



HOUSE OF LORDS

LORD REID, LORD EVERSHED, LORD MORRIS OF BORTH-Y-GEST,
LORD HODSON AND LORD DEVLIN

5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15 NOVEMBER 1962, 14 MARCH 1963

- 10 **Police — County borough police force — Chief constable — Summary dismissal by watch committee — Whether rules of natural justice applicable to proceedings for dismissal — Chief constable previously indicted for alleged criminal offences — Acquitted, but conduct severely criticised by trial judge — Appeal against decision of watch committee dismissed by Home Secretary — Whether action by chief constable thereby barred — Municipal Corporations Act, 1882 (45 & 46 Vict c 50), s 191(4) — Police Act, 1919 (9 & 10 Geo 5 c 46), s 4(1) — Police (Appeals) Act, 1927 (17 & 18 Geo 5 c 19), s 2(3) — Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables, Assistant Chief Constables and Chief Constables) Regulations, 1952 (SI 1952 No 1706), reg 1 and reg 18.**
- 20 The appellant, who in March, 1958, was nearly fifty-nine years of age, joined Brighton Borough Police Force in 1925; thereafter he rose in the service and was appointed chief constable in 1956, the appointment being expressed to be subject “to the Police Acts and regulations”. In October, 1957, he was suspended from duty after he had been arrested, together with two other officers of the same police force, on charges which were subsequently the subjects of two indictments, one for criminal conspiracy to corrupt the course of justice and the other for corruption. At the end of the trial of the first indictment in February, 1958, at which the appellant had given evidence himself but had called no other witnesses, he was acquitted, but the other two police officers were convicted. In passing sentence on the other two
- 30 police officers, the trial judge intimated that they had not had from the appellant the professional and moral leadership which they should have had. At the trial of the second indictment on 6 March 1958, the prosecution offered no evidence against the appellant, and the judge directed the jury to acquit him, but again he made certain observations about the appellant.
- On 7 March 1958, the watch committee held a meeting at which, after considering matters relating to the appellant, they unanimously dismissed him from his office of chief constable under s 191(4)^a of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882. The appellant was not present at this meeting, nor was he charged or given notice of the proposal to dismiss him or particulars of the grounds on which it was based or an
- 40 opportunity of putting his case. By notice of appeal dated 12 March 1958, the appellant appealed, under the Police (Appeals) Act, 1927, to the Home Secretary against his dismissal, the notice stating that it was without prejudice to the validity of the watch committee's decision, and reserving right to contend that the procedure was bad. On 18 March 1958, the watch committee held a special meeting at which the appellant's solicitor requested them to re-consider their decision, particularly with regard to its consequences in relation to the plaintiff's pension, but by a majority the watch committee adhered to their previous decision.

On 5 July the Home Secretary dismissed the appellant's appeal. In October, 1958, the appellant commenced an action against the watch committee, claiming that his purported dismissal was void, and also claiming payment of salary and pension, or alternatively, damages. His action was dismissed. On appeal,

- ^a The terms of s 191(4) are set out at p 96, letter *h*, post

Held – Lord Evershed dissenting): (i) the decision of the watch committee on 7 March 1958, to dismiss the appellant was null and void for the following reasons—

(a) In exercising the power of dismissal conferred by s 191(4)^b of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882 (at any rate where that power was to be

- 10
- ^b The terms of s 191(4) are set out at p 96, letter *h*, post
[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 67

exercised on the ground of negligence, which required to be proved^c) the watch committee were bound to observe the principles of natural justice, but in this instance the committee had not observed them, for the appellant had not been charged nor informed of the grounds on which they proposed to proceed and had not been given a proper opportunity to present his defence (see p 80, letter *g*, p 109, letter *h*, and p 116, letter *d*, post).

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- ^c The power of dismissal was exercisable in relation to a borough constable whom the watch committee “think negligent in the discharge of his duty or otherwise unfit for the same”; there are dicta that the inclusion of the words “or otherwise unfit” conferred a residual discretion which might be unfettered, and for the exercise of which no charge was necessary (see p 111, letter *c*, and p 114, letter *g*, post)

Bagg's case (1615), 11 Co Rep 93b); *Cooper v Wandsworth Board of Works* ((1863), 14 CBNS 180); *De Verteuil v Knaggs* ([1918] AC 557) applied.

Dicta of Atkin LJ, in *R v Electricity Commissioners* ([1923] All ER Rep at p 161) and of Lord Hewart CJ, in *R v Church Assembly Legislative Committee* ([1927] All ER Rep at p 699) considered and explained.

Nakkuda Ali v M F de S Jayaratne ([1951] AC 66) disapproved in part.

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- and (b) (per Lord Morris of Borth-y-Gest, Lord Reid and Lord Hodson concurring) once there was a report or allegation from which it appeared that a chief constable might have committed an offence against the discipline code, established by regulations under the Police Act, 1919, it became a condition precedent to any dismissal based on a finding of guilty of such an offence that the regulations should in essentials have been put into operation, but the watch committee had not complied with the regulations, for they preferred no charge against the appellant and gave him no notice and no opportunity to defend himself (see p 102, letters *f* and *g*, p 116, letter *c*, and p 81, letter *b*, post);

or (c) (per Lord Devlin) compliance with reg 11(1) of the Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables etc) Regulations, 1952, but not all other of those regulations, was a condition precedent to dismissal, and here there had been no report or inquiry satisfying reg 11(1) (see p 118, letter *h*, post).

and (d) the proceedings at the meeting of 18 March 1958, were not a full re-hearing and did not make good the failure on 7 March to observe the rules of natural justice (see p 81, letter *a*, p 106, letter *i*, and p 112, letter *g*, post).

10 (e) (Lord Devlin dissenting) the consequence of the failure to observe the rules of natural justice was that the decision of 7 March 1958, was void, not merely voidable (see p 81, letter *e*, p 110, letter *a*, and p 116, letter *h*, post; cf p 120, letter *e*, post).

Wood v Woad ((1874), LR 9 Exch 190), approved.

(f) the same consequence flowed from disregard of the regulations (see p 104, letter *h*, p 105, letter *e*, p 81, letter *b*, and p 116, letters *c* and *d*, post).

Andrews v Mitchell ([\[1904–7\] All ER Rep 599](#)) and *Annamunthodo v Oilfields Workers' Trade Union* ([\[1961\] 3 All ER 621](#)) applied.

(ii) the decision of 7 March 1958, was a nullity, and the decision of the Secretary of State, although final and binding by virtue of s 2(3) of the Police (Appeals) Act, 1927, could not make valid that which was a nullity (see p 81, letter *i*, p 106, letter *i*, to p 107, letter *a*, p 116, letter *f*, and p 119, letter *b*, post).

20 Decision of the Court of Appeal ([\[1962\] 1 All ER 834](#)) reversed.

Notes

In considering the application of the principles of natural justice to cases of dismissal, Lord Reid distinguishes three classes of cases (i) dismissal of a servant by a master, (ii) dismissal from offices held at pleasure, and (iii) dismissal from an office where there must be something against a man to warrant his dismissal (see p 71, letter *f*, post). The present case fell within class (iii).

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 68

30 The question of waiver (cf holding (ii) at [\[1962\] 1 All ER p 835](#)), as distinct from the effect of s 2(3) of the Police (Appeals) Act, 1927, was referred to in the opinions (cf eg, p 81, letter *h*, and p 116, letter *e*, post), but it was doubted whether it really arose.

As to the statutory power to dismiss a member of a police force, see 30 *Halsbury's Laws* (3rd Edn) 103, para 171.

For the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, s 191, see 14 *Halsbury's Statutes* (2nd Edn) 140.

For the Police Act, 1919, see 18 *Halsbury's Statutes* (2nd Edn) 122.

For the Police (Appeals) Act, 1927, s 2(3), see *ibid*, 136.

For the Police (Discipline) Regulations, 1952, Sch 1, see 17 *Halsbury's Statutory Instruments* 200.

Cases referred to in opinions

Andrews v Mitchell [\[1904–7\] All ER Rep 599](#), [\[1905\] AC 78](#), 74 LJKB 333, 91 LT 537, 25 *Digest* (Repl) 347, 287.

Annamunthodo v Oilfields Workers' Trade Union [\[1961\] 3 All ER 621](#), [\[1961\] AC 945](#), [\[1961\] 3 WLR 650](#), 3rd *Digest* Supp.

10 *Bagg's Case* (1615), 11 Co Rep 93b, 1 Roll Rep 224, 77 ER 1271, 13 *Digest* (Repl) 217, 382.

Barnard v National Dock Labour Board [\[1953\] 1 All ER 1113](#), [\[1953\] 2 QB 18](#), [\[1953\] 2 WLR 995](#), 3rd *Digest* Supp.

Blisset v Daniel (1853), 10 Hare, 493, 1 Eq Rep 484, 1 WR 529, 68 ER 1022, 37 *Digest* (Repl) 609, 1703.

Board of Education v Rice [\[1911–13\] All ER Rep 36](#), [\[1911\] AC 179](#), 80 LJKB 796, 104 LT 689, 75 JP 393, HL, *affg*, SC sub nom *R v Board of Education*, [\[1910\] 2 KB 165](#), 79 LJKB 692, 102 LT 578, 74 JP 259, CA, 19 *Digest* (Repl) 630, 206.

Capel v Child (1832), 2 C & J 558, 2 Tyr 689, 1 LJEx 205, 149 ER 235, 19 *Digest* (Repl) 447, 2644.

20 *Cooper v Wandsworth Board of Works* (1863), 14 CBNS 180, 2 New Rep 31, 32 LJCP 185, 8 LT 278, 143 ER 414, 26 *Digest* (Repl) 585, 2450.

Cooper v Wilson [\[1937\] 2 All ER 726](#), [\[1937\] 2 KB 309](#), 106 LJKB 728, 157 LT 290, 101 JP 349, 30 *Digest* (Repl) 171, 219.

Dawkins v Antrobus (1881), [17 ChD 615](#), 44 LT 557, CA, *affg*, (1879), 41 LT 490, 8 *Digest* (Repl) 652, 21.

Daws, Re (1838), 8 Ad & El 936, 1 Per & Dav 146, 112 ER 1095, 16 *Digest* (Repl) 464, 2841.

De Verteuil v Knaggs [\[1918\] AC 557](#), 87 LJPC 128, 8 *Digest* (Repl) 691, 38.

30 *Dean v Bennett* (1870), [6 Ch App 489](#), 40 LJCh 452, 24 LT 169, 13 *Digest* (Repl) 228, 512.

Fisher v Jackson [\[1891\] 2 Ch 84](#), 60 LJCh 482, 64 LT 782, 19 *Digest* (Repl) 642, 278.

Fisher v Keane (1878), [11 ChD 353](#), 49 LJCh 11, 41 LT 335, 8 *Digest* (Repl) 656, 36.

Hogg v Scott [\[1947\] 1 All ER 788](#), [\[1947\] KB 759](#), [1948] LJR 666, [177 LT 32](#), 111 JP 282, 2nd *Digest* Supp.

Hopkins v Smethwick Local Board of Health (1890), [24 QBD 712](#), 59 LJQB 250, 62 LT 783, 54 JP 693, 26 *Digest* (Repl) 634, 2822.

Kanda v Government of The Federation of Malaya [\[1962\] AC 322](#), [\[1962\] 2 WLR 1153](#).

10 *Lapointe v L'Association de Bienfaisance et de Retraite de la Police de Montreal* [\[1906\] AC 535](#), 75 LJPC 73, 95 LT 479, 25 *Digest* (Repl) 323, *38.

Liversidge v Anderson [\[1941\] 3 All ER 338](#), [\[1942\] AC 206](#), 110 LJKB 724, 116 LT 1, 17 *Digest* (Repl) 422, 27.

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 69

Local Government Board v Arlidge [\[1914–15\] All ER Rep 1](#), [\[1915\] AC 120](#), 84 LJKB 72, 111 LT 905, 79 JP 97, HL revsg SC sub nom *R v Local Government Board, Ex p Arlidge*, [\[1914\] 1 KB 160](#), 83 LJKB 86, 109 LT 651, 78 JP 25, CA, 38 *Digest* (Repl) 102, 733.

Nakkuda Ali v Jayaratne (M F de S), [\[1951\] AC 66](#), 2nd *Digest* Supp.

Osgood v Nelson (1872), LR 5 HL 636, 41 LJQB 329, 13 *Digest* (Repl) 229, 513.

20 *R v Church Assembly Legislative Committee, Ex p Haynes Smith* [\[1927\] All ER Rep 696](#), [\[1928\] 1 KB 411](#), 97 LJKB 222, 138 LT 399, 44 TLR 68, 19 *Digest* (Repl) 240, 2.

R v Darlington School (Governors), (1844), [6 QB 682](#), 14 LJQB 67, 4 LTOS 175, 115 ER 257, 13 *Digest* (Repl) 229, 518.

R v Electricity Comrs, Ex p London Electricity Joint Committee Co (1920) Ltd[1923] All ER Rep 150, [\[1924\] 1 KB 171](#), 93 LJKB 390, 130 LT 164, 20 *Digest* (Repl) 202, 3.

R v Gaskin (1799), 8 Term Rep 209, 101 ER 1349, 16 *Digest* (Repl) 382, 1685.

30 *R v Metropolitan Police Comr, Ex p Parker* [\[1953\] 2 All ER 717](#), [\[1953\] 1 WLR 1150](#), 117 JP 440, 16 *Digest* (Repl) 461, 2811.

R v Nat Bell Liquors Ltd [\[1922\] All ER Rep 335](#), [\[1922\] 2 AC 128](#), 91 LJPC 146, 127 LT 437, 27 Cox, CC 253, 16 *Digest* (Repl) 469, 2897.

R v Neal [\[1949\] 2 All ER 438](#), [\[1949\] 2 KB 590](#), 33 Cr App Rep 189, 14 *Digest* (Repl) 662, 6717.

R v North, Ex p Oakey [\[1927\] 1 KB 491](#), 96 LJKB 77, 136 LT 387,
19 *Digest* (Repl) 345, 1302.

R v Smith (1844), [5 QB 614](#), 1 Dar & Mer 564, 13 LJQB 166, 21 LTOS 400, 9 JP
5, 114 ER 1381, 16 *Digest* (Repl) 382, 1686.

R v Stratford-upon-Avon Corpn (1670), 1 Lev 291, sub nom *Dighton v Stratford-
on-Avon Corpn*, 1 Sid 461, 2 Keb 641, 82 ER 1217, 13 *Digest* (Repl) 232, 554.

R v University of Cambridge (1723), 1 Stra 557, Fortes Rep 202, 2 Ld Raym 1334,
8 Mod Rep 148, 93 ER 698, 8 *Digest* (Repl) 506, 2281.

10 *Ramshay, Ex p* (1852), [18 QB 173](#), Cox, M & H 589, 21 LJQB 238, 18 LTOS 273,
16 JP 135, 118 ER 65, 13 *Digest* (Repl) 371, 24.

Russell v Norfolk (Duke) [\[1949\] 1 All ER 109](#), 12 *Digest* (Repl) 693, 5321.

Smith v R (1878), [3 App Cas 614](#), 47 LJPC 51, 38 LT 233.

Spackman v Plumstead Board of Works (1885), [10 App Cas 229](#), 54 LJMC 81, 53
LT 157, 40 JP 420, HL, *affg* SC sub nom *Plumstead Board of Works v Spackman*,
(1884), [13 QBD 878](#), 53 LJMC 142, 51 LT 757, 49 JP 132, CA, 26 *Digest* (Repl)
571, 2357.

Terrell v Secretary of State for the Colonies [\[1953\] 2 All ER 490](#), [\[1953\] 2 QB 482](#),
8 *Digest* (Repl) 793, 509.

20 *Urban Houses Co Ltd v Oxford Corpn* [\[1939\] 4 All ER 211](#), [\[1940\] Ch 70](#), 109
LJCh 38, 162 LT 29, 38 *Digest* (Repl) 230, 462.

Weinberger v Inglis (No 2) [\[1918\] 1 Ch 517](#), 87 LJCh 345, 118 LT 769, 34 TLR
337, CA, *affd* [\[1919\] AC 606](#), 88 LJCh 287, 121 LT 65, HL, 8 *Digest* (Repl)
651, 11.

Willis v Childe (1851), 13 Beav 117, 30 LJCh 113, 17 LTOS 12, 51 ER 46,
19 *Digest* (Repl) 640, 258.

Wood v Woad (1874), LR 9 Exch 190, 43 LJEx 153, 30 LT 815, 2 Asp MLC 289,
8 *Digest* (Repl) 656, 35.

Appeal

30 This was an appeal by Charles Field Williams Ridge (“the appellant”) from a decision
of the Court of Appeal (Holroyd Pearce, Harman and Davies

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 70

LJJ), dated 30 January 1962, and reported [\[1962\] 1 All ER 834](#), affirming the
judgment of Streatfeild J dated 19 April 1962, and reported [\[1961\] 2 All ER 523](#),
dismissing the appellant’s claim against the respondent watch committee, the police

authority of the county borough of Brighton, that their dismissal of him under s 191(4) of the Municipal Corporation Act, 1882, was invalid.

