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Whitehall in the Caribbean? The legacy of colonial administration for post-colonial democratic development

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Colonial-era administrative institutions and doctrines are fundamental to any analysis of Westminster's legacy in the Caribbean. Applying the lens of 'Public Service Bargains' (PSBs) – the formal and informal understandings of reward, competence and loyalty of public servants – we first examine constitutional and administrative doctrines regarding the public service of Crown Colonies, before analysing how these worked themselves out in Jamaica. Our analysis reveals a number of perceived deficiencies in the PSB in the pre-independence period that cast a shadow on future relations in the post-independence period.

Keywords: colonial administration; Jamaica; Public Service Bargains; development administration; civil service; Westminster system

Introduction

No study of 'Westminster in the Caribbean' can afford to ignore the role of colonial-era administration. In Jamaica, the 1944 Constitution introduced institutions of democracy into existing colonial-led political structures (independence came in 1962); however, such institutions were overlaid onto a set of administrative structures and doctrines which had developed since the imposition of Crown Colony rule in 1866. In the study of a 'Westminster in the Caribbean', consideration should therefore not just be paid to the supposed features of 'majoritarian' systems (Lijphart, 1999). Instead, attention needs to be paid to

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the long-standing impact of Whitehall onto political and administrative life in former colonies. Unsurprisingly, the British administrative legacy has had an enduring influence on Jamaica's post-colonial democratic development. After all, colonial administration in Jamaica represented a notion of 'trusteeship', based on institutional arrangements that sought to insulate the public service from local political actors. This legacy of insulation shaped the relationship between administration and post-independence political movements and has been a source of criticism, especially by domestic elites who repeatedly blamed a lack of civil service responsiveness for Jamaica's poor development outcomes (e.g. Manley, 1974, pp. 185–187). For Manley and others of his generation, Jamaica's inherited civil service model and its alignment (especially prior to 1945) to the colonial service and its objectives were an anathema to post-independence notions of representativeness, as well as an obstacle to post-colonial transformation.

In the following, the pre-independence legacy is examined through the lens of 'Public Service Bargains' (PSBs): the formal and informal rules and conventions governing expectations about reward, competence and loyalties of public servants (Hood & Lodge, 2006). The next section, therefore, outlines the key features of the PSB as it developed within the institutions of colonial rule in Jamaica. Then, we draw on the archival record to trace the way in which these institutions shaped particular expectations of reward, competence and loyalty in the half-century or so leading up to independence. The fourth section draws together our overall findings. We conclude by briefly considering the implications of our findings for contemporary debates about the appropriate role of the civil service in Jamaica's post-colonial democratic development.

PSBs in the Jamaican context

PSBs are defined as the explicit or implicit agreements involving reward, competency and loyalty between public servants – the civil and uniformed services of the state – and those in the wider political system that they serve. (Hood & Lodge, 2006, p. 6; also Lodge & Stirton, 2009). In the traditional Whitehall PSB, in return for agreeing to 'anonymity, some sacrifice of political rights and proficient performance', British civil servants were assured, 'prominent careers, honours and a six-hour working day when the middle classes wanted just that, and neutrality was possible, credible and inexpensive' (Schaffer, 1973, p. 252). Earlier, Lipson noted how, in New Zealand, the 1912 Public Service Act represented a 'mutually beneficial bargain' between civil servants whose careers and pensions were guaranteed, and political parties which, in turn, were owed equal loyalty when in government:

With the political parties the modern [New Zealand] civil service has struck a mutually beneficial bargain. By guaranteeing to public servants a life's career and a pension, parties have foresworn the use of patronage and have guaranteed

to the state's employees their tenure of their jobs. In return the parties expect, and the public servants owe, equal loyalty to any government which the party have placed in office. (1948, p. 479)

Both Lipson's and Schaffer's formulations are sensitive to the conditions and informal understandings under which politics and public servants relate to each other, and to the wider constitutional, administrative and social environment. Complications might arise as 'ministers shuffle out of their part of the bargain, the demands of proficiency increase and even British civil servants no longer get their old guaranteed ration of honours' (Schaffer, 1973, pp. 252–253). Equally, civil servants may also shuffle out of their part of the bargain, by failing to deliver on expectations of loyalty (whether to individual politician, party in government, or the 'state') or proficiency.

What then, can be said of the 'Whitehall PSB' that was transplanted to the context of Jamaica? Crown Colony rule was imposed in Jamaica in 1866 following metropolitan outrage at the heavy-handed reaction to the Morant Bay rebellion of 1865. In constitutional theory, the Governor was directly accountable to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and was the sole authority responsible to and representative of the Sovereign. A Legislative Council provided for some degree of consultation, but was under the effective control of the Governor, who – in addition to controlling the appointment of *ex officio* members of the executive – could nominate additional members. The underlying idea was to maintain executive control while drawing in (through nomination) select members of the local elites, who were nonetheless outweighed by official members. A measure of representation was introduced in 1884, with the introduction of nine elected members into the Legislative Council, increased to 14 in 1893. Domination by the governor was in practice moderated to some extent by constitutional convention, but remained overwhelming since, in the last instance, the Governor's power to declare a measure to be of 'paramount importance' could force any measure (Barnett, 1977, pp. 9–15).

