such a bill would do nothing to relieve the pressure of Civil Service discontent, and could therefore be little more than a temporary arrangement. In January 1855, he emphasized that the financial consideration of retaining the revenue from deductions was unimportant when compared with the remedial effect that could be produced by a properly revised system. Gladstone took no notice, for he was anxious not to abandon revenue of £60,000.

When Gladstone resigned in February 1855, the bill was taken over by his successor, Sir George Cornwall Lewis. Since the latter was temperamentally disinclined to do more than what was immediately necessary, Trevelyan had to repeat all his arguments in favour of ending deductions as a preliminary to total reform. In June he produced three further memoranda including one entitled, "Age of Retirement of Civil Servants".¹ He proposed that forty years service ought to be the norm, with retirement between sixty and sixty-five. He was convinced that the better sort of Civil Servant would welcome longer retirement.² This could only be proved in the long-term; a more immediate advantage would be the end of the unreal, token investigation of superannuation claims by the Treasury. As Trevelyan observed: "A plausible case can

1 Papers 1850, pp. 126-146.

2 Trevelyan best revealed his faith in the almost mechanical efficacy of this arrangement in a letter to Viscount Monck, a junior lord, on 4 July 1856: "I am strongly as ever in favour of a self-acting Regulation that every body should be obliged to retire at sixty-five unless he was asked to remain, but the permission to retire at sixty would get rid of the worst class of cases, and would prepare the way for dealing hereafter with the remainder. The elderly men who are tired of the Service, and wish to retire keep those who ought to retire but wish to remain in countenance; and if the first class were cleared off by permitting them to retire at sixty, the impaired men of sixty-five would stand out in full relief, and public opinion would turn so much against them that there would be no difficulty in applying a suitable remedy." (T.L.B., XXXVI, p.185.)

be easily got up to be laid before the Treasury, which has neither such exact information, nor such strength of will, nor such keen, uncompromising sense of public duty as to make it safe that the fluctuating body of functionaries of whom the office is composed, should be entrusted with a large discretion in a matter in which the powerful influences belonging to this state of society are more than usually active."¹ Trevelyan's more mechanical system, avoiding the snares of personal feeling and political patronage, presupposed that the rules for retirement would be reasonable and explicit, and that the merits of Civil Servants would be evaluated either by the heads of departments or by some other agency. The Civil Service Commission was about to be established, and Trevelyan looked forward to the extension of that body's supervisory functions.

D The Select Committee of 1856 and the Royal Commission of 1856-57

Trevelyan appears to have exerted no appreciable influence, for when the bill was finally introduced on 15 February 1856 it embodied none of the radical changes which he felt were necessary: deductions were retained; no retiring age was fixed. The only concession to efficiency was the reduction to sixty of the age below which a medical certificate was needed to obtain a pension. Another encouragement to earlier retirement was the award of the maximum pension of two-thirds salary after thirty-four years, instead of after forty years.² In all, the bill was an unsatisfactory measure that did nothing to satisfy the demand for the ending or modification of deductions. Its

1 Papers 1850, pp. 142-144.

2 P.P., 1856, I, p. 523.

effectiveness as a means of facilitating retirement was also doubtful. Cornwall Lewis was so conscious of the bill's defects and omissions that he proposed that it should be submitted to a Select Committee after its second reading. Aware of so many aspects of superannuation that were not covered by the bill, he went further and suggested that the Select Committee should examine every aspect of it. Although Cornwall Lewis appealed for no discussion until after the Select Committee had reported, Disraeli was quick to remark that the bill was a poor substitute for a measure that ought to tackle the real issues underlying administrative reform. Northcote, now M.P. for Dudley, felt that the first step should be the removal of the real or supposed grievance of deductions.¹ The eventual outcome was uncertain; the administration had no clear policy and, therefore, little faith in its own measures; the only firm and consistent pressure was from the opponents of deductions.

The Select Committee that was set up was under the chairmanship of Cornwall Lewis and contained, among others, Baring, Gladstone,² Roebuck and Henley - Roebuck was fresh from his triumphant investigation of the Crimean War, and Henley had acquired a reputation in the late 1840s for his demands for drastic economies. Among the witnesses called before them were Trevelyan and Bromley.

Trevelyan gave his evidence first on 4 March 1856, as he was the main official witness. He presented a detailed historical survey of the origins of the superannuation system. He followed this by an exposition of the views expressed in his memoranda. He claimed that,

1 Debates, CXL, cols. 870-897.

2 Gladstone attended only one meeting of the Select Committee. However, Trevelyan felt it worthwhile to argue for the end of deductions. In May he adduced the Burkean argument that "Englishmen are generally content when they are fairly treated", in the hope of countering Gladstone's growing irritation with Civil Service malcontents (T.L.B., XXXVI, p. 149).

after six years' study of the system of making deductions from salaries, he had come to the conclusion that they could not be modified satisfactorily.¹ He also explicitly linked the question of ending deductions with the general improvement of Civil Service personnel, by a reference to the Order in Council of 21 May 1855, which was designed to prevent men who were unequal to their work from ever being appointed. He cited W.G. Anderson as saying that with well-chosen staff only two-thirds of the Civil Service establishment would be needed, and that the pension list would be correspondingly smaller. Once again he made a plea for a comprehensive and powerful supervisory machine; the Civil Service Commission, as already constituted, was only part of what was necessary to ensure that redundant staff were re-employed in other departments wherever possible, instead of being granted pensions.² Trevelyan made a point of stressing the conflict between the need for service economy and efficiency to re-employ men on the redundant list, and the pressure from political patrons to be able to make new appointments. This conflict was strenuously denied by W.G. Hayter, Patronage Secretary, when he came to give his evidence; moreover he argued that except in a few departments the Treasury had no power to make appointments in the way Trevelyan had recommended.³ Hayter's objection to the impression that Trevelyan had given led to the latter's recall for clarification of his evidence. Trevelyan, while denying that he had intended an attack on any individual, reiterated his view that the Treasury needed increased powers to enforce the re-employment of able-bodied men.⁴

1 P.P., 1856, IX, p.35.

2 Ibid., pp. 63-64.

3 Hayter's evidence of 11 March 1856, Ibid., p. 139.

4 Trevelyan's evidence of 14 March 1856, Ibid., pp. 152-160.

On the more immediate issue of ending deductions, Trevelyan's evidence was strictly examined by Sir Francis Baring, a member of the Select Committee, when he questioned Trevelyan's contention that the loss of revenue in ending deductions would only amount to £100,000. Since Trevelyan had himself admitted that the figure was based on guesswork, Baring was able to observe that "the value of your opinion depends upon the data upon which you have founded your opinion".¹

The question of establishing a widows' fund was raised once again by R.M. Bromley, who proposed in his evidence that deductions should be replaced by a $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ levy for this purpose.² He even went so far as to produce his own version of the bill - a suggestion that was turned down by a Select Committee that was not concerned with additional complexities unrelated to the efficiency of the Civil Service.

Bearing in mind the divergence of evidence it is not surprising that the Committee did not attempt to produce a general report; instead it considered a number of general resolutions, the most significant of which linked the abolition of deductions with an immediate revision of the level of salaries. The Committee generally felt that it would be unjust to give most of those who paid deductions an indiscriminate increase of a little over 5%. Rather, they intended that the ending of deductions should mean a redistribution of income among Civil Servants, not an additional burden on the State. On 25 June, the Committee voted in favour of this resolution by nine votes to two, Baring being one of the opposers.³ The bill was accordingly amended to bring about the end of deductions, and the government was instructed to take immediate steps to revise salaries.⁴ Even if this section of the bill

1 Baring's evidence of 4 March 1856, *Ibid.*, p. 50.

2 Bromley's evidence of 11 March 1856, *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

3 Proceedings of the Select Committee, *Ibid.*, p. 11.

4 P.P., 1856, I, p. 536.

had been operable, it would only have constituted a crude economical approach. Trevelyan had opposed any form of general reduction in 1848, and now he resisted what might prove to be the same thing in disguise. In July, Trevelyan recommended to Cornwall Lewis that the bill should be dropped, because of its clumsy amendments and its disregard for the efficiency of the Civil Service.¹

Cornwall Lewis was very pleased to rid himself of such an embarrassing measure. He now attempted to solve the problem by means of a Royal Commission. This was set up in November 1856, and it reported in the following May. One of the members of the Commission was Sir Edward Ryan, one of the recently appointed Civil Service Commissioners, who ensured that the report was more concerned with efficiency than with economy. Trevelyan's arguments were completely upheld, for the Commission claimed that the cost of ending deductions could be met by increased efficiency, rather than by reduced salaries. The Commission recommended that all Civil Servants should be entitled to a net salary, together with the expectation of a pension after satisfactory service. Deductions ought, therefore, to be abolished without qualification. Retirement ought to be permissive at sixty and obligatory at sixty-five, except in special circumstances. Forty years' service was to qualify for the maximum pension of two-thirds salary.² For the first time, superannuation was accepted as an integral part of the rewards of public service: the confusing legacy of half a century was discarded.

1 T.L.B., XXXVI, p. 199.

2 Report of 15 May 1857, P.P., 1857, sess. 2, XXIV, pp. 229-237.

E The Acts of 1857 and 1859

The recommendations of the Royal Commission, despite their cogency, were still far from being implemented. However, Trevelyan was extremely satisfied by the outcome so far, and he realized that care would be needed to consolidate the position, by winning Parliamentary support. The General Committee of Civil Servants for the Amendment of the Superannuation Act of 1834 was also encouraged by the Commission's report to continue its pressure against deductions. Trevelyan asked Bromley on 19 May 1857 to use his influence to stop continued criticism. Since Parliament was possibly going to confer a "boon" on the Civil Service, it would be fatal for the beneficiaries to continue to be critical.¹ Yet the Committee's petitions to Parliament and its lobbying of back-bench M.P.s bore fruit. On 30 June, Lord Naas introduced a private member's bill in the Commons to repeal section twenty-seven of the 1834 Superannuation Act. This would merely abolish deductions, and it would be left to the government to supplement the measure, by revising the rules concerning retirement, and by extending pensions to those departments and classes of Civil Servants that did not pay deductions. The measure was strongly opposed by the government, although Cornewall Lewis was prepared to offer some relief for lower paid Civil Servants, upon whom the burden of deductions pressed most heavily.² In the debate on the second reading on 29 July, James Wilson stressed that most of the anomalies would remain, while the public would lose revenue of £100,000.³ This debate led to Trevelyan's name being involved. When it was argued that the ending of deductions

1 T.L.B., XXXVII, p.53.

2 Debates, CXLVI, cols. 690-701.

3 Debates, CXLVII, col. 246.

would result in many men being overpaid, Lord Naas cited Trevelyan's observation before the Select Committee, that when he had been investigating departments and assessing salaries, the only consideration had been the market value of the work, and that no allowance had been made for a post being subject to deductions. Gladstone was furious that Trevelyan's evidence was regarded as authoritative; he resented what he felt was an implicit usurpation of ministerial responsibility and flatly contradicted Trevelyan's evidence on this point.¹ Trevelyan was in fact right, and he lost no time in writing to Cornwall Lewis in order to tell him so.²

Ministerial opposition proved less effective than the General Committee's lobbying and the Commons put an end to the interminable discussion of deductions by passing Lord Naas's Bill. This was so obviously an incomplete measure designed to force the government's hand, that Trevelyan devoted his attention to advise his colleagues that their proper course was to show gratitude by increased devotion to work and by spending the money formerly deducted on making their own provision for their families; not by continuing to press for a provident fund.³

Pressure for the establishment of a provident fund became less effective when it was revealed in March 1858 that the government had not been profiting from deductions. A supplementary report of the Royal Commission reported the findings of an actuary's report, which demonstrated that even if the deductions had been funded they would have been insufficient to meet all the claims that would have eventually been made by those who paid deductions. However, the Royal Commission

1 Ibid., pp. 650-658.

2 Trevelyan to Lewis, 30 July 1857, T.L.B., XXXVII, p. 84.

3 Trevelyan to J.R. Lowry, 4 March 1858, Ibid., p. 189.

regarded this aspect of deductions as less important than efficiency; the supplementary report reiterated recommendations for a fixed retiring age and for the extension of deductions to all departments.¹ In July, Cornwall Lewis brought in a bill to fix a retiring age. However, notice of an amendment to extend its provisions to dockyard workers was sufficient for it to be withdrawn.² The following February, Disraeli, supported by Northcote, introduced a bill which would have met all the main recommendations of the Royal Commission. No premature retirement, except on the grounds of ill-health was to be permitted; retirement at sixty-five was to be compulsory, except where an individual had been invited to remain: pensions were to be paid to dockyard workers and similar classes of Civil Servants.³ In the debate at the committee stage, the section relating to compulsory retirement proved to be a major obstacle. Amendments were introduced to raise the age of compulsory retirement to seventy, and to delay its operation for three years. Rather than allow the bill to be wrecked by the failure to agree on one section, Cornwall Lewis persuaded Northcote to agree to the section being negatived without a division.⁴ Although the retiring age - a matter that Trevelyan felt was crucial - was deleted, the Act contained one provision that was a positive aid to the continuing process of Civil Service reform: after April 1859 all new entrants to the Civil Service would need a certificate of competence from the Civil Service Commissioners, before becoming eligible for a pension.⁵

1 Supplementary Report of 25 March 1857, P.P., 1857-88, XXV., pp. 635-636.

2 Debates, CLI, col. 1181; CLII, col. 151

3 P.P., 1859 sess. 1, II, p. 791.

4 Debates, CLIII cols. 1387-95.

5 22 Vic c. 26, sec. 17.

3 The Rebuilding of Government Offices

Trevelyan's interest in the location and planning of office buildings for the Civil Service arose from his wider interest in administrative reform. Although he lacked technical knowledge, he felt able to offer advice on the basis of his general philosophy of administration and economical reform. Thus, his views are interesting, whether or not they can be shown to have had a direct influence on the rebuilding that took place in the late 'fifties and early sixties'.¹

Trevelyan's views on the need for more efficient office buildings had been maturing for some time, but he produced his first systematic presentation of them in February 1853. In connection with what eventually proved to be an abortive scheme to rehouse the Admiralty opposite the Treasury, Trevelyan established the principles that he felt ought to apply: the new building ought to be large enough to house the entire department, including those parts of the Admiralty's work that were then housed at Somerset House; there ought to be room for expansion, particularly in wartime; large office rooms together with a central store for records ought to be provided; no official residences ought to be included; the size of the new building ought solely to be determined by the size of the staff and the bulk of the records; and, finally, the design ought to be obtained by means of public competition.² A little later Trevelyan suggested that the Registrar General's Office could conveniently remain at Somerset House after the Admiralty had moved out, since the large rooms in that building were ideally suited for clerks making entries on records in a uniform process.³

1 For background to the problem see J.M. Crook and M.H. Port, *op. cit.*, pp. 537-571.

2 Trevelyan to Molesworth, First Commissioner of Works, 9 February 1853, T.L.B., XXX, p. 281.

3 Trevelyan to Phillips, Secretary to the Board of Works, 17 February 1853, T.L.B., XXXI, p. 13.

Towards the end of March, Trevelyan expatiated to Molesworth, First Commissioner of Works, on the urgent need for rehousing the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office - a fact that had been well-known in official circles for over a decade - but concluded nevertheless that the Admiralty building should be given priority.¹ For the remainder of the year, Trevelyan's increasing involvement in departmental investigations precluded much consideration of office rebuilding.

It was only a year later, when it became clear from Gladstone's statement to the Commons on 5 May 1854 that there was no likelihood of a bill to introduce open competition, that Trevelyan began to devote himself more fully to the problems of office rebuilding. In a number of letters, Trevelyan revealed that he was opposed to any piecemeal solution of departmental accommodation problems as he was to any kind of piecemeal solution of departmental organization and establishments. In a letter to Gladstone on 22 June 1854, Trevelyan reminded him of his remarks in his report on the Board of Works on the use of ordinary dwelling-houses as office buildings. He stressed the wastefulness of using houses which generally only provided two useable floors (attics and basements being of little use), and of the consequent large number of ancillary staff that were needed for a large number of small units. He asserted that, if instead of renting properties individually, the government could obtain contract rates appropriate to the scale of its requirements a great saving could be achieved.² Two days later a further letter dealt with a more immediately practicable, but related, matter: the regrouping of offices in Whitehall. Trevelyan apparently agreed with a proposal of Molesworth's that the Enclosure Commission could conveniently be moved to St. James's Square, so that the Poor

1 Trevelyan to Molesworth, 26 February 1853, *Ibid.*, p. 121.

2 Add. MS., 44334 f. 57.

Law Board could in turn move into its vacated premises near the Home Office, in this way improving communication between the two departments and facilitating Parliamentary business.¹

In every problem relating to accommodation Trevelyan realized that there was an important parallel in the Treasury's attempts to regulate the scale of establishments and departmental expenditure generally; temporary expedients that were justified during an emergency often tended to be made permanent, and to lead to excessively wasteful and inefficient half-measures. For example, the continued failure to solve the Foreign Office's lack of accommodation culminated in 1854 in the decision to build a temporary wooden structure in Downing Street to house books and papers. Trevelyan strenuously opposed this expedient on the grounds that it "would lead to an indefinite postponement of this really important and pressing question."² This view seems to have been shared by the government, who turned to consider an extensive rebuilding scheme in the area of Downing Street. The need to acquire additional land necessitated a bill, and this brought before Parliament a preliminary outline of the scheme. In introducing the Downing Street Extension Bill on 26 April Molesworth bowed to potential economical criticism by undertaking to submit the Bill to a Select Committee.³ On 10 July the Select Committee confined itself to examining only one witness, James Pennethorne, the architect of the scheme. He proposed to construct a large quadrangle behind the Home Office, so demolishing all the houses in Downing Street but not extending as far as Whitehall.

1 Ibid., f. 59.

2 Trevelyan to Molesworth, 6 July 1854, T.L.B., XXXIV, p. 92.

3 26 April 1855, Debates, CXXXVII, col. 1830.

In this way it would be possible to construct an impressive main thoroughfare at a later stage. Molesworth made it plain that he was determined to get rid of the ill-adapted houses that contained the Foreign and Colonial Offices. His position was supported by a surveyor's report on the perilous condition of the buildings.¹

Although the Bill was passed, the large and extensive reconstruction that it made way for could not be satisfactorily planned without consideration of the wider question of office rebuilding in the area of Whitehall. Accordingly, this question constituted the terms of reference of a further Select Committee that was set up on 28 April 1856. Trevelyan was invited to give evidence before it, and in so doing was able to expand his limited experience of particular instances into a general plan of administrative centralization.

Trevelyan prefaced his evidence with the observation that "next to the appointment of proper officers, the thing most conducive to the public service will be to have proper offices". He based his argument on the economical aspects of this, by quoting from his report on the Board of Works that the £15,000 spent on rent could pay the interest on a capital sum of £500,000. For a smaller sum it would be possible to build offices which were conducive to efficient work: "One clerk in a well-arranged office, with ready access to all its papers, and in constant communication with his superiors, can do nearly as much work in a day, as two who are placed in distinct buildings, separated from each other, from their chiefs, and from the records of the office."²

Apart from practical considerations, Trevelyan sought to

1 P.P., 1854-55, VII, pp. 205-209.

2 Report of the Select Committee on Public Offices, Trevelyan's evidence of 16 June 1856, P.P., 1856, XIV, p. 553.

illustrate the economical merits of his proposals by instancing the multiplicity of wasteful domestic arrangements that had once provided for the needs of the Board of Trade: at one time there had been no less than four households of ancillary staff occupying the upper floors and basements of a terrace of houses. This situation had been detected by Treasury vigilance as a result of an appeal for more accommodation. Trevelyan felt that the Board of Works, as a service department, ought to assume supervisory control over domestic arrangements. As with the Stationery Office, he assumed that the centralization of supplies and services would be a sure way of obtaining uniformity of practice and economy. There was, however, no indication that the Board of Works was prepared to act as a trusted agent of the Treasury, and Trevelyan merely preferred to stress the inherent economical merits of consolidation by citing his favourite example of the amalgamation of the Paymasters' Offices.¹

Trevelyan's most novel and ambitious proposal was for the grouping of major government departments. Trevelyan envisaged that their proximity would result in a great simplification of business, by reducing the volume of correspondence both between and within departments. His outline plan for grouping the main departments in three large new blocks reflected a three-fold division of administration: one block was to house financial and supervisory departments such as the Treasury, the Paymaster General's Office, the Audit Board, the Civil Service Commission and the Board of Trade; another was to contain the Departments of State, the Home Office, the Foreign Office and the India Office; and a third was to be occupied by the service departments, the Admiralty and the

1 Ibid., pp. 554-555.

War Department.¹ Improved communication could, he felt, improve financial control, particularly that of the Treasury over the revenue departments. To support his argument he cited the French precedent of assembling all financial departments under one roof in order to form a Ministry of Finance.²

This kind of consolidation could be extended to other departments. The formation of the War Department provided, for example, an admirable opportunity to group together its component parts - the War Office, the Ordnance and the Commissariat. Equally important, the Admiralty ought to be close by so that all the functions of the service departments could "be brought under the immediate view and control of the financial and civil administration". Obviously Trevelyan could produce no examples to illustrate this entirely hypothetical development, so he concentrated on the immediate and practical results that new buildings might have in furthering the cause of the separation of intellectual and mechanical work by facilitating the exchange of good administrative practices and by breaking down inter-departmental barriers. From Trevelyan's point of view a specially designed building had the advantage of revealing and confirming the real distinction between intellectual and mechanical work. When questioned about the work done by the clerks of the Treasury he stressed that only about twelve or so needed a room of their own, the remainder could more profitably work in larger rooms: "for the intellectual work

1 Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects, 3rd. series, XLI (1933) p. 33 reproduces Trevelyan's plan. It was certainly realizable and it gained the serious consideration of Molesworth's successor as First Commissioner of Works, Benjamin Hall (T.L.B., XXXVI, p. 195). Trevelyan's proposals were indeed modest compared with those later put forward by R.M. Bromley. The latter's tabula rasa approach involved the total rebuilding of the whole of Whitehall (P.P., 1861, XXXV, pp. 227-233).