The Court of Appeal held that the watch committee, in dismissing the appellant under s 191(4) of the Act of 1882, were not bound to apply the Police (Discipline) Regulations, 1952, as those regulations required that, as a condition precedent to acting thereunder, a report or allegation must be received. In this case, however, the appellant had been dismissed after his acquittal on a criminal charge following which the trial judge had made certain observations on the fitness of the appellant for office as chief constable.

- 10 Such observations, the Court of Appeal held, were not a report or allegation. Further the Court of Appeal held that the watch committee, exercising their power under s 191(4) of the Act of 1882, were acting in an executive or administrative capacity, not in a judicial or quasi-judicial nature with the consequence that the rules of natural justice did not apply to their proceedings for dismissal. The Court of Appeal also held that by appealing to the Home Secretary under the Police (Appeals) Act, 1927, the appellant had waived his right to bring the action in the courts, notwithstanding the appellant purported to reserve his right to contend that the decision of the watch committee was a nullity.

- 20 It was not contended before the House of Lords that the power of dismissal conferred by s 191(4) of Act of 1882 was impliedly repealed, by the joint effect of the Police Act, 1919, s 4 and regulations thereunder (cf p 99, letter *i*, to p 100, letter *b*, post); accordingly the decision of the Court of Appeal (see [\[1962\] 1 All ER 834](#), letter *i*) on that point stands.

D J C Ackner QC and J L E Macmanus for the appellant.

Neville Faulks QC and P A Harmsworth for the respondents.

Their Lordships took time for consideration

14 March 1963. The following opinions were delivered.

LORD REID.

My Lords, the appellant, Mr Ridge, became Chief Constable of the County Borough of Brighton in 1956, after serving in the Brighton Police Force for some thirty-three years. At a meeting of the watch committee, the police authority, on 7 March 1958, it was resolved that he should be dismissed and he now maintains that that resolution was void and of no effect because he had no notice of the grounds on which the committee proposed to act and no opportunity to be heard in his own defence.

10 The appellant had been arrested on 25 October 1957, and subsequently tried on a charge of conspiring with the senior members of his force and others to obstruct the course of justice, and had been suspended from duty on 26 October. He was acquitted on 28 February but the other two members of the force were convicted and in sentencing them the trial judge, Donovan J made a statement which included grave reflections on the appellant's conduct. He was then indicted on a charge of corruption and was on 6 March acquitted, no evidence having been offered against him. On this occasion Donovan J made a further statement. On the day following that statement the watch committee met and summarily dismissed the appellant. I shall not deal further with these matters because my noble and learned friend Lord Morris of Borth-y-Gest intends to do so.

20 The power of dismissal is contained in s 191(4) of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882. So far as I am aware that subsection is the only statutory provision regarding dismissal, and the respondents purported to act under it. It is in these terms:

“The watch committee, or any two justices having jurisdiction in the borough, may at any time suspend, and the watch committee may at any time dismiss, any borough constable whom they think negligent in the discharge of his duty, or otherwise unfit for the same.”

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 71

30 The appellant maintains that the watch committee ought to have proceeded in accordance with regulations made under the Police Act, 1919, s 4(1), which authorised the Secretary of State to make regulations as to, inter alia, the conditions of service of the members of all police forces in England and Wales. Regulations were duly made but the respondents maintain that they do not apply to this case. For the moment I shall assume in their favour that that is so and consider whether the Act of 1882 taken by itself authorised them to do as they did.

40 The appellant's case is that in proceeding under the Act of 1882 the watch committee were bound to observe what are commonly called the principles of natural justice, that before attempting to reach any decision they were bound to inform him of the grounds on which they proposed to act and to give him a fair opportunity of being heard in his own defence. The authorities on the applicability of the principles of natural justice are in some confusion and so I find it necessary to examine this matter in some detail.

The principle audi alteram partem goes back many centuries in our law and appears in a multitude of judgments of judges of the highest authority. In modern times

opinions have sometimes been expressed to the effect that natural justice is so vague as to be practically meaningless. But I would regard these as tainted by the perennial fallacy that because something cannot be cut and dried or nicely weighted or measured therefore it does not exist.

10 The idea of negligence is equally insusceptible of exact definition but what a reasonable man would regard as fair procedure in particular circumstances and what he would regard as negligence in particular circumstances are equally capable of serving as tests in law, and natural justice as it had been interpreted in the courts is much more definite than that. It appears to me that one reason why the authorities on natural justice have been found difficult to reconcile is that insufficient attention has been paid to the great difference between various kinds of cases in which it has been sought to apply the principle.

What a minister ought to do in considering objections to a scheme may be very different from what a watch committee ought to do in considering whether to dismiss a chief constable. So I shall deal first with cases of dismissal. These appear to fall into three classes, dismissal of a servant by his master, dismissal from an office held during pleasure, and dismissal from an office where there must be something against a man to warrant his dismissal.

20 The law regarding master and servant is not in doubt. There cannot be specific performance of a contract of service and the master can terminate the contract with his servant at any time and for any reason or for none. But if he does so in a manner not warranted by the contract he must pay damages for breach of contract. So the question in a pure case of master and servant does not at all depend on whether the master has heard the servant in his own defence: it depends on whether the facts emerging at the trial prove breach of contract.

30 But this kind of case can resemble dismissal from an office where the body employing the man is under some statutory or other restriction as to the kind of contract which it can make with its servants, or the grounds on which it can dismiss them. The present case does not fall within this class because a chief constable is not the servant of the watch committee or indeed of anyone else.

Then there are many cases where a man holds an office at pleasure. Apart from judges and others whose tenure of office is governed by statute, all servants and officers of the Crown hold office at pleasure and this has even been held to apply to a colonial judge (*Terrell v Secretary of State*). It has always been held, I think rightly, that such an officer has no right to be heard before he is dismissed and the reason is clear. As the person having the power of dismissal need not have anything against the officer, he need not give any reason. That was stated as long ago as 1670 in *R v Stratford-upon-Avon Corpn* where the corporation dismissed a town clerk who held office durante bene placito. The leading case on

40 *[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 72*

this matter appears to be *R v Governors of Darlington School*, although that decision was doubted by Lord Hatherley LC in *Dean v Bennett* ((1870), 6 Ch App 489) and distinguished on narrow grounds in *Willis v Childe*. I fully accept that where an office

is simply held at pleasure the person having power of dismissal cannot be bound to disclose his reasons. No doubt he would in many cases tell the officer and hear his explanation before deciding to dismiss him. But if he is not bound to disclose his reason and does not do so, then, if the court cannot require him to do so, it cannot determine whether it would be fair to hear the officer's case before taking action. Again that is not this case.

10 In this case the Act of 1882 permits the watch committee to take action only on the grounds of negligence or unfitness. Let me illustrate the difference by supposing that a watch committee who had no complaint against their present chief constable heard of a man with quite outstanding qualifications who would like to be appointed. They might think it in the public interest to make the change but they would have no right to do it. But there could be no legal objection to dismissal of an officer holding office at pleasure in order to put a better man in his place.

So I come to the third class which includes the present case. There I find an unbroken line of authority to the effect that an officer cannot lawfully be dismissed without first telling him what is alleged against him and hearing his defence or explanation. An early example is *Bagg's case* though it is more properly deprivation of the privilege of being a burgess of Plymouth.

20 *R v Gaskin* arose out of the dismissal of a parish clerk and Lord Kenyon CJ ((1799), 8 Term Rep at p 210), referred to audi alteram partem as one of the first principles of justice. *R v Smith* was another case of dismissal of a parish clerk and Lord Denman CJ ((1844), 5 QB at pp 622, 623), held that even personal knowledge of the offence was no substitute for hearing the officer: his explanation might disprove criminal motive or intent and bring forward other facts in mitigation, and in any event delaying to hear him would prevent yielding too hastily to first impressions.

30 *Ex parte Ramshay* is important. It dealt with the removal from office of a county court judge and the form of the legislation which authorised the Lord Chancellor to act is hardly distinguishable from the form of s 191 which confers powers on the watch committee. The Lord Chancellor was empowered if he should think fit to remove on the ground of inability or misbehaviour but Lord Campbell CJ ((1852), 18 QB at p 190), said that this was

“only on the implied condition prescribed by the principles of eternal justice”.

In *Osgood v Nelson* objection was taken to the way in which the Corporation of the City of London had removed the clerk to the Sheriff's Court and Lord Hatherley LC said ((1872), LR 5 HL at p 649):

40 “I apprehend my Lords that as has been stated by the learned Baron who has delivered in the name of the judges their unanimous opinion, the court of Queen's Bench has always considered that it has been open to that court, as in this case it appears to have considered, to correct any court or tribunal or body of men who may have a power of this description, a power of removing from office, if it should be found such persons have disregarded any of the essentials of justice in the course of their inquiry before making that removal, or if it should be found that in the place of reasonable cause those persons have acted obviously upon mere individual caprice.”

That citation of authority might seem sufficient but I had better proceed further. In *Fisher v Jackson*, three vicars had power to remove the master of an endowed school. But unlike the *Darlington* case the trust deed set out the grounds on which he could be removed—briefly, inefficiency or failing to set a

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 73

10 good example—and it was held that they could not remove him without affording him an opportunity of being heard in his own defence. Only two other cases of this class were cited in argument, *Cooper v Wilson* and *Hogg v Scott*. Both dealt with the dismissal of police officers and both were complicated by consideration of regulations made under the Police Acts. In the former the majority at least recognised that the principles of natural justice applied and in deciding the latter Cassels J ([1947] 1 All ER at p 792; [1947] KB at p 767), in deciding that a chief constable could dismiss without hearing him an officer who had been convicted of felony, appears to have proceeded on a construction of the regulations.

Of course, if the regulations authorised him to do that and were intra vires in doing so there would be no more to be said. I do not think it necessary to consider whether the learned judge rightly construed the regulations, for he did not expressly or I think by implication question the general principle that a man is not to be dismissed for misconduct without being heard.

20 Stopping there I would think that authority was wholly in favour of the appellant, but the watch committee's argument was mainly based on what has been said in a number of fairly recent cases dealing with different subject-matter. Those cases deal with decisions by ministers, officials and bodies of various kinds which adversely affected property rights or privileges of persons who had had no opportunity or no proper opportunity of presenting their cases before the decisions were given. And it is necessary to examine those cases for another reason.

30 The question which was or ought to have been considered by the watch committee on 7 March 1958, was not a simple question whether or not the appellant should be dismissed. There were three possible courses open to the watch committee—reinstating the appellant as chief constable, dismissing him, or requiring him to resign. The difference between the latter two is that dismissal involved forfeiture of pension rights whereas requiring him to resign did not. Indeed, it is now clear that the appellant's real interest in this appeal is to try to save his pension rights.

It may be convenient at this point to deal with an argument that, even if as a general rule a watch committee must hear a constable in his own defence before dismissing him, this case was so clear that nothing that the appellant could have said could have made any difference. It is at least very doubtful whether that could be accepted as an excuse. But even if it could the watch committee would in my view fail on the facts.

40 It may well be that no reasonable body of men could have reinstated the appellant. But as between the other two courses open to the watch committee the case is not so clear. Certainly on the facts as we know them the watch committee could reasonably have decided to forfeit the appellant's pension rights, but I could not hold

that they would have acted wrongly or wholly unreasonably if they had in the exercise of their discretion decided to take a more lenient course.

I would start an examination of the authorities dealing with property rights and privileges with *Cooper v Wandsworth Board of Works*. Where an owner had failed to give proper notice to the board, they had under an Act of 1855^d authority to demolish any building which he had erected and recover the cost from him. This action was brought against the board because they had used that power without giving the owner an opportunity of being heard. The board maintained that their discretion to order demolition was not a judicial discretion and that any appeal should have been to the Metropolitan Board of Works. But the court decided unanimously in favour of the owner. *Erle CJ ((1863), 14 CBNS at p 189)*, held that the power was subject to a qualification repeatedly recognised that no man is to be deprived

- ^d See the Metropolis Management Act, 1855, s 76 [1963] 2 All ER 66 at 74

of his property without his having an opportunity of being heard and that this had been applied to “many exercises of power which in common understanding would not be at all a more judicial proceeding than would be the act of the district board in ordering a house to be pulled down”. *Willes J ((1863), 14 CBNS at p 190)* said that the rule was “of universal application and founded on the plainest principles of justice” and *Byles J ((1863), 14 CBNS at p 194)*, said that:

“although there are no positive words in a statute requiring that the party shall be heard, yet the justice of the common law will supply the omission of the legislature.”

This was followed in *Hopkins v Smethwick Local Board of Health*. *Wills J ((1890), 24 QBD at pp 714, 715)*, said:

“In condemning a man to have his house pulled down a judicial act is as much implied as in fining him £5: and as the local board is the only tribunal that can make such an order its act must be a judicial act and the party to be affected should have a notice given him ... The judgment of *WILLES, J. (in Cooper’s case [(1890), 14 CBNS at pp 190–194.])* goes far more upon the nature of the thing done by the board than on the phraseology of the Act itself. It deals with the case on principle: from the nature of the thing done it must be a judicial act and justice requires that the man should be heard.”

In the *Court of Appeal ((1890), 24 QBD at pp 716, 717)* Lord Esher MR in dismissing an appeal expressly approved the principles laid down in *Cooper’s* case.

The principle was applied in different circumstances in *Smith v R*. That was an action of ejectment on the alleged forfeiture of a Crown lease in Queensland. The governor was entitled to forfeit the lease if it had been proved to the satisfaction of a commissioner that the lessee had abandoned or ceased to reside on the land. The commissioner did not disclose to the lessee the case against him so that he had no opportunity to meet it, and therefore the decision could not stand. The Commissioner was not bound by any rules as to procedure or evidence but he had to conduct his inquiry “according to the requirements of substantial justice”. In *De Verteuil v Knaggs* the governor of Trinidad was entitled to remove immigrants from an estate

“on sufficient ground shown to his satisfaction.”

Lord Parmoor ([1918] AC at p 560) said that

“the acting governor was not called upon to give a decision on an appeal between parties and it is not suggested that he holds the position of a judge or that the appellant is entitled to insist on the forms used in ordinary judicial procedure ... “

but he had

10 “... a duty of giving to any person against whom the complaint is made a fair opportunity to make any relevant statement which he may desire to bring forward and a fair opportunity to correct or controvert any relevant statement brought forward to his prejudice.”

The duty of an official architect in fixing a building line was stated in somewhat similar terms in *Spackman v Plumstead Board of Works*.

I shall now turn to a different class of case—deprivation of membership of a professional or social body. In *Wood v Wood*, the committee purported to expel a member of a mutual insurance society without hearing him and it was held that their action was void and so he was still a member. Kelly CB said of audi alteram partem ((1874), LR 9 Exch at p 196)

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 75

20 “this rule is not confined to the conduct of strictly legal tribunals but is applicable to every tribunal or body of persons invested with authority to adjudicate upon matters involving civil consequences to individuals.”

This was expressly approved by Lord Macnaghten giving the judgment of the Board in *Lapointe v L'association de Bienfaisance etc* ([1906] AC 535).

In that case the board of directors of the association had to decide whether to give a pension to a dismissed constable—the very point the watch committee had to decide in this case—and it was held that they had to observe

“the elementary principles of justice.”

Then there are the club cases *Fisher v Keane* and *Dawkins v Antrobus*. In the former Jessel MR said ((1878), 11 ChD at pp 362, 363) of the committee:

30 “They ought not as I understand it according to the ordinary rules by which justice should be administered by committees of clubs, or by any other body of persons who decide upon the conduct of others, to blast a man's reputation for ever—perhaps to ruin his prospects for life without giving him an opportunity of either defending or palliating his conduct.”

In the latter case it was held that nothing had been done contrary to natural justice. In *Weinberger v Inglis (No 2)* a member of enemy birth was excluded from the stock exchange and it was held that the committee had heard him before acting. Lord Birkenhead LC said ([1919] AC at p 616):

“if I took the view that the appellant was condemned upon grounds never brought to his notice I should not assent to the legality of that course unless compelled by authority”.

He said this although the rule under which the committee acted was in the widest possible terms—that the committee should each year re-elect such members as they should deem eligible as members of the stock exchange.

I shall not at present advert to the various trade union cases because I am deliberately considering the state of the law before difficulties were introduced by statements in various fairly recent cases. It appears to me that if the present case
10 had arisen thirty or forty years ago the courts would have had no difficulty in deciding this issue in favour of the appellant on the authorities which I have cited.

So far as I am aware none of these authorities has ever been disapproved or even doubted. Yet the Court of Appeal have decided this issue against the appellant on more recent authorities which apparently justify that result. How has this come about? At least three things appear to me to have contributed. In the first place there have been many cases where it has been sought to apply the principles of natural justice to the wider duties imposed on ministers and other organs of government by modern legislation. For reasons which I shall attempt to state in a moment it has
20 been held that those principles have a limited application in such case and those limitations have tended to be reflected in other decisions on matters to which in principle they do not appear to me to apply.

Secondly, again for reasons which I shall attempt to state, those principles have been held to have a limited application in cases arising out of war-time legislation; and again such limitations have tended to be reflected in other cases. And thirdly, there has I think been a misunderstanding of the judgment of Atkin LJ, in *R v Electricity Comrs, Ex p London Electricity Joint Committee Co* ([\[1923\] All ER Rep 150](#) at pp 158 et seq; [\[1924\] 1 KB 171](#) at pp 198 et seq).