Political oversight by elected representatives became a significant feature of Jamaican administration only after 1944. The 1944 Constitution provided for an elected Executive Council to act as 'the principal instrument of policy', while the Legislative Council became the upper house of a bicameral legislature, which also comprised a new House of Representatives. The shift in the style of government meant that, for the first time, it was the voices of elected members – in the form of Chairs of Standing Committees in the new House of Representatives – rather than the voices of civil servants that were heard in matters concerning the work of Government Departments (Byles, 1948, pp. 64–65). The 1953 Constitution continued this trend. The development of an 'incipient Cabinet system' (Barnett, 1977, p. 18) introduced elements of the concept of *responsible* government (in the British context, see Birch,

1964) into the Jamaican constitution, more fully developed under the 1959 Constitution which granted internal self-government to Jamaica.

In general, Crown Colony government thus represented a particular understanding of *trusteeship*. It allowed for limited participatory political institutions, while the colonial administrations' loyalties were directed towards the British Empire rather than local economic elites. The overall goal of the trusteeship doctrine was to achieve a 'general improvement of the standard of native life' (Lord Moyne's 1932 report on Kenya, CO533/421/1).¹ By the time independence had appeared on the agenda, the doctrine of 'preparation' was defined as

ruling a country for the benefit of its people while they are the wards of a benevolent trustee, and also to train them for the self-government and independence which British policy intends that they should achieve in as short a time as is reasonably possible. (Robertson, 1961, p. 313)

The operative ideas of trusteeship within the colonial PSB emphasised limited oversight from the Colonial Office. The idea that Crown Colonies were administered from London was 'the one rank heresy we all shudder at' (Hyam, 1999, p. 257). Rather, Colonial Office doctrine emphasised 'on the spot' rule by Governors with the Colonial Office performing 'an essential function of cautious criticism' (Hyam, 1999, p.257). A further principle was that colonial order had to be maintained on the basis of least coercive expense (Darwin, 2012, p. 190), regardless of whether concerns were of a geopolitical, military, commercial or missionary basis.

In sum, a number of constitutional and administrative features shaped the evolving PSB in Jamaica: First, insulation from domestic elites, together with lines of executive accountability, via the Colonial Secretary and through the Governor, meant that loyalty was to the Sovereign, and thus to the (metropolitan) government of the day. The Colonial Office saw its role as limited in terms of oversight. Second, competence was to provide for government that would smooth the way towards self-government. Third, the reward dimension was to reflect the local conditions themselves.

Criticism focused on these PSB dimensions. Harold Laski, for example, pointed to a lack of reward and competency, as well as loyalty among colonial administrators. It was, he suggested, 'difficult to suggest what are the purposes of the British Colonial Empire for those who are responsible for its maintenance' (Laski, 1938, p. 541). According to Laski, the ideal of trusteeship was:

too flattering to the results obtained. It is hardly compatible with the historic incidence of the facts. It is a word whose sound is too noble for the squalid results too often attained; for, in many cases, whether the test taken be standard of life, public

health, education, or growth of fitness for self-government, the colonies remain, in large degree, the slums of empire. (1938, p. 541)

Recruitment was pursued on too narrow lines, failing to develop ‘educated coloured people’ (Laski, 1938, p. 547). The emphasis was on ‘sound men’ rather than ‘innovators’ who did not learn from other colonial experiences, who failed to engage conscientiously with London, the repression of opposition movements, such as trade unions, and Treasury determination to run an Empire ‘on the cheap’. Policy-making, according to Laski, was on the basis of precedent, control was ‘gravely bureaucratic in nature’ (1938, p. 548), leading to a ‘lack of imagination, complacency about...larger issues, absence of sympathy for the educated members of the subject peoples’ (1938, p. 550).

Laski’s diagnosis was paralleled by civil servants. For example, a former governor general of Nigeria noted how the post-1945 world had brought about a change in terms of the ‘unquestioning certainty in our attitude to our task, doubts about whether democracy was an appropriate form of government, and also the realisation that “trusteeship” was no longer accepted by the governed population’ (Robertson, 1961, p. 313). Similarly, a leading Colonial Office civil servant noted in his ‘administrative memoir’ how the unification of the colonial service in 1930 had created a cadre of individuals which, together with a growing willingness from London politicians to fund development, could have launched an era of planning and development, especially as part of the 1940 Colonial Development and Welfare Act (Jeffries, 1972, p. 9). However, the post-1945 world was a different one, where the priority was the seemingly inevitable move towards de-colonisation, rather than a planning-driven colonial policy.

A generation after Laski, Schaffer (1973, pp. 205–209) painted a similar picture. Rather than trusteeship and preparation, the path towards independence had been characterised by resistance, especially towards extending participatory institutions, by the narrow recruitment pool. Competent colonial government was, according to Schaffer, defined as the maintenance of law and revenue flows, as well as efficiency – rather than developing local administrative talent. Such absence proved even more problematic, given the lack of evolving understandings of politicians and civil servants, as well as the need to ‘localise’ a bureaucratic leadership characterised by expatriates.