2 P.P., 1856, XIV, pp. 556-559.

separate rooms are necessary, so that a person who works with his head may not be interrupted; but for the more mechanical work, the working in concert of a number of clerks in the same room under proper superintendance is the proper mode of meeting it."¹

Finally Trevelyan expatiated on the wider political and imperial implications of his proposals. While the Palace of Westminster symbolized the traditions of monarchy stretching back to Saxon times, the Palace of Whitehall symbolized the revolution from which English liberties had been derived:

I consider that we have a very important national duty to perform in this respect; this city is something more than the mother of arts and eloquence; she is a mother of nations; we are peopling two continents, the Western and Southern Continent, and we are organising, christianising and civilising large portions of two ancient continents, Africa and Asia; and it is not right that when the inhabitants of those countries come to the metropolis, they should see nothing of its ancient renown. Now I conceive that a plan of the kind I have sketched (by no means saying that it is the best plan), would answer the purpose, and more especially as it would give the honour due to the focus of all our liberties, of that regulated freedom which we hope will overspread the world.²

The Select Committee refrained in its report from commenting upon such problematical advantages but it virtually endorsed the financial arguments in favour of comprehensive redevelopment. It proposed that

1 Ibid., p. 559.

2 Ibid., p. 562.

an open competition should be held for the design of a block plan for the Downing Street area and for new Foreign Office and War Office buildings.¹

Trevelyan's contribution was to help the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Benjamin Hall, the First Commissioner of Works, draft the advertisement for the competition of 4 August 1856.² Unfortunately an architectural competition did not prove to be the best method of achieving a sound practical design. Amidst the controversy that arose from Sir George Gilbert Scott's winning gothic design being set aside by Palmerston in favour of an earlier classical design by Pennethorne, Trevelyan despairingly wrote that he would be satisfied with "plain factory fronts".³ The dispute was eventually resolved by Gilbert Scott remodelling his design in a classical form in order to meet Palmerston's objections,⁴ but preoccupation with aesthetic considerations precluded fuller consideration of the practical aspects that were of greater interest to Trevelyan, not least of which was the delay of nearly a decade. However, when Gilbert Scott's government offices to house the India and Foreign Offices (the War Office scheme having been abandoned) were constructed between 1868 and 1873, they clearly represented a large-scale, centralized alternative to the multitude of small houses that had housed many departments. The new buildings were symbolic of continuing attempts to impose some measure of professional uniformity upon a diversity of government departments.

1 Ibid., pp. 535-536. Gladstone, who was not a member of the government acidly commented in The Quarterly (CI, April 1857, pp. 578-9) on the prodigal civil expenditure of Palmerston's administration and singled out for special mention: "the foolish and almost incredible scheme for exterminating the whole population between St. James's Park, the river and the Houses of Parliament, in order to erect in the solitude thus to be created, a great 'Palace of Administration'".

2 B. Hall to the Treasury, 5 December 1856, P.P., 1857-58, XLVIII, pp. 334-337. This letter was written in explanation of the sequence of events leading up to the competition.

3 Trevelyan to Cardwell, 3 August 1857, T.L.B., XXXVII, p. 87.

4 G.G. Scott, Personal and Professional Recollections (1879), pp. 177-201.

Conclusion

Trevelyan's concern for a more efficient and equitable form of superannuation and for improved office accommodation indicate the width of his view of administrative reform that his position as Assistant Secretary had led him to acquire. His significance here, as well as in the early development of the Civil Service Commission, is not the degree to which he had a decisive influence, but rather the way in which his position in the Treasury enabled him to adopt a general overview of the inter-related elements of a number of patterns of government development. Curiously enough, Trevelyan did not find this general aspect of Treasury activity particularly satisfying, since he almost invariably preferred to be involved directly in the details of administration. The next chapter on the Commissariat shows Trevelyan in such a personally congenial situation.

Chapter VIII

CONTROL OF THE COMMISSARIAT

One of the most personally rewarding parts of Trevelyan's work was his control of the Commissariat. As the Commissariat was a distinct department under the direct control of the Assistant Secretary, it was extremely important in the development of Trevelyan's ideas, illustrating for him in microcosm many of the problems of Treasury control and Civil Service reform.

1 The Work of the Commissariat

Between 1840 and 1854 the Commissariat possessed two distinct / functions: it provided food, pay and transport for the army overseas; and it acted as a government banking service in the colonies.

The first of these functions had its origin in the arrangements, made in the time of Marlborough's campaigns, for the appointment of a special civilian staff to organize the provision of non-warlike stores. For many years, the staff for this purpose - a Commissary-in-Chief and his subordinates - had been appointed on an ad hoc basis whenever the need arose. However, in 1809 a Commissary-in-Chief had been appointed to supervise the purchase of provisions and the hiring of transport in the Peninsula. From this time onwards there had been continuity in Commissariat personnel and procedure. Indeed, until the time of the Crimean War, the experience of the Peninsular campaigns constituted the basis of all thinking on Commissariat organization.

The reduction in the strength of the army after 1815 resulted in the dispersal of Commissariat officers among garrisons in the colonies, the placing of many others on half-pay, and the substitution

of an Agent for Commissariat Supplies for the Commissary-in-Chief. To ensure economy this new official had his office in the Treasury. For some years the post of Agent was held by the Assistant Secretary, until in 1834 this personal connection was confirmed by placing the Commissariat under the direct control of the Treasury, with the Assistant Secretary specifically in charge of a distinct Commissariat department.¹

While control of the Commissariat was concentrated in England after 1816, Commissariat personnel were deprived of the possibility of a home tour of duty. The only exceptions were one or two senior officers who were employed in preparing treaties or revising accounts; also a few officers were attached to the army in 1848 when a Chartist rising was feared. In England the Commissariat's work was performed by the Ordnance - a department which in wartime only concerned itself with warlike stores (guns and ammunition). The nearest thing to a home tour of duty was the intermittent periods when the Commissariat saw service in Ireland.

The purely financial part of the Commissariat's work arose from its administration of an annual Parliamentary vote called the Army Extraordinaries. It had first been voted in 1686 to provide for contingencies, but it had gradually come to include the cost of a number of permanent services, such as hospitals and even the salaries of clergy in North America. By 1782, the Extraordinaries had become larger than the ordinary military votes, and as a result many details of military expenditure evaded sanction by Parliament. This state of affairs was revealed by the Commissioners for Examining Public Accounts.

1 Trevelyan himself provides the best short account of the Commissariat's work in the first half of the century in his evidence to a departmental committee in 1848, P.P., 1859, XV, p. 197. A more general contemporary account is in C.M. Clode, The Military Forces of the Crown (1869). A recent description is provided by J. Sweetman, "The effect of the Crimean War upon the administration of the British Army (1852-1856)" (London thesis, 1972), pp. 127-131.

They recommended that the actual spending of this vote should be conducted by a civil officer responsible to the Treasury. The vote was continued as it provided a useful banking balance.¹ Commissariat officers had from the outset managed these funds at local level, and this they continued to do, obtaining money by means of bills drawn upon the Treasury and by cash remittances. From these sources they were able to make advances towards services contained in other votes. In 1833 the vote for Army Extraordinaries was finally brought to an end, and the services it provided were included in the votes and estimates of a number of other departments. However, the so-called Army Extraordinaries continued to provide a banking service in the colonies. Yet as it was now made explicit that it could never make final payments, the Treasury acquired additional supervision over expenditure.²

All this military and financial work was carried out by a staff of about 200 officers and clerks. They were deployed at between twenty and twenty-four overseas stations, which in turn controlled about 118 subordinate stations and sixty-five Commissariat Chests at stations where cash balances were kept.³ The officers of the Commissariat were half civil, half military; they were granted a constitution by the Treasury and a commission by the War Office, so making them subject both to Treasury discipline and to military law. One indication of their military status was the blue uniform prescribed in Commissariat Regulations. The ranks ranged from Commissariat Clerk - with pay at 7/6 a day, equivalent to an ensign - to Commissary General - with pay

1 C.M. Clode, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 111-139.

2 Trevelyan's evidence to the Select Committee on Army and Ordnance Expenditure on 10 May 1850, P.P., 1850, X, pp. 451-453, 470.

3 Appendix to Report, *Ibid.*, pp. 1109, 1115.

at 94/11, equivalent to a major general.¹ Little prestige was attached to this service and few men of social standing entered it. It was less glamorous than the army; and less convenient than a post in civil departments at home.

2 Staff Reorganization

A Promotion

From the time he first came to the Treasury Trevelyan was concerned with the reform of the Commissariat. He was, therefore, conscious of a rather special relationship with his subordinates, particularly as regards promotion. In 1858, he recalled his first steps: "Soon after my appointment to the charge of the department in January 1840, Sir Francis Baring ... called my attention to the report of the commission upon naval and military promotion, of which the Duke of Wellington was chairman, and desired me to consider what changes in this respect were required in the Commissariat."² This was a realistic task in that the report had pointed out that the Treasury possessed "full power to redress any grievances that may be found to affect the officers of this Departments". Trevelyan immediately discovered that promotion was extremely slow, owing to the large number of officers of middle rank who had started their careers during the Napoleonic wars, and also because of the return of many half-pay officers to full-pay service. With Baring's support, the regulations concerning half-pay were tightened up; in future the half-pay list was to be a refuge only for

1 Trevelyan's evidence of 30 June 1858, War Office Committee on the Reorganization of the Commissariat, P.P., 1859, XV, p.198.

2 Ibid., p. 199.

senile and hopelessly incompetent officers, for whom a return to full-pay would be completely impossible. Some of the older officers who still retained their faculties were transferred from ordinary service to work on rearranging accounts and on preparing treatises on Commissariat practice. These changes, together with greater attention to the overall distribution of ranks when making new appointments and promotions, enabled Trevelyan to offer more immediate prospects to those who had waited a decade for a deserved promotion. For example, in a Treasury Minute of 11 August 1840, Trevelyan referred to some officers who had been twenty-five years in the same rank. A programme of mass promotion in the lower ranks was initiated: twenty-four men who had been first appointed before 1816 were promoted from Deputy Assistant Commissary General to Assistant Commissary General; sixteen Clerks were promoted to Deputy Assistant Commissary General. In this minute, Baring also established principles - later embodied in Commissariat Regulations - for future promotions: there was to be an annual investigation of promotion claims, in which the criterion was not to be seniority but "recorded merits and services".¹ In 1858 Trevelyan proudly recalled the procedure that was adopted at the time:

What actually took place was, that towards the close of each year, the state of the department was carefully reviewed, the casualties that had occurred in the past year were noted ... and the promotions were made on the principle of putting up, out of their turn, those who had proved themselves possessed of superior qualifications; of passing over those who had misconducted themselves, and of promoting the rest according

1 Commissariat Promotion Memorandum Book, P.R.O., W.O., 61/3 pp. 1-4.

to seniority. Mistakes of course may have been made but the promotions were always awarded on strictly public grounds, and all idea of interest or of favour was excluded.¹

Trevelyan believed that to confine promotions exclusively to seniority would have a "deadening effect". At the same time he was convinced that, under his direction, there had been a judicious balance of the justice of seniority and the efficiency of promotion by merit. Trevelyan's promotion memoranda gives ample evidence that he rigorously acted upon these principles. The first draft of these memoranda were usually written by Thomas Archer, Chief Clerk for Commissariat Business, but they were substantially rewritten by Trevelyan. His method of making promotions later served as a model for proposals in the Northcote-Trevelyan report.² Trevelyan was rapidly convinced of the effectiveness and the justice of what he was doing. In his promotion memorandum dated 9 December 1842, he recapitulated his achievements; very extensive promotion had been made (since 1840, two promotions to Commissary General, three to Deputy-C.G., thirty-four to Assistant-C.G. and twenty-seven to Deputy-Assistant-C.G.), yet because of some transfers to half-pay and a reduction of the number of full-pay officers from 202 to 194, the salary bill had only been increased from £46,326 to £47,781. Fortunately the half-pay list had been reduced from 193 to 184 as a result of numerous deaths among the older officers. This reduction saved about £2,000. Trevelyan felt that he had defended the interests of Commissariat officers, while protecting the public purse. His triumphant mood was indicated by his remark towards the close of the memorandum that "no grievances remain".³ His perfected system of promotion was now fully operational.

1 P.P., 1859, XV, p. 200.

2 P.P., 1854, XXVII, p. 20.

3 P.R.O., W.O. 61/3, pp. 13-15.

Once the machinery was set up, Trevelyan had unbounded faith in its continued efficiency. Even when the Treasury was about to lose control of the Commissariat, Trevelyan wrote to C.G. Filder, asking him for reports on his subordinates in order to consider the Christmas promotions. Although the Commissariat was beset by the problems of provisioning the army during an unexpected winter siege, Trevelyan expected Filder to list the officers in each grade in order of merit. Characteristically Trevelyan concluded by saying that this task would not take very long, as Filder must have become aware of their relative merits.¹ When the Commissariat was handed over to the War Office a month later, in December 1854, Trevelyan wrote to Henry Roberts, the Permanent Under Secretary, begging him to take care of the Promotion Memorandum Book as it was "the key to the administration of the Department during the last fifteen years."²

B Appointments

Trevelyan had less control over first appointments to the Commissariat than he had over promotion. Some Commissariat officers started their careers as unestablished extra clerks, but both permanent and extra clerks were appointed by patronage. One common practice was for some of these appointments to be given to the relatives of senior Commissariat officers. Trevelyan entered into the spirit of this, and his memoranda indicate that he selected such officers as were entitled to this favour. Although he wrote in 1843 of its beneficial effects,³ approval of this practice was belied ten years

1 Trevelyan to Filder, 3 November 1854, T.L.B., XXXIV, p. 285.

2 Trevelyan to Roberts, 26 December 1854, T.L.B., XXXV, p. 54. A few months later Trevelyan borrowed it back to have a copy made (Trevelyan to Petrie, 11 May 1855, Ibid., p. 203).

3 P.R.O., W.O. 61/3 p. 34.

later when he had to remind one officer that his nephew had behaved so badly since his appointment that he had had to be suspended.¹

When eight new appointments were made in 1853, Trevelyan was anxious that four of them should be regarded as "departmental". Of these, one was given to the nephew of C.G. Pine-Coffin (even if the officer did not have a son who wanted the post, it was legitimate for a distant relative to benefit) and the other three to unestablished clerks.²

Trevelyan clearly enjoyed the exercise of this additional power over his subordinates. On a number of occasions he refused this "boon" (as he liked to call it), either because the importunate officer had not conducted himself well, or because he had the effrontery to ask for more than one appointment. For example, D.C.G. Bowers at the Cape was reproached for ingratitude for the appointment he had already received, when Trevelyan discovered that he provided another son with a local temporary appointment. Trevelyan insisted that this appointment should be cancelled.³ Trevelyan was fairly satisfied with these arrangements, although he later became more guarded about them. When he was being questioned in 1854 by the Select Committee on the Army before Sebastopol, he was not being perfectly truthful when he denied that he would only employ gentlemen connected with the Treasury or the Commissariat.⁴ Although he had no reason to be ashamed, Trevelyan had come by this time to commit himself to the merits of open competition and he naturally had no wish to draw attention to the

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- 1 Trevelyan to McClean, 15 December 1853, T.L.B., XXX, p.124.
 - 2 Memorandum of 12 January 1853, P.R.O., W.O. 61/3 p. 201.
 - 3 Trevelyan to Bowers, 3 February 1854, T.L.B., XXXII, pp. 273-275. For other examples of Trevelyan's small-scale patronage, see T.L.B., III, p. 2; VI, pp. 84, 207.
 - 4 Evidence of 20 April 1855, P.P., 1854-55, IX (ii), p. 92. He emphasized that the employment of centrally recruited staff gave the Treasury greater control over commercial operations, since - unlike locally recruited personnel - they were entirely dependent on the Treasury for their future prospects.

close patronage he had once hoped to exercise.

Trevelyan did have misgivings about the educational attainments of the young men who were appointed. His misgivings were tempered by the satisfaction he felt in making the system work as well as it could. With the benefit of fourteen years' experience he described in 1855 to the Select Committee on the Army before Sebastopol how he had succeeded in eliminating the worst candidates nominated by the Patronage Secretary. He felt that public money would have been saved if instead he had been in a position to select the best. The methods that Trevelyan actually used were quite simple: he "screwed up" the qualifying examination as much as he could, and he insisted that the period of probation should be really meaningful. Trevelyan went on to report that a considerable number had been "weeded out" for lack of application or ability: "Whether it was their fault or not, we removed them from the department, sometimes allowing them a few months' pay."¹ This is shown in more detail in the sparse record of clerks' progress that Trevelyan kept at the end of the Promotion Memorandum Book. The list starts in 1840 and ends in June 1854 - it appears not to have been continued after its transfer to the War Office - and contains about 200 names. Most clerks were appointed D.A.C.G. after three years, and against their names Trevelyan sometimes wrote "bene" or "optime". A few took much longer, and against one clerk who was six years in this rank he wrote: "Will become a good officer in time if put under a strict officer". Against another who took seven years, he put: "Will never make a good officer - devoted to his pleasures - has received a very limited education - orthography bad". During this fourteen year

1 Evidence of 18 April 1855, Ibid., p. 74.

period, there were ten dismissals (one the result of a sentence of transportation after a conviction for fraud), compared with 104 promotions and nine deaths or resignations.¹ Compared with the purely nominal system of probation for Treasury clerks, this was an impressive record.

Despite his dissatisfaction with the quality of some new entrants, Trevelyan appeared so pleased with his own achievements in organizing the department, that it was inevitable that the Select Committee on the Army before Sebastopol should question him as to why the Commissariat had not been more successful in the Crimea. Trevelyan stoutly denied that the Commissariat had failed, but here he hinged his explanation upon the need for better selection: "the quality of a manufactured article depends mainly upon the raw material, and unless you have a high standard of raw material you cannot have a first-rate article."² Trevelyan's experience of controlling the Commissariat increasingly made him regard personnel management as a comparatively simple mechanical process.

C Personnel Management

Although Trevelyan had immense faith in administrative systems, he took delight in personally supervising the work of Commissariat officers. In this, as in all other business connected with the Commissariat, he relied heavily upon Archer, Chief Clerk of the Commissariat Department.³

1 P.R.O., W.O. 61/3, unpaginated at end.

2 P.P., 1854-55, IX (ii), p.75.

3 Archer was equally concerned with improving the Commissariat department of the Treasury. In his memorandum of 10 December 1847, he pointed out that the volume of business had expanded from 5880 letters in 1845 to 7600 letters in 1847. He also hoped that Trevelyan would do something to improve the status and prospects of the clerks (P.R.O., W.O. 61/3, pp. 126-127). This plea was partially answered by the reorganization of 1848 - one which paralleled the changes in the rest of the Treasury in that it freed senior officers from routine work and improved salaries (Treasury Minute of 29 June 1854, P.P., 1854, XXVII, pp. 47-49).

Both men were in agreement over the principles to be adopted in order to exclude the grossly incompetent and the chronically sick. In his memorandum for 1848, for example, Archer suggested that four men who had served between thirty-four and thirty-eight years should be promoted to A.C.G., and then prematurely retired on half-pay. He justified the expense "by the superior efficiency and the benefit to be derived from the intelligence and activity of the rising officers".¹ Trevelyan readily accepted this involved manoeuvre, which alone made possible the retirement of old officers by ensuring them an adequate income.