In cases of the kind with which I have been dealing the Board of Works or the governor or the club committee was dealing with a single isolated case. It was not
30 deciding, like a judge in a lawsuit, what were the rights of the person before it. But it was deciding how he should be treated—something analogous to a judge's duty in imposing a penalty. No doubt policy would play some part in the decision—but so it might when a judge is imposing a sentence. So it was easy to say that such a body is performing a quasi judicial task in considering and

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 76

deciding such a matter and to require it to observe the essentials of all proceedings of a judicial character—the principles of natural justice. Sometimes the functions of a minister or department may also be of that character and then the rules of natural justice can apply in much the same way.

40 But more often their functions are of a very different character. If a minister is considering whether to make a scheme for say an important new road, his primary concern will not be with the damage which its construction will do to the rights of

individual owners of land. He will have to consider all manner of questions of public interest and, it may be, a number of alternative schemes.

He cannot be prevented from attaching more importance to the fulfilment of his policy than to the fate of individual objectors and it would be quite wrong for the courts to say that the minister should or could act in the same kind of way as a board of works deciding whether a house should be pulled down. And there is another important difference.

As explained in *Local Government Board v Arlidge* a minister cannot do everything himself. His officers will have to gather and sift all the facts including objections by individuals and no individual can complain if the ordinary accepted methods of carrying on public business do not give him as good protection as would be given by the principles of natural justice in a different kind of case.

We do not have a developed system of administrative law—perhaps because until fairly recently we did not need it. So it is not surprising that in dealing with new types of cases the courts have had to grope for solutions, and have found that old powers, rules and procedure are largely inapplicable to cases which they were never designed or intended to deal with. But I see nothing in that to justify our thinking that our old methods are any less applicable today than ever they were to the older types of case. And, if there are any dicta in modern authorities which point in that direction, then in my judgment they should not be followed.

And now I must say something regarding war-time legislation. The older authorities clearly show how the courts engrafted the principles of natural justice on to a host of provisions authorising administrative interference with private rights. Parliament knew quite well that the courts had an inveterate habit of doing that and must therefore be held to have authorised them to do it unless a particular Act showed a contrary intention.

And such an intention could appear as a reasonable inference as well as from express words. It seems to me to be a reasonable and almost an inevitable inference from the circumstances in which defence regulations were made and from their subject-matter that at least in many cases the intention must have been to exclude the principles of natural justice. War-time secrecy alone would often require that and the need for speed and general pressure of work were other factors.

But it was not to be expected that anyone would state in so many words that a temporary abandonment of the rules of natural justice was one of the sacrifices which war conditions required—that would have been almost calculated to create the alarm and despondency against which one of the regulations was specifically directed. And I would draw the same conclusion from another fact. In many regulations there was set out an alternative safeguard more practicable in war time—the objective test that the officer must have reasonable cause to believe whatever was the crucial matter. (I leave out of account the very peculiar decision of this House in *Liversidge v Anderson*.)

So I would not think that any decision that the rules of natural justice were excluded from war-time legislation should be regarded as of any great weight in dealing with a

case such as this case which is of the older type, and which involves the interpretation of an Act passed long before modern modifications of the principles of natural justice became necessary, and at a time when, as Parliament was well aware, the courts habitually applied the principles of natural justice to provisions like s 191(4) of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882.

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 77

The matter has been further complicated by what I believe to be a misunderstanding of a much quoted passage in the judgment of Atkin LJ, in *R v Electricity Comrs*. He said ([1923] All ER Rep at p 161; [1924] 1 KB at p 205):

- 10 “The operation of the writs [of prohibition and certiorari] has extended to control the proceedings of bodies which do not claim to be and would not be recognised as, courts of justice. Whenever any body of persons having legal authority to determine questions affecting the rights of subjects, and having the duty to act judicially, act in excess of their legal authority, they are subject to the controlling jurisdiction of the King's Bench Division exercised in these writs.”

- A gloss was put on this by Lord Hewart CJ, in *R v Legislative Committee of the Church Assembly* ([1927] All ER Rep 696; [1928] 1 KB 411 at pp 415, 416). There it was sought to prohibit the Assembly from proceeding further with the Prayer Book Measure, 1927. That seems to me to have no resemblance to a question whether a person should be deprived of his rights or privileges, and the case was decided on the ground that this was a deliberative or legislative body and not a judicial body.
- 20 Salter J put it in a few lines ([1927] All ER Rep at p 701; [1928] 1 KB at p 419):

“The person or body to whom these writs are to go must be a judicial body in this sense, that it has power to determine and decide, and the power carries with it, of necessity, the duty to act judicially. I think that the Church Assembly has no such power and, therefore, no such duty.”

But Lord Hewart CJ said, having quoted the passage from Lord Atkin's judgment ([1928] 1 KB at p 415; [1927] All ER Rep at p 699):

- 30 “The question therefore which we have to ask ourselves in this case is whether it is true to say in this matter, either of the Church Assembly as a whole or of the Legislative Committee of the Church Assembly, that it is a body or persons having legal authority to determine questions affecting the rights of subjects and having the duty to act judicially. It is to be observed that in the last sentence which I have quoted from the judgment of ATKIN, L.J. [[1923] All ER Rep at p 161; [1924] 1 KB at pp 204, 205.], the word is not 'or' but 'and'. In order that a body may satisfy the required test it is not enough that it should have legal authority to determine questions affecting the rights of subjects; there must be superadded to that characteristic the further characteristic that the body has the duty to act judicially. The duty to act judicially is an ingredient which if the test is to be satisfied must be present. As these writs in the earlier days were issued only to bodies which without any harshness of construction could be called and naturally would be called courts so also today these writs do not issue except to bodies which act or are under the duty to act in a judicial capacity.”
- 40

I have quoted the whole of this passage because it is typical of what has been said in several subsequent cases. If Lord Hewart CJ, meant that it is never enough that a body simply has a duty to determine what the rights of an individual should be, but that there must always be something more to impose on it a duty to act judicially before it can be found to observe the principles of natural justice, then that appears

to me impossible to reconcile with the earlier authorities. I could not reconcile it with what Lord Denman CJ, said in *R v Smith* ((1844), 5 QB at pp 620–624), or what Lord Campbell CJ, said in *Ex parte Ramshay* ((1852), 18 QB 173 at pp 188–196), or what Lord

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 78

Hatherley LC said in *Osgood v Nelson* ((1872), LR 5 HL at pp 648–650), or what was decided in *Cooper v Wandsworth Board of Works*, or *Hopkins v Smethwich Local Board*, or what Lord Parmoor said in *De Verteuil v Knaggs* ([1918] AC at pp 558–563), or what Kelly CB ((1874), LR 9 Exch at pp 195–199) said, with the subsequent approval of Lord MacNaghten^e, in *Wood v Woad*, or what Jessel MR, said in *Fisher v Keane* ((1878), 11 ChD at pp 357–363), or what Lord Birkenhead LC said in *Weinberger v Inglis (No 2)* ([1919] AC at pp 610–617) and that is only a selection of the earlier authorities. And, as I shall try to show, it cannot be what Lord Atkin ([1923] All ER Rep at pp 160, 161; [1924] 1 KB at p 204) meant.

- ^e In *Lapointe's case* [1906] AC at p 540

In *R v Electricity Comrs* the commissioners had a statutory duty to make schemes with regard to electricity districts and to hold local inquiries before making them. They made a draft scheme which in effect allocated duties to one body which the Act required should be allocated to a different kind of body. This was held to be ultra vires and the question was whether prohibition would lie. It was argued that the proceedings of the commissioners were purely executive and controllable by Parliament alone. Bankes LJ said ([1923] All ER Rep at p 157; [1924] 1 KB at p 198):

“On principle and on authority it is, in my opinion, open to this court to hold, and I consider that it should hold, that powers so far-reaching, affecting as they do individuals as well as property, are powers to be exercised judicially and not ministerially, or merely, to use the language^f of PALLES, C.B., as proceedings towards legislation.”

So he inferred the judicial element from the nature of the power. I think that Atkin LJ ([1923] All ER Rep at pp 157 et seq.; [1924] 1 KB at pp 198 et seq), did the same. Immediately after the passage which I said has been misunderstood, he cited a variety of cases and in most of them I can see nothing “superadded” (to use Lord Hewart’s word) to the duty itself. Certainly Lord Atkin did not say that anything was superadded. A later passage in his judgment convinces me that he, like Bankes LJ (See [1923] All ER Rep at p 157; [1924] 1 KB at p 198), inferred the judicial character of the duty from the nature of the duty itself. Although it is long I am afraid I must quote it ([1923] All ER Rep at pp 161, 162; [1924] 1 KB at pp 206, 207):

- ^f In *R v Kingstown Comrs* (1885), 16 LR Ir 150

“In the present case the Electricity Commissioners have to decide whether they will constitute a joint authority in a district in accordance with law, and with what power they will invest that body. The question necessarily involves the withdrawal from existing bodies of undertakers of some of their existing rights, and imposing upon them of new duties including their subjection to the control of the new body, and new financial obligations. It also provides in the new body a person to whom may be transferred rights of purchase which at present are vested in another authority. The commissioners are proposing to create such a new body in violation of the Act of Parliament and are proposing to hold a possibly long and expensive inquiry into the expediency of such a scheme,

in respect of which they have the power to compel representatives of the prosecutors to attend and produce papers. I think that in deciding upon the scheme and in holding the inquiry they are acting judicially in the sense of the authorities I have cited ... “

There is not a word in Lord Atkin's judgment to suggest disapproval of the earlier line of authority which I have cited. On the contrary, he goes further than those authorities. I have already stated my view that it is more difficult

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 79

for the courts to control an exercise of power on a large scale where the treatment to be meted out to a particular individual is only one of many matters to be considered.

10 This was a case of that kind, and, if Lord Atkin was prepared to infer a judicial element from the nature of the power in this case, he could hardly disapprove such an inference when the power relates solely to the treatment of a particular individual.

The authority chiefly relied on by the Court of Appeal in holding that the watch committee were not bound to observe the principles of natural justice was *Nakkuda Ali v M F de S Jayaratne*. In that case the Controller of Textiles in Ceylon made an order cancelling the appellant's licence to act as a dealer, and the appellant sought to have that order quashed. The controller acted under a defence regulation, which empowered him to cancel a licence

20 “where the controller has reasonable grounds to believe that any dealer is unfit to be allowed to continue as a dealer.”

The Privy Council regarded that as ([1951] AC at p 77)

“imposing a condition that there must in fact exist such reasonable grounds known to the controller before he can validly exercise the power of cancellation.”

But according to their judgment certiorari did not lie and no other means was suggested whereby the appellant or anyone else in his position could obtain redress even if the controller acted without a shred of evidence. It is quite true that the judgment went on, admittedly unnecessarily, to find that the controller had reasonable grounds and did observe the principles of natural justice, but the result would have been just the same if he had not.

30 This House is not bound by decisions of the Privy Council and for my own part nothing short of a decision of this House directly in point would induce me to accept the position that, although an enactment expressly requires an official to have reasonable grounds for his decision, our law is so defective that a subject cannot bring up such a decision for review however seriously he may be affected and however obvious it may be that the official acted in breach of his statutory obligation. The judgment proceeds ([1951] AC at p 77):

40 “But it does not seem to follow necessarily from this that the controller must be acting judicially in exercising the power. Can one not act reasonably without acting judicially? It is not difficult to think of circumstances in which the controller might in any ordinary sense of the word have reasonable grounds of belief without having ever confronted the licence holder with the information which is the source of his belief. It is a long step in the argument to say that because a man is enjoined that

he must not take action unless he has reasonable grounds for believing something he can only arrive at that belief by a course of conduct analagous to the judicial process. And yet unless that proposition is valid there is really no ground for holding that the controller is acting judicially or quasi-judicially when he acts under this regulation. If he is not under a duty so to act then it would not be according to law that his decision should be amenable to review and if necessary to avoidance by the procedure of certiorari.”

10 I would agree that in this and other defence regulation cases the legislator has substituted an obligation not to act without reasonable grounds for the ordinary obligation to afford to the person affected an opportunity to submit his defence. It is not necessary in this case to consider whether by so doing he has deprived the courts of the power to intervene if the officer acts contrary to his duty. The question in the present case is not whether Parliament substituted a different safeguard for that afforded by natural justice, but whether in the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, it excluded the safeguard of natural justice and put nothing in its place.

So far there is nothing in the judgment of the Privy Council directly relevant

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 80

to the present case. It is the next paragraph which causes the difficulty and I must quote the crucial passage ([1951] AC at p 78):

20 “But the basis of the jurisdiction of the courts by way of certiorari has been so exhaustively analysed in recent years that individual instances are now only of importance as illustrating a general principle that is beyond dispute. That principle is most precisely stated in the words of ATKIN, L.J., in *R. v. Electricity Comrs.* “...

and then follows the passagepg 80 (See p 77, letter a, ante, [1923] All ER Rep at p 161; [1924] 1 KB at p 205) with which I have already dealt at length. And then there follows the quotation from Lord Hewart CJ (See p 77, letter f, ante, [1928] 1 KB at p 415; [1927] All ER Rep at p 699), which I have already commented on ending with the words ([1951] AC at p 78)—

30 “there must be superadded to that characteristic the further characteristic that the body has the duty to act judicially”.

And then it is pointed out:

“It is that characteristic that the controller lacks in acting under reg 62”.

Of course if it were right to say that Lord Hewart CJ's gloss on Lord Atkin stated

“a general principle that is beyond dispute”

the rest would follow. But I have given my reasons for holding that it does no such thing, and in my judgment the older cases certainly do not “illustrate” any such general principle—they contradict it. No case older than 1911 was cited in *Nakkuda Ali v M F de S Jayaratne* on this question, and this question was only one of several difficult questions which were argued and decided. So I am forced to the conclusion

that this part of the judgment in *Nakkuda's* case was given under a serious misapprehension of the effect of the older authorities and therefore cannot be regarded as authoritative.

I would sum up my opinion in this way. Between 1882 and the making of police regulations in 1920, s 191(4) of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, had to be applied to every kind of case. The respondents' contention is that, even where there was a doubtful question whether a constable was guilty of a particular act of misconduct, the watch committee were under no obligation to hear his defence before dismissing him.

10 In my judgment it is abundantly clear from the authorities that I have quoted that at that time the courts would have rejected any such contention. In later cases dealing with different subject-matter opinions have been expressed in wide terms so as to appear to conflict with those earlier authorities. But learned judges who expressed those opinions generally had no power to overrule those authorities, and in any event it is a salutary rule that a judge is not to be assumed to have intended to overrule or disapprove of an authority which has not been cited to him and which he does not even mention.

20 So I would hold that the power of dismissal in the Act of 1882 could not then have been exercised and cannot now be exercised until the watch committee have informed the constable of the grounds on which they propose to proceed and have given him a proper opportunity to present his case in defence.

Next comes the question whether the respondents' failure to follow the rules of natural justice on 7 March was made good by the meeting on 18 March. I do not doubt that if an officer or body realises that it has acted hastily and reconsiders the whole matter afresh after affording to the person affected a proper opportunity to present his case then its later decision will be valid. An example is *De Verteuil v Knaggs*. But here the appellant's solicitor was not fully informed of the charges against the appellant and the watch committee did not annul the decision which they had already published and proceed to make a new decision. In my judgment what
30 was done on that day was a very inadequate substitute for a full rehearing. Even so three members of the committee changed their minds, and it is impossible to say what the

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 81

decision of the committee would have been if there had been a full hearing after disclosure to the appellant of the whole case against him. I agree with those of your lordships who hold that this meeting of 18 March cannot affect the result of this appeal.

40 The other ground on which some of your lordships prefer to proceed is the watch committee's failure to act in accordance with the police regulations. I have had an opportunity of reading the speech about to be delivered by my noble and learned friend Lord Morris of Borth-y-Gest and I agree with his views about this. I will only add that the circumstances in which the Police Act, 1919, was passed, and the consequent regulations were made, show that the regulations must have been

intended to have a very wide application and I see nothing unreasonable in applying them to this case.

Dismissing a chief constable who has not been convicted of any criminal offence is not a thing to be done lightly. If the whole of the matters against him are disclosed to him and he refuses to admit some or all of them, it seems to me perfectly proper that there should be such an inquiry as the regulations require. In particular to exclude this case from the ambit of the regulations because the watch committee did not proceed on any report or allegation is a very narrow interpretation of the regulations and it would lead to a strange result.

- 10 Counsel for the respondents was constrained to admit—he could not reasonably have done otherwise—that, if some busybody had formally reported to the watch committee the observations of Donovan J and required them to deal with these allegations, then the watch committee would have been bound to apply the regulations. But it would be absurd if the substantive rights of the appellant were to depend on whether or not someone happened to have made a formal report or allegation to the watch committee before they proceeded to deal with the case.

- 20 Then there was considerable argument whether in the result the watch committee's decision is void or merely voidable. Time and again in the cases I have cited it has been stated that a decision given without regard to the principles of natural justice is void and that was expressly decided in *Wood v Woad*. I see no reason to doubt these authorities. The body with the power to decide cannot lawfully proceed to make a decision until it has afforded to the person affected a proper opportunity to state his case.