PSBs in practice

To examine the PSB in evolving debates surrounding the civil service in Jamaica in the period prior to independence, we rely on official documentation, material found in national archives (in London and Spanish Town, Jamaica)

and the historical online archive of the Jamaican daily, *The Gleaner*. These have been supplemented to some extent by a review of secondary sources, memoirs and, where possible, interviews. As will become evident, some official reports are directed more at the Colonial Office and its approach towards Jamaica (and the Commonwealth Caribbean); other reports focused more on the PSB applying to local civil servants. Nevertheless, they provide a good insight into the overall PSB that was said to apply to colonial administration in Jamaica, albeit from a predominantly 'top-down' perspective.

We concentrate on the evolution of such understandings through five key reports written in the era under consideration. These are: (1) The 1919 Legislative Council Select Committee established to consider salary increases (Select Committee of the Legislative Council, 1919); (2) the *Report of the Salaries Commission* (Salaries Commission, 1929); (3) the *West India Royal Commission report* (Guinness, 1st Baron Moyne, 1945); (4) *The Report of the Committee on the Public Service in Jamaica 1939–1942* (Hodges, 1942); (5) *The Report of the Commission on the Public Service in Jamaica* (Mills, 1949). In addition to these five reports, we consider also the issue of transition agreements in the lead-up to independence for Jamaica. The analysis starts in the immediate post-First World War period when concerns about the quality of governance in the colonies had become particularly salient.

Select Committee report 1919

Following the end of the First World War, a Select Committee of the Legislative Council was established to consider 'applications for temporary or permanent increase in salaries or wages [after 10th April 1919, and] to consider these applications and the question of the revision of emoluments paid in the Civil Service generally' (Select Committee of the Legislative Council, 1919, para. 1). The select committee was also invited to look at 'the economy and efficiency of the various Government Departments' (Select Committee of the Legislative Council, 1919, para. 1).

The catalyst was the increase in the cost of living post-First World War. This was said to have resulted in considerable hardship, especially to Assistants whose position was said to have become increasingly vulnerable. In 1918, the government was forced to concede that no official notice would be taken of bankruptcy proceedings against officers. The implicit admission that salaries were insufficient to live was, according to *The Gleaner* 'a damaging admission, a thing that was a reproach to this country, a startling disgrace' (*The Gleaner*, 22 October 1919). The Committee agreed that

the salaries paid should be sufficient to enable a man to live; it may be that others are dependent on him, but apart from that under the present circumstances it does

not seem possible for a man to live on £78 a year, nor is it easy to do so on £100. (Select Committee of the Legislative Council, 1919, para. 8)

Inadequate salaries were said to lead to a loss of proficiency particularly at the Assistant level: ‘At present many young Assistants resign their positions, either to take up more lucrative appointments or to go abroad; and so, promising Officers are lost to the Service’ (Select Committee of the Legislative Council, 1919, para. 8). A separate minute by one of the Select Committee members, J. H. Phillips (member for St Thomas) pointed to another reason for this attrition: ‘There are men in the Service who are admittedly clogging the advancement of others by their incapacity, and have been doing so for years past’ (Select Committee of the Legislative Council, 1919, Ch. XI). He added, “‘Promotion by merit’ does not naturally meet with universal approval in a service where “promotion by seniority” has generally been the rule’ (Select Committee of the Legislative Council, 1919, Ch. XI). The majority of the Select Committee rejected proposals for voluntary or compulsory retirement at age 40 or 45 which, being contrary to the principle of employment at the pleasure of the Crown, ‘would revolutionise the theory and practice of the Service, and might conceivably tend to disorganisation’ (Select Committee of the Legislative Council, 1919, para. 4).

The recommended salary increases, including a starting salary of £100 per annum for Assistants, were described by *The Gleaner* as ‘substantial’ (*The Gleaner*, 10 December 1919). Debates did not solely focus on salary but the increase in the burden of work: ‘[. . .] within the last 20 years the work with respect to every Government Department has considerably increased . . . [as] the Government has . . . undertaken new duties in various fields’ (Select Committee of the Legislative Council, 1919, para. 15). Such increases in work had not been matched by an increase in the civil service establishment. The Committee regarded better salaries as more valuable than an increase in manpower: ‘pay them well, and work them hard’ was its recommendation (Select Committee of the Legislative Council, 1919, para. 15). Furthermore, ‘selection should be of the candidate, male or female, who is best qualified, having regard to the nature of the work’ (Select Committee of the Legislative Council, 1919, para. 15).

Salaries Commission, 1929

Issues of reward and competence were again raised by a Salaries Commission 1929 (Jamaica Archives 1B/5/235, Jamaica Archives 1B/5/77/126-1929 and Jamaica Archives 1B/5/77/231; full report in *The Daily Gleaner* (6 March 1929). The Commission was established in response to a proposal of the Governor General. Its terms of reference covered salary levels, and the possibility of

achieving economies of staff numbers. The final report had little to offer in terms of staff reductions, even recommending the expansion of some scientific and technical positions.

