

## 8. 1942 Governor Sir Alan Cardinall's 'Utopian dream'

On 22 February 1942 Governor Sir Alan Cardinall sent a 75 page Despatch <sup>1</sup> to London outlining his proposals for a post-war development programme for the Islands. Cardinall's 50-year plan was strikingly different from all other development plans - it was both radical and visionary.

Cardinall's Despatch is significant for a number of reasons:

- It revealed clearly the frustrations felt by some in the Islands as a result of the failure to respond adequately to the agricultural situation, and to the advice given in both the Munro and Davies reports.
- It also revealed some of the misunderstandings and prejudices found in the Colonial Office with regards to the proper management and development of a distant colony.
- It presages much of the thinking, which is contained within the Shackleton Reports of 1976 & 1982.
- Any major development programme of the scale proposed by Cardinall - albeit concerned with a wide range of issues - would have considerable impact on the natural environment.

Governor Sir Herbert Henniker-Heaton left the Islands in 1941 having been unable to convince the large-scale farming interests in the Islands of the importance of the central tenet of William Davies' work, *i.e.* sub-division of the land into 6,000 acre paddocks. Henniker-Heaton sought a rapid transformation of the situation - but his successor advocated a more patient and long-term approach. Despite this apparent 'gradualist' approach Cardinall's proposals were, in practice, much more radical than anything previously suggested in the Islands' history - so much so they were described in a Colonial Office Minute as 'a Scandinavian-style socialist utopian dream.' It is clear from the comments made in London about Cardinall's plan that the Colonial Office suspected that the Governor had 'gone native'. It is also quite certain that the Colonial Office were either unable or unwilling to deal with the philosophical

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<sup>1</sup> CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

and political basis of Cardinall's plan. Running throughout Cardinall's Despatch is his implied criticism of the Colonial Office's unwillingness to stand-up to the large farming companies or to spend any large amount of development money in the Colony, and its inability to formulate any long-term plan for the Islands - other than the commissioning of yet more surveys and reports.

An insight into the central theme of Cardinall's philosophy came at the beginning of his Despatch when he quotes a Sudani proverb: 'To teach boys is to plough good earth, to teach men is to plough rock, and to teach old men is to plough water.'

Cardinall's plan proposed a significant road building programme, the creation of an Agricultural Institute, and the co-operative tenancy (not ownership) of the land and farms. This aspect of Cardinall's proposals is an echo of the original conception of land use proposed by Governor Richard Moody in the 1840s.

Cardinall writes: <sup>2</sup>

Pastoral agriculture, sheep farming is the only industry. In recent years the sheep population has decreased owing to the deterioration of the land due to over-grazing and the destruction of the grass. (paragraphs 4-7).

In the Falklands' conditions a long-term policy was the only viable one. (paragraph 10) Present farming methods have produced serious deterioration of the land. Smaller fields and better grazing management was required (paragraph 23). Wool is the staple industry. Meat and tallow have been tried without success. The Islands cannot enter the meat market as a mutton producing country (paragraphs 27-37). 'Wool production cannot be increased as the wool market is near saturation point' (paragraphs 38-45). There are no roads at present except around Port Stanley. The only road communication is by horse tracks. 'What is required is a road from east to west across the East Falkland. No proper survey exists to indicate the route' (paragraphs 47-50). Complementary to the road plan is a regular inter-island (*i.e.* between the main islands

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<sup>2</sup> All the material from Cardinall's 1942 Report comes from CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942; source material concerning Cardinall's specific proposals, quoted from the Report, are indicated by the paragraph numbers of the Report.

of East and West Falkland) shipping service. This would run from the terminus at the new township site on Falkland Sound to West Falkland, *e.g.* Fox Bay (paragraphs 55-60). Cardinall states that an air Service had been first considered in 1938, but it was thought too costly. The Governor considers that funds should be raised for the maintenance of two aircraft (paragraph 63).