- 30 Finally there is the question whether by appealing to the Secretary of State the appellant is in some way prevented from now asserting the nullity of the respondents' decision. A person may be prevented from asserting the truth by estoppel but it is not seriously argued that that doctrine applies here. Then it is said that the appellant elected to go to the Secretary of State and thereby waived his right to come to the court. That appears to me to be an attempt to set up what is in effect estoppel where the essential elements for estoppel are not present.

There are many cases where two remedies are open to an aggrieved person but there is no general rule that by going to some other tribunal he puts it out of his power thereafter to assert his rights in court; and there was no express waiver because in appealing to the Secretary of State the appellant reserved his right to maintain that the decision was a nullity. But then it was argued that this case is special because by statute the decision of the Secretary of State is made final and binding.

- 40 I need not consider what the result would have been if the Secretary of State had heard the case for the appellant and then had given his own independent decision that the appellant should be dismissed. But the Secretary of State did not do that. He merely decided “that there was sufficient material on which the watch committee could properly exercise their power of dismissal under s 191(4)” of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882. So the only operative decision is that of the watch

committee, and if it was a nullity, I do not see how this statement by the Secretary of State can make it valid.

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 82

Accordingly in my judgment this appeal must be allowed. There appears to have been no discussion in the courts below as to remedies which may now be open to the appellant, and I do not think that this House should do more than declare that the dismissal of the appellant is null and void and remit the case to the Queen's Bench Division for further procedure. But it is right to put on record that the appellant does not seek to be reinstated as chief constable: his whole concern is to avoid the serious financial consequences involved in dismissal as against being required or allowed to resign.

10

LORD EVERSHED.

My Lords, on the difficult problem presented by this appeal I regret to find myself differing from your lordships; but I have felt myself constrained to agree with the conclusions reached by Streatfeild J, at the trial and by all the members of the Court of Appeal.

10 It will be logical for me to deal first with the question whether the watch committee of Brighton Corporation were bound to observe the requirements of what I will compendiously call the Police (Discipline) Regulations of 1952, before purporting to exercise, as regards the appellant, the jurisdiction now admittedly vested in them by s 191(4) of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882; for if they were so bound then, in the absence of such observance, it may be said—and was so contended on the appellant's part—that the watch committee had in truth no jurisdiction to reach their decision for the appellant's dismissal.

By “the Police (Discipline) Regulations of 1952” I refer compendiously to two statutory instruments, namely, (1) the Police (Discipline) Regulations 1952, [SI 1952 No 1705](#), and (2) the Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables, Assistant Chief Constables and Chief Constables) Regulations, 1952, [SI 1952 No 1706](#); as respectively amended by the two regulations, SI 1954 Nos. 1687 and 1688, being regulations of the same respective titles as those of 1952 already mentioned. The
20 two instruments of 1952 were both made on 17 September 1952, and came into operation on 1 October 1952. Similarly the two amending instruments of 1954 were both made on 17 December 1954, and came into operation on 1 January 1955. The several instruments clearly form together a single code. I shall have to make some references to them hereafter and I shall then refer to them respectively as “Statutory Instrument 1705” and “Statutory Instrument 1706”, the references being in each case intended to comprehend the amendments made in 1954.

I have been unable to accept the argument that every case of indiscipline or of incapacity of any police officer whether a chief constable or any other member of a police force (save only cases of incapacity arising from mental or physical illness)
30 falls or was intended to fall within the scope of the regulations. For my part I accept the view propounded by counsel for the watch committee which appealed to the learned judge at the trial, that “discreditable conduct” and “neglect of duty” which constitute the first and fourth headings in the discipline code set out in Sch 1 to Statutory Instrument 1705, should be construed as limited to the kinds of conduct specified in those headings, each of which, be it observed, begins with the words “that is to say”.

In the present case the substance and gravamen of the appellant's incapacity as chief constable, on which the watch committee proceeded to act, was that expressed by Donovan J after presiding at a trial, lasting nineteen days, of the appellant and
40 others charged with conspiring to obstruct the course of public justice, namely that the appellant had not, in that learned and experienced judge's view, the “professional” or “moral” qualities requisite for one holding the office of chief constable. Although therefore the appellant was himself acquitted of the charge, the learned judge thought it right to treat the appellant's limitations, which he had

expressed, as justifying remission of the sentences otherwise appropriate to be passed on his two subordinate officers whom the jury had convicted. As I understand the language of Donovan J (and as, I doubt not, the watch

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 83

committee also understood it), the appellant had been shown not to possess a sense of probity or of responsibility sufficient for the office which he held, and so had been unable to provide the essential leadership and example to the police force under his control which his office properly required.

10 The first of the relevant headings in the discipline code, "Discreditable conduct" is thus defined:

"that is to say, if a member of a police force acts in a disorderly manner or any manner prejudicial to discipline or reasonably likely to bring discredit on the reputation of the force or of the police service."

I will not take time by reciting the more detailed expansion of the second heading, "Neglect of duty"⁹ but I cannot (as could not the learned judge in the first court) hold that the shortcomings of the appellant as chief constable, described by Donovan J fall within either of the respective headings as expanded by their definitions. I add only that the two headings in question, being part of the code specified in Statutory Instrument 1705, should be construed with regard to the fact that they were originally
20 intended to apply only to members of a police force of lower rank than chief constables or deputy or assistant chief constables though it is true to say that by Statutory Instrument 1706 they were made applicable also to chief constables and deputy and assistant chief constables.

- ⁹ For this heading, see 17 *Halsbury's Statutory Instruments* 201

My lords, it follows, in my opinion, that the watch committee were entitled to exercise their residual powers under s 191(4) of the Act of 1882 without observance of the Police (Discipline) Regulations. I do not forget the terms of para (1)(f) of the watch committee's resolution of 7 March 1958. It is said that the subject-matter of this paragraph was that mentioned in para (c) of the watch committee's answer to the
30 appellant's appeal to the Secretary of State, namely, the suggestion that the appellant had given false evidence at the trial before Donovan J; and that such a charge was in terms within para (b) of the heading numbered 5 in the discipline code, namely,

"Falsehood or prevarication, that is to say, if a member of a police force ... wilfully ... makes any false ... statement".

But, assuming the premise, it is nevertheless, in my opinion, still clear that the reference was but to an incident in the trial on the conclusion of which the watch committee were manifestly founding themselves; and must have been so understood. I cannot think that such an incidental reference can sensibly have the
40 startling result of making the watch committee's jurisdiction dependent on a strict application of the Police (Discipline) Regulations. It follows, if I am right in thinking

that the case against the appellant did not fall under any of the provisions of the discipline code, that it was not brought within the regulations by cl 11 of Statutory Instrument 1706.

I also find myself in agreement with all the learned judges below in thinking that in any event this was not a case of there having been a “report or allegation” to the watch committee as contemplated by the regulations. I have, for my part, been unable to accept counsel for the appellant’s argument that any deliberation by the watch committee necessarily supposes the presence of a “report or allegation” by someone.

10 I do not attempt any definition of the phrase; but, in my opinion, the context of the regulations suggests necessarily something in the nature of an accusation as distinct from a conclusion reached after proper inquiry, and cannot sensibly be said to include a judicial conclusion after the protracted investigation of a trial. If this view be wrong I would ask your lordships to observe the consequences. If counsel for the appellant’s submission be accepted, it must follow (as counsel for the appellant indeed conceded) that the regulations were or would be equally applicable to any disciplinary action taken by the watch committee in regard to Detective Sergeant Heath and Detective Inspector Hammersley, each found guilty at the trial and sentenced to terms of imprisonment. If the argument submitted be correct,

20 *[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 84*

it must follow that the watch committee’s duty must be or have been (notwithstanding the conclusion of their trial) to refer the cases of these two officers to an “Investigating Officer” under Statutory Instrument 1705 who would “report to the chief constable” (sic), the officers having a right of appeal to the watch committee. And so, on this view, it was the watch committee’s duty, as regards the appellant, under Statutory Instrument 1706 first to instruct a solicitor to formulate the case against him; and then to appoint a tribunal (which might consist of five members of the watch committee itself) whose duty it would be to report to the watch committee. My Lords, I cannot think it right to accept an argument involving results which appear to me so
30 manifestly absurd.

In the present case the conduct of the appellant had been the subject of a public trial lasting nineteen days; and, if the observations of Donovan J^h, can sensibly be called a “report” at all, they were equivalent to the “report” of the investigating tribunal to the watch committee contemplated by Statutory Instrument 1706. In this respect the situation after the conclusion of the trial was to my mind wholly different from that at the time when the appellant was first charged and when, therefore, as it seems to me, the watch committee rightly felt itself bound to act in accordance with the regulations in ordering the appellant’s suspension.

40 My lords, any other view, in my opinion, makes the regulations gravely offend against common sense. I agree therefore with the view of the Court of Appeal—and particularly with that of Holroyd Pearce LJ (*[1962] 1 All ER at p 843*), that this was a special and entirely exceptional case, outside the scope of the regulations and, as a matter of public notoriety, requiring instant action by the watch committee. The extent of the public notoriety can fairly be gauged from the letter written by the

appellant's solicitor explaining the remarkable request for his client's reinstatement as chief constable by reference to the telephone calls and offers of rewards by newspapers to which he had been incessantly subjected.

- ^h These are quoted in [1962] 1 All ER at p 837, letter *b*

10 I turn accordingly to what have appeared to me to be the most difficult questions raised in this appeal; that is to say, first, whether the exercise of the statutory jurisdiction by the watch committee, which in my opinion was vested in them without regard to the regulations, required the observance by the watch committee of what are called the principles of natural justice; and, second, if so, whether on the facts of this case such principles were in fact observed.

20 It has been said many times that the exact requirements in any case of the so-called principles of natural justice cannot be precisely defined; that they depend in each case on the circumstances of that case. According to Sir Frederick Pollock the meaning of the phrase "natural justice" is "the ultimate principle of fitness with regard to the nature of man as a rational and social being"; and he went on to point out that the origin of the principles could be traced to Aristotle and the Roman jurists. Your lordships were therefore not unnaturally referred to a great many cases, but as I believe that your lordships agree, it is by no means easy to treat these decisions as entirely uniform and still less easy to be able to extract from them the means of propounding a precise statement of the circumstances or of the cases in which the principles can be invoked before the courts.

I am, however, content to assume that the invocation should not be limited to cases where the body concerned, whether a domestic committee or some body established by a statute, is one which is exercising judicial or quasi-judicial functions strictly so called; but that such invocation may also be had in cases where the body concerned can properly be described as administrative—so long as it can be said, in Sir Frederick Pollock's language, that the invocation is required in order to conform to the ultimate principle

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 85

30 of fitness with regard to the nature of man as a rational and social being. On the other hand, it is (as I venture to think) no less plain now that Parliament may by appropriate language in a statute make it clear that the activity or discretion of the body constituted by the statute is not to be subject to any control or interference by the courts.

40 At this stage I venture to make two points. First, since there is no question here of bias or any suggestion that the watch committee acted otherwise than entirely in good faith, the only principle of natural justice here involved is that enshrined in the Latin phrase "Audi alteram partem". Second, I for my part conclude that if the principles of natural justice can properly be invoked in this case and if it should be held that such principles were not observed, then the decision of the watch committee was not void but voidable only.

On this second question (whether the decision afterwards impugned can be said to be void or voidable only) the cases provide, as I think, no certain answer; nor have I found one in the text-books. Indeed in the vast majority of circumstances, it does not in the end matter whether the decision challenged is void or only voidable; for, if the court does decide to quash a decision or otherwise set it aside, then the effect is in general the same whether such decision be considered as void or only voidable. For my part, however, I have come to the conclusion that in a case where a body is acting within its jurisdiction but of which the courts will say that it has failed to do substantial justice in accordance with the principles of natural justice, then the decision is only voidable and cannot properly be described as a nullity.

Though I am in this respect anticipating what later follows, I refer first to the extremely wide and general terms of the relevant subsection of the Act of 1882:

“The watch committee may at any time dismiss any borough constable whom they think negligent in the discharge of his duty or otherwise unfit for the same.”

My lords, in my opinion it is impossible to accept the suggestion put forward on the appellant's part that the final words of the subsection, “otherwise unfit for the same”, must be regarded as ejusdem generis with what has gone before; that is to say, that they are intended only to refer to some kind of negligence. I know of no authority in a case of this kind, where the jurisdiction of the body in question is expressed in two alternatives, for supposing that the second of the alternatives does not mean what it says but is somehow limited by the terms of the first alternative.

Put in other words, where, may I ask, is the genus to be found of which the second part of the alternative is said to be but a part? As I interpret the language used, the second part of the power conferred is, as the language inevitably imports, intended to cover the case of someone who is regarded as unfit for his position for reasons other than negligence.

I observe again that there is, as I think, no question here of the watch committee's jurisdiction. If I had taken a different view on the first question, namely, whether the exercise of the jurisdiction had to be subject to compliance with the regulations, then my answer might have been different. On that assumption it is unnecessary for me to express any concluded opinion and I do not do so.

But, if I am right in thinking that there was here no question of compliance with the regulations, the only question for your lordships is whether, admitting the jurisdiction of the watch committee, it was properly exercised having regard to any application of the principles of natural justice to which the exercise of the jurisdiction was subject. I observe further that the appellant in his action seeks a declaration.

There was some discussion before your lordships concerning the office of a declaration, as contrasted with that of an order for certiorari. In my judgment it must be accepted as tolerably clear that (subject to what follows) the granting of a declaration in a case of this kind must prima facie be discretionary: and if that is so it must equally follow that the question whether the decision of the watch committee is such that the court can quash it or otherwise interfere with it involves the conclusion that such decision was

voidable and not void. If the decision was a complete nullity (for example, on the ground that the watch committee never had any jurisdiction) then no doubt it would follow that the court would have to say so in some form or other. But this is not, in my judgment, such a case. My lords, I have in mind on this matter decisions such as that of the Privy Council in the recent case of *Annamunthodo v Oilfield Workers' Trade Union*, where the plaintiff had been expelled from the union and the board thought that the expulsion was wholly invalid. In fact, however, in that case the plaintiff had been charged under one rule but was later expelled under another.

- 10 It is also to be noted that the case was dealing not with powers conferred by Act of Parliament but with a domestic tribunal; the point submitted (but rejected) was that the appeal which the plaintiff had taken under the rules of the union constituted an affirmation of the jurisdiction of the council, which had dismissed him. I have also in mind the case of *Wood v Woad*. My noble friend Lord Reid has stated in his opinionⁱ that in this case the Court of Exchequer Chamber expressly decided that a decision by a body acting in a quasi-judicial capacity which failed to have due regard to the principle of natural justice *audi alteram partem*, is void and not merely voidable. With all respect to my noble friend, I am unable to agree with this conclusion.

- 20 • ⁱ See p 81, letter e, ante

- My lords, it is, I think, necessary to have in mind what was the nature of the plaintiff's claim in *Wood v Woad*. The plaintiff alleged that he had been a member of a mutual marine insurance association and, as such member, having paid to the treasurer the appropriate deposit, had therefore been entitled to recover from the association the amount of loss incurred by him in respect of a particular ship; that in the committee of the association was vested by its rules the whole power of the management of its affairs and also the power, if they deemed the conduct of any member to be suspicious or that he was for any other reason unworthy of remaining in the association, to exclude such member by appropriate notice from further participation in it; but that the committee had "wrongfully, collusively and improperly" expelled the plaintiff from the association without any just reason or probable cause; so that the plaintiff had been deprived of his right to the sum of money in respect of the damage done to his ship and that he was accordingly entitled to recover as damages *from the members of the committee* the amount of such loss.
- 30

This being the nature of the claim the court decided on demurrer that the plaintiff could have, on his allegations, no cause of action for damages at law against the members of the committee. I emphasise the important fact that the claim formulated was for damages at law against the members of the committee (not all of whom in fact were or need have been members of the association).

- 40 It is clear from the headnote to the case that the learned barons of the Court of Exchequer Chamber did not arrive for entirely the same reasons at the conclusion that the plaintiff could not succeed in his action. It is true that certain language in the judgment of Kelly CB appears to support the view that in **his opinion the committee's failure to give to the plaintiff any opportunity of answering the**

charge made by the committee against him rendered the committee's decision “void and a nullity”.

See, for example, the chief baron's citation of the decision in *Blisset v Daniel*. But if so, it was, in my judgment, because in the view of the chief baron there was

“enough to show a collusive and unlawful exercise of power on the part of the committee”

10 ((1874), LR 9 Exch at p 198)—in other words not a true exercise of the power at all or, at best, an exercise of the power of the exceptional kind to which I later refer in the case of *Osgood v Nelson*. It is essential to have in mind the nature of the plaintiff's claim as formulated by him which the Court of Exchequer Chamber rejected. On the one hand (as Kelly CB

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 87

pointed out ((1874), LR 9 Exch at p 196) if the discretion of the committee was absolute and if the committee in fact exercised their power under the rules, the plaintiff could not question it. On the other hand, if, as the plaintiff in his declaration alleged, the committee's act was collusive and unlawful and therefore ineffective then the plaintiff remained a member of the association and (whatever might be his rights or remedies in a court of equity) he therefore could have no claim for damages in law against the committee ((1874), LR 9 Exch at p 198):

20 “The claim in this action is for damages sustained by reason of the expulsion of the plaintiff from the association; but in law the plaintiff has sustained no damage at all, for whatever rights he may have possessed before he possesses still, as if no action had been done calculated to deprive him of them.”