Trevelyan was convinced of the need for positive incentives. With the new method of making promotions, he was in a good position to balance the principles of hope and fear: "Every young commissary looks to become a commissary general, and he knows that all his prospects in life depend on his merit, and that on every occasion of a promotion his conduct will be severely scrutinized, and he is, therefore, exceedingly anxious to keep well with the Treasury. You do not have that advantage in the Ordnance Civil Service, or in the case of the regimental paymasters."² In his day-to-day letters to Commissariat officers, Trevelyan made sure that this situation would never be long forgotten. He sometimes adopted an intimate tone, so as to be better able to chide and exhort in the same breath. In 1841 for example, in appointing an officer to be in charge of a station he observed that Baring was satisfied that he had selected an officer of "unimpeached honour and integrity, animated by a genuine zeal for the public interest and possessed of an extensive knowledge of the profession", while at the same time reminding that only highly successful service had eradicated an earlier unfavourable impression

1 Commissariat Promotion Memorandum Book, P.R.O., W.O. 61/3, pp. 57, 77.

2 Select Committee on Army and Ordnance Expenditure, Trevelyan's evidence of 10 May 1850, P.P., 1850, X, pp. 457-459.

of his "temper and discretion". Trevelyan concluded with the hope that the recipient would never have to forfeit his post, together with his personal congratulations.¹

This tone was most common in letters written in the early 1840s when Trevelyan had fewer other tasks to distract him from the management of the Commissariat, and when he doubtless felt that many officers needed guidance in the ways of the revitalized Commissariat. When an A.C.G.'s allowance was doubled, Trevelyan was not above suggesting that this should not be the occasion for extravagance, but rather that the officer should adopt "such a moderate and economical style of living as will furnish a guarantee for the prudent and independent discharge of his public trust - to which object and not to that of vying with persons whose main ground of distinction consists in their wealth, his ambition ought to be directed."² On another occasion, he replied to a request for more pay on account of an increased volume of work, by suggesting that the officer ought to feel glad that he had an opportunity to reveal his merits as a claim for future promotion.³ To an officer being transferred from the Ionian Islands to China in 1843, he remarked that he would be doing him an injustice if he stressed that it was his duty to accept without question a less favourable station.⁴ To another who complained of feeling unwell during the Irish emergency, Trevelyan said nothing beyond assuring him that his personal sacrifice was in a good cause.⁵ Sometimes

1 Trevelyan to Knowles, 21 January 1841, T.L.B., I, p.19.

2 Trevelyan to A.C.G. Stickney, 13 May 1841, Ibid., p.51.

3 Trevelyan to A.C.G. Bowers, 14 July 1841, Ibid., p.61.

4 Trevelyan to Foote, 22 March 1843, T.L.B., II, p.171.

5 Trevelyan to Hewetson, 27 January 1847, P.P., 1847, LII, p.371.

Trevelyan's rather paternalistic interest was more constructive. One instance of this was the efforts he made in 1842 to ensure that the son of A.C.G. Maclean should be able to go to Sandhurst on the same favourable terms that were available to the sons of military officers. Of course, he was equally concerned to secure implicit recognition of the improved status he was seeking for the Commissariat.¹

Whatever Commissariat officers thought about Trevelyan's advice and encouragement, they had little chance to express their feelings. Separated from each other by the distance of their stations and with no prospect of home service, the Treasury as personified by Trevelyan was their only link. Certainly Trevelyan appreciated their efforts, even if he usually presented an austere front to them. When he finally surrendered control of the Commissariat, Trevelyan wrote to one junior officer, thanking the officers as a whole for the support they had given him over the years. For his part, he felt that he was leaving "the system in a more advanced state and the position and the general estimation of the officers better than I found them".² This was borne out by the testimony of two Commissariat officers before a departmental committee in 1858. They admitted that the Assistant Secretary's methods were fairer and more intelligible than the lack of method that characterized administration by the War Office. Fishing for compliments, Trevelyan asked one A.C.G. at this inquiry whether Commissariat officers had ever had to appeal to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The reply was extremely gratifying: "No, we never found it necessary to appeal, because the Assistant Secretary had sufficient power, and invariably investigated personally every complaint. The officers of the department had such confidence in his justice and sympathy that they never wished to appeal after his decisions."³

1 Trevelyan to A.C.G. Maclean, 8 October 1842, T.L.B., II, p.116.

2 Trevelyan to A.D.C.G. Smith, 8 December 1854, T.L.B., XXXV, p. 253.

3 Evidence of A.C.G. Watt on 6 July 1858 in answer to a question by

D Training and Professionalism

Practical involvement in the details of promotion, appointment and day-to-day management led Trevelyan to consider such general issues as training and professional status. He elaborated his views in the memoranda he prepared in 1850 for submission to the Select Committee on Army Expenditure. In his memorandum on training he was anxious that the Commissariat should be placed on a sound permanent footing, rather than wait until a war emergency forced the Treasury to appoint temporary staff. Wartime waste and profusion could only be prevented by sound professional habits - habits which in turn could only be acquired by prolonged training. Indeed, this training, linked with experience, was the only effective safeguard for the public against the unscrupulousness of businessmen. Proof of the need for this degree of professionalism was, he felt, to be found in the inefficiency of the Indian Commissariat caused by the secondment of officers from the army. Furthermore Commissariat officers needed to possess "the highest mental and moral qualities" - qualities of the kind that Trevelyan later prescribed for "intellectual" Civil Servants.¹ Both for the Commissariat and for the Civil Service as a whole Trevelyan advocated

1 "Memorandum by Sir C.E. Trevelyan on the Training of Commissariat Officers for Active Service", 1 May 1850, P.P., 1850, pp. 1057-58.

Trevelyan, War Office Committee on the Commissariat, P.P., 1859, XV, p.253. This view was shared by A.C.G. Fonblanque (Ibid., p. 247).

a special kind of professionalism that could not safely be imported, but could only be produced by training in the service.

Trevelyan realized that the Commissariat needed a home tour of duty to help make it more truly professional. Service in England with the army could obviously accustom military and Commissariat to co-operate - something that would otherwise have to be learnt during a campaign. Home service would also remove the grievance that arose from officers being destined to a lifetime overseas.¹ In September 1848, Trevelyan suggested to Russell, that the Commissariat's proven usefulness in Ireland should lead to a permanent establishment in England and, indeed, to an extension of the Commissariat's functions.² Although Russell ignored Trevelyan's immediate proposal for a special committee to explore these possibilities, the economical crisis of February 1848 (the same crisis that sparked off the investigation of the Civil Service) led to a detailed examination of the Commissariat. Trevelyan found himself in a strong position as the main witness for the Commissariat before the Select Committee on Army and Ordnance Expenditure. For the benefit of this Committee, Trevelyan produced a further memorandum, in which he pointed out that the morale of the Commissariat had been undermined by uncertainty about the various schemes for dismembering the department which had been considered at one time or another. Between 1838 and 1846 there had been no home tour of duty, except during emergencies, and the Commissariat's work had been performed by the Ordnance. In this respect Trevelyan claimed that the Commissariat had

1 Trevelyan vigorously defended the few perquisites open to Commissariat officers. One of these was an extra step in rank as a reward for those who had served in the notoriously unhealthy West African stations. On the grounds of justice and necessary incentive, he resisted an attempt by W.G. Hayter to interfere with this arrangement (Trevelyan to Hayter, October 1851, T.L.B., XXVII, p. 266).

2 Trevelyan to Russell, 23 September 1848, T.L.B., XXII, p. 259.

been used as a mere convenience, without any regard for the feelings and just claims of the officers. He described with enthusiasm the efficient way in which the Commissariat had provided for the forces assembled at Manchester and Liverpool at the time of the Chartist crisis, but concluded: "Yet, as soon as the restoration of tranquillity rendered it possible for these duties to be performed by other departments, it was proposed that the Commissariat, which had borne the burthen and heat of the day, should be laid aside and sent back to their work in the colonies, in favour of those departments."¹

Apart from the justice of providing a home tour, Trevelyan was convinced that the Commissariat could extend its duties to public advantage, particularly in the supervision of contracts. In another memorandum produced at this time, he asserted that: "With the help of railroads, a deputy commissary-general acting under the eye of the Treasury, with one or two officers of inferior rank, would be able to form and superintend the execution of all the commissariat contracts in Great Britain, and might give much valuable assistance in regard to the prison and police contracts; and these with the commissariat officers serving in Ireland, would if war broke out, furnish a disposable body of experienced officers whose agency might be of the highest national use."² A Commissariat establishment in England could, therefore, begin to form part of a machine for financial supervision.

Trevelyan's view of professionalism was a paradoxical one; his desire to improve the status of Commissariat officers was partly

1 "Memorandum on the claims of the Commissariat Department to a Tour of Home Service", 16 May 1850, P.P., 1850, X, p.1059.

2 "Commissariat Duties in Great Britain", submitted to the Committee on 14 May 1850, Ibid., p. 503.

contradicted by his faith in the regulations that were to guide all their actions. This faith was shared by most Commissariat officers, and it was constantly renewed by Trevelyan's references to "regularity". Moreover, Trevelyan felt that it was one of his main tasks to improve these regulations by making them more comprehensive and consistent. He made use of the most senior serving officer, C.G. Randolph Routh, on his return from Canada in 1843. Routh was first employed on rearranging accounts, and then on the simplification and clarification of Commissariat regulations.¹ Both Trevelyan and Routh believed that if rules were made consistent and readily intelligible, it would be possible to command absolute obedience to them. The editions of the Commissariat Code which appeared under Trevelyan's signature in 1845, 1851 and 1852 replaced an obsolete book of regulations and a great number of circulars. This compilation was comprehensive; it ranged from rules governing first appointments to the provisioning of an army in the field. Seventeen numbered forms at the back were designed to ensure uniformity in accounting. With Trevelyan's encouragement, Sir John Bissett, a retired officer with experience in the Napoleonic wars, produced a more general and practical guide.² His manual, Commissariat Field Service, was intended to instruct young Commissariat officers and it dealt with most practical matters from the purchase of a personal outfit to the layout of stores and depots. Trevelyan was confident of the improved system that these manuals betokened, and he was impatient with those who were unacquainted with it. For example, when he was questioned by the Sebastopol Committee on whether a requisition had been delayed because a signature was an inch too low on the form,

1 Ibid., p. 1078.

2 Trevelyan to Bissett, 4 June 1846, T.L.B., VII, p. 24.

he replied that the Commissariat officer concerned frequently had reason to complain of the irregularity with which the ration returns had been made out, but denied the truth of this specific incident.¹ However, he realized that the outcry in The Times against bureaucratic methods in the Crimea could not be lightly dismissed. In answer to criticisms that urgent medical supplies had been refused for want of a requisition, he suggested in a letter to Lord Panmure, Secretary for War in Palmerston's cabinet, that there ought to be special regulations for such emergencies. He admitted that the best security against serious irregularity was "a correct state of feeling" rather than "positive regulation".² However good the rules devised under his own aegis, Trevelyan could not safely deny the exercise of professional discretion. Indeed, he stressed in his later evidence that the Treasury's regulations combined "a provision for departing from our system, and making an exception from it but still preserving the responsibility and check."³

3 Staff Reductions

While Trevelyan was concerned to organize the Commissariat as a career service, he had a more immediate and pressing responsibility to ensure economy, by keeping the establishment as small as possible. This applied to locally recruited subordinate staff as well as to the officers appointed by the Treasury. It was obviously difficult to reconcile staff reductions with the variable demand for men to serve in stations where military action was taking place. For example, in March 1844 Trevelyan wrote a circular letter to all Commissariat officers in charge of stations, informing them that he was awaiting with anxiety

1 Evidence of 17 April 1855, P.P., 1854-55, IX, (ii), p.29.

2 February 1855, T.L.B., XXXV, p. 96.

3 P.P., 1854-55, IX (ii), p. 109.

news of the reductions that they were to make, and ordering them to take extra care in preparing their estimates and in explaining any increases.¹ However, in the following year Trevelyan was hard pressed to find sufficient officers for additional responsibilities in the Gold Coast, South Australia, New Zealand and China. At this stage he recognized the difficulties and potential dangers inherent in such slender staff margins. Yet his main fears were of wastefulness rather than inefficient organization, should it at some stage become necessary to provide Commissariat services on the scale of the Peninsular campaigns. He never envisaged that the Commissariat could ever fail to provision an army, but he felt that a large scale war would lead to hurriedly appointed staff, and consequently to slack contracting of the kind that had characterized the early stages of the Peninsular War.² This essentially traditional view of military requirements was typical of this period. But Trevelyan at least felt that the new Commissariat officers who were being appointed had acquired significance in constituting a nucleus of leadership in such an eventuality. This idea of a comparatively small élite finds its parallel in later consideration of the division of labour in the Civil Service.

In 1846, such a nucleus had to be hurriedly gathered together to supervise famine relief in Ireland. One of the special functions of the permanent staff involved was to imbue their temporarily recruited colleagues with an appropriate sense of economy. In this operation, Trevelyan had in Sir Randolph Routh someone who was acutely conscious of the Treasury's concern for economy. The whole of the relief

1 T.L.B., III, p.193.

2 Commissariat Memorandum, 15 December 1845, P.R.O., W.O. 61/3 p.57.

operation was conceived within the traditional framework of contract and carefully accounted-for distribution. In his endeavour that all government interference, whatever its form, should be kept within the "narrowest possible limits", Trevelyan wore himself out in controlling matters of minute detail from London. Here the efficient working of the Commissariat was confused with Trevelyan's zeal to extend and to develop the Treasury's supervision; a confusion that arose from the Commissariat being both an executive and supervisory department within the Treasury.

By 1848, however, reduced military commitments in China, Australia and Africa and the end of Irish relief operations led Trevelyan to feel that at last his staff was large enough. For the next five years no new appointments needed to be made. This was most convenient, since the economical Select Committee of 1848 resulted in pressure for reductions in the Commissariat, as it did in the whole Civil Service. In October 1849, Trevelyan sent a Treasury circular letter to officers in charge of stations asking them to describe in detail the duties of their staff. In particular, economies were expected to be achieved by the reduction of temporary staff and by the curtailment of every aspect of Commissariat business, including the volume of correspondence.¹ It was soon apparent from the replies that spectacular reductions would be impossible. At Gibraltar, for example, it was reported that the subordinate staff of ten persons were constantly employed and yet were barely able to complete the work of the station.² In Canada, one of the largest and most important stations, C.G. Filder agreed to reduce his staff from thirty-eight to thirty-five, but observed that if the troops were ever ordered to move from their depots,

1 Appendix to the Report and Proceedings from the Select Committee on Army and Ordnance Expenditure, P.P., 1850, X, p.1080.

2 Ibid., p.1087.

he would not have an officer to spare for field service.¹ Even in Canada, with the perennial risk of insurrection, the Commissariat was placed on a static basis.

By 1850 Trevelyan was able to report in his annual memorandum a saving of £9,000, while claiming that the Commissariat was still equal to its existing tasks.² When he gave an overall picture of Commissariat costs to the Select Committee on Army and Ordnance Expenditure, Trevelyan produced a memorandum to show that although the volume of business had increased since 1840 and that there were twenty-seven more full-pay officers, a reduction of forty-two in the half-pay list had resulted in a proportionate saving of £5,040.³ In effecting these small-scale economies Trevelyan was faithfully performing an assignment set him by his political superiors; he was not expected by them to take the initiative in suggesting constructive improvements. Consequently Trevelyan never pressed strongly for a reserve of staff to meet emergencies.

Even during the Crimean War, when the Commissariat was about to be taken from his control, Trevelyan was planning staff reductions. He was mistakenly convinced that Sebastopol would fall before the end of 1854 and that consequently the war would soon be over. He wrote to C.G. Filder on 2 September 1854 to tell him that his Commissariat establishment had seldom been equalled for its extent, efficiency and condition. However, he went on to ask him to prepare his half-yearly statement of the establishment with special care, and to begin to reduce the establishment by sending less efficient officers home.⁴

1 Filder to Trevelyan, 4 May 1849, *Ibid.*, p.1080.

2 P.R.O., W.O. 61/3 pp. 138-144

3 Appendix, Commissariat Promotions, 1 May 1850, P.P., 1850, X, pp. 1106-10.

4 T.L.B., XXXIV, p.208.

4 The Commissariat in Action

Trevelyan's perennial concern for economy makes a good starting point for examining the way that the Commissariat actually worked. To a greater or lesser degree, considerations of economy permeate all the aspects that are to be considered: the operation of the Commissariat Chests; African campaigns; the Irish emergency; the transfer of the Commissariat to the War Office; and the Crimean campaign.

A The Commissariat Chests

Just before Trevelyan came to the Treasury, the Army Extraordinaries fund was subjected to a much needed and urgent review. The next eight years were devoted to keeping the balances in order. From his evidence to the Select Committee on Army and Ordnance Expenditure, it seems that in 1839 the fund had been about two million pounds in debt to the army grants. But when the accounts were eventually made up, it became apparent that large sums raised by the sale of Treasury bills abroad had never been repaid from the army grants. In fact there was a favourable balance of £1,260,000. Trevelyan was proud of this discovery as it demonstrated the honesty of the Treasury: "And it is due to the Treasury to say that this result has been worked out by the Executive Government without any pressure from Parliament, and without its being even known that there was such a balance at the disposal of Parliament."¹ To prevent this situation from arising again, the fund was renamed in 1840 the Commissariat Chest Account, and formally established as a rigorously managed fund.²

1 Evidence of 10 May 1850, X, p.450.

2 Treasury Minute of 1840 quoted by Trevelyan, Ibid, pp. 471-472.

What had started as an accountant's problem, Trevelyan turned into a scheme of immediately practicable Treasury control. He realized that the accounts had become confused and overdrawn in the past because Commissariat officers had not been strictly enough controlled in these operations. He ordered that in future the balances held in each Commissariat Chest should be limited by regulation.¹ Trevelyan pestered Commissariat officers to keep their accounts up-to-date and insisted that smaller balances should be kept in the Chests in order to have more funds available in England for the redemption of bills drawn against the Treasury. Trevelyan's letter books indicate his persistence in reducing balances at each station to an average of two months' expenditure.² He reminded one officer that if everyone wanted a larger balance, heavier taxation would be needed.³ This kind of pressure seems to have worked, in that balances in the Chests were reduced from £1,350,000 in 1840 to £470,000 in 1850. This was in part due to the improved system of estimates, according to which the department that provided a given service had to account for its own expenditure. Under this new system from 1843 onwards, the Commissariat prepared estimates for the services it provided - provisions, forage, fuel and light. Thus, the Treasury had influence as an executive department as well as through its supervisory function in keeping expenditure within accustomed limits. By 1850 Trevelyan realized that further reductions would be impossible, when he showed in a written statement that by his careful management total Commissariat balances were £29,715 within the limit of an average of two months' expenditure.⁴

1 Ibid., pp. 451-452.

2 Circular letter to Commissaries, 8 December 1840, T.L.B., I, p.15; Trevelyan to Knowles, 5 November 1841, Ibid., p.74. By 1849 the average Chest balance was $2\frac{10}{24}$ months' expenditure (Appendix to the Report of the Select Committee on Army and Ordnance Expenditure, P.P., 1850, X, p.1130).

3 Trevelyan to D.C.G. Palmer, 18 March 1841, T.L.B., I, p.32.

4 Appendix, 14 May 1850, P.P., 1850, X, pp. 1128-31.

Trevelyan's attitudes were partly formed and also mirrored by those of an experienced officer like C.G. Randolph Routh. He was one of those officers whose experience was embodied in the revision of Commissariat regulations. He also produced a manual which described double-entry book-keeping as "a copious index of our affairs". Like Trevelyan, he put the financial responsibilities of the Commissariat first: "The Commissariat is essentially a Financial Department, and its other duties grow out of the position in which the former are exercised; the first is the principal operation and the second consequent on it, to meet the convenience and necessities of the service that require them to be united. The Public have an interest in this liaison, because the whole expenditure passes undividedly under the review of the Board of Audit, and secures an impartial examination and report."¹ The Commissariat was, therefore, an outpost of Treasury influence - an outpost that Trevelyan was very reluctant to abandon, even where it could be shown that its maintenance was very costly. For example, it was suggested by the Select Committee on Army and Ordnance Expenditure that the annual cost of the Commissariat establishment in the Bahamas was £900 as compared with an average Chest balance of £400, it would be better to close the establishment and allow the governor to manage the funds in the Chest. Normally Trevelyan would have welcomed any small saving, but here he reacted strongly against the proposal: "The first objection would be that he is not an officer of the Treasury, and would not be under our control; and I conceive that for the safe custody and due and economical management of the public monies abroad, it is absolutely necessary that we should have our own officers."² His particular objection to such an

1 R.I. Routh, Observations on Commissariat Field Service and Home Defences (2nd. ed. 1852), p. 127.

2 Evidence of 10 May 1850, P.P., 1850, X, p. 453.

arrangement was that governors would be unable to resist colonial pressure for unauthorized expenditure, and that this would in turn lead to the inflation of balances. Trevelyan's solution to the problem of small Commissariat establishments was to suggest additional duties for them. In a memorandum he proposed that the Commissariat should undertake the work of the Navy Victualling Agents in small stations like the Bahamas. This arrangement had been shown to work where naval vessels called infrequently, as at Bermuda, St. Helena, Sierra Leone and Sydney; it would save salaries, ensure larger and more economical contracts, and spare the Admiralty the task of attempting to find men of sufficient integrity and ability to act as its agents.¹ This logical development of extending Commissariat, and implicitly Treasury, influence never materialized.