The establishment of a road system would shift the commercial centre of the Falkland Islands to East Falkland Sound, which would result in freight savings, and which would expose the present dominant position of the Falkland Islands Company. Hence opposition is to be expected from this Company. (paragraphs 78-84).

Stanley itself would, however, remain the centre of Government and the location of the Naval base (paragraph 85). Commercially the proposed road would hardly justify its cost. Its main justification is long term and social (paragraph 88-89).

The exploitation of other natural resources must be considered: peat (paragraphs 105-105); vegetables for export (paragraphs 106-109); exporting sand for the production of glass (paragraph 110); kelp for iodine and potash (paragraphs 111-113); homespun wool (paragraph 114); guano (paragraph 115); fish (paragraph 116-117). Cardinall evaluated the prospects for a fishing industry; he commented: 'Always too is the pernicky attitude of the Argentine Government, barring that country from any solid chance of exploitation.'<sup>3</sup>

Cardinall considers the problem of the shortage of labour, and increased colonisation would be one solution. But it pre-supposes the disappearance of large-scale landowners and the development of the small holding system. Labour might be imported, but the real trouble was conservatism of the farmers (paragraphs 118-125). Cardinall dealt at length with the problems of unemployment and the population drift from the camp into the town (paragraphs 129-146).

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<sup>3</sup> It is not clear what exploitation Cardinall had in mind - most likely the exploitation of the fish resources. CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942; *op.cit.*

The road system is a *sine qua non* of any development. It will encourage immigration, foster rural life by making it more attractive and provide amenities elsewhere than in Stanley (paragraph 146).

and:

The solutions proposed are co-operative communities on the Danish plan - itself based on sound secondary agricultural education. Education directed towards the wrong objects and a too low leaving age is the cause of a large part of the present discontent with country life. Secondary education directed towards the agricultural life inside a co-operative community might create a contented rural community. (paragraphs 149 & 229-237).

The Despatch considered a possible oil industry; although a Government report in 1922 had suggested that while the prospects were not good, but the possibility of there being oil in the Islands could not be ruled out without exploratory borings (paragraph 151).

Cardinall criticised the proposal of the previous Governor to establish 6,000 acre leasehold holdings:

6,000 acre Blocks are too large for sheep farming, too small for sheep ranching. The estimates are too loose to be safe; with these holdings it would not be practicable to ranch or farm sheep (paragraphs 153-170).

‘An Agricultural High School and Institute should be established, and should be co-located on the site of the revived Agricultural Experimental Station abandoned in the 1920s.’ The new Experimental Farm and Institute should be established at Albemarle. Boys should go to this Institute from five years until aged nineteen. From nineteen until thirty-five boys should be placed on private farms as highly trained farm labourers. From thirty-five they would set up in small-holdings on the lines of the Danish co-operative system (paragraphs 208-245).

The Governor admits: ‘the idea is a vast gamble ... But without trial and experiment no progress is possible’ (paragraphs 256-257). ‘It is unfortunately impossible to predict accurately the cost of these proposals - but a rough estimate is about £500,000’ (paragraph 275).

Cardinall was fully aware of the radical nature of his proposals - and the difficulty of dealing with deeply entrenched opinions - both in Stanley and in London.

Cardinall made a number of telling remarks which reveal his attitudes towards sheep farming in the Islands, and his knowledge of the effects of sheep ranching upon the natural environment:

Sheep farming has everywhere in the world proved to be a drain on the natural resources of the land and a steady exhaustion of agricultural wealth, when carried on by ranching rather than farming methods. Since the introduction of sheep in this Colony, the steady deterioration of the land has been noticed.<sup>4</sup>

The heart of Cardinall’s revolutionary plan was revealed when he said: ‘I put forward the solution of co-operative communities founded on the Danish plan which itself should be founded on sound secondary agricultural education.’