Cleasby B, put his conclusion on somewhat different grounds ((1874), LR 9 Exch at pp 198, 200):

“Now, we may suppose either that the committee expelled the plaintiff without just cause and without giving him notice, or that they expelled him without just cause but did give him notice; and the declaration is framed so as to comprehend in the breach both modes of wrongful expulsion.”

30 After pointing out that by the rules the committee had absolute discretion, the learned baron concluded his judgment by saying that the allegation not having made fraud the basis of the claim the declaration sought could not be sustained. Pollock B's judgment ((1874), LR 9 Exch at pp 201–203) was to the same effect—particularly in respect of the absence of any claim based in terms of fraud. The learned baron went on to observe that the plaintiff's declaration having alleged that the committee's actions were a nullity it was not on this premise possible for him to formulate a cause of action at law against the committee members. Finally, Amphlett B, posed the matter thus ((1874), LR 9 Exch at p 204):

40 “Now according to the allegations in the declaration, the defendants never gave the plaintiff that opportunity, and I cannot entertain a doubt that if this allegation were proved, the plaintiff would, by

filing a bill in a court of equity, be restored to the enjoyment of his rights. But if so, what is his damage? He has not ceased to be a member of the society; he has not lost the rights of a member. He is to recover damages for what? For an attempt to expel."

10 I have attempted at some length to analyse the reasons for the judgments of the Court of Exchequer Chamber in *Wood v Woad*. It is, as I have more than once observed, of the essence of the matter in that case that the plaintiff was claiming damages personally against the members of the committee. In such circumstances it is, as I venture to think, clear that the question whether the purported exclusion from the association by the committee was "void" or "voidable" was not essential nor indeed material to his claim made in the action by the plaintiff for damages against the members of the committee.

Certainly in my judgment it cannot be asserted that the judgments in the case cited, or indeed any of them, support or involve the proposition that where a body, such as the watch committee in the present case, is invested by the express terms of a statute with a power of expulsion of any member of the police force and purport in good faith to exercise such power, a failure on their part to observe the principle of natural justice audi alteram partem has the result that the decision is not merely voidable by the court but is wholly void and a nullity.

20 My lords, I have for my part on this question, derived the greatest assistance from the case of *Osgood v Nelson* in which Baron Martin gave ((1872), LR 5 HL at pp 645–648) to your Lordships' House the opinion of the judges. The case was concerned with the

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 88

removal of the chief clerk or registrar of the Sheriffs' Court in the City of London. By the Act 15 and 16 Vict c lxxvii power had been given to

"the mayor, aldermen and commons in common council assembled ... for inability or misbehaviour or for any other cause which may appear reasonable to the mayor and council to remove"

30 a person in the position of the chief clerk or registrar. It was the unanimous opinion of the judges expressed by Baron Martin ((1872) LR 5 HL at pp 646, 647) that there was no doubt

"that the courts of law in this country would take care that any proceeding of this kind should be conducted in a proper manner"

—that is by giving to the person whose removal was in question every opportunity of defending himself. "If" continued the learned Baron ((1872), LR 5 HL at pp 646, 647)

"your lordships are satisfied that there was a real substantial miscarriage of justice, ... your lordships would not permit this amotion to remain."

Again ((1872) LR 5 HL at pp 646, 647):

“we also think that it is possible—though there is no necessity for giving any judgment upon it—that if a man was removed from an office of this kind for any frivolous or futile cause you would in all probability be inclined to think the removal is a nullity.”

Lord Hatherley C, in adopting the view so expressed of the judges said ((1872), LR 5 HL at p 649):

10 “The Court of Queen's Bench, has always considered that it has been open to that court, as in this case it appears to have considered, to *correct* a court or tribunal or body of men who may have a power of this description ... if it should be found that such persons have disregarded any of the essentials of justice.”

From these citations I deduce the conclusion that, save in the case where “the tribunal or body of men” have acted on “frivolous or futile” grounds (in which case the court may treat not merely the decision but the whole proceeding as a nullity) the power of the court is to “correct” the decision if, in the court's view, there “has been real substantial miscarriage of justice”.

20 In other words I think that, save in the excepted cases (of which the present cannot be said to be one) the right or duty of the court is to correct, that is to set aside or otherwise restrain, the impugned decision if satisfied that there has been “a real substantial miscarriage of justice”; a view which, if well-founded, must mean that (save in the excepted cases) the decision is voidable and not void.

My lords it is perhaps useful and necessary to inquire what in truth is meant by saying that a decision such as that of the watch committee in the present case, is “void” or “a nullity”. Is it thereby intended that, though the proceedings up to the pronouncement of the decision were proper and effective, the decision itself was a nullity?

30 Or is it intended that the whole proceedings ab initio were irregular and ineffective so that the decision was similarly and of necessity also of no effect? My lords, the latter must in my judgment be the true analysis. In the first place, it does not to my mind appear correct or indeed sensible to say that the decision reached was a “nullity” although the proceedings leading up to the decision were in order. Second, I observe as I have earlier stated, that in cases of this kind it is not the function of the court to impugn the decision as such—still less to substitute its own—but to examine the steps taken in reaching the decision and to decide whether, in the course of those steps, there was “a real substantial miscarriage of justice.”

40 In the vast majority of cases it matters not in the result whether the decision is said to be void or voidable but avoided. It is sufficient for the court to say that the decision cannot stand. In truth, as Sir Frederick Pollock pointed out (see Pollock on Contract, 13th Edn, p 48) the words “void” and “voidable” are imprecise and apt to mislead. And so it is, as I venture to think, that language such as that used by Kelly CB in *Wood v Woad* ((1874), LR 9 Exch at p 198) ought not to be strictly

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 89

construed—it was, indeed, for reasons which I have attempted to give, in any case obiter having regard to the nature of the claim in that case.

I do not doubt that in some cases the proper conclusion will be that the entire proceedings of the body or tribunal in question (including therefore its decision) will properly be found to be wholly irregular and ineffective from first to last. The obvious case is where the body or tribunal is shown to have been acting in excess of its jurisdiction. In this category no doubt will fall the class of case mentioned by Martin B, in *Osgood v Nelson* ((1872), LR 5 HL at p 647) where the body concerned has acted on

10 “a futile or frivolous cause”;

for in such case it could truthfully be said that the invocation by the body of its power was a pretence and its proceedings no more than a sham. It may indeed well be that Kelly CB so regarded the performance of the committee in *Wood v Woad*. But save in those cases, as I think, on true analysis the function and duty of the court is to “correct”, that is to say, to set aside or quash the decision where it is shown that there has been some

“real substantial miscarriage of justice”

in the steps taken by the body or tribunal in question in arriving at its decision in exercise of the powers vested in it.

20 My lords, I do not wish unduly to prolong this opinion but on this highly important matter it seems to me that useful analogy may be found in the practice of the criminal courts. Thus, the Court of Criminal Appeal in the exercise of its powers under the Criminal Appeal Act, 1907, may quash a conviction and substitute a verdict of acquittal, and may do so where there has at the trial been what is regarded in effect as a failure to observe the principles of natural justice, eg where the jury has been told that it must return with its verdict in ten minutes or where the jury was allowed after retirement under the bailiff's control to depart from the court for luncheon.

30 In these cases it is essential that there should have been an effective trial at least up to the point where the departure from the principles of natural justice occurred; for otherwise the appeal court could not have ordered the prisoner's acquittal. If in truth the prisoner had never been really tried at all, he would be liable to be tried again for the same offence and the appeal court could have issued a venire de novo. The second of the examples above given (ie where the jury had been allowed to leave the court for luncheon) was involved in the case before the Court of Criminal Appeal of *R v Neal* and the point with which I am concerned was in terms dealt with by Lord Goddard CJ ([1949] 2 All ER at p 441; [1949] 2 KB at p 596). I would also refer your Lordships to the judgment of the Privy Council delivered by Lord Sumner in the case of *R v Nat Bell Liquors Ltd*.

40 I only add that, as I apprehend, the same principles apply to an order for certiorari which has been held to be available, but at the direction of the court, by way of declaration and an injunction in cases of decisions by statutory tribunals where the

persons affected would otherwise be without remedy (see *Barnard v National Dock Labour Board* following *Andrews v Mitchell*). On the other hand it has also been held that certiorari will not be granted where the proceedings in the inferior tribunal are not merely voidable but altogether void—eg where the person purporting to act in a judicial capacity had in truth no authority so to do (see *Re Daws*).

10 Finally, I venture to pose to your lordships the question, what would have been the situation had the Secretary of State allowed the appellant's appeal and held that he should be reinstated as chief constable? Would it have been open to the corporation to refuse to give effect to such decision on the ground that the proceedings or the decision before or by the watch committee had been a nullity?

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 90

I return accordingly to the first of the points previously mentioned, namely, the question whether the watch committee in exercising its powers under the relevant section of the Act of 1882 was in the present circumstances bound to give to the appellant an opportunity of putting forward his case and arguments before the committee. I have already said that the terms of the discretion vested in the watch committee by the Act of Parliament have seemed to me to be of the widest. They are, as I think, much wider than the phrase appearing in the case, to which I shall later refer, of *De Verteuil v Knaggs*, where the relevant language was

20 “If ... it appears to the governor on sufficient grounds shown to his satisfaction”.

I also think that the language in the Act of 1882 was at least as wide if not wider than the relevant language in the case of *Nakkuda Ali v M F de S Jayaratne* on which the Court of Appeal considerably relied, namely

“[where] the controller has reasonable grounds to believe that any dealer is unfit to be allowed to continue as a dealer”.

30 I understand that some of your lordships feel disposed to say that the decision of the Privy Council in that case ought not to be followed. I must respectfully dissent from that view. It seems to me that on the language of the enactment there in question there was in truth conferred on the governor an unfettered discretion. I am aware that it is sometimes said that a different result may be appropriate where there is in question the grant or withdrawal of a licence as distinct from the taking away of some right or proprietary interest.

There is no doubt force in this argument and it has been supported by our Court of Criminal Appeal in the case of *R v Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Ex p Parker*. At the same time I would observe that though the withdrawal of a licence, which can be described as the removal of a privilege, is in some respects different in character from the taking away of vested rights or proprietary interests, nevertheless the withdrawal of a licence from the person from whom it is withdrawn may in fact mean the destruction of his means of livelihood.

40 My lords, if the only question which was here involved was whether the appellant should have ceased in March, 1958, to be chief constable and whether therefore the

watch committee was entitled without more so to decide I would, for my part, say that there was in the circumstances no call for the watch committee to observe the so-called rule audi alteram partem. As I have already observed the appellant had been subjected to a trial lasting nineteen days and it was as a result of the evidence in that trial that Donovan J expressed the view that the appellant was in fact no longer fitted to act as chief constable.

10 It would seem to me frankly somewhat absurd that the watch committee should invite the appellant to state his points again after he had put forward a case before the trial judge for so long a period. Moreover, as [Holroyd Pearce LJ \(\[1962\] 1 All ER at p 843\)](#), pointed out (and as I have earlier noted), there was here a case of extreme urgency. The trial had attracted the greatest possible notoriety as had also the observations in regard to the appellant of the trial judge. In my judgment the watch committee had a duty—a duty not only to the corporation of which they were a committee but also to the citizens of Brighton—to act and to act at once so as to give effect to what the trial judge had after so long a hearing in effect determined.

20 But my difficulty in the present case arises over the question of the appellant's pension. For assuming it to be right that the appellant would have to cease to be chief constable—and I add in regard to that matter the not unimportant fact that his learned counsel has not before your lordships suggested that he should have been retained as chief constable—then there were two ways in which his appointment might be determined. First, he might have been required to resign in which case, though he would have had so to resign, he would under the terms of the Police Pension Regulations, 1955,^j have been entitled to receive the pension which by that date had accrued in his favour. The alternative was the

- ^j See SI 1955 No 480, reg 52
[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 91

appellant's summary dismissal which was the course adopted; though I do observe that in the watch committee's minute of 7 March 1958, it is recorded that they had paid regard to the length of the appellant's service.

30 It is undoubtedly a striking fact that the appellant had at the date when he had been suspended from his office of chief constable served some 33 1/2 years and had risen from the rank of police constable through the various intervening ranks to that of chief constable. During this long period of service it does not appear that there had ever been any criticism of his work in the police force. Moreover, in March, 1958, he had attained the age of fifty-eight years and ten months—in other words he was within fourteen months of the age on which he would have been entitled to retire voluntarily with full pension. In these circumstances I cannot conceal from myself that (unless the words of the statute deny it) there is shown an obvious case for giving to the appellant an opportunity to put forward his argument for the first of the
40 two alternatives, namely, that he should be required to resign and not be summarily dismissed.

As I have said, I feel very great difficulty on this matter. I do not wish at all to denigrate the principles of natural justice or of their proper invocation in the courts. On the other hand, we have, as I have already many times pointed out, the very wide

terms of the Act of Parliament here in question and the body in which was invested this wide discretion was an entirely responsible body. To insist, as I venture to think, on the invocation of these principles whenever anyone is discharged from some office seems to me to involve a danger of usurpation of power on the part of the courts and under the pretext of having regard to the principles of natural justice to invoke what may often be in truth little more than sentiment; and on occasions when the courts, though having necessarily far less knowledge of all the relevant circumstances, may be inclined to think that, had the decision rested with them, they would have decided differently from the body in question. Yet I do observe again that it is not the decision as such which is liable to review; it is only the circumstances in which the decision was reached and particularly in such a case as the present the need for giving to the party dismissed an opportunity for putting his case.

I should therefore, for my part have been inclined to accept the view of the learned lord justices in the Court of Appeal. But since, as I understand, your lordships take a different view and having read the exhaustive opinion of my noble and learned friend Lord Reid, I will on this matter, express no concluded opinion of my own. I am ready to assume that the appellant should have been given an opportunity at any rate to put his case for being required to resign rather than being summarily dismissed. If this assumption be made, then the second question arises—was justice done in all the circumstances of this case?

My Lords, having considered the whole matter with the greatest care of which I am capable I conclude that justice was here done—or, at least, that there was no

“real substantial miscarriage of justice”.

I have already observed that in their minutes of 7 March 1958, the watch committee (against whose good faith no kind of charge is made) stated that they had paid due regard to the length of the appellant's service. But at once after the receipt of notice of that resolution the appellant's solicitor, Mr Bosley, asked the watch committee to reconsider the matter and to hear observations that might be put forward on it. In acceding to this request it is to my mind plain that the watch committee (and the corporation) thereupon decided that, notwithstanding their resolution of 7 March the matter of the appellant's dismissal should be held in suspense—and indeed after they had been informed of the appellant's appeal to the Secretary of State they also clearly decided that the operation of their previous resolution should be suspended pending the result of that appeal.

It is clear that on 12 March the town clerk informed the appellant's solicitor that the watch committee would reconsider their decision with regard to the appellant's pension and further told him that a meeting would be held on 18 March at which the committee would consider such representations as might then be

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 92

made by or on behalf of the appellant

“either orally or in writing, or both as may be preferred”.

Thereupon Mr Bosley sent to the town clerk his written observations dated the same day in which in fourteen numbered paragraphs he set out the heads of his client's complaints; and in para 15 he asked, first, that the appellant should be allowed to retire on full pension forthwith. Mr Bosley also sent to the town clerk a copy of his notice of appeal to the Secretary of State, a lengthy document in which every kind of complaint made on the appellant's behalf was enumerated, though I would observe that nowhere in that document was any specific claim made that the appellant's case really was that of his being summarily dismissed instead of being requested to resign with the consequent right to receive his pension.

- 10 As a result there was a further special meeting of the watch committee held on 18 March. An extract from the minutes of that meeting was duly sent to Mr Bosley and from the minute it is clear that the watch committee had given to Mr Bosley the fullest opportunity to make such representations as he should think fit; and it is also recorded that the committee having heard all that Mr Bosley had to say and considered also his written representations and the notice of appeal to the Home Secretary had decided to adhere to their previous decision; though it is noted that there were three dissentients on this occasion.

- My lords, having regard to all the circumstances, I have formed the view that your lordships ought not now to say that a sufficient opportunity was not given to the
20 appellant by himself or through his adviser to put before the watch committee such points as he had and in particular to put before the watch committee the request that he should be required to resign rather than be summarily dismissed.

- I therefore respectfully agree on this matter with the conclusion of [Streatfeild J](#) ([1961] 2 All ER at p 536), at the trial of the present proceedings, and also with what I understand and believe to have been the view of Harman LJ as reported ([1962] 1 WLR at p 735; cf [1962] 1 All ER at p 850) (though the language as there recorded does not contain, as I think from a reading it should have contained, a negative). In reaching this conclusion I have derived support from the case of *De Verteuil v Knaggs* above referred to. In that case the governor of Trinidad had acted in
30 emergency with promptitude but without giving to the person concerned any opportunity for a hearing.