The Commission concluded that 'taken as a whole, the Civil Service of this Colony is underpaid', leading to a situation where 'the promising youth of the Colony is being attracted into other walks of life' (*Daily Gleaner*, 6 March 1929). In an era when admission into executive work was (except for some central appointments) through promotion from the rank of Assistant, the Commission's recommendations aimed to attract

a type that can not only be moulded into an efficient clerk but which will in course of time be likely to develop those qualities which are essential in the men who can aspire to the higher offices of Government. (*Daily Gleaner*, 6 March 1929)

The administration rejected the most significant recommendations in respect to salary and grading structure, namely the abolition of the distinction between a first- and second-class clerk into a single grade. It favoured the minority report by a representative on the Commission of the private sector, which recommended only relatively modest increases in salary ('it must be remembered that the majority of Tax-payers are in not as favourable position as are members of the Service' and warning of the risks of making commitments 'until the island has, without any doubt, stabilised its prosperity' (*Daily Gleaner*, 6 March 1929)).

On equal pay between the sexes, the Colonial Secretary's views went further than recommendation that female recruits should be paid £100 per annum, the same as Assistants: 'when Assistants join the Service, they are of little value. They have to be taught their job; but a stenographer comes into the service with a thorough knowledge of her job, namely Typing and Stenography' (Jamaica Archives 1B/5/77/126-1929). Furthermore, the Colonial Secretary was opposed to the recommendation that civil servants should be given a lunch-eon hour, arguing that it 'would be hopelessly abused by a lot of people who would simply be out of the office for an hour' (Jamaica Archives 1B/5/77/231).

The Report criticised the inadequacy of local recruitment practices, including long waiting lists of qualified candidates: 'The result is that the best candidates tire of waiting and only those who have not succeeded in obtaining other satisfactory employment retain their names on the list and are eventually appointed to the service' (*Daily Gleaner*, 6 March 1929). The Commission's damning conclusion linked issues of reward to competency: 'The present system of selection appears to us to be no system of selection at all' (*Daily Gleaner*, 6 March 1929). Official discussion agreed that the system 'does not tend to attract to the Service the type of young man which is so very necessary' (Jamaica Archives 1B/5/77/231).

Improvement was seen to lie in personal interviews. As noted by one senior officer, candidates were

so similar in qualification that they might have been all turned out from the same mould in a mass production factory. They have all passed the Junior Cambridge, all possess the same glowing testimonials from the referees, and all profess to a love for and proficiency in games.

A new system, 'might afford the Selection Committee some facts on which to divide the candidates into at least two classes of sheep and goats' (Jamaica Archives 1B/5/77126-1929).

Report of the West India Royal Commission (the 'Moyne Report', 1945)

Insights into the climate that generated Laski's comment on the colonial civil service can be gleaned from the report of a Royal Commission chaired by Lord Moyne. This report was initiated in June following strikes and unrest that had erupted all over the British West Indies in 1938. To avoid a German propaganda coup due to the Report's damning conclusions, only the executive summary was published. The completed report of 1939 was suppressed until after the Second World War (Cmd. 6607).

The establishment of the Royal Commission was motivated by the unrest witnessed in the Caribbean islands that was blamed on the spread of 'modern ideas . . . amongst the coloured people'. According to the Secretary of State for the Colonies' note to his cabinet colleagues, '[. . .] the economic conditions of the coloured communities in the colonies are at least fifty years behind the times and it is not too much to say that their condition constitutes a reproach to our colonial administration'; indeed, a further deterioration would 'prove very damaging to Great Britain's reputation as a colonial power' (CAB 21/809, 17 June 1938). Blame was placed at the door of the narrow and reactionary franchise that informed the legislatures, as well as the 'low standard of administration' that British rule had 'obliged to maintain owing to local preferences for appointments of local men and to the extremely low salaries which some of the Colonies can afford'. Indeed, the low salaries and conditions of service deterred 'good officers from the Colonial Service generally', leading to social progress being 'retarded' (CAB 21/809, 17 June 1938). It was argued that any work would be futile if there was no up-front commitment by HM Government to provide enhanced funding.

The Moyne Report similarly argued that one of the problems of colonial administration had been that colonies had to largely cover their own expenses. In response, the Colonial Development and Welfare Act 1940 provided central funds for the provision of education, health, housing and social welfare (among

other matters), as well as for training programmes for the civil servants who were to administer these funds.

While acknowledging island-specific factors, the Report condemned with a 'sense of shame' the 'situation which now exists'; 'we are the biggest land-owners in the world, and we allow our people to live in these conditions'. Similarly, the Report noted that the causes for this widespread malaise were partly economic, partly constitutional. In fact, social regeneration was 'not possible under the present form of government'. Particular criticism was reserved for issues of rewards and competency.

On the one hand, colonial administration was hampered by the fact that the 'tropical climate' had an effect on 'a man's health and mental capacity', but also that a one-year absence from the 'home administration' led to a

very deteriorating effect upon his administrative capacity [...] there are far too many men today waiting for their pension and putting off reforms, which they know should be tackled, rather than run the risk of unpopularity with the Colonial Office or in the Colony itself.

This lack of initiative was a result of being 'a little out of touch with the main currents of opinion in the territories for which they are responsible', due to 'continuous meetings with the well-to-do'.