Cardinall’s tackled the vexed subject of the large farming companies head on:

I definitely do not believe in improving present conditions at Government expense whilst still maintaining the system in existence. This would be nothing more than Government support of large landowners.<sup>5</sup>

Governor Cardinall was well aware that he was open to the criticism that he was being utopian:

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<sup>4</sup> CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

<sup>5</sup> CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

My contention is that farming in any of its forms cannot survive at its best unless it is made so interesting and inspiring that it becomes a hobby and a love. One must keep on the land the intelligent and far-seeing, the progressive and the liberal and not be content with the slow, conservative and the almost unimaginative. If therefore, before counter attractions grow too strong and numerous, one were to teach agriculture, show its beauty, its science, its possibilities, one might so interest him that the go-ahead impatient youth, brimful of ideas and hopes, would look to the land not only as source of livelihood but as that of his life's happiness and content. This is an ideal that perhaps may seem too utopian.<sup>6</sup>

It would be easy to dismiss Cardinal's view of agriculture as romantic idealism, but the following quotation from his Report revealed his deep love of the Islands and its rural way of life.

If a child is educated through all his school life to see the land as the greatest of all possible spheres of work, to know that his future thereon is assured and that his old age will be cared for, if he can be trained to love the soil as his ancestors used to do, if he can be shown that there is neither monotony or drudgery in working alongside Nature, then surely one will succeed in eventually raising here a truly agricultural colony of well-to-do yeomanry.<sup>7</sup>

Cardinal's concluding remarks showed that he also understood both the importance of implementing proposals to create a more a representative form of Government in the Islands, and also the opposition his proposals would face:

I am fully aware my proposals are highly controversial and are certain to evoke both criticism and opposition ... But there is one obvious criticism which the past history of these islands has impressed on all in the Colony, and

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<sup>6</sup> CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

<sup>7</sup> It is of some significance that at this point in the Despatch a pencilled comment appears in the margin. It was probably added at the Colonial Office in 1945, and is stated that Cardinal's ideas are '[S]oundly conceived if a little Utopian.' CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

that is - *can continuity of policy be assured?* If a plan looking fifty years ahead is adopted, continuity must somehow be most certainly guaranteed.<sup>8</sup>

Within the Islands the Governor had his supporters. John Gibbs, the Colony's Agricultural Advisor praised it as 'one of the most comprehensive plans for development ever envisaged for a British Colony.'<sup>9</sup> The Director of Public Works thought that:

If adopted it would cut the Gordian knot of the Colony's troubles in all its threads ... [but] the very boldness and simplicity of the plan will cause its non-acceptance in the UK and the resultant return to the present drift.<sup>10</sup>

Governor Sir Alan Cardinall's *magnum opus* did indeed receive a mixed reaction in London. Over the next three years it was shuffled around several Government departments while a succession of advisors and experts made detailed comments.

The first Minute dated 28 August 1942<sup>11</sup> began with apologising for the length of time in dealing with the Despatch because its deals with 'long term matters and there have been more urgent short term questions to be dealt with'. It noted that Sir Herbert Henniker-Heaton's land settlement scheme is dismissed as impracticable, and that Cardinall proposed that:

A road be built across East Falkland to improve communications with West Falkland; to establish an Agricultural High School combined with an experimental farm to train younger members of the community ... to stop the dangerous tendency to become a discontented black-coated class for which the Colony offers no outlets.<sup>12</sup>

It is noted that the Despatch draws attention to the serious deterioration of the quality of grazing resulting from the present methods of sheep ranching ...

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<sup>8</sup> CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

<sup>9</sup> Gibbs, J.G. letter to Governor Sir Alan Cardinall; 10 March 1942; CS 8/42; Falkland Islands Government Archive.

<sup>10</sup> CS8/42; Falkland Islands Government Archive; Woodgate, A, letter to Governor Cardinall; 9 February 1942.