- In the circumstances it was pointed out by Lord Parmoor ([1918] AC at pp 560, 561) that this might well be justified provided that there was opportunity given afterwards when the original decision might be reviewed. Similarly, in my view the present case was indeed one of grave emergency calling for the greatest promptitude of action. But for reasons which I have attempted to state I think that assuming in the first place there was any failure to observe the principles of natural justice by giving to the appellant an opportunity of being heard, this defect was remedied afterwards when the original decision was suspended and an opportunity given to the appellant or his
40 adviser or both to make to the watch committee such representations as they wished.

But if I were wrong on the point last mentioned still in my opinion the appellant fails in the end on another point, namely, by reason of the consequences of his appeal to the Secretary of State. This matter was also dealt with by the learned judges of the Court of Appeal who similarly concluded that in any event the appeal to the

Secretary of State barred the appellant from claiming relief now. The case appears then to have been put on the basis of estoppel or election. For my part I prefer to rest my conclusion simply on the terms of the relevant section in the Act itself. The Act is the Police (Appeals) Act, 1927—a date, be it noted, eight years later than the date of the Police Act, 1919, under which were promulgated the SI 1952 Nos. 1705 and 1706. By s 1(1) of the Police (Appeals) Act, 1927,^k,

“a member of a police force who after the passing of this Act is punished by dismissal ... “ was given the right to appeal to the

- ^k The enactment is printed as amended by the Police (Appeals) Act, 1943, s 1
[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 93

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Secretary of State. It is also by the Act provided that the Secretary of State is not bound to entertain the appeal by way of hearing oral evidence if it appears to him that the case is of such a nature that it can properly be determined without such evidence. This was in fact the course adopted by the Secretary of State in the present circumstances. By his order of 5 July 1958, after reciting that an appeal had been made against the watch committee's decision of the previous March it is recorded that the Secretary of State “having decided that the case is of such a nature that it can properly be determined without taking oral evidence hereby order as follows”; and then, in para 1, occurs the language “I dismiss the appeal”.

- 20 It was not, as I followed the argument, suggested that the Secretary of State was acting otherwise than within the jurisdiction conferred on him by the Act of Parliament in deciding to dispose of the appeal as he did on the written material before him and without hearing oral argument. Indeed s 2(2) of the Act of 1927 provides thus:

“The Secretary of State after considering the notice of appeal and any other documents submitted to him by the appellant and the respondent ... and the report (if any) of the person or persons holding the inquiry shall by order, either—(a) allow the appeal; or (b) dismiss the appeal; or (c) vary the punishment ... “

- 30 As it seems to me the action taken by the Secretary of State was in strict compliance with his powers and duties under the Act and, with all respect to those who may take a contrary view, I cannot see how it can be said that the order of the Secretary of State is ex facie unsustainable. What then is the result? By s 2(3) of the Act of 1927 it is provided that the decision on such appeal by the Secretary of State is to be “final and binding upon all parties”. I agree that if it had been made out that the proceedings of the watch committee were a nullity, then the appeal and the result of the appeal might well be regarded equally as a nullity. But for reasons which I have endeavoured to justify it is in my opinion not true to say that the decision of the watch committee was a nullity even if there was a failure on their part to obey the rules of natural justice by their omission to give to the appellant proper opportunity to be heard. Their decision was voidable only. This being so, then the appellant having invoked his right under the statute to appeal to the Secretary of State must, as I conceive, be bound by the result which Parliament has enjoined: and that result is that after such an appeal the Secretary of State's decision shall be final and binding
- 40

as between himself and the watch committee. I cannot imagine any language more explicit. Nor does it seem to me that the result can be avoided because both in his original letter to the Secretary of State and in the documents stating his grounds of appeal itself the appellant's solicitor stated that his invocation of the power to appeal was without prejudice to his right thereafter to maintain that the watch committee's decision was in some way "wrong in law". In my judgment the appellant invoked his right to appeal to the Secretary of State under the Act of 1927 and, having done so, cannot escape the consequences which, as it seems to me, Parliament has stated in the plainest terms.

10 It follows therefore that, whatever might be the right answers to the difficult questions involved in regard to the application of the rules of natural justice, the appellant by proceeding as he did under the Police (Appeals) Act, 1927, to appeal to the Secretary of State cannot now say other than that the conclusion of the Secretary of State which was entirely in accordance with his statutory powers was a final and binding conclusion which put an end to any right that the appellant might otherwise have had to invite the court in the exercise of its discretion to set aside or otherwise interfere with the watch committee's decision.

My conclusion, therefore, with all respect to your lordships who take a different view, is, *first*, that there was in the present case no requirement that the watch committee
20 should observe the terms of the Police (Discipline) Regulations of

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 94

1952 and therefore that the jurisdiction lay under s 191(4) of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, with the watch committee; that therefore (*second*) the most that could be said against the watch committee's decision was that by failing to observe the rules of natural justice it was liable to be challenged and impugned in the courts; but (*third*) for reasons given, that assuming that there was a failure to comply with the rules of natural justice in the first instance by omitting to give to the appellant the right to be heard (before the passing of the resolution of 7 March 1958), that failure was afterwards remedied; in other words having regard to the
30 entirely exceptional circumstances that it cannot now be said on the appellant's part that there was any real or substantial injustice in what was done by the watch committee. But, *fourth*, it is my opinion that if in all other respects I am wrong the result of invoking the Act of 1927 by way of appeal to the Secretary of State involved necessarily the result that the Secretary of State's conclusion must be regarded by your lordships as having finally disposed of all questions between the appellant and the watch committee.

There was also raised on the appeal before your lordships a question of the true interpretation of s 220 of the Act of 1882. So far as relevant that section is as follows:

40 "A conviction, order, warrant or other matter made or done or purporting to be made or done by virtue of this Act shall not be quashed for want of form, and shall not, unless it is an order of the council for payment of money out of the borough fund, be removed by certiorari or otherwise into the High Court."

It was contended on behalf of the appellant that the terms of the section were only applicable to cases in which the question was as regards purely formal matters. For my part I am not persuaded that this is a right construction of the words which Parliament has used. But I prefer on this matter not to express any concluded opinion. If the view which I have tried to express and justify were right it would follow that this section would not be a relevant consideration. Further than that, since the point was never taken by the watch committee until the course of the argument before your lordships, it would as it seems to me, in any event be too late for the watch committee to rely on this section if in other respects they were wrong. I therefore say no more on this matter.

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If the matter rested with me, my lords, I would dismiss the appeal.

LORD MORRIS OF BORTH-Y-GEST.

My Lords, the appellant who in March, 1958, was nearly fifty-nine years of age became a constable in the Brighton Borough Police Force in 1925 after a short period of service in another police force. Thereafter he received progressive promotions in the Brighton Police Force. In 1935 he became a detective sergeant and in 1948 a detective inspector. In 1949 he was made detective chief inspector and in 1950 detective superintendent. In 1954 he was promoted to be deputy chief constable. In the early part of 1956 there was a vacancy in the office of chief constable.

- 10 The appellant was an applicant for the appointment. He was one of five candidates who were interviewed by the watch committee. The committee who had the opportunities for judging of the competence of the appellant which his prior service afforded them resolved that subject to the approval of the Secretary of State the appellant should be appointed. He was so appointed. Amongst other terms and conditions the appointment was to be “subject to the Police Acts and Regulations”.

- In October of the following year the appellant and two police officers and two others were arrested. The allegation was one of conspiracy to obstruct the course of public justice. The watch committee (who are the police authority) then took action under the provisions of the Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables, Assistant Chief
20 Constables and Chief Constables) Regulations, 1952 ([SI 1952 No 1706](#)), as amended by SI 1954 No 1688. They decided to suspend him from duty as notified in a letter dated 29 October 1957; they resolved in accordance with

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 95

reg 15 to pay him certain suspension allowances. The opening part of reg 15(1) as amended provides that:

“Where a report or allegation is received from which it appears that a deputy chief constable or assistant chief constable of a borough police force may have committed an offence against discipline or a criminal offence the police authority may suspend him from duty until such time as either—

- 30 “(a) it is decided that he shall not be charged with an offence against discipline, or
(b) the disciplinary proceedings referred to in these regulations are concluded.”

Though that regulation refers to a deputy or assistant chief constable it may under certain circumstances be invoked in the case of a chief constable. This is as a result of reg 18 which provides:

“Where a report or allegation is received from which it appears that a chief constable may have committed an offence, these regulations shall apply with the following modifications, adaptations and exceptions:— ... “

The regulations provided that the expression “offence” had the same meaning as it has in the Police (Discipline) Regulations, 1952. Regulation 1(1) of those regulations provides:

“A member of a police force commits an offence against discipline (hereafter in these regulations referred to as 'an offence') if he commits one or more of the offences set out in Sch. 1 hereto (hereafter in these regulations referred to as the 'discipline code') or such additions thereto as may be made by the police authority for the police force with the consent of the Secretary of State.”

10 The position in October, 1957, was therefore that the watch committee suspended the appellant under reg 15 which was applicable on the basis that the watch committee had received a report or allegation from which it appeared that the chief constable might have committed one or more of the offences set out in the discipline code contained in the Police (Discipline) Regulations, 1952. It followed that the suspension would continue either until it was decided that he would not be charged with an offence against discipline or until any disciplinary proceedings were concluded.

20 In December, 1957, the appellant was committed for trial. An indictment dated 7 January 1958, charged him with the offence of conspiracy to obstruct the course of public justice. The particulars alleged that he conspired with the four other accused and with other persons unknown to obstruct the course of public justice in that the appellant and the two police officers accused should act contrary to their public duty as police officers in relation to the administration of the law. The conspiracy was alleged to have been between 1 January 1949, and 18 October 1957. The trial began on 3 February 1958, and after a hearing which lasted for some nineteen days the appellant was acquitted. That was on 27 February 1958.

30 On 28 February his solicitors by letter requested the watch committee to remove his suspension and to reinstate him. On that day two police officers who had been convicted by the jury were sentenced, and in passing sentence the learned judge made certain observations in regard to the appellant. A second indictment had been preferred against the appellant. The charge was that “being a person serving under the Crown” he corruptly obtained a gift of £20 from a named person as a reward for showing favour to such person in relation to the affairs of the Crown. The appellant stood his trial on that indictment on 6 March 1958. He pleaded “Not Guilty”. The prosecution offered no evidence. On the direction of the learned judge the appellant was found not guilty. After the appellant had left the dock the learned judge made certain observations in regard to the appellant.

On the following day, 7 March 1958, there was a meeting of the watch committee. The appellant had not been invited to attend and was not sent for. He received a letter the same afternoon telling him that he had been summarily

40 *[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 96*

dismissed. He was informed of certain resolutions which the watch committee had passed. Information as to those resolutions was given to the press. The resolutions

which were passed by the watch committee as recorded in their minutes were as follows:

“Resolved (unanimously):—

“(1) The committee after carefully considering

“(a) the request by [the appellant's] solicitors that [the appellant's] suspension be removed and [the appellant] be reinstated in his office as chief constable,

“(b) the length of [the appellant's] period of service in the Brighton Police Force,

10 “(c) the trial of [the appellant], Detective Inspector J. R. Hammersley and Detective Sergeant T.E. Heath, two senior members of the criminal investigation department of the Brighton Police Force and others on a charge of conspiring to obstruct the course of public justice and the conviction of Hammersley and Heath and another,

“(d) the statements of DONOVAN, J., on Feb. 28, 1958 and Mar. 6, 1958,

“(e) the statements made by [the appellant] in evidence at his trial, and

“(f) certain statements made today by members of the committee and the town clerk,

“decide that [the appellant] has in the opinion of the committee been negligent in the discharge of his duty and is unfit for the same and the committee in exercise of the powers conferred upon them by s. 191 of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, accordingly hereby dismiss him from his office as Chief Constable of Brighton forthwith.

20 “(2) That in accordance with the provisions of reg. 7 of the Police Regulations, 1955 the amount of [the appellant's] aggregate pension contributions be paid to him.

“(3) That the town clerk be requested to arrange for the foregoing resolutions to be conveyed to [the appellant] and to Messrs. Bosley and Co.

“(4) That resolutions (1) and (2) be made available to the press at a conference to be held at 2.45 p.m. this day and the chairman and the town clerk be requested to inform the press that no other statement will be made or questions answered in amplification thereof.

“(5) That no statements or disclosures be made by members of the committee concerning the matter other than the foregoing resolutions.”

30 Your Lordships were informed that the transcript of the proceedings at the criminal trial were not available for the watch committee on 7 March but that there was a transcript of the statements which had been made by the learned judge on 28 February and 6 March.

Section 191(4) of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, is in the following terms:

“The watch committee, or any two justices having jurisdiction in the borough, may at any time suspend, and the watch committee may at any time dismiss, any borough constable whom they think negligent in the discharge of his duty, or otherwise unfit for the same.”

By s 4(1) of the Police Act, 1919, it was provided:

“It shall be lawful for the Secretary of State to make regulations as to the government, mutual aid, pay, allowances, pensions, clothing, expenses and conditions of service of the members of all police forces within England and Wales, and every police authority shall comply with the regulations so made.”

At the material times the following regulations made by the Secretary of State pursuant to that power were in force: (a) Police Regulations, 1952, [SI 1952 No 1704](#); (b) Police (Discipline) Regulations, 1952, [SI 1952 No 1705](#), as amended by SI 1954 No 1687; and (c) Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables,

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 97

- 10 Assistant Chief Constables and Chief Constables) Regulations, 1952, SI 1706, as amended by SI 1954 No 1688. The regulations, [SI 1952 No 1705](#), show that a member of a police force commits an offence against discipline if he commits any of the offences which are set out in the discipline code contained in Sch 1 to the regulations. The regulations contain detailed provisions as to the procedure which must be followed

“where a report or allegation is received from which it appears that a member of a police force may have committed an offence”.

- 20 Chief constables, deputy chief constables and assistant chief constables are governed by the regulations, [SI 1952 No 1706](#), which were in fact made on the same day as those in [SI 1952 No 1705](#). These officers are also subject to the “discipline code” and the regulations, [SI 1952 No 1706](#), contain detailed provisions as to the procedure which must be followed where a report or allegation is received from which it appears that a chief constable may have committed an offence, ie an offence contained in the discipline code (see reg 18).

Amongst the many offences included in the discipline code are the following:

- “1. *Discreditable conduct*, that is to say, if a member of a police force acts in a disorderly manner or any manner prejudicial to discipline or reasonably likely to bring discredit on the reputation of the force or of the police service.
“4. *Neglect of duty*, that is to say, if a member of a police force—
30 “(a) neglects, or without good and sufficient cause omits, promptly and diligently to attend to or carry out anything which is his duty as a constable,
“5. *Falsehood or prevarication*, that is to say, if a member of a police force— ... (b) wilfully or negligently makes any false, misleading or inaccurate statement,
“17. *Conviction for a criminal offence*, that is to say, if a member of a police force has been found guilty by a court of law of a criminal offence.”

If there is a report or allegation from which it appears that a chief constable may have committed an offence against the discipline code then the police authority must¹

- ¹ [SI 1952 No 1706, reg 1, applied by reg 18](#)

- 40 “unless they are satisfied that he has not committed an offence inform him in writing of the report or allegation and ask him whether or not he admits that he has committed an offence and give him an opportunity, if he so desires, of making

to the police authority any oral or written statement he may wish to make concerning the matter.”

Regulation 2 (of [SI 1952 No 1706](#)) as applied to chief constables by reg 18 provides that if the chief constable

“admits that he has committed an offence, the police authority may impose a punishment in accordance with reg. 11 of these regulations without the case being heard in accordance with the following provisions of these regulations.”

10 The power to punish for an offence without a hearing was therefore made conditional on there being an admission of an offence. Thereafter if the police authority are not satisfied with the statement of a chief constable who does not admit that he has committed an offence the police authority must instruct a solicitor to enter on a discipline form the offence with which the chief constable is charged and must give such particulars as will leave the chief constable

“in no doubt as to the precise nature of the alleged offence”.

20 That having been done a chief constable must be supplied with (a) a copy of the discipline form (b) a copy of the report or allegation on which the charge is founded and any reports thereon notwithstanding that they may be confidential (c) a copy of any statement relating to the charge made by any witness to be called in support of the charge together with the witness's name and address and (d) a copy of any statement relating to the charge made by any person other than a witness to be called in support of the charge, to the police authority or to anybody on their behalf,

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 98

30 together with the person's name and address. Thereafter there must be a hearing by a tribunal (which could consist of a person selected from a list of nominated persons and assisted on matters pertaining to the police by an assessor or could consist of not more than five members of the police authority). The regulations lay down the procedure for the hearing and provide that after the hearing the tribunal must submit a report to the police authority and send a copy of it to the accused chief constable. The report must contain (inter alia) a statement as to the facts found or admitted, as to the charges found to be proved, and as to any recommendation as to any punishment. Then the police authority must come to a decision. That will be only

“on receipt of the report of the tribunal”.

They may decide to dismiss the case: alternatively they may decide to impose any one of the following punishments (i) dismissal (ii) requirement to resign either forthwith or on such date as may be specified in the decision as an alternative to dismissal (iii) reprimand (see reg 11).