On the other hand, insufficient rewards contributed to a poor standard of living and lack of resources to pursue interventionist policies: 'civil servants are expected to live up to a high standard of respectability, and to maintain the social status of the class to which they belong [...] however [...] they are constrained to practice the strictest economy, which often entails residence in mean dwellings with inadequate accommodation, appearing at work almost poorly clad, and in some cases, foregoing the regular use of nourishing food', thus 'the Colonial Office and the local administrations have been embarrassed, have been hindered and hampered at almost every turn, by the vulnerable position of these Colonies; and that is one of the absolutely fundamental weaknesses of their position' (official report). Indeed, local administration which was 'not really ... of a sufficiently high standard' due to the

perhaps natural insistence of the local Legislatures in most cases that local candidates should be appointed ... and low salaries and conditions of services are often such as they would not in any case attract good officers from the Colonial Service generally.

The problem was, however, also one affecting the Colonial Office; Lord Moyne suggested that its weakness was due to its origins and that it 'has always rather suffered from prenatal experiences'.

In other words, the criticism of the appalling conditions in the West Indies that had given rise to rioting and fear of destabilisation, was directed at the quality of administrative and political rule, and at the heart of those criticisms was the nature of the PSB: a disinterest in initiative (if not actual discouragement) led to risk-averse and poorly trained civil servants who were also poorly rewarded for their services. The response, the 1940 Act, was supposed to bring the promise of a different kind of developmental administration, one where a ‘well-equipped Colonial Office was now a necessary instrument of British colonial policy’ (Jeffries, 1972, p. 16). Such hopes were quickly dashed, if only because of the institutional inheritance of a colonial service in which public services in each territory had remained distinct, and where serving officials were paid by the colony they were currently serving. Co-ordination in terms of perks and other aspects of the PSB were therefore a matter of negotiation, rather than central imposition. In addition, there was a reluctance to merge civil servants working for the Colonial Office with those working for the colonial service (i.e. those civil servants working in the colonies). The decision, in 1944, not to merge these services was widely seen as a political signal that certain understandings would not be forthcoming:

if the scheme had gone through it would have established the principle that the British government accepted responsibility not only for making suitable staffs available to the colonial territories, but also for securing suitable terms for the officers employed, and [. . .] providing funds for this purpose. (Jeffries, 1972, p. 33)

Committee on the Public Service in Jamaica 1939–1942

Shortly before the publication of the Moyne Report’s executive summary, a Committee on the Public Service in Jamaica was established in 1939, ‘to review the existing organisation, emoluments, and other conditions of employment of the Public Service in Jamaica and to make recommendations . . .’ (Hodges, 1942, para. 1). The Report was critical of the Salaries Commission 1929 and the official response, commenting sarcastically on the additional expenditure on salaries of around £14,000 per annum provided to address problems of an underpaid service that ‘It can only be concluded that this condition of affairs was corrected relatively cheaply’ (Hodges, 1942, para. 6). On the additional payments to clerks, ‘it is clear to us that, in the subsequent years, this provision failed to solve a question which . . . has given rise to much of the dissatisfaction which persists in the Civil Service today’ (Hodges, 1942, para. 6). The continued inadequacy of civil service salaries was confirmed by G. E. Mills, a civil servant in the 1930s, who recollected that during his time in the Postmaster General’s department, some ‘older colleagues, barely subsisting on their meagre salaries, hiding from debt collectors, made weekly

efforts to eke out their incomes by gambling, greedily anticipating opportunities and occasions for overtime pay' (Mills, 1994, p. 57).

The Report again highlighted a situation of chronic understaffing in the Service, as well as the inadequacy of prior measures to increase staff: 'We are satisfied that the majority of Public Officers give, not only a full day's work, but a considerable amount of overtime, including Sundays and public holidays ... In many Departments, vacation and departmental leave are curtailed' (Hodges, 1942, para. 9). Part of the problem, the Committee argued, was that there had been a considerable extension of government-provided social services, and the demands placed even on ordinary Departments had become far more exacting. An increasing amount of civil service time was allegedly taken up with dealing with members of the public:

senior officers whose duties bring them into contact with the public, find little time during office hours to deal with correspondence and normal requirements of office. In many cases, work is done out of office hours, leaving no leisure time for recreation or relaxation. (Hodges, 1942, para. 12)

Problems of overwork also obtained at senior levels, with Heads of Departments required to chair numerous committees. The Report called for a new understanding with the public in which 'the public of Jamaica should have their business carried on with despatch, with ability and courtesy; but the public must provide adequate staff for the machinery of Government, and must pay commensurate sums, by way of salaries ...' (Hodges, 1942, para. 14). The Report drew attention to the comparatively low share of the colony's revenues which went to pensions and personal emoluments compared to other, similarly situated territories.

As with the Salaries Commission more than 10 years earlier, the Committee found difficulties in attracting more than minimally qualified candidates: 'the Civil Service does not offer sufficient attraction to the average boy or girl with educational qualifications above what is required to qualify a candidate to sit for the Civil Service Entrance Examination today' (Hodges, 1942, para. 20). This was also a problem given the 'growing desire on the part of Jamaicans to senior offices in the Local Civil Service filled by Jamaicans' (Hodges, 1942, para. 22). Higher educational standards, as well as suitable entry routes for those with advanced educational qualifications was seen as a first step to encourage 'the prospective Civil Servant to fit himself for the responsibilities of executive office' (Hodges, 1942, para. 22). Competence in the higher levels was also diminished by 'a system of promotion, which ... has tended to give prominence to seniority at the expense of merit and special qualifications' (Hodges, 1942, para. 94).