The actual management of the Commissariat Chests was simple yet effective. Depending on the monetary resources of the station, funds were either raised locally by bills drawn on the Treasury or by the proceeds of Crown receipts, or by imports of specie. This specie was shipped from England, except in the case of stations in the Americas which were kept supplied by a special establishment in Mexico.² These funds, forming the working cash balances, were stored in the Chests or strongboxes, for colonial banks were as suspect as colonial governors. Quite apart from the possibility of failure, Trevelyan felt that there would be pressure on the Commissariat to preserve the banks' solvency at those times of crisis when funds would be required for military preparations.³ The actual physical control of the money by the officer in charge (he had one key to the Chest and his subordinate another) put the Treasury in a strong position. In his evidence in 1850, Trevelyan

1 Memorandum dated 19 June 1850, Ibid., pp. 1144-45.

2 Ibid., p. 472.

3 Ibid., p. 453.

described how the banking and supply sides had come to be inextricably intertwined in the persons of the Commissariat officers, and how this development reinforced Treasury influence at local level - in that Commissariat officers could only depart from established financial regulations with the permission of the Treasury. In effect the Commissariat was "the executive of the Treasury in reference to the greater part of the military and colonial expenditure".¹ Trevelyan's elaboration and defence of this watchdog rôle was a sound strategy to adopt before an economical Select Committee. The Committee's report never for a moment questioned the rightness of the Treasury's control of the Commissariat.

B Field Service in Africa, 1846-47 and 1851

Bearing in mind Trevelyan's claims about the flexibility of financial control, it is interesting to consider how the Commissariat actually worked during a small-scale war. Between the Peninsular and Crimean Wars virtually all Commissariat field-service took place in stations where the officers were reasonably familiar with the country and were accustomed to supplying the troops of their station. Only in Canada and in Cape Colony did the scale of military operations call for the rapid recruitment of extra staff and for the solution of unprecedented problems. At the Cape the Commissariat's methods showed dangerous signs of weakness.

Even Trevelyan had to admit in 1850 that the Kaffir War of 1846-7 showed that the accountancy-orientated Commissariat was inadequate in an unconventional and highly dispersed campaign:

1 Ibid., p. 509.

It was not equal to the exigency of a levy en masse over the whole colony. The pressure upon the department at the frontier was extreme; perhaps a 100 posts and detachments had to be provided with money and provisions and the ordinary establishment of the commissariat was quite insufficient for the purpose; it was only by appointing a number of people who were not thoroughly competent, and had not been trained, but who were the best to be had, that the establishment was made sufficient for the service on the frontier, and it necessarily follows that it could not be equal to the arrangements for carrying on the equipment of the burgher force in every village of the colony.¹

These emergency arrangements even led to accusations by the governor of the Cape, Sir Henry Pottinger, of serious financial laxity. When he contrasted this with the stricter methods employed in the Indian Civil Service, Trevelyan found himself defending flexibility against regularity in a situation where the dispersed nature of operations called for speedy local decisions about pay and rations.²

The Select Committee remained critical of the Commissariat's handling of the campaign. The Commissariat's attention to the wants of an army in the field was rewarded by a reproach that the Board of Audit had complained of slowness in the submission of authorities for most of this extraordinary expenditure. Trevelyan himself was criticised for having recommended the promotion of the officer with overall responsibility, C.G. Palmer. Trevelyan defended himself by saying that only after all the accounts had been completed would it be possible to question the competence of Palmer.

1 Evidence of 10 May 1850, P.P., 1850, X, p.478.

2 Ibid., p.479.

3 Ibid., p.480.

Practical as well as financial difficulties were experienced in the Kaffir war. Most of these were concerned with transport: the provision of transport animals in drought conditions and the replacement of losses caused by native depredations. It was only as a result of hard experience that Commissariat officers took to using mules fed on corn in place of oxen. In his evidence in 1850 one of the officers involved, D.C.G. Watt, denied the feasibility of prior experiment on the grounds that this would have been even more wasteful. Such a lack of detailed guidance and planning was symptomatic of the professional Commissariat attitude. This attitude was also illustrated by the same officer's observation that despite the peculiar local difficulties of the Kaffir wars, the experience of a commissary in Canada in peace-time would be relevant and useful in such a situation. After all, he would be conversant with the regulations, and he would also be able to apply his skills in accountancy.¹

Criticism of Commissariat vigilance made Trevelyan even more concerned than usual with economy in the Kaffir campaign of 1851. Not only did he enjoin economy in general terms to the officer in charge, but he even suggested that a substantial saving of 12/- per 100 lb. could be made if biscuit were purchased in London.² Concern for detail of this kind could do nothing to perfect the Commissariat as part of a military machine. At no stage did anyone suggest that Trevelyan should do anything more than provide an acceptable service at the lowest possible cost. Indeed despite its preoccupation with accounts, the Commissariat was not criticised by military officers. According to Fox Maule, Secretary at War in 1850, the Commissariat in

1 Evidence of 18 June 1850, *Ibid.*, p.706.

2 Treasury Minute, 7 March 1851, P.R.O., T.1/5641B/5052.

its existing form was accepted as an essential part of army organization.¹ Only Trevelyan's hints indicated that the permanent staff was set at a dangerous minimum; and these hints were not seriously regarded, since Trevelyan had at the same time to substantiate his claim to sustained Treasury vigilance. Although it is difficult to imagine any administration in the 1840s and 1850s devoting money to military refinements, Trevelyan's concern for accountability produced an impression that the Commissariat would always be adequate for performing its supervisory functions, whatever the scale of military operations. This was an impression that Trevelyan helped to confirm when he boasted to Lord Hardinge in December 1852 that the Commissariat was, as a result of the fair treatment that it had received at the hands of the Treasury, "never in a more efficient state".²

C Operations in Ireland, 1845-47

The Irish potato famine gave the Commissariat a chance to undertake a much larger supply operation than anything attempted since the Peninsular War. As a government department that possessed experience of buying and distributing food in bulk, only the Commissariat was able to implement Peel's initial decision to buy Indian Corn and to keep it in reserve as a price control.³ Through his overall responsibility for the Commissariat, Trevelyan became involved in what started as a limited, almost commercial, operation, and which progressively

1 Evidence of 22 February 1850, P.P., 1850, X, p.18.

2 Trevelyan to Hardinge, 12 December 1852, T.L.B., XXX, p.103.

3 There had been numerous Irish potato famines from the eighteenth century onwards. On these occasions, the resulting distress had been mainly relieved by charitable efforts, although with some government assistance. Peel's relief plan was in part original. As he did not wish to interfere with the principle of free trade in cereals, Peel had decided to spend £100,000 on Indian corn - a cereal that was both extremely cheap and also unknown on the English market. Peel hoped, therefore, that his action would not compete with any established trade, while at the same time serving to deter any excessive rise in corn prices. (C. Woodham Smith, The Great Hunger, 1962, pp. 38, 55.)

became extended to include supervision of the Irish Board of Works and the Irish Poor Law. Since the Commissariat provided the nucleus of Trevelyan's supervisory personnel for much of the emergency, it is appropriate to consider his involvement in Irish affairs as an aspect of his work with the Commissariat.

Aware of the disastrous consequences of the blight of the potato crop in the autumn of 1845, Peel ordered the establishment of a Relief Commission in Dublin. Set up in November, its objects were fourfold: the encouragement of local relief committees to buy food and to provide work; the organization by the Irish Board of Works of road-building works; the establishment of fever hospitals; and the sale of Indian corn whenever it proved necessary to force down prices.¹ Trevelyan immediately became concerned with the last operation through the appointment of C.G. Sir Randolph Routh, a senior and distinguished Commissariat officer, to be in charge of it. Trevelyan was convinced that Routh, with his extensive experience in the Peninsula and in Canada, was the best man to be put in charge of an extensive emergency feeding operation.²

Although the greatest reliance had originally been placed on those parts of the plan that called for local initiative and for the effectiveness of public works in providing employment, it soon became apparent that the actual provision of food was going to be the most important factor in actually averting famine. Thus, the Commissariat's supervision of Indian corn supplies became a central feature of relief operations. The Commissariat, and therefore Trevelyan, became preoccupied with the multifarious problems of milling the grain, establishing depôts and distributing meal by selling it to local relief committees. Trevelyan,

1 Ibid., pp. 61-62. The main narrative throughout this section is derived from this source.

2 Trevelyan to Freemantle, 28 November 1845, T.L.B., V, quoted in Ibid., p.57.

always suspicious of any extension of government interference, was not at all sympathetic to this development: throughout the emergency he preferred to improve the Commissariat's financial control, rather than exploit the opportunity for large-scale operations to develop the Commissariat's supply organization. However, the change of emphasis in the relief operations did bring Trevelyan one advantage: the Relief Commission was remodelled in February 1846 with Routh as its chairman. Consequently, Trevelyan became the leading official in England concerned with relief. Trevelyan was, moreover, certain that his views on the need for close control of Commissariat operations coincided with those of the government. In January, he had remarked to Routh: "I have formed decided opinions as to the course which ought to be pursued in reference to the Relief of Distress in Ireland, and have no reason to suppose that my opinions on this subject differ from those which are entertained by the Government."¹ Routh's deference to Treasury opinion was never in question, but Trevelyan was not loth to emphasize his exceptionally favourable standing in the matter. Not content to establish principles, Trevelyan endeavoured to prescribe many of the details in setting up Commissariat depôts, and Routh had to insist quite forcefully that he should be allowed some discretion.²

With Routh as the Treasury's representative in Dublin, depôts were established at Cork and Limerick, each under the command of a D.C.G. At Cork, supplies of Indian corn were received and processed.

1 Trevelyan to Routh, 22 January 1846, P.R.O., W.O. 63/132. In fact, Peel had a low opinion of Trevelyan's judgment in Irish matters. In 1843, following a private visit to Ireland, Trevelyan had made a personal and confidential report on the state of the country to Peel and Graham, but had then proceeded to publish the substance of this pseudonymously. Since he suggested that rebellion was imminent, this was not merely discourteous but politically dangerous. Furthermore, it was evident from the far-fetched details which he repeated that Trevelyan lacked both discrimination and a sense of humour (Woodham Smith, pp. 60-61; letter by "Philalethes", The Morning Chronicle, 14 October 1843, p. 3 and col. c, contd. 16 October 1843, p. 3 col. c).

2 Routh to Trevelyan, 22 February 1846, P.R.O., W.O. 63/132.

Limerick was intended to be a centre that was more accessible to the most distressed areas in the South and West. Sub-depôts, eventually numbering seventeen, were also established under the command of Commissariat officers or clerks.¹ Trevelyan's involvement was in large measure possible because of the copious written explanations expected from Routh, as indeed they were expected from most Commissariat officers. Even when heavily burdened with work, as in April 1846, Routh deferentially apologised for the brevity of some of his letters: "You will see that I am not idle, and if I am not always so full in my explanations as you wish, you must remind me of my omissions."² Trevelyan, furnished with these explanations and safely insulated from the realities of the situation in Ireland, busied himself with the minutiae that arose from the difficulties in preparing and gaining acceptance for a totally new kind of food. For example, Trevelyan's deeply implanted faith in printed instructions extended to the Irish peasantry: he suggested to Routh that a printed half sheet of paper was all that was needed as a guide to cooking corn meal.³ The extent of Trevelyan's own involvement was to conduct experiments on himself and his family in eating corn meal bread. However, he doubted the need for experiment if its findings were likely to lead to increased expenditure. Thus, when the digestibility of Indian corn meal was discussed, he settled the matter a priori: "I cannot believe that it will be necessary to grind the Indian corn twice - we must not aim at giving more than wholesome food. It would do permanent harm to make dependence on public charity an agreeable mode

1 P.P., 1847, LI, p.24; Trevelyan to Routh, 18 March 1846, T.L.B., VI, p.115.

2 Routh to Trevelyan, 4 April 1846, P.R.O., W.O. 63/132.

3 Trevelyan to Routh, 7 February 1846, T.L.B., VI, p.13.

of life."¹ Instead self help was the keynote of Trevelyan's efforts to encourage the manufacture and use of hand mills as a means of increasing Ireland's inadequate milling capacity.²

It was starvation, rather than Trevelyan's and Routh's efforts at popularizing Indian corn meal, that was the cause of the tremendous demand for meal when Trevelyan ordered the depôts to start selling it to relief committees on 15 May 1846. Both Peel and Trevelyan were taken unawares, since they had expected that only limited supplies would be needed in order to keep down prices until the next potato harvest. The run on the meal made Trevelyan even more determined that corn meal sales should constitute a single finite operation. When the facts reported from Ireland appeared to demand a totally different approach, Trevelyan refused to modify his original policy. He attributed the excessive demand for meal to the impossibility of distinguishing between ordinary endemic destitution and the exceptional hardship resulting from the potato failure. Since it was impossible to make this distinction, Trevelyan was anxious that the depôts should be closed as soon as possible.³ Routh clearly understood Trevelyan's motives; he remarked in July: "Mr. Trevelyan appears to be more alarmed, than I think the event will justify, but he looks less to our wants and local complaints than to the effect which he thinks our purchases will produce on the provision trade ..."⁴

The formation of Russell's administration in July 1846, following Peel's resignation over the Corn Laws, redoubled Trevelyan's determination to end Commissariat operations for Sir Charles Wood, the new Chancellor

1 Trevelyan to Routh, 20 February 1846, *Ibid.*, p.46.

2 Trevelyan to Capt. Mann, 28 October and 9 November 1846, T.L.B., IX, pp. 50, 139.

3 Trevelyan to Routh, 25 June 1846, T.L.B., VII, quoted in Woodham Smith, p. 86.

4 Routh to D.C.G. Hewetson, 7 July 1846, P.R.O., W.O. 63/132.

of the Exchequer, completely shared Trevelyan's views on the need to limit government interference. Predictions, including Routh's, that the potato crop of 1846 would also be blighted were only further incentives for Trevelyan to disengage the government. Accordingly, Trevelyan ordered Routh to close the depôts on 15 August.¹

Trevelyan was placed in overall charge of relief operations. To prevent excessive dependence on government funds a new relief plan was set up. Under the new plan public works were to be met entirely from rates, and the provision of food was to be left to private enterprise, except in the most remote areas, where depôts were to be reopened as a last resort. To ensure that there was no departure from the new plan, Trevelyan personally attended to all Commissariat and Board of Works correspondence. In January 1847 Cardwell relayed to Peel Palmerston's acid description of the situation: "If you were to come over to the Treasury you would not know yourself. Trevelyan is First Lord, and Chancellor of the Exchequer:- has a new room with 4 private secretaries and 3 Commissariat clerks:- and the whole had been left to him."² Diligent attention to voluminous correspondence could not in itself ensure success. The confident predictions upon which the plan had been founded proved incorrect: there was an increase, not a reduction in applications for public works; demands for food did not decrease and were dramatized by heart-rending descriptions of distress.³ Nonetheless, Trevelyan remained confident that a free market would alone bring forward sufficient food at a price appropriately deterrent to prodigality. Moreover as the depôts were understocked even for limited emergency distribution, Trevelyan was

1 Routh to Trevelyan, 17 July 1846, P.R.O., W.O. 63/132; Trevelyan to Routh, 17 July 1846, T.L.B., VII, quoted in Woodham Smith, p.89.

2 Cardwell to Peel, 15 January 1847, Peel Papers, Add. MS., 40598 f. 34, quoted in C.S. Parker (ed.), Sir Robert Peel from his Private Papers (1899), II, p.481.

3 Woodham Smith, pp. 116-117.

anxious that all depôts should finally close in October 1846 - an unworkable decision that brought a furious reaction from Commissariat officers struggling to sustain a starving population in Co. Galway and Co. Mayo.¹ The evils of starvation had been exacerbated by the chaotic management of public works. Not only did it prove impossible to exact a reasonable day's work from men who were on the point of starvation, but the attraction of earning cash wages was sufficient to attract men away from cultivating their land for the following year's crops. An intelligent initiative of the Board of Works to counter this development, by enabling men to obtain relief pay as well as to work their own holdings, was promptly vetoed by Trevelyan.² As a classical political economist, Trevelyan believed that the ruin of small farmers would pave the way for larger, better-capitalized entrepreneurs.³

The tacit admission that the public works policy had failed to cope with starvation was the establishment of a third relief commission. This time it was not under Routh's chairmanship, since the object was to transfer the burden of relief to the Irish Poor Law boards, and to provide outdoor relief in the form of free soup. Public works were progressively reduced under Trevelyan's detailed and embarrassingly pedantic direction.⁴ When the Act that permitted the provision of soup expired in August 1847, Trevelyan was confident that the Commissariat depôts could be finally closed. Yet once again the failure of the potato crop - about two-thirds in 1847 - called for the retention of an emergency food supply service. Routh, despite his misgivings about

1 Ibid., pp. 138-139.

2 Ibid., p. 148.

3 Trevelyan to Col. Jones, 14 January 1847, T.L.B., XI, p. 125.

4 Jones complained to Trevelyan that he felt that he ought to be allowed some discretion in making minor appointments. (8 May 1847, P.R.O., T.64/366B.)

Trevelyan's over-simple approach, nevertheless promised to keep remaining Commissariat operations "within the narrowest possible limits".¹ The Commissariat continued to distribute food in the most remote areas until August 1848.

During this final period of Commissariat involvement, Trevelyan's main efforts were devoted to imposing upon the Irish Poor Law a doctrinaire scheme of mandatory indoor relief, despite its impracticability. To one of the severest critics of this policy, Lord Clarendon, the Lord Lieutenant, Trevelyan felt it was only necessary to cite the example of English practice: "the landowners and farmers of England have no difficulty in combining and setting to work their unemployed poor and that if Irish landowners, agents and farmers would make the trial they would find it equally easy to act in concert."² Trevelyan showed no more sympathy towards the intractable problems of the Poor Law Commission and of the Unions than he had shown earlier towards the equally difficult practical problems of the Board of Works and the Commissariat. This lack of sympathy was reinforced by Trevelyan's conviction that famine conditions were part of a necessary, if painful, economic remedy for Ireland's overpopulation. Trevelyan's harsh attitude was further confirmed by his and Sir Charles Wood's indignation at Irish ingratitude, as evidenced by minor outrages and insurrections.³

Religious sentiments served to justify Trevelyan's economic views in moral terms. For example, in a letter to D.C.G. Hewetson in January 1847 he defended the prevalence of high food prices: "Dearness is synonymous with scarcity, and is the check which God and nature have

1 Routh to Trevelyan, 27 November 1847, P.R.O., T.64/369C/2.

2 13 October 1847, T.L.B., XVII, p.76.

3 Woodham Smith, op. cit., p.375.

imposed upon a too rapid consumption of an insufficient supply of any article. ... it is hard upon the poor people that they should be deprived of the consolation of knowing that they are suffering from an infliction of God's Providence to mitigate which much has been done by the Government and by the upper classes, while nothing, as far as I am aware had been done to aggravate it, with the exception of the outrages which have been committed on the works and on the stores of food in progress on the high roads."¹ This confidence that everything that could properly be done had been done pervaded Trevelyan's apologia, The Irish Crisis. In this article in The Edinburgh Review,² later republished as a book, Trevelyan unselfconsciously revealed his pride in his own administrative rôle: "neither ancient nor modern history can furnish a parallel to the fact that upwards of three millions of persons were fed every day in the neighbourhood of their own houses by administrative arrangements emanating from and controlled by one central office."³

Trevelyan had worked exceptionally hard, although, insofar as he had controlled so many details from London, unnecessarily so. His reward was a K.B. and a donation of a year's salary. While no one questioned the knighthood, the donation caused Trevelyan acute embarrassment.

Parliament was in recess at the time the donation was made, and approval was sought for it and other donations in connection with the Irish famine as a total sum of £4,055 for civil contingencies. When this was questioned by R.B. Osborne, M.P. for Middlesex, in a debate on 14 August 1848, it became clear that £2,500 of this had been awarded to Trevelyan. To Osborne, this appeared to be a manoeuvre calculated to deprive the Commons of its right to determine public rewards.

1 6 January 1847, P.P., 1847, LI, p. 462.