40 By the Police Pensions Act, 1948, it was provided that regulations to be made by the Secretary of State were to make provision as to the pensions to be paid whether as of right or otherwise and also “as to the times at which and the circumstances in which members of police forces are or may be required to retire otherwise than on

the ground of misconduct". The Police Pensions Regulations, 1955 (SI 1955 No 480), contain the following provisions:—

"1.—(1) Subject to the provisions of these regulations, every man or woman who is a regular policeman, that is to say, a member of a home police force who is not an auxiliary policeman and a member of an overseas corps who is a reversionary member of a home police force, shall, on retiring from the force of which he is a member, be entitled to an award under these regulations.

"3.—(1) Subject to the provisions of these regulations, where a regular policeman who is entitled to reckon twenty-five years' pensionable service retires from a police force, the award shall be an ordinary pension.

10 "7.—(2) Where a member of a police force is dismissed the police authority shall pay an amount equal to the amount of his aggregate pension contributions to such one of those persons hereinafter described as, in their discretion, they may think fit or, if in their discretion they think fit, shall distribute that amount among such of those persons in such shares and in such manner as in their discretion they may think fit.

"52. If a police authority determine that the retention in the force of a regular policeman who if required to retire is entitled to receive a pension of an amount not less than two-thirds of his average pensionable pay would not be in the general interests of efficiency, he may be required to retire on such date as the police authority determine."

20 It is to be observed that s 191(4) of the Municipal (Corporations) Act, 1882, gives to the watch committee a power of suspension. As I have already mentioned, a power to suspend a chief constable is also given to the police authority by the regulations, [SI 1952 No 1706](#), as amended. The case has proceeded on the basis that the watch committee suspended the appellant in October, 1957, under the powers given to them by those regulations. At the trial of the action the appellant gave evidence that after his arrest on 25 October 1957, the town clerk came to see him on the same day and said that he had been suspended from duty and the appellant's recollection was that the town clerk added "under police regulations" or "in accord with police regulations".

30 The appellant's recollection as to this was not challenged in cross-examination. The suspension allowances which thereafter were paid to the appellant were payable because on 28 October 1957, the watch committee resolved that in accordance with reg 15 of the regulations such allowances should be paid. It is not suggested by the appellant that there was any irregularity in his suspension. The power to suspend arose because the watch committee must have received a report or allegation from which it appeared that

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 99

the appellant may have committed some offence against discipline (ie some offence against the discipline code).

40 It seems very probable that the watch committee received an oral report that the appellant had been arrested on criminal charges, and it is abundantly clear that, if he were guilty of criminal charges, he would have committed one or more of the offences set out in the discipline code. Quite apart from various other offences he would have been guilty of the offence under para 17 of the discipline code as previously set out.

After the appellant was acquitted of all criminal charges there were various courses which were open to the watch committee. They could have decided not to charge the appellant with any “offence against discipline”. In that event his suspension would have ceased. They could have decided to charge him with some offence or offences against discipline. In that event the suspension would have continued. That would be on the basis that there was some report or allegation that the appellant may have committed an offence against discipline.

10 The appellant would then have had the right to be informed of, and to make a personal explanation concerning, any such report or allegation and the procedure laid down in the regulations would have to be followed. Had there been disciplinary proceedings, the appellant would have had all the opportunities to defend himself which the regulations give. If any charges were found to be proved and if the case were not dismissed, then there might have been dismissal or a requirement to resign in lieu of dismissal or a reprimand.

Another course which was open to the watch committee was to consider (pursuant to reg 52 of the Police Pensions Regulations, 1955, SI 1955 No 480) whether the appellant was one who if required to retire was entitled to receive a pension of an amount not less than two-thirds of his average pensionable pay, and, if so, to consider whether the retention of the appellant in the force “would not be in the
20 general interests of efficiency”, and to decide whether to require the appellant to retire.

The documents show what the watch committee did. The documents further show their reasons for doing what they did. What they did was summarily to dismiss the appellant without any prior communication of any sort to him and without inviting any submission from him. They purported to exercise powers given by s 191(4). It is beyond dispute that the procedure of the regulations was in no way operated. The issue that is raised is therefore whether the powers given by s 191(4) may be invoked without paying any regard to the provisions contained in regulations, [SI 1952 No 1706](#).

30 The further issue that is raised is whether such powers may also be invoked without paying regard to those principles which are conveniently referred to as the principles of natural justice. I propose to deal with these issues separately.

The powers given by s 191(4) are impressive. There is, first, a power to suspend. It may well be that different considerations apply to suspensions as compared to dismissals. It may well be that a power to suspend if exercised by a watch committee in good faith may have to be exercised without any hearing and without any procedural requirements. That does not have to be decided in the present case. The power to dismiss (given by the section to a watch committee but not to justices) relates to any borough constable (which term includes a chief constable) whom the
40 watch committee

“think negligent in the discharge of his duty or otherwise unfit for the same”.

My lords, I consider that in the context the word “otherwise” denotes that there may be dismissal of a constable if the watch committee considers that he is unfit for the

discharge of his duties even though he may not have been negligent in their discharge. In the section it seems to me that the words “unfit for the same” were designed to cover situations where even apart from any misconduct or lack of care and even apart from any physical or health condition a constable was thought to be unfit for the discharge of his duty. It was not contended before your lordships that s 191(4) has been impliedly repealed. Having regard to s 1(4) of the Police Act, 1946, and para 3(2) in Sch 2 to that Act, that would have been a difficult contention to advance. But

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 100

- 10 though the powers given by s 191(4) are still exercisable I consider, in agreement with the Court of Appeal, that the effect of the Police Act, 1919, is that the powers given by s 191(4) must be exercised in accordance with any regulations made under the Police Act, 1919, which are applicable.

Pearce LJ said (*[1962] 1 All ER at p 842*) that in cases coming within the regulations the statutory power of the watch committee must be used in accordance with the regulations, and that in such cases the watch committee must act judicially or quasi-judicially. Harman LJ (*[1962] 1 All ER at p 848*), said that in cases to which the regulations are applicable the power to dismiss given by s 191(4) is controlled. Davies LJ (*[1962] 1 All ER at p 851*), likewise agreed that the power is controlled by
20 the regulations. These conclusions followed and were in accord with the judgment of Greer LJ, in *Cooper v Wilson*. In that case Greer LJ while rejecting a suggestion that the power to make regulations under s 4(1) of the Police Act, 1919, had impliedly repealed s 191(4) of the Act of 1882 said (*[1937] All ER at p 730; [1937] 2 KB at p 316*):

“The regulations, in my judgment, must be read as applying to the way in which the watch committee are to exercise their powers in a borough ... “

- It may well be that the various Police Regulations and Police Pensions Regulations were designed to cover all the circumstances and situations with which police
30 authorities are likely to be faced, and in practice I would think that police authorities would invariably wish to follow the spirit as well as the letter of the carefully devised procedures which the regulations lay down. As a matter of construction, however, I am not prepared to say every power is controlled by the regulations: they do not appear to make provisions in regard to the power to dismiss a constable who is thought by the watch committee to be unfit for the discharge of his duties. If, however, a constable is thought to have been negligent in the discharge of his duties, and so guilty of an offence under s 4 of the discipline code, or if he is thought to have been guilty of some other offence, then the provisions of the regulations would be applicable.

- 40 The action of the watch committee in summarily dismissing the appellant was stated to be for two reasons. In the first place they decided that the appellant had been negligent in the discharge of his duty. In the second place they decided that he was unfit for the discharge of his duty. Had they been merely of the opinion that the

appellant had become unfit for the discharge of his duty, but had not been in any way negligent in the discharge of his duty, it would seem to be inherently unlikely that they would have exercised a power of summary dismissal. They had appointed the appellant in 1956, after he had been successively promoted in the period of years after 1925, when he first joined the Brighton Borough Police Force. He was nearing the time when he could have retired on a pension. If the watch committee thought that there were reasons why his retention in the force would not be in the general interests of efficiency they could have required him to retire (see reg 52 of the Police Pensions Regulations, 1955).

- 10 If the watch committee had thought that there was no element of misconduct and no suggestion of negligence in the discharge of duty, then, assuming that the power given by s 191(4) to dismiss, where there is unfitness for duty, is a power which is not governed by and has not been affected by regulations which have been made, then on such hypothesis I do not suppose that summary dismissal would have been contemplated. In fact there was a decision in the discharge of his duty. There was therefore a finding of misconduct, although there had not been a charge and although there had not been a hearing. A member of a police force is guilty of an offence if he "neglects or without good and sufficient cause omits promptly and diligently to attend to or carry out anything which is his duty as a constable". I do not
- 20 think that it can be open to doubt that, if someone is found to have been "negligent in the discharge of his duty",

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 101

- he is found to have been guilty of the offence defined by these words. The watch committee therefore found the appellant guilty of this offence and summarily dismissed him for it. They found him guilty without giving him particulars and without charging him and without giving him any opportunity to defend himself. They made no attempt to pay heed to the regulations. The explanation of this that is advanced is that they were not obliged to do so, because they had not received any report or allegation from which it appeared that the appellant might have committed an
- 30 offence. I find this a most surprising suggestion. If they had not received any report or allegation to the effect that he might have committed an offence then why did they suddenly decide that he had committed an offence?

- How could they find him guilty of being negligent in the discharge of his duty without some suggestion or some information which amounted to a report or allegation to that effect? Indeed, it is difficult to understand how the committee could ever act in a disciplinary matter without first having some report or some allegation that an offence may have been committed. The minutes of the meeting record that they carefully considered the trial of the appellant and the other accused. The trial had lasted some nineteen days. The transcript of the evidence was not before the committee on 7
- 40 March.

If the committee had acquired knowledge that in the proceedings at the trial there was some material which might lead to the view that the appellant had been negligent in the discharge of his duty, then they were treating that material as a report or allegation. The minutes further record that the committee considered the statements made by the learned judge on 28 February and 6 March. They had

transcripts before them of what the learned judge had said. The statements made by the learned judge manifestly called for the most careful consideration by the watch committee who would obviously pay the greatest heed to them. One of the statements besides commenting on the failure of the appellant to give proper leadership raised two specific matters, viz (1) that the appellant had contrived to go to a suspected briber of the police in private (that was a reference to a man named Leach) and (2) that the appellant had admitted “a much convicted and hectoring bookmaker” to his private room and had discussed with him the policy of the police in certain matters (that was a reference to a man named Page).

10 My lords, I find it impossible to say that in considering those statements the committee had not received, and were not considering, a report or allegation to the effect that the appellant might have been guilty of an offence. The learned judge on 6 March had said in terms that he realised that the matter of the leadership of the Brighton Police Force was “about to engage the attention of those persons whose responsibility it is”. No words used by the learned judge, however, could or did in any way suggest that the matter was to be dealt with in disregard of the requirements of the law.

20 The minutes of the watch committee further record that the committee considered “certain statements made today by members of the committee and the town clerk”. If those were statements that might lead members to conclude that the appellant had been negligent in the discharge of his duty then they must have been reports or allegations from which it appeared that the appellant might have committed either the offence of neglect of duty or some other offence. As no evidence was called on behalf of the watch committee at the trial of the action, it was not possible to ask any member of the watch committee what these statements were. There is, however, material from which their nature may be reasonably inferred. In circumstances to which reference must later be made, the solicitors for the appellant gave notice of appeal to the Secretary of State against his dismissal, while stating that the appeal was without prejudice to the appellant’s rights to contend that the purported notice of
30 dismissal was bad in law as being contrary to natural justice and not in accordance with the appropriate statutes and regulations. Thereafter in a written statement submitted by the watch committee to the Secretary of State the facts and contentions on which reliance was placed included the following:

“(c) In the course of the said trial the appellant gave false evidence in

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 102

respect of two matters of material importance, namely (i) that he had reported to the deputy town clerk and also to the chairman of the watch committee the facts relating to an interview between Alderman Cullen and one Page, and (ii) that he had reported to the then chief constable the facts relating to an interview which he (the appellant)
40 had had with one Mrs. Cherryman.

“(d) The appellant failed to investigate and to take any action whatsoever in respect of complaints of a serious nature made by the said Mrs. Cherryman as to the manner in which the Astor Club was conducted and as to the trustworthiness of the Brighton Criminal Investigation Department.

“(e) Following a report of an attempt to bribe a police officer, the appellant went to the house of the man concerned, namely Harry Leach, and there interviewed him privately and alone.

“(f) The appellant permitted a man with a criminal record, namely the said Page, to interview him in his private room and to discuss with him matters of police policy.

“(i) The [watch committee] contend that, having regard to the facts and matters aforesaid, the appellant has *both* been negligent in the discharge of his duty and is also unfit for the same and that, therefore, they were entitled to dismiss him pursuant to the provisions of s. 191 of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882.”

10 It is in my judgment a reasonable inference that the statements made at the meeting of the watch committee covered the matters set out under (c). If someone made the serious suggestion that the appellant had at his criminal trial given false evidence on material matters, that was surely a report or allegation from which it appeared that the appellant might have committed an offence. There would have been an offence under para 5 of the discipline code.

The watch committee were under a statutory obligation (see Police Act, 1919, s 4(1)) to comply with the regulations made under the Act. They dismissed the appellant after finding that he had been negligent in the discharge of his duty. That was a finding of guilt of the offence of neglecting or omitting diligently to attend to or to carry out his duty. Yet they had preferred no charge against the appellant and gave him no notice. They gave him no opportunity to defend himself or to be heard. Though their good faith is in no way impugned they completely disregarded the regulations and did not begin to comply with them. My lords, I cannot think that any decision so reached can have any validity and unless later events have made it valid it ought not to be allowed to stand.

Had the regulations been applied but if there had been some minor procedural failure different considerations might have applied. There was, however, no kind of compliance with them. In my judgment once there was a report or allegation from which it appeared that a chief constable might have committed an offence it was a condition precedent to any dismissal based on a finding of guilt of such offence that the regulations should in essentials have been put into operation. They included and incorporated the principles of natural justice which, as [Harman LJ \(\[1962\] 1 All ER at p 850\)](#), said, is only fair play in action. It is well established that the essential requirements of natural justice at least include that before someone is condemned he is to have an opportunity of defending himself and in order that he may do so that he is to be made aware of the charges or allegations or suggestions which he has to meet; see [Kanda v Government of The Federation of Malaya](#). My lords, here is something which is basic to our system: the importance of upholding it far transcends the significance of any particular case.

The circumstances existing in March, 1958, made it, in my judgment, particularly necessary quite apart from its being a matter of legal obligation that before considering whether the appellant had been negligent in the discharge of his duty the procedure of the regulations should be observed. The appellant had after a

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 103

long trial been acquitted on criminal charges. There had been much publicity. He had not been on trial on charges of neglect of duty or of unfitness for duty. If any facts had emerged which, while insufficient to support the charges at the criminal trial, had seemed to the watch committee to suggest that the appellant had been negligent in

the discharge of his duty it would have been so easy to state them. If at the criminal trial any admission had been made or evidence given which seemed to support the view that there had been negligence—how simple it would have been to state it. If some facts were clear and plain—so that denials would have been unlikely or explanations difficult—then the opportunity to make a statement might have shown a course ahead.

10 But if, on the other hand, facts could be explained and if conduct could be defended and if charges of neglect or of unfitness could be repelled, was the appellant to be denied a hearing? It is to be noted that whatever suggestion or charge might be formulated in regard to the “Leach” matter raised questions as to the desirability or propriety of a visit that had taken place as far back as 1954, which was some time before the appellant was appointed to be chief constable.

The appellant's case was that he had told his then chief constable in advance of his proposed visit to Leach. His case further was that neither in respect of the “Leach” matter nor in respect of the “Page” matter was there any impropriety in his conduct or actions. On the charges brought against him in a court of law and on which he was tried he was found not guilty. If a new charge of neglect of duty was to be brought against him was he not even to be told about it or asked about it? Was he to have no chance of dealing with matters which may have influenced the committee?

20 Were the safeguards of a criminal trial, of which the law is a jealous protector, to find no reflection in the days that followed an acquittal?

My lords, before further considering the result of disregarding the regulations it becomes necessary to mention certain events that followed the dismissal. The solicitor for the appellant addressed a letter to the Secretary of State on 7 March 1958, in which he contended that the dismissal was contrary to natural justice and bad in law and gave notice of appeal. The letter pointed out that the notice of dismissal had merely recited a general finding of negligence and unfitness without specifying any details. The Police (Appeals) Act, 1927, as amended by the Police (Appeals) Act, 1943, by s 1(1) provides:

30 “A member of a police force who after the passing of this Act is punished by dismissal, by being required to resign as an alternative to dismissal, by reduction in rank, or a reduction in rate of pay, may appeal to a Secretary of State in accordance with this Act and the rules made thereunder, if he gives notice of appeal in the prescribed manner and within the prescribed time.”

The Police (Appeals) Rules, 1943 ([SI 1943 No 473](#)), which apply to all appeals by a member of a police force provide^m that notice of appeal must be sent “within ten days from the date when the appellant received on the misconduct form the notification of the decision against which he desires to appeal”. The solicitor for the appellant followed his letter of 7 March with another dated 10 March in which he

40 stated that the appeal was without prejudice to the appellant's rights to contend that the purported dismissal was bad in law as being contrary to natural justice and not in accordance with the appropriate statutes and regulations.

