

**THE BEGINNINGS OF A COLONIAL BUREAUCRACY :
BRITISH ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY EMBODIED IN THE
KANDYAN CONVENTION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

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Under any system of government in modern times, bureaucracy¹ plays a very important role in determining and carrying out the aims, interests and policies of the rulers. This is particularly so with regard to the colonial administrations where the rulers were aliens in the eyes of the people in terms of race, ideology and interests.

The British who occupied the Dutch possessions in the Maritime Provinces of Sri Lanka in 1796,² annexed the interior provinces of the island which were under the Kandyan King, in 1815. On the part of the British, the annexation of Kandy was a stage in the territorial and political expansion of the British empire and an essential step towards strengthening their position in Sri Lanka which was of strategic and military importance in the defence of their power in India.

According to some scholars, British colonial policy like the colonial policy of the other European powers, was in the main moulded by economic considerations. But other scholars are of the view that colonialism arose from the competition for power among European nations and argue that it was mainly moulded by political considerations. However, even if colonialism was motivated mainly by economic considerations we should not ignore the importance of political, military and strategic aims in the development of colonial policy.

At first, the main concern of British colonial policy was commerce. They were interested in obtaining Eastern produce from colonies at the lowest price either for the European market or for inter-Asian trade which was also in the end directed towards the establishment of their position in the European market. This object was effectively attained by the English East India Company, a chartered company which enjoyed a monopoly with regard to British trade with Asia and exercised political power over certain areas where it utilized the native revenue system and other social and economic institutions for its own advantage. With the spread of the Industrial Revolution in Britain, British colonial policy changed in perspective. Thus it came to be directed towards the import of raw materials, such as cotton, and other items of trade, such as spices, sugar and tobacco which would not compete with British produce, and towards the opening up of potential markets in the colonies for English products. In