2 The Edinburgh Review, LXXXVII (January 1848) pp. 229-320.

3 C.E. Trevelyan, The Irish Crisis (1848) p. 90.

Disraeli went further and attacked the donation in more personal terms: "The vote of £2,500 was surely conceived in rather bad taste: and a preux chevalier, like Sir Charles Trevelyan, bearing his blushing honours, might well be supposed to recoil from receiving an extra year's salary." There was a measure of disquiet expressed by Goulburn and Gladstone about the procedure that had been adopted, and it was left to Russell to attempt to spare Trevelyan's embarrassment by hoping that the government's technical error "would not be visited upon one of the most intelligent and laborious officers that he had ever known."¹ For Trevelyan this questioning of the propriety and regularity of the donation was obviously intolerable; for one who attached so much importance to regularity it was impossible that he should keep the money. On the day following the debate, Trevelyan wrote to Russell announcing that he intended to repay the money within four days.²

As Trevelyan's previous experience of Commissariat operations had been confined to comparatively short and limited campaigns, he was unable to look upon the department's involvement in relief operations as anything other than another brief campaign. This attitude, combined with distrust of the government in economic and social matters, constantly led Trevelyan to press for a premature end to Commissariat operations. Even while the Commissariat was at work, neither the traditions of the department nor Trevelyan's laissez-faire philosophy allowed the department any administrative initiative. What little there might have been was effectively frustrated by Trevelyan's centralized control

1 Debates, CI, col. 138.

2 Trevelyan to Russell, 15 August 1848, T.L.B., XXII, p.170.

from London. The experience of Irish affairs instead of making the Commissariat more flexible when confronted with unusual problems, only confirmed Trevelyan's mechanistic interpretation of administration. As far as Trevelyan was concerned, the Commissariat provided a service that would have been adequate if only the more remote and primitive areas of Ireland had been regulated by the "correct" principles of political economy. Consequently Trevelyan was able to assert that any failure to provide an adequate relief service could be attributed to Irish waywardness and lack of co-operation.¹ He was later to adopt the same attitude, when he was criticised for the Commissariat's reaction to the confused and almost equally unpredictable problems that arose during the Crimean War.

In terms of Commissariat organization the only advantageous, but indirect, result of the Irish emergency was the re-establishment of a regular Commissariat service for the troops in Ireland. The disturbed state of the country called for increased garrisons, and in June 1847 the Commissariat was established on a permanent footing. Ironically, therefore, the failure of Trevelyan's simple solutions for Ireland's complex economic and social problems did at least make necessary the continuance of a garrison and in this indirect way ensured something approaching a home tour of duty.²

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- 1 In this connection, Trevelyan was particularly appreciative of the difference of attitude between Scottish and Irish proprietors, when confronted by roughly comparable distress. When D.C.G. Pine Coffin was transferred from Limerick to Oban to organize emergency food supplies, he was instructed to work closely and respectfully with Scottish proprietors. To one of these, Trevelyan wrote that it was a pleasure to work for a change with "people who can help themselves". (Trevelyan to Pine Coffin, Trevelyan to H.G. Craig, 2 October 1846, T.L.B., VII, p.147.) As a rule the Scottish proprietors of the most remote and backward areas applied the same drastic economic remedies recommended for Ireland: depopulation and better capitalized farming, usually sheep raising.
 - 2 Trevelyan's evidence of 26 February 1850 before the Select Committee on Army and Ordnance Expenditure, P.P., 1850, X, p. 319. Characteristically, Trevelyan was extremely cautious in setting the scale of the new establishment as low as possible in order to avoid public criticism. (Trevelyan to Routh, 14 July 1847, T.L.B., XVI, p.44.)

D Transfer of the Commissariat to the War Office, 1854

Before considering the Commissariat's involvement in the Crimean War it is necessary to note that control of the department was transferred to the War Office in 1854. Trevelyan had always resolutely opposed such a change, and he had written memoranda on the subject in 1840 and 1850.¹ As soon as the change was mooted in March 1854, Trevelyan wrote to the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, reiterating his earlier objections.² However, it was not Newcastle who was pressing for administrative changes, but out-of-office Whigs like Lord Ellenborough and Lord Grey who prompted Lord John Russell to propose a scheme for the amalgamation of military departments under the Secretary for War, and for the establishment of a separate Secretary for the Colonies. After protracted discussion from April to June 1854, the administrative reorganization was accepted in principle by the Cabinet. Although the main reason for change at this time was to improve the efficiency of the military machine in preparation for a major conflict, the absorption of the Commissariat into the War Office did not take place for a further six months. Newcastle, who had been reasonably happy with the original division of responsibilities, refused to take over the Commissariat until he was given adequate office accommodation.³

During this interval Trevelyan continued to run the department according to established routine, and without any ministerial guidance.

1 One of the arguments he adduced in a memorandum in 1850 was extremely ingenious: "If a superintending department has no executive business, it can have no practical experience, and is liable to be continually met by objections on practical grounds, which it cannot answer. The executive experience possessed by the Treasury through the Commissariat, has therefore been in many ways productive of advantage to the public service." ("System adopted by the Treasury for controlling the Expenditure abroad", 14 May 1850, P.P., 1850, X, p.487.)

2 Trevelyan to Newcastle, 1 March 1854, T.L.B., XXXIII, p.37.

3 J.B. Conacher, The Aberdeen Coalition, 1852-1855 (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 399-409, 490.

As he later remarked to the Select Committee on the Army before Sebastopol, it was the duty of the Commissary General, under the direction of the Commander in Chief, to take any necessary initiatives. Trevelyan for his part, devoted his efforts towards resisting the impending change. He wrote to Aberdeen and Newcastle, complaining about the financial risks inherent in the proposals, while admitting the need for improved liaison between the Treasury and the War Office.¹ Trevelyan regretted that Gladstone's temporary absence prevented him from springing to the defence of "the integrity and efficiency of the Financial Department."² Quite unexpectedly for Trevelyan, Gladstone only intervened to suggest to Trevelyan that his view of Treasury control was completely mistaken: "One thing is clear to me, that if it is right to have the Commissariat expenditure under the Treasury, the proper function of the Treasury in regard to all expenditure is placed so far as regards that Department of it in abeyance, for the Treasury cannot be a controlling department to itself."³ Trevelyan was also sensitive at losing control of the department, lest the change should be interpreted as a criticism of his management. Gladstone reassured him on this point, while stressing that Treasury control would be stronger if the Commissariat were supervised as a separate department. However, he did agree with Trevelyan that the specifically banking functions of the Commissariat should be restored to the Treasury.⁴ This division of functions was too subtle a task to be attempted in the middle of a war, and when

1 Trevelyan to Aberdeen, 8 July 1854, T.L.B., XXXIV, p.98; Trevelyan to Newcastle, 13 July 1854, Ibid., p.103.

2 Trevelyan to Aberdeen, 12 June 1854, Ibid., p.99.

3 Gladstone to Trevelyan, 14 August 1854, Add.MS., 44529 f. 130.

4 Gladstone to Trevelyan, 30 October 1854, Ibid., f. 164.

Newcastle took over the Commissariat in its entirety, Trevelyan accepted the situation and querulously remarked: "I am ready to do my best under all circumstances but I wish to be certain that I am doing what is expected from me."¹ A few days later he made one last attempt to retain financial control by citing what he described as the impartial opinion of W.G. Anderson.² Although this view did not immediately prevail, Trevelyan remained confident that he would eventually resume control of the Commissariat's financial business.

E The Crimean Campaign, 1854

The disasters of the Crimean campaigns brought to an end a period of public indifference about the quality of the armed forces. Public outrage at the spectacular mismanagement of so much of the war caused all branches of military administration to be closely scrutinized. In particular the need to find scapegoats for the blunders of the winter siege of Sebastopol transformed the Commissariat from an obscure department into the principal object of radical vituperation.³ After Russell left Aberdeen's cabinet, the administration was so vulnerable that John Arthur Roebuck's motion in January 1855 to set up a select committee was carried by 305 to 148. After the collapse of the Aberdeen administration and the formation of Palmerston's, the Select Committee on the Army before Sebastopol was set up with Roebuck as its chairman. The Select Committee was concerned not to find detailed explanations, but to demonstrate that corruption and incompetence were the cause of the nation's disgrace in the Crimea, and in this way to reveal the evils of aristocratic government and consequent obvious need for radical reform.

1 Trevelyan to Gladstone, 8 November 1854, T.L.B., XXXIV, p.292.

2 Trevelyan to Gladstone, 12 November 1854, T.L.B., XXXV, p.2.

3 For a fuller recent account, see Sweetman, op. cit., pp. 127-180.

Since the misfortunes at Sebastopol were in large measure attributable to failure in transport and supplies, Trevelyan was the main witness called to explain the Commissariat's activities. Although the Commissariat was often accused of having failed, Trevelyan was convinced - as he observed to C.G. Filder on 23 April 1855 - that the Englishman's sense of justice would vindicate the reputation of the department.¹ Although Trevelyan no longer controlled the Commissariat, he was the only readily accessible witness and the only person able to speak about the department's work as a whole.

Trevelyan gave an outline of the whole Commissariat operation in order to define his own and the Treasury's responsibility. As soon as the expedition to the Black Sea was planned, C.G. Filder, a sixty-four year old veteran of the Peninsular War, was placed in charge of the practical arrangements. There was no semblance of intelligence work to discover the special needs and possible difficulties of the campaign. Filder's only guidance was the treatises written by Routh and Bissett, other Peninsular officers like himself. Trevelyan insisted that, fortified by this collective wisdom, Filder needed no specific guidance from the Treasury. This would not have mattered overmuch if Lord Raglan, like Wellington in the Peninsula, had had a firm idea of the scope and objectives of the expedition. Yet even allowing for the lack of direction provided by Raglan, it was apparent from Trevelyan's own evidence that the staff, hurriedly scraped together, was completely inadequate. Forty officers and clerks had been found for the original expedition of 10,000 men; but when this was expanded to 25,000, only nine more were available. Although this deficiency amply proved Trevelyan's case for a Commissariat home establishment, he maintained that the nucleus of staff actually provided has been adequate to ensure regularity in accounting.

1 T.L.B., XXXV, p.171.

As a result, the wastefulness which had marked the early stages of the Peninsular War had not been repeated. This was little help in defending the Commissariat, since criticism did not centre upon any lack of the Treasury's financial vigilance.

It was much more difficult to explain or defend practical inadequacies. He had always maintained that hired transport was preferable to government transport on account of its relative cheapness. Unfortunately what might have applied in a free market with ample carts and horses waiting to be hired did not apply in Malta, the springboard of the expedition, or on the coast of Bulgaria, where the first landings were made. A.C.G. Smith's preliminary expedition only resulted in a few carts being sent from Malta, and of the 12,000 baggage animals prescribed by Bissett's manual for an expedition of that size, only half were ever obtained. Even Trevelyan had to admit that at the Gallipoli landings: "Our Commissariat, when the French troops landed, saw the French mule carts loaded and trotting off with the supplies, whereas they had to labour after our troops with the heavy arabas of the country. This arises out of the superior organisation of the civil department of the French army, and their constant readiness for war."¹ Trevelyan was nevertheless absolutely determined to exonerate himself; when asked whether Filder had actually told him of the inadequate transport arrangements, he replied very cautiously that "he never stated in so many words, but he never stated anything to the contrary." In this way he limited the responsibility of the Treasury to supporting the Commissariat. Clearly it would not have been in keeping with Treasury notions to invite mention of inadequacies and difficulties that might require heavy corrective expenditure.²

1 Trevelyan's evidence of 17 April 1855, P.P., 1854-55, IX (ii), p.21.

2 Ibid., p.24.

The Select Committee, ever anxious to expose the culpable, appreciated that Trevelyan's rigid attitude might make it easy to trap him into making injudicious admissions. If, for example, he denied responsibility for the detailed working out of the army's requirements, he could be accused of a culpable lack of foresight. Although Trevelyan claimed to be something of an expert on Turkish geography,¹ he does not appear to have realized that the army would require far more logistical support than a comparable expedition in a more highly developed part of Europe. In his evidence he had asserted that "in a proper sense, it is only as wants are found out that they are provided for."² When on 26 April the Duke of Newcastle was asked whether he thought Trevelyan's answer constituted a sound principle upon which to conduct Commissariat operations, his reply was an emphatic negative.³ Trevelyan felt that this question had been contrived as a personal slight. He rashly decided to defend his reputation by submitting to the Committee a written explanation of his earlier evidence, simultaneously sending a copy of this explanation to The Times.⁴ Apparently he had meant to say that the Treasury was dependent on information sent by the Commissariat; he had never meant to justify hand-to-mouth methods. The Committee was incensed by this breach of privilege; their anger possibly increased by an awareness of Trevelyan's characteristic use of Press leaks as a means of presenting his own point of view. Trevelyan was not allowed to escape as easily as he had done over Civil Service reform; he was ordered to appear before the Select Committee on 30 April when he was

1 Evidence of 20 April 1855, Ibid., p.108.

2 Ibid., p.100.

3 Ibid., p.213.

4 The Times, 28 April 1855, p.11 col. e. Trevelyan's explanation was printed at the end of the report of evidence to the Committee.

forced to admit that in his first evidence he had not really meant what he had said. Nonetheless, he was not prepared to repent publicly for his haste in communicating with a newspaper:

May I be allowed to say in my defence that I felt very keenly the imputation implied in the question put by the Honourable Member for Aylesbury to the Duke of Newcastle, because it went directly to impugn my fitness for the duties on which I have been employed for 15 years, for 15 long years I have laboured incessantly at those duties, and devoted myself entirely to them; and I certainly felt it as a great grievance that my management should be impugned on the most vital point of all, which is the exercise of reasonable foresight; and I also supposed, that, as the evidence given before the Select Committee was published in all the papers, from day to day, there could be no objection to my sending a copy of this statement to the "Times", having already given the original to Lord Seymour to be submitted to the Committee.

Trevelyan had to admit that even if Layard's question to Newcastle had been a veiled attack upon himself, the Press had not exploited it. He confessed that it had been some of his friends who had pointed out to him the slight upon his reputation.¹ Trevelyan's extreme sensitivity was a handicap, but he was quite unable to conceal the intensity of his enthusiasm for his work with the Commissariat.

The Select Committee itself made considerable capital out of

1 P.P., 1854-55, IX (ii), pp. 318-319. Lord Seymour, a Whig member of the Committee and moderate in comparison with Roebuck, was Trevelyan's main personal link. Trevelyan wrote him a number of letters, suggesting the topics on which he would like to be questioned; he also sent him copies of much of the correspondence with Filder. (T.L.B., XXXV, pp. 133, 151, 194.) Simultaneously, Trevelyan hoped to prevent The Times from forming any misconceptions, as when he defended Filder's exercise of foresight in a letter to Delane on 23 April 1855. (T.L.B., XXXV, p.167.)

Trevelyan's regard for precedent, particularly when it appeared that virtually all the practical precedents derived from the time of the Peninsular War. One instance was the Committee's criticism of the Treasury's failure to exploit new techniques for preserving potatoes. Trevelyan's answer was that he had been aware of this invention, but that he did not feel that it was necessary.¹ As far as Trevelyan was concerned, the Commissariat's main task was to provide the ration of bread and meat for which a stoppage was made from the soldiers' pay. These staple items could readily be provided in bulk, while those required in variable quantities were - Trevelyan thought - better left to private enterprise. This was the basis of his explanation why many of the vegetables shipped from Constantinople were allowed to rot on shipboard: the troops did not need them, since they had been buying potatoes and onions from speculative merchants.² This was consistent with his general philosophy of keeping government activity "within the narrowest possible limits", and in the short-term it was successful in that it produced economies. Originally Trevelyan had been very confident about the campaign. On 8 November 1854, he had informed Gladstone that very little money had been spent so far. He pointed out that the cost of pay and army agency were fixed costs, while happily the cost of provisions in Turkey was cheaper than in England.³ This letter had been intended to help convince Gladstone that Trevelyan should retain control of the Commissariat. Trevelyan could have argued that in the early stages of the war with Russia the Commissariat had been reasonably effective in

1 P.P., 1854-55, IX (ii), p.108.

2 Ibid., p.71. Trevelyan was impatient with criticisms of supply arrangements, assuring Aberdeen that the Commissariat worked in exactly the same way as it had done at the Cape, and that the troops had received rations "of the best kind that was to be had" (12 July 1854, T.L.B., XXXIV, p.99).

3 T.L.B., XXXIV, p.292.

satisfying basic supply requirements, and had been completely effective in the strictly traditional sense of preventing the kind of waste that had characterized the early Peninsular campaigns.

The most bizarre episode which illustrated concern for precedent was his order that coffee beans should be sent out green and unroasted as they had been during the Kaffir wars.¹ Trevelyan was particularly concerned at the possibility that roasted beans might deteriorate in transit, but did not take into account the difficulty of finding fuel. Apparently no one had ever told the Commissariat officers - at least Trevelyan was completely ignorant of the fact - that using lids of cooking pots for roasting resulted in the rims coming unsoldered. When this happened the lids would no longer fit their pots, and ordinary cooking became impossible.² While it was a minor blunder and one that was soon remedied, it was one that the report of the Select Committee attributed to the pedantic approach of the Treasury "The more immediate comfort of the troops appears to have been overlooked, whilst ingenious exchanges on the volatile aroma of the berry, and in the Turkish mode of packing coffee, were passing between Commissary-General Filder and the Treasury."³

Some of the evidence about Commissariat management caused much bitterness between Trevelyan and Filder. Trevelyan was not responsible for this as he was always at pains to prevent any of his statements being used to attribute blame to the Commissary General. Indeed, during 1854

1 Trevelyan's evidence of 17 April 1855, P.P., 1854-55, IX (ii), pp. 33-34. As Trevelyan admitted to Lord Seymour, it was an episode that had taken a "grip" on the public mind (8 May 1855, T.L.B., XXV, p.194).

2 Sergt. Dawson's evidence of 13 March 1855, P.P., 1854-55, IX (i), p.259.

3 Fifth Report from the Select Committee, 18 June 1855, P.P., 1854-55, IX (iii), p.380.

Trevelyan had always been extremely satisfied with Filder's work,¹ and initially the attack on Filder came from a report produced by Sir John M'Neill and Col. Tulloch, a two-man commission appointed by Lord Panmure to investigate in the Crimea itself a number of allegations of mismanagement. This report was in turn reported upon by a Board of General Officers who obtained the views of men who had served in the Crimea. Filder was criticized for providing insufficient transport during the winter siege of Sebastopol, and he in his turn attributed this to an insufficient supply of fodder. As soon as Trevelyan became aware of this criticism, he was eager to vindicate himself. He produced a paper to demonstrate that he had sent out all the pressed hay that Filder had asked for. In it he quoted from one of Filder's letters, running two paragraphs together and italicising the words "I believe them to be ample", which clearly applied to Commissariat provisions and not to hay at all.² In his evidence to the Board of General Officers, Filder corrected this impression and succeeded in having the last word. The report endorsed his view by quoting his words in full: "I proceed to state, if the authorities in England are to judge of the expediency of complying with the requisitions of a commissary general in charge of an army in the field, founded on his personal knowledge derived on the spot of his wants and resources, it seems clear that the personal responsibility of that officer must be at an end. It is the first time in my experience I have ever known demands made under such circumstances to be disregarded, whatever future investigation they might be supposed to call for." However, the report did go to remark that a more resourceful commissary would have realized that the usual procedure of tender and contract

1 Trevelyan to Filder, 18 September 1854, T.L.B., XXXIV, p. 240; 23 October 1854, Ibid., p. 266.

2 "Statement in Explanation of the Arrangements made by the Treasury ... ", P.P., 1856, XXI, pp. 582-589.

was impossible in Turkey, and that he would have pressed his case more strongly with the Treasury.¹ Yet even this failing was an indirect indictment of the Treasury, since Filder's lack of initiative was a product of traditional Treasury caution.

The man on the spot took the blame and Trevelyan was fortunate that the Press and the reviews made no attempt to single him out for serious criticism. Fraser's was critical of his unguarded remark that the cavalry should have been prepared to forage in the Crimea.² The Edinburgh Review, while it felt that the Commissariat was not to blame over failure to provide adequate transport, felt that Trevelyan had overstated his case in favour of the Commissariat in explaining inadequacies in the provision of fodder and shelter for transport animals.³

Conclusion

The Commissariat, in presenting a number of administrative problems in microcosm, revealed Trevelyan's limitations. Although he often maintained that Treasury rules were flexible, his own mechanistic attitude to administrative procedures and his strictness towards Commissariat officers effectively inhibited local initiatives of the kind that would have made Commissariat organization responsive to the needs of unexpected and unprecedented situations. Trevelyan's overbearing manner can be partially justified by the quality of the Commissariat officers themselves (as he observed in 1855 he had no opportunity to pick men whom he thought would make the best officers) and by the constant Treasury preoccupation with immediate economies. Thus no one person but rather the system must be held responsible. If Trevelyan were

1 P.P., 1856, XX, p.406.

2 Fraser's Magazine, LI (May 1855), pp. 600-601.

3 The Edinburgh Review, CII (July 1855), pp. 289-290.

culpable it was because he worked so happily within this system that he sought to preserve it. Indeed, he remained convinced that the Commissariat had worked quite well in the Crimea and that it was other departments that had broken down.¹ Such an assertion by Trevelyan in 1855 was only an attempt to save his own reputation, for by this time the decision to transfer the Commissariat to the War Office had already been taken. This decision marked the end of a period of direct Treasury control of part of the military machine in favour of the more customary dualism of spending and supervising departments. One indication of Trevelyan's "old-fashioned" outlook was his attachment, as we have seen, to the traditional concept of Treasury control of the Commissariat - an attachment that had offered him some of the most satisfying work of his career.