The Report made recommendations regarding the appointment of university graduates – including 'perhaps to a lesser extent – young women'

(Hodges, 1942, para. 33). The Report recognised ‘the claim of women to have some place in the administrative organisation’ but given ‘the peculiar difficulties confronting this country . . . its limited economic prospects and rapidly increasing population’, the Committee was of the opinion that ‘any large scale employment of women, in posts which could be satisfactorily filled by men, cannot be justified’ (Hodges, 1942, para. 73).

Transition agreements

Issues of reward and loyalty featured heavily in the immediate period before decolonisation. Jamaica was seen as setting a precedent for other jurisdictions in the Caribbean. There was no debate about ‘preparation’. Instead, the debates involving officials in London and Jamaica were either directed at the rules governing Public Service Commissions (PSCs), or protecting the perks applicable to expatriate officers who might be affected by independence. To some extent, these debates qualify the image of an all-powerful and numerous expatriate class ready to pack the bags and move to remaining parts of the British Empire.

Civil service representatives were incensed by what they perceived to be a neglect of the Colonial Office in the protection of their interests post-independence:

I cannot afford to remain for an Independence which guarantees me nothing except the possibility of unemployment. I feel strongly that the Colonial Office has failed in its duty to its overseas personnel and has left them floundering around without guidance or advice. (CO1031/2972)

Indeed, they argued that expatriate officers were ‘not missionaries, but officers for whom the Secretary of State wants compensation from the territory concerned’ (CO137/904/3). In response, the Colonial Office agreed that in Gold Coast in particular, ‘the great majority of senior policymaking posts in the public service were held by expatriate officers sharply distinguished from their colleagues both by colour and terms of service’ (CO1031/2270). In those jurisdictions, this arrangement had triggered ‘acute public criticism’ and its continuance was seen as ‘incompatible with the grant of independence’. Therefore, ‘voluntary retirement’ was offered to these civil servants (CO1031/2270). These ‘safeguards’ were granted in Malaya, Ghana, Nigeria and Singapore (CO1031/2295).

However, it was argued that Jamaica was different. First of all, the actual number of such officers was low in Jamaica, amounting to ‘only 60 out of 360 administrative, professional and technical officers who are eligible for membership of the HMOCs’ (CO1031/2270). Rather than offering voluntary retirement to all, individual cases would have to persuade the Secretary of State that their careers would be prejudiced if they were to continue their

service post-independence. Indeed, any expatriate who had gone to the West Indies in recent years had done so 'with their eyes open'. Civil service union representatives were (naturally) not persuaded, suspecting that 'nobody will qualify' and that this was a breaking of the bargain as 'these chaps still nurture the Colonial Service tradition' (CO 1031/2270). Again, the poor resourcing/rewarding of civil servants in the West Indies were raised:

By accepting posts in the Caribbean they have gained a life full of interest and responsibility but they have condemned themselves and their families to salaries and conditions of service very much worse than those of their colleagues who have stayed where they were or who have been promoted to similar posts on other parts of the world [. . .] Indeed I think there would be strong arguments for requiring Caribbean territories to pay greater compensation than elsewhere to make up for the unsatisfactory terms of service which they have got away with (to their own tragic detriment) for so long. (CO1031/2270)

Second, it was argued that the Jamaican civil service was not shaped by a clear distinction between 'local' and 'expatriate' (although 'locals' might have disagreed with the recorded sentiment): it was '[. . .] not going to make for happier relationships if we now start to make a clear differentiation between "expatriate" and "local" officers. There has never been any real distinction in the Jamaica civil service' (CO 1031/2270, Renison (Jm) to Kitkatt (Ldn, also CO1031/2295 (no date)). In the end, the Colonial Office granted civil servants 'on an individual basis' the right to retire with compensation should their career have been adversely affected as a result of constitutional changes (CO 1031/2295). However, it was also made clear that it was unlikely that many cases would qualify.

In terms of appointment, the creation of PSCs created the novelty that appointments continued to be made (formally) by the Secretary of State, while in practice these procedures should be conducted by the Commissions. Local politicians (such as Alexander Bustamante) succeeded in removing educational qualifications for appointment² (CO137/904/3). However, more generally, the change in convention was seen as minimal as the control of appointment by the Secretary of State had been minimal in the West Indies (CO1031/227). At the same time, the role of PSCs was seen as critical; once Jamaica had achieved the status of 'self-government', then the PSC would become an executive organ whose decisions would be more or less binding on the Governor (who could refer individual cases back for reconsideration, without being able to veto appointments).

