

EVOLUTION OF OMNIBUS TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM OF SRI LANKA ABSTRACT

ARIYAWANSA DISANAYKE

Sri Lanka's omnibus transportation has evolved in three main phases. It was originated as a private enterprise in 1907. At the initial stage, the private bus owners staked the public welfare for making profits. Therefore, after a decade government intervened to restore law and order in this industry and to secure public welfare. In the late 1950's, omnibus transportation was nationalised. After two decades of nationalisation, because of the inefficiency, loss and inability to adapt according to the growing needs of the country this industry was deregulated. Presently the bus transportation service signifies a mixed economy. When the public welfare and current needs of the economy are concerned bus transportation in Sri Lanka remains in a backward state.

Historical Background

The socio-economic and political needs of a country determine the patterns of development of that country's transportation system. Therefore, a country's need of rapid economic growth, social transformation and political integration leads to build an efficient transportation system. This had been emphasised by the socio-economic and political needs of various periods. The object of this paper is to examine the historical evolution of omnibus transportation of Sri Lanka in several aspects.

As the historical evidence suggests there were no proper roads available for passenger transportation in Sri Lanka. However, there were pathways which were described by Bingham as "in truth no more than mere clearing through forests.....practicable for rough cart traffic during the dry season but impassable during the rains" (Bingham). Governor Fredrick North who made a trip round the island in 1800 had to do it with 160 palanquin bearers and numerous elephants as part of his entourage" (Bingham). These records provide evidence for the under developed state of road transport system during the early British administration. However, after conquering the Kandyan Kingdom British realised the importance of a developed transportation system for a stable rule as well as for proper transformation of the economic activities. Governor Edward Barnes is