<sup>11</sup> By Trafford-Smith. CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

<sup>12</sup> CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

suggesting a Danish style model of co-operative community to arrest this tendency ... It is noted that the Governor admits his policy is a complete gamble, and it is noted that the Governor is most vague on the subject of finance...initial capital outlay of £500k to be financed by Colonial Development loans, doubled income tax and a wool export tax.<sup>13</sup>

The Governor's plans are described as utopian, but it is conceded that he made an adequate case for the road and the establishment of the Agricultural School. The initial response of the Colonial Office was that these proposals should be approved, and that they should be implemented after the end of the War. But the conservative nature of the Colonial Office prevailed:

It is exceedingly difficult to deal with proposals of this wide sweep, especially as they are all aimed at the unpredictable period 'after the war'. Personally I think we should reply thanking the Governor for his comprehensive picture approving the road and the school in principle, but remaining deliberately rather vague about the rest. The plain fact is that it would be rather rash to commit any Colony to a 50-year post war programme.<sup>14</sup>

This comment was short-sighted, and the failure to engage in any long-term planning for the Islands, at this point, was a serious mistake.

A Minute from Dr Tempany, on 10 September 1942<sup>15</sup> noted that although Cardinal had put a great deal of work into the Despatch he did not find the Governor's conclusions very satisfactory. 'It seems to me that what we have got to have in mind in regard to the Falkland Islands is what can be made of the place.'<sup>16</sup>

Tempany noted that the knowledge that is now possessed of the Islands was considerable because of the Davis Report. He cast doubt on the Agricultural School and Experimental Farm ideas until the aims and objectives were much clearer.

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<sup>13</sup> CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

<sup>14</sup> CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

<sup>15</sup> CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

<sup>16</sup> CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

The pessimistic analysis of Cardinall about the current wool industry in the Islands was also challenged, but it was conceded that:

The development of farmsteads should be allowed to associate with the larger properties and that the farmstead owners should be allowed grazing rights on a certain number of larger properties. Alternatively some system of communal grazing rights might be possible.<sup>17</sup>

The Minute also questioned the similarities with Denmark because of the lack of ready-made markets for the produce of a mixed farming model, but it agreed with the plea to establish a road system but ‘his ideas are too grandiose ... something simpler might suffice ... To start off with a first class motor road seems to be going rather far.’<sup>18</sup>

Despite Mr Cardinall’s enthusiasms I can see no practical substitute for wool ... and the idea of breeding bloodstock for export is to my mind doubtfully impracticable if for nothing else the distance kills it whilst it is hard to see how a reputation for such stock could be built from nothing under such circumstances.<sup>19</sup>

Some pencilled comments in the margin at this point are revealing: ‘Pole-Evans is said to be selling pedigree stock in South America, but we have no evidence that this is a paying proposition’.

I do not see why homespun woollens should not be practicable ... and it should not be dismissed off-hand. Weaving could certainly be taught in the schools ... I do not believe the future of the woollen industry is so hopeless as Mr Cardinall seems to think. If it is really so bad I can see no hope for the Falklands.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

<sup>18</sup> CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

<sup>19</sup> CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

<sup>20</sup> CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

The Colonial Office's response to Cardinall's Despatch does show that there is some understanding of the true nature of the problem with the pasturage:

There are probably inherent possibilities of the establishment of smallholdings on mixed farming lines using suitable crops and suitable rotations ... The basis of this would be subsistence agriculture ... conjoined with some cash crop ... The fundamental problem is the improvement of pastures from the grazing point of view ... this can only be done by the re-establishment of an Experimental Station.<sup>21</sup>

In a Minute, dated 18<sup>th</sup> Sept 1942, J Smith noted:

Although I find much to criticise in this Despatch, I have read it with the greatest interest for it is an attempt to deal with a serious situation. It is of value in giving a picture of the Falklands and its problems ... There is any amount of evidence that communications must precede development. That roads are required in the Falklands is evident, but to what extent and what directions is still problematical.<sup>22</sup>

This is clear confirmation that Cardinall had grasped the essential elements required in any rural development, but the old, and entrenched, viewpoints concerning the deleterious effects of ranching still prevailed in the Colonial Office.<sup>23</sup> There was recognition that much more scientific information was required:

The first step is to engage three first class men; a soil chemist, a general agriculturist and a veterinarian ... and allow them to make a careful survey of the islands and report ... Steps for re-opening the Experimental Station should

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<sup>21</sup> CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

<sup>22</sup> CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

<sup>23</sup> 'There can be no doubt that the deterioration of the flocks has continued over many years and that their condition today is very unsatisfactory ... I do not doubt in the slightest that the pastures have deteriorated. The statement of the Governor that when sheep are carried on a ranching basis, exhaustion of land and wealth follows is rather astonishing ... if this were true there would be very little mutton and wool available for the markets; these are to a great extent supplied from sheep reared under ranching conditions (e.g. New Zealand and Australia).' CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

at once be taken. The closing down of the station was little short of a tragedy. At the moment we are planning a building without knowing what materials are available. The survey suggested would give all concerned something definite upon which to plan.<sup>24</sup>

In some of the latter comments made upon Cardinall's plan there is clear indication that some of his proposals were regarded as unrealistic.<sup>25</sup>

For nearly four years the Despatch and file did the rounds of various Colonial Office departments and in the end only 30% of the funding requested was provided for roads and education - and the central feature of small holdings based on sheep farming was dismissed as being financially impractical. The cost of the proposals was the major objection, and in the context of the devastated post-war economy of Great Britain 'a distant backwater like the Falkland Islands' was a lower priority than the African colonies. Consequently London rejected road construction and educational reform as presented; the former would incur capital and recurrent expenditure with 'little economic justification', while the latter would only prepare students for emigration without some major improvement in farming methods. London found no grounds for supposing that 'any drastic or immediate modification is possible in the one economic basis of the Islands.'<sup>26</sup>

An experimental station was approved, and it was charged to investigate mixed farming methods and pasturage improvements. Funds were provided to refurbish the Hospital in Stanley and to re-build the Town Hall destroyed by fire in 1944. Stanley's electrical supply system was improved, and funds were provided to improve housing and camp education. This piece-meal response to his proposals deeply disappointed Sir Alan Cardinall because it failed to address the issue of land reform. Bernhardson noted that 'like earlier efforts, Cardinall's plan became an historical curiosity.'<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942.

<sup>25</sup> CO78/216/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1942. (Minute dated 1 March 1945 by Williams, J).

<sup>26</sup> Bernhardson, W; 1989; op.cit.; p588.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*; p589.

On 3 June 1946 Sir Frank Stockdale made the pointed comment outlining the principle objection to Cardinall's proposals, namely the difficulty of dealing with the Falkland Islands Company, and other companies which were keen to preserve their secure positions in the Colony:

The Falkland Islands Company is the difficulty, but we must try to carry them with us in reforms. It would be quite impossible to break them except under a system of land nationalisation and that would only replace one monopoly for another, on which it would be just as difficult for us here in Whitehall to exercise sound economic progress as it is for the Falkland Islands Company to impress progressive ideas into their managers and employees. If we are going into land nationalisation let us gain some experience nearer home rather than attempt it in the Straits of Magellan.<sup>28</sup>

This comment is not a wholly fair assessment of the Falkland Islands Company's position, but it does reflect some of the continual tension that existed between the Colonial Office/Governors and large scale farming interests.

Since the beginning of the 1980s the agricultural scene has altered considerably. There is now a mixed pattern - with some small-holdings, some medium sized owner-occupied farms, some large owner-occupied farms, and a very large area of Government owned farmland.<sup>29</sup>

Shortly after the final reply from London to the Governor, the file and the original Despatch was marked SECRET and was closed until 1972. Cardinall's socialist and co-operative vision remains untried and unproven.

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<sup>28</sup> CO78/220/8; Colonial Office Records; Public Record Office; Kew; 1946

<sup>29</sup> Falkland Landholdings Ltd, and consisting of four farms.