Report on the Commission on the Public Service in Jamaica (The Mills Report)

A further inquiry on the Jamaican public service published in 1950, chaired by a British civil servant, Eric Mills, addressed many of the key issues regarding

competency, loyalty and rewards that had emerged in previous reports. First, it was noted that the lack of capacity characterising local government burdened and threatened to pre-occupy ‘central authority’ (Mills, 1949, para. 5.3). Furthermore, too much expenditure was centred on social services rather than on developing economic activity. Blame for such developments was partly laid at the door of local politics (‘this is almost inevitable in conditions of political immaturity deriving from universal adult suffrage’ (Mills, 1949, para 5.6)). Civil servants’ obligation to ‘translate policy on the part of those who, through election are made the trustees of the interests of the whole people irrespective of party’ involved ‘the exclusion of arbitrariness, capriciousness, or fancifulness’ (Mills, 1949, para 5.7). However, Mills suggested that civil servants were afraid of speaking truth to politicians as that ‘may put at risk the career of any public servant’ (1949, para 5.7). Indeed, the *Gleaner* argued that Bustamante’s criticism of the Mills Report was largely because of the criticisms about politicians’ behaviour that Mills had noted. In addition, Mills also criticised civil servants, ridiculing the notion that the tropical climate could be considered as a major impediment, and condemning office accommodation, accounting and filing systems. He also advocated that pensioned-off police and prison officers should be used as office messengers rather than young people (1949, para 15.1–3).

While the Mills Report desired a ‘flexible articulation in the design and structure of the instrument of administration, composed in such a manner as to secure an economical application of the Government of the day’, some key criticisms of the operating PSB are repeated (CO137/907/3, CO137/904/1–28 September 1950). In particular, the Report argued that policy-making at the top was hindered, ‘as things are, they are fettered and frustrated by the misuse of routine that compels their attention. [Staff] were overburdened . . . with details of staff administration’ (Mills, 1949, para 39.2). Staff in general were seen to be insufficiently qualified, given a reliance on secondary education (Mills, 1949, paras 40.2–40.3), it was underpaid, ineffectively organised, over-staffed, and not offering sufficient opportunities of ‘promotion for ability’. Mills therefore argued for the division of the service into administrative and clerical grades, with direct entry into the administrative service for suitably qualified applicants, for the creation of a PSC, for a regrading to ‘retire the dead wood’, as well as for an increase in pay and living expenses.

The Colonial Office, however, noted that these recommendations faced difficulties, given the problematic financial position of the island. Bustamante demanded higher taxes rather than expenditure reductions to pay for higher wages (as he suspected civil servants’ suffering to be comparable to other Jamaicans), while the Civil Service Association accepted the need for a reorganisation, although it noted that salary scale adjustments meant that the civil service continued to remain ‘unattractive’. Neither of the two main

political parties was interested in taking up the issue of wage demands, because, as the Colonial Office put it, ‘Mills’ proposals are about all Jamaica can afford’ (CO137/904/1, 28 September 1950). Manley and his party advocated the split between administrative and clerical grades (unlike Bustamante who successfully vetoed proposals that would have allowed for entry into the administrative class not solely through the clerical route).³

The recommendations of the Mills Report were seen as establishing the ‘foundation for a better civil service’, as it potentially accelerated promotion opportunities (CO137/904/1, 28 September 1950). However, the recommendations regarding salary increases had to be delayed, given political opposition and the precarious financial position that made the proposed increases unaffordable. The debates regarding the PSC, in contrast, focused largely on the powers of the Secretary of State, the extent to which the Commission’s powers should be restrained until independence (as advocated by the governor general) and how to achieve consistency across different Caribbean territories (CO137/904/2).

A colonial PSB?

Across the reports and debates considered above, the central focus was on the main dimensions of the PSB, but very little on the implications for the wider development of relations between bureaucracy and the political system. Such concerns emerged primarily in the context of the more immediate discussions surrounding pending independence. In this section, each PSB dimension is discussed in turn, paying attention to the shifting emphases over time that reflect different sensitivities that shape how assumptions about (colonial) government from Westminster were reflected in debates about administration in the colonies. Our findings are summarised in [Table 1](#), below.

In terms of *reward*, the continuing theme is one of low pay and poor promotion opportunities as well as to some extent poor living and working conditions. Particularly in the earlier part of the period we considered, the lack of structured recruitment processes, and an entrenched resistance to appointment on merit was also said to stand in the way of attracting candidates who went beyond the minimal qualifications. To some extent, the official record needs to be tempered by interview evidence which suggested that for brown or black Jamaicans from the 1930s onwards, the civil service represented a prestigious career, attracting high-achieving scholarship students from rural areas, and indeed that the service in the Jamaican civil service was seen as an attractive career opportunity for officers of other territories. Mills (1994, p. 59) notes that with the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, the Treasury began to challenge the dominance of the Secretariat (previously the main policy-making department, headed by the Colonial Secretary), and this

Table 1. Overview of PSB-related debates in Jamaica.

	Whitehall-legacy (as defined by Schaffer)	Observed patterns (to 1945)	Observed patterns (1945–1962)
Reward	Comfortable reward, certain degree of security and predictability	Continued themes of insufficient reward, and poor promotion opportunities	Insufficient reward, improved promotion opportunities (local). Secure and predictable tenure
Competency	Competent operation in the light of preferences of government of the day	Lack of expertise and skill, although increase in Jamaican entrants by 1930s	Lack of expertise and skill, the civil service was seen as a prestigious career, attracting some of the best and brightest local students
Loyalty	Loyal service to the ‘government of the day’	Hardly mentioned, only in context of criticism that government is ‘shuffling’ out	Remained a marginal issue. Increased tensions as independence approached

provided opportunities for brown and black Jamaicans who were in practice excluded from the Secretariat.