1 Trevelyan's evidence of 20 April 1855, Sebastopol Committee, P.P., 1854-55, IX (ii), p.10.

Chapter IX

ARMY REFORM

Trevelyan's deep interest in and enthusiasm for military matters can only be partially explained by his connection with the Commissariat. As he himself claimed, this interest arose from his service in India and from the experience of some members of his family. Moreover his ideas only came to be developed and presented systematically after he had given up control of the Commissariat - the spate of committees that resulted from the disasters of the Crimea providing him with a welcome outlet for his ideas. As far as Trevelyan was concerned, the period after 1855 coincided with the partial rejection of his ideas on Civil Service reform and Treasury reorganization. Being able to offer generalized advice to committees on the reorganization of the Commissariat and the sale of commissions was, therefore, a compensatory activity.

1 Commissariat Reorganization, 1855-58

The Commissariat always remained central to Trevelyan's military thinking; the events of the Crimean War strengthened his resolve that it should be properly managed as a professional entity. The relative efficiency of the French army's intendance militaire provided him with a convenient practical model. Thus when Trevelyan was questioned by the Select Committee on the Army before Sebastopol about the merits of the French system, he asserted that it embodied some of the characteristics like a single financial authority, division of labour and careful staff selection that he had been endeavouring to introduce into the Civil Service.¹ Trevelyan's admiration for the fact that the French had actually achieved in the military administration those qualities which in England only existed in embryonic form led him to

1 Trevelyan's evidence of 18 April 1855, P.P., 1850, X, p.75.

produce in May 1855 a memorandum in which he vigorously attacked the critics of both formal regulation and Treasury control, claiming that the disasters of the Crimea had been caused "not by too much routine, but by too little system". He stressed that the civilian rather than the military nature of the intendance in order to draw attention to the continued control by the War Office of all financial operations, particularly that of drawing bills of credit. By this time he recognized that the best he could hope for was the return of the Chests to Treasury management.¹ Trevelyan was gratified when the Commissariat's exclusively financial business - the management of the Chests - was restored to the Treasury in December 1855. He took a large part in preparing instructions for this change and in formulating regulations for the re-named Treasury Chests. As he remarked to Sir George Cornwall Lewis, it was a difficult task but one that was possible as a result of fifteen years' experience and the support of his political superiors.² He also came to be very satisfied with the new relationship between the Commissariat and the Treasury, remarking to Hawes on the subject in March 1857: "Everything at present goes like clockwork. The correspondence with the Treasury being confined to the raising of money and the integrity of the balances."³ However, he was far from satisfied with the War Department's control of the Commissariat. When he became aware of scandals in awarding Commissariat contracts, he wrote to Petrie, Chief Clerk of the Commissariat department, to point out that the prevalence of such practices could lead to a general decline in trustworthiness.⁴ Although the discipline of the Commissariat

1 "Memorandum on the Civil Administration of the British Army by Sir C.E. Trevelyan, written in May 1855; with remarks upon it by Sir Edward Coffin, written in February 1856", n.p. (War Office Library).

2 Trevelyan to Lewis, 19 October 1855, T.L.B., XXXV, p.278.

3 T.L.B., XXXVII, p.5.

4 Trevelyan to Petrie, 2 August 1857, T.L.B., XXXVII, p.259.

was no longer his concern, Trevelyan was determined to retain his sense of moral involvement.

Trevelyan's overall criticisms of the Commissariat's inadequate and incomplete organization and of its imperfect integration with the army were borne out by the number of times that the department was investigated in the years following its absorption into the War Department. Trevelyan himself served on a departmental committee in December 1858, when he suggested that Commissariat officers should be recruited from among young men who possessed the entry qualifications for Sandhurst and who also had an aptitude for book-keeping.¹ Of course, he was unable to establish whether any men with such appropriate and convenient qualifications really existed. Trevelyan was confidently assuming that the Commissariat would be able to offer attractive middle-class careers, and that this incentive would ensure a supply of suitably qualified persons. The committee's report and the resulting Royal Warrant of October 1858 disregarded this problematical proposal. The Royal Warrant laid down that Commissariat officers were to be recruited from among subalterns of two years standing. Furthermore, integration of the Commissariat was confirmed by making Commissariat ranks correspond with military ranks. The reorganized department was to be exclusively supervisory, with all its subordinate staff seconded from the non-commissioned ranks of the army.² In as far as this integration with the army at last removed the perennial grievance of the lack of a home tour of duty, it was a step that Trevelyan welcomed. However the new system as a whole was quite the reverse of Trevelyan's more novel and ambitious scheme for the creation of a professional, civilian intendance.

1 Trevelyan's evidence of 30 June 1858, P.P., 1859, XV, p.199.

2 Ibid., pp. 190-191.

2 Purchase of Military Commissions

Trevelyan's initial concern for the quality of Commissariat personnel only developed at a late stage into a concern to improve the officer corps as a whole. His first opportunity to expound his views at length was provided by the Royal Commission of 1857 on the Purchase and Sale of Commissions. From this time onwards, the abolition of purchase became one of Trevelyan's consuming interests. It filled the watershed between the frustration of his plans for Treasury reorganization and his eventual return to India. His interest continued after he had left official life, and he remained an ardent pamphleteer against purchase until its eventual abolition.

Although strictly military matters, as opposed to army accounts, were on the periphery of Trevelyan's work, he never doubted that his thirty years' experience in India and at the Treasury was in itself sufficient qualification for giving evidence to the Royal Commission. His evidence on 9 and 18 June 1857 reflected both his experience of managing the Commissariat and his theories for improving admission to the Civil Service. Although there were obvious differences between civil and military service Trevelyan confidently expected that the same range of moral, social and educational advantages would be derived from the abolition of purchase, as from open competitive examinations in the Civil Service.

Trevelyan began his evidence by observing that the purchase system undermined the basis of any satisfactory relationship between the state and its servants; it destroyed the essential contractual relationship by preventing the payment of a realistic salary in return for the performance of a public service. Instead the purchase system was virtually equivalent to the purchase of an annuity (the officer's pay being the income), with the right of resale if the officer survived the

1 For a full description of the system see N.H. Moses, "Edward Cardwell's Abolition of the Purchase System, 1868-1874" (London thesis, 1969), pp.28-58.

hazards of war and of tropical postings. Quite apart from its effect on military efficiency, Trevelyan deplored the system because it was contrary to sound principles of insurance in sacrificing capital for a precarious income. Such an arrangement automatically favoured the rich and excluded the man of limited means who was seeking a professional career.¹ Another major defect of purchase was that it prevented a rational system of retirement because officers could reasonably regard half-pay as a legitimate return on the purchase price that they had already paid.² Purchase - like superannuation deductions in the Civil Service - created a moral right that conflicted with efficiency. In addition, the effect of purchase on an officer's family was equally objectionable, for if the officer had the misfortune to die or to be killed, the purchase price was lost. Only the royal bounty could alleviate distress in these circumstances.³ Trevelyan maintained that if officers did not have the burden of debt that often resulted from their having to buy each step of promotion, they would be able to insure their lives. Trevelyan emphasized what he felt was tantamount to the immorality of the existing system: "Arrangements could hardly be devised or better calculated to overthrow the habits of economy which the great motive of providing for wife and children generally forms." He did not, in discussing this aspect of purchase, take into account the special hazards of military life. Instead, he was eager to use the same argument that he had used earlier to counter demands for a

1 P.P., 1857 sess. 2, XVIII, pp. 305-306. Only an elaborate and artificial system of allowances brought officers' pay up to a realistic level.

2 Ibid., pp. 311-313.

3 When Trevelyan's cousin, Colonel Trevelyan, died at Varna £9,000 was lost in this way. (Ibid., p.318.) In February 1856, Trevelyan appealed to Lord Hardinge for some kind of compensation for the family as a whole. As a result, a free ensigncy was granted to the eldest son of the colonel's eldest brother (Trevelyan to Hardinge, 7 February 1856, T.L.B., XXXVI, p.298).

dependants' fund for Civil Servants.¹ When pensions had in fact been paid to the dependants of those who had been killed or who had died of wounds in the Crimea, Trevelyan had insisted that they should be awarded strictly according to the established rule, i.e. only those whose relative had been killed outright or who had died within six months of being wounded were entitled to a full-rate pension.²

Another parallel with the situation in the Civil Service was the lack of incentive that resulted from an excessively secure position; a commission was in effect the purchase of a life interest that nothing short of a court-martial could extinguish. Although Trevelyan felt that many Civil Servants possessed too great a security, the direct equivalent in the Civil Service had been the sale of reversions - a practice that had ended in the eighteenth century. Trevelyan was, therefore, only seeking to see introduced into the army the more modern, contractual approach to making appointments.

When Trevelyan came to suggest an alternative to the purchase system, he drew directly on his experience of the Indian army. The Indian army was much more professional in that the officers mostly depended on their pay rather than on private incomes. Mobility in making promotions was achieved by a species of self help, whereby officers contributed towards unofficial retirement bounties for their seniors. Although this was not an ideal arrangement - indeed superficially it suspiciously resembled purchase - Trevelyan maintained that it did not conflict with promotion by merit, since it was possible for the commander in chief to be acquainted with the facts of each case: "We require no reports; we know every inch of a man's character."³ Trevelyan was convinced that

1 See p. 230 supra.

2 Trevelyan to Sidney Herbert, 18 January 1855, T.L.B., XXXV, p.64.

3 P.P., 1857 sess. 2, XVIII, pp. 306-307.

the English army could benefit from the same degree of moral scrutiny, but achieved by the systematic use of reports of the kind he employed on a small scale in his management of the Commissariat.

While in the reform of the Civil Service Trevelyan had sought to sharpen distinctions between levels of work, in the army he was more anxious to make the service more homogeneous by encouraging promotion from the ranks. He believed that if more men were commissioned in this way, commissions would serve as "prizes" and as such would exercise "a stimulating and elevating moral influence". In addition to pointing out that an analogous system existed in the French army, he was anxious to find English examples of competitive professionalism as in the merchant service, the railways, civil engineering and industry. Furthermore in favouring more promotion of tried and experienced men from the ranks, Trevelyan admitted that there was an element of speculation in selecting young men by competitive literary examination - a point that he had been less keen to admit in connection with the Civil Service.¹ Trevelyan's ambition was, of course, to make the army "more aristocratic in the best and truest sense, because education and professional qualification, and the zealous discharge of duty, would be the only conditions of success in it; and the military service would be opened to our respectable and energetic middle class, who have at present neither lot nor part in it." Trevelyan's definition of middle class was a rather specialized one, in that he was thinking principally that the sons of yeoman farmers might be attracted by a career in a revitalized army. For the industrial and commercial middle classes he particularly favoured a connection with "executive establishments, acting under the central corps of administrative officers proposed to be formed on the principle of the "Intendance" of the continental armies ..."²

1 Ibid., pp. 324-327.

2 Ibid., p. 329.

Although Trevelyan had demonstrated some of the administrative and "moral" shortcomings of the purchase system and had outlined a few advantages that could result from his own proposals, he was extremely careful not to criticize the officer corps as a whole. He may have learnt caution from the disastrous effects of his unguarded remarks in 1853 on the Civil Service, but more positively his restraint was the result of his admiration of the aristocratic nature of the existing system - a quality which professionalization could only strengthen, since Trevelyan was convinced that the upper classes were bound to be successful in an educationally competitive system. Moreover Trevelyan expected extensive social and political benefits to arise from his proposals: "New and closer relations would be established with the upper, middle and lower orders; our army would become even less of a military caste than at present and it would be more completely incorporated with English society than ever."¹

As well as pronouncing as a social theorist, Trevelyan prided himself on his practical alternatives to the purchase system. His proposals ranged comprehensively over the whole of an officer's career from first appointment to retirement. On the question of appointments, he was by this time convinced of the merits of limited competitive examinations - examinations of the kind that the Civil Service Commission was beginning to organize on a small scale for a few departments. Two years' experience of examinations of this kind had convinced him of their effectiveness. Consequently, he proposed that three candidates should be nominated by the Commander in Chief for each vacancy; and that the examinations could appropriately be based on the education received in the sixth forms of public schools.² The successful candidates would receive professional

1 Ibid., pp. 334-335.

2 On 25 July, Trevelyan presented a memorandum to show how patronage in the Irish Constabulary worked: half the nominations were in the hands of the government; a sixth were granted to sons of officers. The examination of nominees was conducted by the Civil Service Commission (Ibid., p.527).

training in a military college for two probationary years, during which time their moral qualities and suitability for command would be assessed. Trevelyan was insistent that no part of this education should be paid for by the state, since the class that could afford public school education could also afford the modest fees of a military college. He did not attempt - as he had originally done in connection with his plans for Civil Service appointments - to offer special privileges to officers' sons. He disapproved of the existing arrangements which allowed reduced fees at Sandhurst for the sons of serving officers, for he felt that the latter should be encouraged to be provident. Any survival of special privileges would help to preserve the close-knit professionalism of the kind that was antithetical to the notion of an open profession.¹

The system of promotion recommended by Trevelyan was a rather obvious blend of the principles of seniority and merit. Promotion to the rank of captain was to be by seniority and the passing of a fixed-test examination in the duties of a company commander. Trevelyan felt that this new system could be introduced gradually and in a modified form. (In this connection he even likened the army to the Treasury as it had been twenty-five years before and to the changes that had been brought about then - a reference to the reorganization of 1834.) Promotion to higher ranks was to be made on the basis of frequent and regular inspections by general officers. Trevelyan assumed that it would be quite simple for such inspections to be conducted globally on an annual or fifteen-month cycle, and for the results to be recorded and collated at headquarters. Inevitably, he cited his experience of the Commissariat

1 Ibid., pp. 335-336. In a letter to Gladstone on 15 April, Trevelyan restated his arguments against military privilege, while stressing the need to defend entry examinations for the Engineers and the Artillery against the vested interests in patronage as exemplified by the Commander-in-Chief (T.L.B., XXXVII, p.218).

to show that the merits of officers could at least be effectively assessed on a small scale. He never appeared to question whether the same methods would be equally appropriate on a far larger scale. Possible objections to the fairness of such a scheme of selection were countered by the example of the Civil Service Commission - its work being made to appear as an instance of an improved national morality that would not tolerate favouritism.¹

Trevelyan's proposals implied a major change in making retirements. These proposals would put an end to a number of unprofessional practices of which Trevelyan strongly disapproved. For example, once the personal rights that were associated with purchase were eliminated, it would no longer be possible for officers to transfer to and from half-pay and to exchange commissions merely to avoid foreign postings; half-pay would remain only for those who were obliged to retire through ill-health.² Mobility in the profession could be actively encouraged by the adoption of the French system of enforcing retirement, in which the age of retirement depended upon the rank attained - the higher the rank, the higher the compulsory age. This common-sense formula, which ensured a fair degree of athletic competence in regimental ranks, was later to be adopted when purchase was eventually abolished; but in 1857, it was the cost of implementing this part of Trevelyan's scheme that provided one of the many arguments for rejecting his scheme in its entirety.

The report of the Royal Commission doubted whether Trevelyan's suggestions would prove effective. Apart from the impracticability of large-scale inspection, there were too many purely theoretical elements

1 Ibid., pp. 337-440.

2 Ibid., p. 341.

in Trevelyan's schemes.¹ Yet Lord Panmure, the Secretary for War, took them sufficiently seriously to appoint a special committee in October 1857 to examine them in detail.² Trevelyan was extremely glad to be given an opportunity to clarify his views and to remove misunderstandings.³ However despite this additional opportunity, the committee, headed by Benjamin Hawes, failed to see any merits in Trevelyan's proposals. Their main objection was on grounds of cost, for Trevelyan had estimated that the cost of retiring full-pay officers would be £210,622, whereas the committee put it at £512,271.⁴ Additional arguments on these lines were formulated by Col. A. Tulloch, who produced a hostile memorandum in April 1858.⁵ One of Trevelyan's last official acts as Assistant Secretary was an attempt to refute Tulloch's arguments in a monumental memorandum, dated 1 February 1859 and running to twenty-one folio pages. Trevelyan was particularly offended by the double attack that had been launched on his scheme. He remained convinced that the end of purchase would contribute to the process of improving national morality. As a last piece of evidence, Trevelyan produced a memorandum written by William Farr, Assistant Registrar General, which set the cost of retirements at an intermediate figure of £380,000.⁶ This was merely to set the record straight, for by this time there was no likelihood of anything being done. A little later the situation was summed up in a pamphlet by Edward Barrington de Fonblanque, a Commissariat officer, who felt that although purchase was justifiably doomed, Trevelyan's alternative proposals were premature and insufficiently worked out. In particular, he dismissed

1 Ibid., pp. 29-35.

2 P.P., 1857-58, XXXVII, p. 410.

3 Trevelyan to Hawes, 18 July 1857, T.L.B., XXXVII, p.81.

4 P.P., 1857-58, XXXVII, pp. 410-417.

5 Ibid., pp. 425-440.

6 P.P., 1859, XV, pp. 15-40.

Trevelyan's optimism about the beneficial effects of a system of selective entry based on educational merit as entirely unjustified.¹

These efforts came to nothing and the Purchase Question was shelved. In the early sixties Trevelyan was closely involved in Indian affairs, and only after his retirement did he return to the subject with a series of three pamphlets.² In The Purchase System (1867) he repeated much of his earlier evidence to the Royal Commission, while elaborating his views of the social and educational benefits of commissioning more men from the ranks. While arguments in favour of retaining purchase had weakened with the realization that new military techniques required systematic professional training, as instanced by the French and Prussian armies, Trevelyan's incidental advantages provided defenders of the old order, like the writer in The Quarterly in 1868, with a good opportunity to deflect attention away from the real issue.³ When he attempted to extend awareness of the issue through the columns of the recently started Saint Paul's (edited by Anthony Trollope) he was even more speculative: he deplored what he described as the "feudal" structure of the British army and suggested that a reserve system on the Prussian model would broaden its social basis.⁴ This matched his earlier enthusiasm for French military institutions, but failed to appreciate the innate differences between a volunteer and conscription army.

1 E.B. de Fonblanque, Money or Merit (1857), pp. 10-14, 41-44.

2 The Purchase System in the British Army (1867, 2nd. ed. 1869), The British Army in 1868 (1868), A Standing or Popular Army (1869). The last pamphlet was priced at one penny in order to obtain wide circulation.

3 /General Robert Cornelis Napier/, "Purchase in the Army", The Quarterly Review, CXXIV (April 1868), pp. 525-537.

4 C.E. Trevelyan, "Army Reform", Saint Paul's, IV (1869), pp. 176-184. In an earlier issue in the same year, an article by a "Private Dragoon" referred to Trevelyan's ideas and pointed out that the barrack room was essentially democratic and thus the antithesis of national attitudes. He cited a speech by G.O. Trevelyan which referred to the army being composed of the two extremes of "froth and dregs" (Ibid., pp.95-101).

When Cardwell with Gladstone's support and encouragement remodelled the army and abolished purchase in 1870 and 1871, nothing approaching Trevelyan's ambitions was realized. Although the quality of recruits to the ranks was improved through improved conditions of service, the officer corps remained for the most decidedly "aristocratic", commissions did not become realistic career objectives and promotion prospects were not improved. Here, as in other fields, Trevelyan's extravagant enthusiasm for vague social and educational objectives did little to further the attainment of more immediate and practicable ones. Yet it was later recognized by those who succeeded in abolishing purchase that it was Trevelyan who had formulated the arguments that eventually prevailed.¹

Conclusion

Trevelyan's enthusiasm for army reform was unfortunately for him not matched by significant and immediate success. In particular, his loss of the management of the Commissariat was not compensated by the adoption of the scheme he put forward for a civilian intendance on French lines. While the reorganization of the department in 1858 enhanced its status, it did so by integrating the Commissariat more closely with the army. With the wider issue of the abolition of purchase, Trevelyan's views were as premature as were his views on the abolition of patronage in the Civil Service. Both reforms were unrealizable in the confused political conditions of the fifties and sixties; both had to await Gladstone's first ministry in order to be ruthlessly and rapidly implemented.

1 Lord Northbrook admitted to Cardwell that "most of our arguments come out of his [Trevelyan's] arsenal", 8 March 1872, Cardwell Papers, P.R.O., 30/48/21, f. 10, quoted in Moses, op. cit., p.16.

Chapter X

CONTINUED CONCERN FOR INDIA

Trevelyan's immediate involvement in the problems of English administration did not prevent him from retaining his deep concern for Indian affairs. It was characteristic of him to remark in lamenting the destruction of Delhi during the Mutiny that India was his first and last love.¹ He always prided himself on being an authority on Indian affairs, and he welcomed the opportunity to give evidence before Select Committees in 1840² and 1853 as a means of defending the interests of India. Yet although immensely proud of his Indian background, Trevelyan never believed that English administration could learn much from India - rather the reverse. By the end of his period at the Treasury, Trevelyan was advocating the adoption of English financial methods in India.

1 Advice on Indian Affairs, 1853-58

Trevelyan made the most comprehensive statement of his views on Indian affairs in 1853, when he was equally preoccupied with the investigation of English government departments. Bearing this in mind the quality and scope of his evidence before the Select Committee on Indian Territories (May and July) and before the House of Lords Select Committee on the Government of Indian Territories (June) are

1 Trevelyan to Col. Burns, 16 November 1857, T.L.B., XXXVII, p. 120.

2 Select Committee on East India Produce. Trevelyan was particularly concerned to reveal the unfairness that penalized the production of sugar in India (P.P., 1840, VIII, pp. 93-111). A review of this Report pointed out that Indian commerce did not exercise the same powerful influence as the West Indian sugar interest, and therefore stressed the value of Trevelyan's evidence (R.D. Mangles ascribed, "Wrongs and Claims on Indian Commerce", The Edinburgh Review, LXXII January 1841, pp. 340-383).

all the more remarkable. Trevelyan looked upon himself as someone who could bring forward the suggestions of others in one consolidated point of view; he was a self-appointed authority on "correct" opinions, equally happy at marshalling administrative, educational or financial idea. There was some justification in this attitude in that Indian affairs were little understood and aroused slight interest in Parliament, where often only thirty M.P.s bothered to debate them.¹

One persuasive concern was to keep Indian affairs independent of English political considerations; Trevelyan felt that it was particularly important to protect Indian revenues from English politicians. The only way to guard against this traditional "Whig" fear was to preserve the double system of government by the East India Company and by the Board of Control. Like Macaulay, Trevelyan was convinced that Indian government needed to be largely autonomous; that India needed to be governed in India. Yet he realized that to retain the essentials of the existing system the Company's administration in India would have to be made less vulnerable to radical attack.

One proposal that Trevelyan supported in this connection was the introduction of open competition into the East India Company's Civil Service. This has already been discussed in relation to reforms in the home Civil Service.² The continuance, or rather development, of English recruitment to the Indian Civil Service coloured Trevelyan's approach to the appointment of native Indians to the Civil Service. Although he approved in theory of their being given a full range of career opportunities, in practice he suggested that their advancement should be bounded by "an impalpable elastic line" in order to protect

1 Evidence of 26 May 1853, P.P., 1852-53, XXVIII, p.123.

2 See supra pp. 172-176.

the interests of English-born Civil Servants. Repeating what he had said twenty years earlier on Indian education, he suggested that the revenue departments and judiciary could provide adequate scope for Indian ambition. He also envisaged the establishment of English-language universities as a means of preparing men for public service.¹ This was the Indian paradigm of the educational stimulus of open competition.

By contrast, Trevelyan viewed the English in India in a quasi-political rôle, in that they would be of greatest value in detecting abuses and in exporting to India some of the improved moral climate that he detected in English public life. He even saw merits in limited English colonial settlement, asserting that "One stout Englishman is as good for routing out and exposing abuses in a Judges' or Collectors' Court as several thousand Natives."²

In his evidence on financial matters Trevelyan stressed the extent to which he believed India could learn from England. He pointed out that inefficiency was endemic in India; indeed, that his idol, Bentinck, had even been temporarily confused into believing that Indian revenues were insufficient. According to Trevelyan, solvency was possible through the avoidance of expensive wars and by putting the supreme government in India more fully in charge of its own finances. He had faith in the feasibility of grafting the "very perfect and beautiful system" of estimate and appropriation onto Indian financial machinery. Although India lacked a system of ministerial responsibility and parliamentary government, Trevelyan felt that the existing machinery could be made to serve: the governments of the presidencies would

1 Evidence of June 1853, P.P., 1852-53, XXXII, p. 159.

2 Ibid., p.182.

prepare estimates, these would be examined by the legislative council before being embodied in an Appropriation Act. As a result retrenchment rather than taxability could become the watchword of Indian finance. Of course retrenchment would clearly need to be demonstrated as a way of reducing taxation, not just of increasing net revenue. Indeed Indians would need to be educated to appreciate the new principle, but once the public realized that the government was only demanding "the exact degree of sacrifice" that was necessary for the proper administration of the country, they would accept taxation as a civic duty rather than as a burden, much in the same way as United States citizens did. Since stable government in England and America was intimately linked with the notion of responsible taxation, Trevelyan believed that the same principle was the key to ensuring a firm basis for continued English rule in India. He also suggested a means of achieving retrenchment of expenditure by devolution of many routine administrative functions that overburdened the supreme government.¹ These twin themes of retrenchment and local devolution were to dominate Trevelyan's subsequent return to India.

One aspect of Trevelyan's earlier experience in India was reinforced and confirmed by his activities at the Treasury. This was his use of Press articles as a means of giving currency to what he believed were correct views on governmental matters. In his evidence to the Select Committee on Indian Territories he described how his "Indophilus" letters on internal customs duties and related fiscal matters had informed European opinion in India of the government's plans and had helped to mould opinion. He also made the further points, that in

1 Evidence of 7 July. The answer to the main question runs to twelve printed pages, and in it Trevelyan gave a comprehensive picture of his views and experience. P.P., 1852-53, XXVIII, Q.8066, pp. 488-500.

India the Press provided one of the few effective checks on the arbitrary action of officials, and that it was invaluable in explaining the intentions of the government to the native population. He went on to dismiss fears that open discussion could undermine British control provided that Civil Servants were free to write to the Press: "The whole information of the Government, and the knowledge of the business of the Government, resides with them; and they happen to be very apt with their pens. It is the character of the Anglo-Indian community that they are unpractised in speaking, but are very ready with their pen, which makes writing in the newspapers peculiarly suitable to them."¹ A little earlier another witness, J.C. Marshman, editor of the missionary newspaper, Friend of India, had commented on the "Indophilus" letters observing that although Bentinck had approved of them in 1833, the official attitude had now changed and Civil Servants would no longer be permitted to communicate government information to the Press.² Significantly for his resumed career in India, Trevelyan preserved the Whig-Benthamite tradition of uninhibited use of publicity which he had inherited from his first period of service.

2 Governor of Madras, 1859-60

Between 1853 and 1858 Trevelyan continued to offer advice to ministers and politicians.³ At the time of the Mutiny he gained greater public prominence by readopting his old pseudonym, "Indophilus", for a series of letters to The Times. He deplored both the violence of the mutineers and the crudely vindictive reaction of English public opinion.

1 Evidence of 28 June, P.P., 1852-53, XXXII, pp.212-214.

2 Evidence of 12 March 1853, P.P., 1852-53, XXVIII, pp.60-61.

3 Trevelyan to H.D. Seymour, Secretary to the Board of Control, 22 April 1856, T.L.B., XXXVI, p.141; Lord Edward Fitzmaurice, The Life of Lord Granville (1905), I, p.269.

After calling for firm and just re-establishment of British rule, he went on to discuss practical means of achieving this, such as the development of railways and the improvement of the police force.¹ This conspicuous and informed interest in Indian affairs may have contributed to his being offered the governorship of Madras in January 1859.

The governorship was the kind of appointment usually reserved for politicians, and the offering by Lord Stanley, President of the Board of Control, was a quid pro quo for appointing a politician to Trevelyan's place at the Treasury. The Economist criticized the appointment on the grounds that Trevelyan had left the Indian service twenty years earlier and returned over the heads of his Indian Civil Service contemporaries.² Since Civil Servants were not normally given governorships the objection was scarcely a valid one, and it may have arisen from the editor, James Wilson's pique at Trevelyan's obtaining such a valuable and influential post. (During Palmerston's administration Wilson had served as Financial Secretary to the Treasury and had clashed with Trevelyan on a number of occasions.) Certainly with its salary of £12,800 and its power to mould Indian policies, the governorship was attractive to Trevelyan, who had become increasingly frustrated by his lack of real power at the Treasury. Yet for personal reasons Trevelyan did not find it easy to accept for it meant leaving his family in England: his son, George was at Harrow and his wife felt obliged to remain in order to care for the ailing Macaulay. He asked for time to think the matter over and on 10 January decided to accept the offer, remarking: "In coming to this determination I make a great personal sacrifice but my duty is plain."³

1 The Times, 24 September 1857, p. 8 col. e; 25 September 1857, p. 4 col. c. These and subsequent letters were later published as The Letters of Indophilus to "The Times" (1857).

2 R.N.W. Blake, Disraeli (1966), p.391; "The New Treasury Appointments - Mr. Disraeli's Shifting Scenes", The Economist, 15 January 1859, pp. 57-59.

3 Trevelyan to Stanley, 6 and 10 January 1859, T.L.B., XXXVIII, p.61.

His sense of duty was immediately transmuted into the energy with which he began to prepare himself for his new post. On 22 January he wrote to the retiring governor of Madras to ask for information about the merits of his subordinates and for a note on the characters and qualities of civil and military officers in the presidency.¹ At the same time he wrote to Canning, the Governor General, expressing the hope that he would prove to be a helpful and obedient governor.² On his journey to India he devoted himself to the study of blue books on Indian affairs.³

A Administrative Reforms

As soon as Trevelyan arrived in Madras on 28 April he embarked upon a series of reforms of varying magnitude. On 2 April he started by simplifying the paperwork of the Presidency - an obvious reform that he had recommended in his evidence to Select Committees. After consulting members of the Presidency, he issued a minute abolishing quarterly general letters, replacing them by separate letters on important subjects, annual administrative reports and printed monthly returns. During the remainder of his governorship Trevelyan's activities ranged from standardization of the spelling of native words to the amalgamation of the Queen's and the Company's courts. His energy was as boundless as his efforts were far-ranging; unfortunately the more intractable problems of Indian finance do not allow him to be judged by this record alone.⁴

1 Ibid., p. 63.

2 Ibid., p. 63.

3 Trevelyan continued to keep semi-official letter books for the period from January 1859 to April 1865 (six volumes). Their scope is discussed in M. McRae, "Sir Charles Trevelyan's Indian Letters, 1859-65", E.H.R., LXXVII (1962), pp. 706-712.

4 J.D. Bourdillon, Brief Statement of the Principal Measures of Sir Charles Trevelyan's Administration at Madras (Madras, 1860), n.p. Other reforms included the establishment of a civil police force, the reorganization of public works (the low-ranking officers to be selected by competitive examination), the imposition of an irrigation water rate, the improvement of public parks and reductions in military expenditure.

B Fiscal Problems

The real issue in Indian affairs was the method to be adopted to meet the deficit caused by the Mutiny; the first tentative steps towards remedying this by imposing increased taxation were being taken by the time Trevelyan arrived in India.¹ From the outset the new governor vigorously opposed these measures by the first of a prolific series of minutes. He countered pressure for increased taxation with the stock free-trade argument that reduced taxation would encourage consumption and thereby indirectly increase revenue. Furthermore he stressed the dangers of centralization in the application to Madras of fiscal measures that were only appropriate to Bengal. His main remedy for the deficit lay in making major reductions in expenditure.²

Despite Trevelyan's claim that he had the support of his own presidency government in resisting taxation, the central government insisted in July 1859 that an increased salt tax should be levied in Madras. This was followed in September by a more far-reaching and novel proposal: a Bill for licensing trades and professions. In its operation the measure was to include the incomes of many small merchants and traders, and Trevelyan was convinced that the introduction of such a prevalent tax would inevitably lead to the creation of a large class of corrupt officials, and to the encouragement of dishonesty through people making false returns: "The experience I have had of the want of principle in making returns to the Income Tax even in Christian England, makes me exceedingly dread the introduction of such an element of

1 The correspondence and minutes relating to financial measures in India and leading up to Trevelyan's eventual recall from Madras were printed as a Commons return (sessional paper 339, continued in 481 of 1860, P.P., 1860, XLIX).

2 Ibid., pp. 250-251, 308-313.

immorality and extortion into a heathen country."¹ This emotional protest went unheeded.

When in June 1859 an abortive attempt to pass a Parliamentary reform measure resulted in the fall of the Derby administration and the return of Palmerston, there was no marked change in Indian policy. However Trevelyan had the advantage of being already acquainted with Sir Charles Wood, the new Secretary for India, and set about persuading him that more power should be given to the governors of presidencies to enable them to raise local taxes.² This move towards devolution was cut short by Trevelyan's open defiance of the supreme government - a conflict that was exacerbated by the fact that the newly appointed Indian Finance Minister was Trevelyan's former rival at the Treasury, James Wilson.

C The "Madras Mutiny", March - May 1860

Trevelyan had frequently suggested that India needed a good financier, and it was ironic that when it was decided to establish the post of Indian Finance Minister the choice should have fallen upon James Wilson, the founder of The Economist and a former Financial Secretary to the Treasury, where he had strongly opposed Trevelyan's reorganization plans. Despite some suspicion on Wilson's part, relations were initially cordial and Trevelyan was encouraged to embark on the reform of the Commissariat, Audit and Pay Departments. Yet it proved difficult to discourage him from continuing his ominous criticisms of fiscal policy.³

Wilson, like Trevelyan, disapproved of the Licensing Bill, but

1 Ibid., pp. 298-302.

2 Wood to Trevelyan, 10 February 1860, Wood Papers, quoted in R.J. Moore, Sir Charles Wood's Indian Policy 1853-66 (Manchester, 1966), p. 58.

3 Wilson to Wood, 11 July 1859; Wilson to Trevelyan, 9 December 1859, quoted in E.I. Barrington, The Servant of All (1927), II, pp. 170-178, 208-209.

a brief study of the gravity of the Indian financial situation led him to propose a solution that was totally different from Trevelyan's. He finally elaborated his remedy for the annual deficit of £10 million in his budget presented on 18 February 1860. He planned to clear this deficit with three new taxes. Firstly, he modified the proposed licensing system by prescribing three rates of tax: one percent on artisans and small manufacturers (small farmers were to be totally excluded from its scope); four percent on shopkeepers; and ten percent on wholesale traders and men in the professions. Secondly he instituted an income tax for five years at two levels: on incomes over 200 rupees per year at two percent and on those over 500 rupees at four percent - one percent of the latter to be devoted to local purposes. Wilson felt that in this way the rich landowners would be made to contribute a fair proportion and he was insistent that there should be no privileges and exceptions. The third tax was one on home-grown tobacco, to be imposed at a rate equivalent to the import duty.¹

Trevelyan's reaction was predictable. He had been sent a copy of Wilson's speech and ten days later, on 20 March, he drafted a minute announcing his refusal to collect income tax in the Madras presidency. For Trevelyan the issue had become a moral one: "This crisis is more pregnant with portentous results of good and evil than any which has occurred within the memory of the present generation." Trevelyan doubted whether, in attempting to impose income tax, the government had learnt anything from the Mutiny. He observed that Wilson's speech had been masterly in a Gladstonian way but quite inappropriate, since the Indian people lacked any kind of representation.² As soon as he saw the minute

1 P.P., 1860, XLIX, pp. 318-338.

2 Ibid., p. 354.

Wilson sensed that Trevelyan might make some rash public gesture of defiance in order to make his opposition more effective. On 3 April Trevelyan was in fact warned by telegram against taking any action that might make the supreme government's task more difficult, but despite this he decided on his own responsibility to have published in the Press his own defiant minute, together with those written by members of his government who were also opposed to increased taxation.¹ It is certain that Trevelyan had not fully calculated the consequences of his defiance, and that this failure was in part due to the absence of his wife's moderating influence.² Trevelyan had also failed to realize that the speeding up of communication by the introduction of the telegraph had made it less easy to defy the Supreme Government or the authorities in England with impunity. Reaction was swift. The other members of the presidency who had been unwittingly involved through the publication of their minutes dissociated themselves from Trevelyan.³ The Supreme Government, although momentarily taken by surprise, was determined to reassert its authority, and Canning had no hesitation in asking Wood that Trevelyan should be recalled.⁴ Wood, although he personally regretted the necessity, had no hesitation in agreeing, and Trevelyan was recalled on 10 May.⁵ Trevelyan had in fact totally miscalculated the situation in not realizing that his own removal from office was essential if Wilson's credibility as finance minister were to be preserved. Indeed Trevelyan remained entirely unrepentant in the

1 Ibid., p. 372.

2 Macaulay's Journal, 5 June 1859: "As Hannah justly says, Trevelyan has all his life been saying and doing rash things, and yet has always got out of his scrapes." Quoted in G.M. Trevelyan, Sir G.O. Trevelyan, A Memoir (1932), p.51.

3 Ibid., p. 374.

4 M. Maclagan, Clemency Canning (1962), p. 261.

5 P.P., 1860, XLIX, pp. 376-377.

time that remained to him as governor due to the slowness of communications between India and England. In a minute of 1 May he even ventured to discuss what he felt were the constitutional issues involved in the dispute over income tax:

In complaining of the opposition of this Government [Madras], Mr. Wilson entirely mistakes the relations of the local and central governments in matters of legislation. In respect to the passing of a particular measure, we owe to the Government of India, not support, but sound and faithful advice. The Legislative Council of India is a free deliberative assembly. Its constitution and powers have been carefully arranged on that principle. It stands in the place of the local legislature which this Presidency formerly had; the difference being that instead of taking a direct part in legislation, as this government formerly did, we act through a representative. The Executive Council has silenced that representative, and it has therefore become necessary for us to speak on our own behalf. The answer ought to be as public as Mr. Wilson's speech. The pretension that any one should monopolise free speaking and discussion, has never before been heard of in the British empire in the memory of the present generation.¹

Trevelyan's new rôle as constitutional watchdog was a logical development of his claim to defend the interests of India.² Canning took a less

1 Ibid., p. 426. Wood originally intended to abolish the Legislative Council and to devolve its local legislative and fiscal functions to presidency councils; Trevelyan's action discouraged this possibility and led to attempts to remodel the Council as a supreme legislative and taxing body (Moore, op. cit. p. 59).

2 Trevelyan's view of himself was shared by at least one reviewer who numbered him among an illustrious series of governors who had fallen from favour, including Bentinck and Ellenborough. [J.M. Ludlow], "Sir Charles Trevelyan and Mr. Wilson", Macmillan's Magazine, II, (1860), pp. 164-168.

charitable view of Trevelyan's attitude in a letter to Granville:

"And yet I don't think that dishonesty or trickiness are features of his character. I believe Vanity is at the bottom of his doings. He had conceived such an overweening estimate of his own power, judgement and capacity for rule, that he considers every way of bringing about his own views to be allowable."¹

Wilson did not conceal his pleasure at Trevelyan's recall. He observed to his son-in-law, Walter Bagehot, that the embarrassment caused by Trevelyan's indiscretion was well worth the opportunity to get rid of him. He attributed Trevelyan's main failing to his passion for having his own pronouncements published under his own signature: "that unhappy personal characteristic to all public proceedings which Trevelyan could not resist; the passion of seeing [sic] C.E. Trevelyan to documents has been his ruin."² With Trevelyan disposed of, Wilson was able to continue the construction of a new financial system -a task that was prematurely cut short by his death in the following August.

3 Finance Minister, 1862-65

Trevelyan's indignation at his recall was tempered by the knowledge that his less controversial activities had not passed unappreciated. Sir Charles Wood had gone beyond the usual forms of official politeness in thanking him for the reforms he had accomplished while at the same time dismissing him.³ Furthermore Trevelyan's opposition to income tax had made him a popular hero in Madras, and before his departure he was presented with a series of laudatory addresses from the European and native sections of the community.⁴ Partly encouraged by this favourable

1 Canning to Granville, 12 June 1860, quoted in Maclagan, p. 262.

2 Wilson to Bagehot, 4 July 1860, quoted in Barrington, II, p. 252. Trevelyan had been guilty of an earlier indiscretion in leaking to the Madras Athenaeum (30 April 1860) a minute proposing the amalgamation of the Supreme and Sudder courts (Maclagan, loc. cit.).

3 P.P., 1860, XLIX, pp. 376-377.

4 Addresses presented to..Sir Charles Trevelyan ... (Madras, 1860).

climate of opinion, Trevelyan wrote an apologia in which he justified his defiance of the central government on the grounds that it was pursuing a hazardous policy in increasing taxation.¹

Trevelyan's eventual vindication, however, was less due to his own efforts than to the failure of Wilson's successor, Samuel Laing (a former Financial Secretary to the Treasury), to co-operate with Sir Charles Wood. The latter was anxious that all of Wilson's policies should be continued, but Laing resisted Wood's pressure to bring the licence duty into force. Furthermore, Wood was dissatisfied with the way in which Laing had approached the problem of establishing a paper currency. He was also incensed at Laing's attempts to court popularity both in India and England.² Not surprisingly, therefore, Wood was far from sorry when Laing was obliged to resign through ill-health in the summer of 1862. Wood was more than ever anxious to achieve his policy of stabilizing Indian finances, and he now sought a thoroughly reliable man: "a gentleman who will not play tricks".³ Trevelyan, who had for some time been pestering for another appointment, was his rather surprising choice.⁴

Not surprisingly the appointment was bitterly attacked in The Economist by Bagehot, incensed at the slight done to his father-in-law's memory. He made a telling attack on Trevelyan's propensity for meddling and for usurping the powers of his superiors. On fiscal matters Bagehot urged that income tax should be retained in preference to the introduction of protective duties.⁵ Wood saw fit to send him a personal reply with the assurance that Trevelyan had learned his lesson and that Wilson's

1 Statement by Sir Charles Trevelyan on the Circumstances connected with his recall from the Government of Madras (1860), pp. 3-8.