Criticism was also raised regarding the preference of the ‘locals’ and the way in which the desire by some parties to protect a career structure where individuals started at the clerical ‘bottom’ and could rise to the administrative ‘top’ prohibited the direct recruitment of individuals into the administrative grade. Whereas the reward side was directly linked to the competence aspect of the PSB in the earlier reports, those documents and correspondence that sought to prepare Jamaica for independence pointed to the inherent link between reward and loyalty. For example, it was argued that career civil servants deserved not to be abandoned by the Colonial Office.

Similarly, in terms of *competence*, there was continued discontent with the capability of individual civil servants, as well as the overall organisational set-up. In terms of the latter, a continuous theme throughout the reports was that the colonial leadership, that is, colonial governor and heads of departments, was overburdened with the ‘wrong’ activities. The lack of capacity at the local government level further impeded the capacity of the colony-wide administration as it displaced activity and generated further local dissatisfaction. In contrast, other parts of the civil service were seen as poorly skilled. This was reflected in repeated demands for university graduates to be recruited, and to allow for direct entry into the administrative grades. Indeed, the Mills Report and the Salaries Commission made the case for the recruitment of scientists.

However, such attempts were stifled by local politics. As noted, by Moyne and other reports, poor salaries and the perception of fear to be exposed to criticism (and worse) from local actors as well as the Colonial Office itself led to a decision style that was seen as risk averse and accommodating ‘dead wood’ (therefore, the Mills Report suggested a re-grading to allow for difficult choices to be made).

Loyalty was perhaps the least-discussed dimension of the PSB, suggesting that the underlying assumptions were never really questioned. This is perhaps not surprising in an era where officers acted within a direct line hierarchy extending, via the Colonial Secretary to the Governor. Yet starting with the 1939–1942 report, one sees an emerging issue as to whom civil servants are loyal: the Government or the wider public? As independence approached, we also observe increasing evidence of a concern with the implications for civil servants from independence. The Colonial Office somewhat fatalistically noted that it was likely that post-independence life would witness politicisation. There was also only limited interest in providing sitting civil servants with constitutional guarantees that would have monetary value (i.e. compensation payments). The other aspect of loyalty debates was the issue of political interference. The Mills Report in particular argued that local politicians showed limited respect for civil servants, thereby creating a climate of distrust that would reduce government capability at large.

Conclusions

This article contributes to the assessment of Jamaica’s (and other Caribbean islands’) colonial legacy, and to contemporary policy debates about the rejection or reform of British administrative institutions and practices. While our analysis points to the difficulty in sustaining in everyday practice the understandings of the colonial-era PSB, it paradoxically also points to its persistence, and therefore also to the difficulty in adapting a colonial-era administrative doctrines to the post-independence era. Presciently, a report to the Government of Jamaica prepared under the United Nations Programme of Technical Assistance (Angus, Barrett, & Holstein, 1965) published only three years after independence highlights how the persistence of a colonial-era bargain founded on insulation from political factors imperilled the survival of the civil service itself. Although praising Jamaica’s ‘strong, uncorrupt civil service’ as ‘a national asset of incalculable and fundamental value’ (Angus et al., 1965, para. 1.), the report nonetheless saw a lack of responsiveness to elected ministers as a serious threat to the survival of a permanent career civil service in Jamaica (Angus et al., 1965, para. 7).

As the civil service proved unable or unwilling to ‘serve different political masters and give loyal and effective service to each one’, then ‘ministers will

inevitably be faced with the temptation to press for the appointment to positions of responsibility in the civil service of people who *will* in fact carry out their policies and plans' (Angus et al., 1965, para. 7). The PSB analysis developed here helps to explain the deeper doctrinal and institutional factors that impeded the responsiveness of the Jamaican civil service.

Beyond these specific and practical lessons for Caribbean administration, our analysis points to a number of broader lessons for comparative scholarship. For example, the contemporary literature on comparative politics has pointed to different developmental trajectories depending on whether territories were governed on the basis of 'direct rule' and 'indirect rule', especially in the case of British colonial rule (Gerring, Ziblatt, Van Gorp, & Arevalo, 2011; Lange, Mahoney, & vom Hau, 2008; Mahoney, 2010).

If colonialism is, as Hobson (1905, p. 5) famously suggested, 'the power of colonists to transplant the civilisation they represent to the new natural and social environment in which they find themselves', then a much more contextual approach towards the extent and limits of this power is required. The broader potential of PSB analysis is to combine such a contextual approach with the generalising ambitions of social science. Such an approach requires a move beyond a reliance on select secondary sources on which the literature on colonial legacies, like the wider literature on historical institutionalism, is based. The differences we traced between the doctrines of colonial rule and the everyday experience of officials point to the risks in relying only on the former.

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Notes

1. Except where otherwise indicated, all archival references in this article are to files held in The National Archives, Kew, London.

2. Bustamante argued in the House of Representatives that ‘... every one of us knows it is a fact that the great majority of those who have had College training are almost absolute failures, and some are failures’ (*The Gleaner*, 10 August 1950).
3. According to the *Gleaner*, Manley accused his opponents of not having considered the Mills Report, and, instead, displaying an ‘abundance of expression of bad manners, of strange noises more appropriate to the cattle pen and pig sty’.

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