2 Moore, op. cit., pp. 230-231.

3 Wood to Ellice, 26 July 1862, quoted in ibid., p. 231.

4 Trevelyan to Wood, 4 May 1861, cited in ibid., loc. cit.

5 The Economist, 8 November 1862, pp. 1233-1234.

income tax would be allowed to run for its five year term.¹ Yet it must be admitted that Wood himself lacked confidence in income tax - an attitude that was in part due to his difficulties in renewing English income tax in 1848 and 1851 - and that Trevelyan was in fact morally and emotionally committed to its complete abolition. To an increasing extent, Trevelyan became the victim of his own naïve financial confidence. On the way to Calcutta he was fêted at Madras by illuminations and greeted by addresses which vindicated his own earlier defiance of the central government in terms of over optimistic forecasts of falling public expenditure and rising private income.² Almost predictably Trevelyan made a token attack on income tax in his first budget, when he reduced the maximum rate from four to three percent. Although Wood disapproved, he did not attempt to force an issue with Trevelyan. Rather than attempt to preserve income tax in its existing form, Wood was concerned to revive the idea of a licence duty and to plan for the continuance of income tax on a local basis. Fortified by his deep-seated aversion of any extension of fiscal bureaucracy, Trevelyan did nothing to implement Wood's policy. On the contrary, when income tax was due to expire, he persuaded the Supreme Council not to renew it. In his budget of April 1865, Trevelyan was obliged to make good the resulting deficit by means of export duties and the floating of a loan of £1.2 million. Both measures were an admission that Trevelyan's fiscal policy had failed, and Wood rejected both of them. This disastrous budget was Trevelyan's last major work as Finance Minister, as he was obliged to retire for health reasons shortly afterwards.³

Trevelyan's failure to put Indian finances on a permanently sound

1 Wood to Bagehot, 28 November 1862, quoted in Barrington, op. cit. II, pp. 258-259.

2 The Trevelyan Meeting (Madras, 1860), n.p.

3 Moore, op. cit., pp. 245-248.

footing was an indication of his own limitations when confronted with the enormous problems of reinvigorating Indian government and society in the years following the Mutiny. The failure would have been excusable if it had been accompanied by an appropriate sense of humility in the face of the delicate task of balancing solvency with the preservation of public goodwill. Instead Trevelyan's simplistic overconfidence that he inherited from his earlier service in India in the 1820s, appeared totally unrealistic in the sixties. Trevelyan felt that it was sufficient to reduce the cost of the army and to avoid wars of annexation. While interested in the development of railways and the expansion of education, he did not accept that they could only be adequately financed by heavy taxation. He never felt the need to revise this position. In his last pronouncement on the subject before the Select Committee on East India Finance in 1873, he spoke exclusively of the need to keep down expenditure and of his efforts in applying to India the Treasury's rules about the preparation of estimates.¹

Conclusion

India partly provided the clear field for Trevelyan's energies that he so desperately needed and had so long awaited. Yet this freedom quickly revealed the limitations of Trevelyan's imagination and his ability as a negotiator. While at Madras he was able to engage in a series of successful minor reforms, he ran into great difficulties in the more complex field of fiscal reform. His earlier experience of the corruption of Indian tax collectors made him suspicious of any attempts to create new tax machinery. This ingrained attitude, combined with his enthusiasm for reduction of expenditure, forced him into direct conflict with the Supreme Government over income tax. Yet he not only survived the humiliation of his recall, but enjoyed the vindication of his later appointment as Finance Minister. He eventually got his own way over ending income tax because Sir Charles Wood shared his mistrust. What constituted for Trevelyan his final "victory"

¹ Trevelyan's evidence of 25 February 1873, P.P., 1873, XII, p. 89.

in public service was for India the failure to obtain a taxation system to meet the cost of railways, education and public works.

Chapter XI

CONCLUSIONS AND RETROSPECT

Trevelyan's position in the history of nineteenth-century British administration can best be evaluated in the interaction between his Indian career and the political and administrative situation that he encountered on taking up his post at the Treasury. This interaction gives him a unique position in the development of the Civil Service and also explains many of the frustrations and limitations of his career.

Trevelyan obtained in India a totally different perception of official duties from those of his contemporaries in English government departments. Like most East India Company Civil Servants he assumed an independent attitude that stemmed from the necessity of working without immediate reference to a political superior, and from the awareness of being one of a small minority of administrators working amid an alien population of 150 millions. Trevelyan gave early proof of his preparedness to take independent action - independent even of official superiors - in his handling of the Colebrooke scandal. This episode might be regarded as an exceptional exercise in youthful zeal, if the same degree of enthusiasm in pursuing "right" objectives, regardless of the means employed, had not also characterized Trevelyan's subsequent activities. Furthermore, the same attitude was shared at the highest level, where Bentinck, and later Macaulay, as member of the Supreme Council, effectively defied the Board of Control and the Directors in abolishing internal customs duties and anglicizing Indian education by means of a series of faits accomplis. These well-intentioned, but conspiratorial, triumphs were sustained by confident optimism, which was in turn based on a combination of evangelical fervour, radical impatience with outdated methods and institutions, and a Whig sense of mission to rule. Furthermore, the

frequency with which Trevelyan found himself on the winning side in Indian affairs made him arrogant and unwilling to see the need for compromise.

This background was inappropriate to the post of Assistant Secretary to the Treasury, where it was essential to work within the confines of routine with only occasional excursions into consideration of policy and executive action. Inevitably Trevelyan was disappointed and frustrated by his inability to change the situation. For example, in the remodelling of the Treasury in 1848 and 1856 Trevelyan's wish to create an "intellectual" administrative élite was largely ignored by his political superiors in the interests of maintaining harmony within the office. As to financial control by the Treasury, Trevelyan's influence was inversely proportional to the political status of the department concerned. While the estimates of the War Office and the Foreign Office remained immune from serious scrutiny, it was open to Trevelyan to harrass a politically vulnerable department like the General Board of Health.

Given this limited scope it is not surprising that Trevelyan relished the exceptional opportunities offered by Irish Famine relief and later by the investigation of government departments. His two-year control of Irish operations was due both to his position as executive head of the Commissariat - the department that provided most of the key personnel and over which Trevelyan exercised close personal control - and to the good working relationship that he established with a fellow Whig, Sir Charles Wood. As in India, he was able to mould policy and to supervise its detailed implementation. Being in full agreement with Wood on a policy of minimum government involvement, Trevelyan was given a free hand. By contrast with this exceptional activity, the investigation of departments was a traditional Treasury function. It was one that gave Trevelyan the satisfaction of

collecting evidence, making judgments and writing reports - all tasks in which he had excelled in India. Gladstone gave this added significance by asking Trevelyan to draw general conclusions and to make recommendations for improving the quality of Civil Servants. Originally Trevelyan's emphasis had been on the division of labour between "intellectual" and "mechanical" labour through separate recruitment for each category - a distinction which appeared to make sense in the Treasury and which, he suggested, could be applied to all departments. First appointments were a secondary consideration and were to be made under more carefully controlled political patronage. Gladstone completely changed the emphasis by urging open competition for all first appointments. Trevelyan adopted this novel concept as his own, but in the process of doing so he made Civil Service reform more doctrinaire and less politically palatable. Sadly for Trevelyan, Gladstone's bold gesture was in advance of political opinion, and it merely served to raise false hopes of an administrative, social and educational millenium in the minds of Trevelyan and his educationist supporters.

In matters of general public concern Trevelyan had already in India made use of the Press to make preliminary soundings on reactions to government policy. His *Indophilus* letters on internal customs and Indian education had been given Bentinck's blessing, and in the absence of an Indian legislature such letters provided a forum for discussion, even if a limited and partisan one. Trevelyan never accepted that this technique was inappropriate in England. Apart from occasional pseudonymous letters which brought him into conflict with his political superiors, his main use of Press publicity was to encourage Civil Service reform. Believing that the country was on the threshold of a significant moral and educational change, he felt that the Northcote-Trevelyan proposals should reach a wide

public. With its large circulation The Times was an ideal medium, and the leak of the proposals and the ensuing correspondence doubtless aroused public interest. Yet of greater significance was the way in which the tone of the report's criticisms estranged many Civil Servants and prompted resistance from the Whig members of the Aberdeen coalition. Gladstone was clearly embarrassed by Trevelyan's conduct of this episode, and more might have been achieved in the short-term if polemical publicity had been avoided.

Trevelyan's use of the Press also indicated his inability to appreciate political realities, particularly the subtle balance of interests within the Aberdeen coalition. The period between 1846 and 1868 has been described as a period of indecision, and in this context the failure to establish open competition is not surprising.¹ Both open competition and the abolition of the purchase of military commissions - another reform to which Trevelyan attached great social and administrative importance - were achieved by Gladstone when he eventually found himself in control of a strong Liberal administration.

The personal notoriety that Trevelyan acquired in connection with Civil Service reform is analogous to the reputations gained by reformers in other fields, like Chadwick and Kay Shuttleworth. Like them Trevelyan had no wish to be, in Stephen's phrase, "a statesman in disguise". Paradoxically however, the stronger government that later made Gladstone's reforms possible, also made it less possible for a Civil Servant to acquire quasi-political prominence. Trevelyan's unique position in the evolution of the Civil Service was partly a product of the instability, which in turn prevented the realization of reforms that appeared both opportune and tantalizingly within his grasp. The subsequent development within the

1 George Kitson Clark, The Making of Victorian England (1962), pp. 42-45.

Civil Service of political and anonymous professionalism ensured Trevelyan's uniqueness.

In part Trevelyan's special position was due to the evolution of the distinction between the political and permanent servants of the Crown. While the main demarcation had been established in the period between 1780 and 1830, transfer between the political and permanent categories was not unusual, and Trevelyan's successor as Assistant Secretary was a former M.P.¹ Trevelyan himself thought in terms of transition between administrative and political functions, suggesting that the higher level "intellectual" posts in the Civil Service might provide training in public business for prospective politicians. If this had ever been normal the evolution of constitutional bureaucracy as an adjunct of constitutional monarchy might never have occurred.

Trevelyan's economic principles constitute an important link between India and England. Probably inspired by his education at Haileybury, he was an ardent exponent of Free Trade, being particularly emphatic in his opposition to any form of government interference in free markets. Only in India did he have occasion to write reports specifically on the subject but his attitude is equally apparent in his semi-official letters written at the time of the Irish famine, when his laissez-faire views were of a rigour and intensity that was surprising even for the 1840s. He was concerned that relief should be confined to those who were actually on the point of starvation. Furthermore he was convinced that any government intervention in the free market in corn would lead to irreversible economic ruin. Indeed starvation would almost be preferable to relief if it were interpreted as an expression of God's will and stirred the Irish to

¹ Henry Parris, Constitutional Bureaucracy (1969), p.49.

solve their agrarian problems by emigration and improved agricultural methods. Trevelyan's ally in this was the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Charles Wood, whose suspicion of exceptional government activity undermined his own confidence in his income tax proposals in the budget of 1848. Trevelyan also shared his chief's aversion to income tax - a sentiment with profound consequences for his later service in India.

Trevelyan sustained his social and economic ideas after his final retirement through involvement in the Society for Organizing Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendicity (later renamed as the Charity Organization Society). He devoted his pamphleteering skills to the evils of indiscriminate charity and to the refinement of techniques for distinguishing between the deserving and undeserving poor.¹ In effect, this was a transposition of his own ethos of the morally distinguishing quality of individual effort.

This oversimple outlook pervaded Trevelyan's career. In his brother-in-law, Macaulay, it had been castigated as "cocksureness", and perhaps it could best be described as a form of secularised evangelicalism. While there is little evidence about the strength of Trevelyan's convictions, there is no doubt about his belief in the perfectability of human institutions and the importance of his own mission in this process. This belief served to convert brusqueness and insensitivity into an overbearing manner towards colleagues.

Lacking the tact that might have made an outsider acceptable Trevelyan found that he was unpopular with his colleagues in England. In the Treasury his overall supervisory function offered little scope for his energies. Only in his management of the Commissariat, which was directly responsible

1 C.E. Trevelyan, "Charity Electioneering", Macmillan's Magazine, XXIX (1874), pp. 171-176. See also British Library catalogue for a list of Trevelyan's letters, addresses and pamphlets from 1870 onwards.

to the Assistant Secretary, did he have an area of administrative autonomy. Here he had the satisfaction of establishing strict monitorial control over Commissariat officers serving at foreign stations. He delighted in rewarding their merits by means of promotion or favourable posting, and in reproving them for their shortcomings. In this Civil Service in microcosm Trevelyan felt that he had developed techniques of personnel management (probation records, regular promotion reviews etc.) which, he felt, could be usefully applied to the Civil Service in general. Although his Commissariat officers were obliged to endure Trevelyan's schoolmasterlike manner, they appear to have appreciated his detailed interest in their work and his sense of fairness. Yet even here Trevelyan remained more concerned with economy than the development of the service - and hence the improvement of career opportunities.

Trevelyan's obsession with economy and retrenchment coupled with his intemperate manner provide the key to the final stage of his public career. His avowed affection for India and sustained comment on her affairs led him to accept the offer of the governorship of Madras in 1859. He particularly hoped to help in the task of reconstruction after the Mutiny, and he was optimistic about introducing improved English techniques of estimate and audit as a first step towards fiscal stability. He was equally concerned to achieve reductions in government, and in particular military, expenditure. These activities were cut short by the crisis over income tax. No longer in a post with so many obvious constraints and lacking his wife's moderating influence he came into open conflict with the supreme government. For Trevelyan it was particularly unfortunate that the recently appointed Finance Minister was James Wilson, with whom he had earlier clashed at the Treasury. Having learnt little about the hazards of using the Press

as a weapon, despite the problems he had encountered in England, Trevelyan hoped that by printing the texts of official telegrams he would prevent the imposition of the tax on his presidency. Instead of being shamed into surrender by Trevelyan's appeal to public opinion, the Governor General promptly requested Trevelyan's recall. Trevelyan remained unrepentant, and he eventually vindicated himself by later being appointed finance minister, and in allowing income tax to lapse. The price of this personal vindication was a large deficit for his successors, and a doubtful ending to his public service.

Throughout Trevelyan's career enthusiasm and promise is offset by rashness and failure. Coming to the Treasury after distinguished service in India, he found insufficient scope for his energy and talents. Only in specific areas of activity, such as management of the Commissariat, the supervision of Irish relief and the reform of the Civil Service, did he obtain personal satisfaction and acquire distinction. Operating at a time before the tradition of Civil Service anonymity had become established, he relished publicity and thus his name became lastingly associated with the Northcote-Trevelyan report and the eventual evolution of a Civil Service based on the twin principles of division of labour and open competition.

Appendix

The 1854 Civil Service Appointments "Bill"

Source: British Library, Chadwick Tracts, CT 277 (4a).

A BILL

For Regulating the Appointment of Clerks in the Civil Service.

BE IT ENACTED, &c.

as follows :

1. HER Majesty and her successors may from time to time appoint three competent persons to be a Board of Examiners of candidates for appointment as Clerks in the Civil Service, and may from time to time remove any such person.

I.
Board of Ex-
aminers.

2. The Board of Examiners may from time to time appoint a Secretary and a Registrar and so many Assistant Examiners Clerks Messengers and Servants as may be approved by the Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury, and may from time to time remove any such Secretary Registrar Assistant Examiner Clerk Messenger or Servant.

Their Offi-
cers.

3. The Board of Examiners shall from time to time frame a scheme of examination and regulations for the purpose of ascertaining the natural ability and rudimentary acquirements to be required as a qualification for admission to compete for employment in the Civil Service.

II.
Examination
for admission
to compete.

They shall once at least in every year cause a description of the existing scheme of such examination to be published in the "London Gazette."

4. They shall from time to time appoint convenient places in England Scotland and Ireland for making such examinations.

They shall on the 1st of January and 1st of July in every year give notice in the "London Gazette" of the times and places at which such examinations will be made during the ensuing half-year.

They shall direct one or more of the Assistant Examiners to attend at such time and place to make such examination.

5. Every male subject of Her Majesty, who has not been dismissed from any branch of the public service, may present himself at any such time and

place for examination and shall be then and there examined according to the regulations of the Board.

If any person so examined shows thereby that he has the qualifications required to admit him to compete for employment in the Civil Service he may require and the Assistant Examiner shall deliver to him a certificate of the same.

6. The Board shall cause a register to be kept of the names descriptions and addresses of all persons so admitted to compete.

III.
Competitive
Examination;

7. The Board of Examiners shall from time to time by inquiry of the heads of offices and departments ascertain the special qualifications required for the service of each office or department or of any particular branch or division thereof :

They shall from time to time frame a scheme of a series of competitive examinations for the purpose of ascertaining the qualifications of candidates for clerkships in the civil service :

General,—

And the first class of such series shall be framed with a view to ascertain the general qualifications of candidates : and the other classes of such series shall be framed with a view to ascertain the special qualifications required in clerks in particular departments or divisions of the civil service :

Special.

And in every class of such series a number of marks shall be fixed for the maximum of excellence in respect of each subject of examination and a number of marks constituting the minimum of qualification :

They shall on the 1st of January in every year and so often as the scheme of competitive examination is altered cause to be published in the "London Gazette" a copy of such scheme.

8. They shall on the 1st of January in every year give notice in the "London Gazette" of the places and times appointed for such examinations :

They shall conduct the examination of all persons who duly present themselves for competitive examination in some place to which the public may freely resort :

They may for the purpose of examination in any special class be assisted by any person or persons whom they may think proper.

9. Every person who has obtained a certificate of admissibility to compete may present himself at any such place and time for examination ; and he may require to be examined as to his qualifications in any particular class or classes exclusively ;

And if on such examination he obtain a number of marks equal to that fixed as the minimum of qualification the Board of Examiners shall enter his name description and address on the register of candidates



for appointment as clerks in the civil service, with the number of marks obtained by him on examination and the class or classes in which they were so obtained ; and shall deliver to him a certificate of the same under their hands.

10. The Board shall keep a register of all persons who have passed the competitive examination distinguishing the classes in which they have passed and the number of marks obtained in each class respectively ;

The Board shall keep a register of the address of every such person so long as such person remains on the list of candidates and until he has accepted of some probationary or other appointment in the civil service ; and whenever such person gives notice to the Board of any change in his address they shall cause such change to be made in the register accordingly.

11. After the first competitive examination under this Act, whenever it becomes necessary to appoint a clerk in any office or department maintained by funds provided by Parliament (including the civil departments of the army and navy,) unless some person previously employed in the public service be appointed as such clerk, the head of such office or department shall notify the same to the Board of Examiners, and shall state whether the qualifications required in the clerk to be appointed be general or special, and if they be special of what class :

IV.
Appoint-
ments to
Clerkships in
the Civil Ser-
vice.

And the Board of Examiners shall thereupon by letter directed to the address from time to time given by each candidate, or otherwise, offer such appointment to that person on the register of candidates who has obtained the greatest number of marks in the class from which the appointment is required to be made ; and if the same be not accepted by such person within days, then to the person on the register who has obtained the next greatest number of marks ; and so on in succession :

And if no person in the class for whom the appointment is required to be made accept the same, such appointment shall be thrown open to all those persons who have passed a competitive examination, and every such person may claim such appointment : and the Board shall cause notice thereof to be exhibited publicly in some place open to all candidates : and if more than one such person make such claim, that person who has received the greatest number of marks shall be entitled to be appointed : and if amongst such persons there be two or more who have obtained an equal number of marks, they shall be re-examined in respect of the subjects of examination of the class from which the appointment was first required to be made : and any one member of the Board may conduct such examination : and the person who at such examination obtains the greatest number of marks, shall be entitled to the appointment.

12. If any candidate accept of such appointment he shall be appointed on probation for one year but he may be dismissed during such year for incompetency or improper conduct.

When any person has so received an appointment, the same shall be entered in the Register of Candidates, and he shall be no longer deemed a candidate for appointment.

13. But in case any person having received an appointment resign the same, if he produce a certificate of good conduct from the head of the office or department to which he was so appointed, he may present himself again for any competitive examination, and if he pass the same shall be again entered on the Register of Candidates accordingly.

Saving of powers of heads of offices, &c.

14. Provided always that nothing in this Act contained shall alter or affect the powers of any head of any office or department or other person, to regulate the duties and promotions of clerks therein or their suspension or dismissal therefrom.

V.
Annual Report.

15. The Board of Examiners shall on the _____ in every year make a report in writing of their proceedings, during the year preceding, under this act: and shall include therein a list of the names descriptions and addresses of all persons who within the year have passed a competitive examination distinguishing the class or classes passed and the total number of marks obtained by each person:

And also a list of all persons who having passed an examination under this Act, have within the year accepted any appointment under the provisions of this act.

VI.
No officer under this Act to sit in Parliament.

16. No Examiner, Assistant Examiner, Secretary, or Registrar appointed under this Act shall be competent to be elected or to sit or serve in the Commons House of Parliament.



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