In his notice of appeal which was dated 12 March he set out some thirty grounds of appeal. While denying any neglect or any unfitness, he set out that he had been

given no notice of what was alleged against him and no opportunity of being heard. He further set out that by lodging his appeal he did not recognise the legality of the watch committee's decision, and that his appeal was without prejudice to his contentions that the watch committee's decision was invalid, and he stated that his notice of appeal was only given within the limited time in case it should be held that the watch committee's procedure was valid. In due

- ^m See reg 2(2)
[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 104

10 course a written statement dated 18 April 1958, was submitted to the Secretary of State on behalf of the watch committee: it set out the facts and contentions on which the watch committee relied in opposing the appeal.

Following on the dismissal of the appellant his solicitor made a request to appear before the watch committee. He wished to be informed about the case against his client so as to be able to deal with it, and furthermore he wished to submit that the best way of dealing with the situation would be to allow his client to resign and to have his pension. A copy of the appellant's written statement to the Secretary of State and in addition some written observations were sent to the watch committee. In those observations it was submitted that the appellant should be allowed to retire on full pension forthwith.

20 The committee decided to meet on 19 March and stated that they would consider any representations which were then made by or on behalf of the appellant either orally or in writing, and that such representations need not be limited to the matter of the pension. The appellant's solicitor attended and addressed the watch committee. In the course of his address he stated that before being dismissed the appellant had been given no notice of what was charged against him or of being heard. The solicitor was received with courtesy, but in silence. It seems, however, to be beyond dispute that he was given no further particulars of the case against the appellant than appeared in the letter of 7 March. The watch committee's later submissions to the Secretary of State which were dated 18 April were, of course, not then available.

30 The result of the meeting of 18 March was that the watch committee by a majority resolved to adhere to their previous decision: nine members voted in favour of such resolution and three members voted against it.

The written statement (dated 18 April 1958) submitted to the Secretary of State by the watch committee set out their contentions, and they included the paragraphs to which I have already referred. The Secretary of State decided that the case could be determined without taking oral evidence (see Police (Appeals) Act, 1927, s 2) and on 5 July 1958, he dismissed the appeal. He came to the conclusion

“that there was sufficient material on which the watch committee could properly exercise their power of dismissal under s 191(4)”.

40 He did not take into account, as no evidence in support of them was before him, certain allegations on which the watch committee relied, viz

(i) that the appellant did not report to the deputy town clerk and to the chairman of the watch committee the facts relating to an interview between Alderman Cullen and one Page;

(ii) that the appellant did not report to the then chief constable the facts relating to an interview which the appellant had with one Mrs Cherryman; and

(iii) that the appellant in giving evidence at his trial that he had so reported those matters gave false evidence.

10 My lords, in my judgment, inasmuch as the decision of the watch committee was that the appellant had committed an offence or offences against the discipline code and inasmuch as the decision was arrived at in complete disregard of the regulations it must be regarded as void and of no effect. The power to dismiss for an offence was a power that could only be exercised if the procedure of the regulations was set in motion. A purported dismissal in complete disregard of them cannot be recognised as having any validity.

20 In *Andrews v Mitchell* a member of a friendly society, who had been duly summoned before the arbitration committee for a breach of the rules, was in his absence expelled from the society by a resolution of the committee on a different charge, ie of fraud and disgraceful conduct of which no written notice had been given to him as required by the rules. By one of the general laws of the friendly society any member proved guilty of fraud or any conduct or offence calculated to bring disgrace on the order before any recognised arbitration committee, provided a charge had been preferred against him as required by the general laws with regard to arbitrations, might be expelled or suffer some less penalty. It was held that the decision of the committee

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 105

was null and void. In his speech ([1904–7] All ER Rep at p 600; [1905] AC at p 80) the Earl of Halsbury LC said that

“there are some principles of justice which it is impossible to disregard”.

30 He pointed out that while there was a rule which justified expulsion it justified expulsion on the express proviso that the charge had been made as provided by the rules. He added ([1904–7] All ER Rep at p 600; [1905] AC at p 81):

“In this case the charge never was made as provided by the rules; and if you have no power given under the rules to expel a member except upon a charge made and tried according to the rules, you have no power to expel in a case like this.”

40 He described the summoning of a member pursuant to the rules and giving him time to consider what he had to do and giving him the charge against him in writing as “matters of substance and not mere matters of form”. He concluded that the arbitration committee “had no jurisdiction” to entertain the matter. Lord Davey said ([1904–7] All ER Rep at p 601; [1905] AC at pp 82, 83):

“It is not contended that this charge was properly made according to the rules, but it is said that it may be regarded that as a mere informality which might be set right. But it was an informality which went to the root of the jurisdiction, and the omission to follow the directions of the rules for preferring charges has had the unfortunate effect of making the resolution which was come to for the expulsion of the respondent, in my opinion altogether invalid, null and void.”

10 My lords, if the regulations were applicable in this case, as in my judgment they were, reg 2 of [SI 1952 No 1706](#), to which I have referred above, only gives a power to impose punishment without a hearing if a condition is satisfied, viz, if there is an admission of the commission of an offence. In the present case there was no such admission and the watch committee therefore lacked power to impose punishment for an offence without a hearing: in purporting to dismiss the appellant they acted without jurisdiction and their decision was a nullity.

20 In *Lapointe v L'association de Bienfaisance et de Retraite de la Police de Montreal*, the appellant, who was a member of the respondent benevolent and pension society, had been obliged to resign from the police force. Under those circumstances he became entitled according to the rules to have his case for a gratuity or pension considered by the board of directors and his right to such gratuity or pension determined by a majority of the board. The board in fact acted in a most extraordinary manner. In delivering the judgment of the Privy Council Lord MacNaghten said ([1906] AC at p 538):

30 “They first appointed a committee of four from their own body to investigate the reason of Lapointe’s resignation. There would have been no objection to this course if the committee had been deputed to consider and report whether or not there was a prima facie case for inquiry. But what the committee did was to listen to all sorts of stories about Lapointe’s past history, and rake up everything that was against him during his connexion with the force. Then, without telling Lapointe what the charges against him were, or giving him any opportunity of defending himself, they advised the board that the pension should be refused. Thereupon the board abnegated their judicial duties altogether. They summoned a general meeting of the members and submitted a question, which they were bound to determine themselves, to a popular vote. The meeting was held on Apr. 26, 1892, when by a large majority of the members present it was resolved that Lapointe’s name should not be entered on the pension roll of the society.

“The whole of these proceedings were irregular, contrary to the rules of

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 106

the society, and above all contrary to the elementary principles of justice. And the position of the board was certainly not improved by a formal resolution stating solemnly, what was contrary to the truth, that after having inquired into the facts and circumstances which brought about Lapointe’s resignation, and having deliberated upon his claim, the board ‘desires that the pension on which he claims be refused, seeing that he was obliged to tender his resignation’.”

40 Lord MacNaghten said ([1906] AC at p 451) that it was obvious that the so-called determination of the board was void and of no effect, and the order which they humbly advised included a declaration and determination as required by the rules and that the proceedings were null and void.

In *Annamunthodo v Oilfields Workers’ Trade Union*, it was held in the Privy Council that a decision of the general council of the trade union was vitiated because it convicted the appellant of an offence against the rules with which he had never been charged and it was held that it should be declared that the purported expulsion of the

appellant was invalid and that an order should be made to set it aside. My lords, so here should it, in my judgment, be declared that the purported termination on 7 March 1958, of the appellant's appointment was void unless it be that later events debar the appellant from obtaining this relief. If they do not then the effect of such a declaration will be that the respondents will have to consider what action to take and in any course that they follow they must act according to law.

10 The appellant, through his counsel, has stated that he has no intention of applying for reinstatement, but would be content to retire (as from March, 1958), with his pension. I apprehend that in all the circumstances it would not be appropriate for your lordships to do more than to declare that the purported termination on 7 March 1958, of the appellant's appointment was void. Included in the other claims of the appellant in his action is a claim for his salary as from 7 March 1958. It would not seem appropriate at the present stage to deal with the appellant's claim for salary, and it would not be for your lordships to decide any question as to a pension.

20 The question next arises whether the events subsequent to 7 March form any bar to the appellant's claim. I have already referred to the meeting of 18 March. That occasion afforded an opportunity for the watch committee to tell the appellant and his solicitor what were the allegations that he had to meet. The documents which the solicitor sent to the watch committee emphasised the point that the appellant had been given no notice of them: mention was also made of the fact that the appellant did not know what were the statements made by members of the watch committee referred to in the letter of 7 March. He most certainly had no hint that it was being said of him that he had given some false evidence. The appellant's case is that he never had the chance—which he would have welcomed—of refuting that suggestion before the watch committee and the chance of calling such evidence as he might desire to call to deal with the suggestion.

30 The oral request for information made by the solicitor met with no response. Even though the watch committee had communicated their previous decision to the press a full inquiry might still have been possible but the watch committee neither took the opportunity then to begin compliance with the regulations nor even, in default of that, to give information to the appellant as to the case that he had to meet. In the result, in my judgment, nothing occurred on 18 March to give validity to what the watch committee had purported to do on 7 March. Nor in my view did the action of the appellant in appealing to the Secretary of State have any such effect. If the decision of 7 March was a nullity and void the fact that the appellant appealed made no difference. The decision of 7 March remained a nullity. The appellant made it as plain as possible that he was adhering to and was in no way abandoning his submission that the decision of 7 March had no validity. In

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 107

40 these circumstances the provision in s 2(3) of the Police (Appeals) Act, 1927, that the decision of the Secretary of State on an appeal is to be “final and binding upon all parties” cannot produce the result that validity is given to that which is a nullity.

The watch committee referred to s 220 of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882. That section was not pleaded and was not mentioned in the watch committee's case, but

it was argued that it could be relied on in support of the contention that the court could not declare against the validity of the decision of the watch committee. I deal with the point because, if it had validity, it would go to jurisdiction. I would not regard the complaints of the appellant as covered by the words "want of form", nor would I regard the words "removed by certiorari or otherwise" as apt to exclude the claims made in this action. Furthermore it would clearly be contrary to the intention of s 11(1) of the Tribunals and Inquiries Act, 1958, if its effect on s 220 could be construed as having the result that the court could make an order of certiorari, but could not entertain an action for a declaration.

- 10 In view of the opinions which I have expressed as to the applicability of the regulations and as to the consequences of disregarding them I propose only to deal briefly with the question whether, had there been no regulations, the police authority would have been bound to have regard to the principles of natural justice. In my view the regulations incorporate those principles, but had there not been any and had the police authority in the exercise of powers given them by s 191(4) contemplated dismissing the appellant on the ground of neglect of duty, they would in my view have been under obligation to give him an opportunity to be heard and would have had to consider anything that he might say.

- 20 I cannot think that the dismissal of the appellant should be regarded as an executive or administrative act if based on a suggestion of neglect of duty: before it could be decided that there had been neglect of duty it would be a pre-requisite that the question should be considered in a judicial spirit. In order to give the appellant an opportunity to defend himself against a charge of neglect of duty he would have to be told what the alleged neglect of duty was.

In a case in which a consistory court had made an order requiring a vicar to pay certain expenses and costs, but had given him no opportunity of being heard in his defence, a writ of prohibition directed to the chancellor was issued (see *R v North, Ex p Oakey*) and Scrutton LJ said ([1927] 1 KB at p 502):

- 30 "In my view an order that any one shall pay the cost of work that has been obliterated without a faculty is in the nature of a penalty for an ecclesiastical offence, and one of the most fundamental principles of English law is that if you are going to impose on a person a penalty for an offence you must first clearly inform him that an application to that effect is going to be made against him, so that he may know what he is charged with and have an opportunity of attending to meet it."

The proceedings in the consistory court were therefore "without jurisdiction" and prohibition lay. The application of the "fundamental" principle is, however, not limited to proceedings in courts or to cases where penalties for offences are being imposed. The conduct of James Bagg (see *Bagg's case*) was hardly commendable but it was held that it did not give good cause for his disfranchisement. In any case he had not been heard and the court said ((1615), 11 Co Rep at pp 98b, 99a):

- 40 "And although they have lawful authority either by charter or prescription to remove any one from the freedom and that they have just cause to remove him: yet it appears by the return that they have proceeded against him without hearing him answer to what was objected or that he was not reasonably warned, such removal is void and shall not bind the party. Such a removal was against justice and right."

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 108

So also did the courts come to the aid of Dr Bentley and grant a peremptory mandamus to restore him to his degree (*R v University of Cambridge*). Though the court was roundly critical of Dr Bentley's behaviour they considered that even if he had been guilty of a contempt to the Vice-Chancellor's court that court had no power to deprive him of his degrees: but they held that in any event he could not be deprived without notice. The words of Fortescue J ((1723), 1 Stra at p 566), were emphatic:

“Besides, the objection for want of notice can never be got over. The laws of God and man both give the party an opportunity to make his defence if he has any.”

- 10 In *Wood v Woad*, Kelly CB in speaking of the “rule expressed in the maxim audi alteram partem” said ((1874), LR 9 Exch at p 196):

“This rule is not confined to the conduct of strictly legal tribunals but is applicable to every tribunal or body of persons invested with authority to adjudicate upon matters involving civil consequences to individuals.”

- 20 The relationship between the watch committee and the appellant was not that of master and servant. Nor was the appellant one who held an office at pleasure with the consequence that he could be required at pleasure to relinquish it. He was in a different position from someone possessing a licence to do various acts. The appellant held an office from which the watch committee could at any time dismiss him if they thought he had been negligent in the discharge of his duty. The watch committee did not however have an unfettered or unrestricted discretion.

If it be assumed that no regulation had been made, then the fact that s 191(4) is silent as to any procedure for a hearing does not involve that there could be a dismissal without a hearing. The “justice of the common law” would require it, for, as Byles J said in *Cooper v Wandsworth Board of Works* ((1863), 14 CBNS at p 194):

“a long course of decisions, beginning with Dr. Bentley's case and ending with some very recent cases, establish that although there are no positive words in a statute requiring that the party shall be heard, yet the justice of the common law will supply the omission of the legislature.”

- 30 In that case it was held that, although s 76 of the Metropolis Management Act, 1855, empowered the district board to alter or demolish a house where the builder had neglected to give notice of his intention to build seven days before proceeding to lay or dig the foundation, yet the district board were not empowered to demolish the building without first giving the party guilty of the omission an opportunity of being heard. Erle CJ said ((1863), 14 CBNS at p 189):

- 40 “It has been said that the principle that no man shall be deprived of his property without an opportunity of being heard is limited to a judicial proceeding and that a district board ordering a house to be pulled down cannot be said to be doing a judicial act. I do not quite agree with that; neither do I undertake to rest my judgment solely upon the ground that the district board is a court exercising judicial discretion upon the point: but the law, I think, has been applied to many exercises of power which in common understanding would not be at all more a judicial proceeding than would be the act of the district board in ordering a house to be pulled down.”

So Willis J said ((1863), 14 CBNS at p 190):

“I apprehend that a tribunal which is by law invested with power to affect the property of one of Her Majesty's subjects is bound to give such subject an opportunity of being heard before it proceeds: and that that rule

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 109

is of universal application and founded upon the plainest principles of justice.”

So also in *Spackman v Plumstead Board of Works*, the Earl of Selborne LC said ((1885), 10 App Cas at p 240):

10 “No doubt in the absence of special provisions as to how the person who is to decide is to proceed, the law will imply no more than that substantial requirements of justice shall not be violated. He is not a judge in the proper sense of the word: but he must give the parties an opportunity of being heard before him and stating their case and their view. He must give notice when he will proceed with the matter and he must act honestly and impartially and not under the dictation of some other person or persons to whom the authority is not given by law. There must be no malversation of any kind. There would be no decision within the meaning of the statute if there were anything of that sort done contrary to the essence of justice.”

20 Lord Selborne was there speaking of the decision of an architect (under s 75 of the Metropolis Management Act, 1862) as to the general line of buildings in a road. If the principles, to which he adverts, apply where property rights are in issue, surely they must at least apply with equal effect where the issue is whether there has been misconduct which merits dismissal from an office. It is to be remembered also that in the case of the appellant his summary dismissal involved the loss of valuable pension rights. Property rights were at stake in *Local Government Board v Arlidge*. Viscount Haldane LC (([1914–15] All ER Rep at p 7; [1915] AC at pp 132, 133), there expressed his approval of the view indicated by Lord Loreburn in *Board of Education v Rice* ([1911–13] All ER Rep 36; [1911] AC 179) that an administrative body to which the decision of a question in dispute between parties has been entrusted must act in good faith and listen fairly to both sides.

30 Lord Parmoor said ([1914–15] All ER Rep at p 15; [1915] AC at p 142) that, whether in that case the order of the Local Government Board was to be regarded as of an administrative or of a quasi-judicial character, if the order affected the rights and property of the respondent he was entitled to have the matter determined “in a judicial spirit in accordance with the principles of substantial justice”. A right to be heard before property rights were affected was upheld in the circumstances applying in *Cooper v Wandsworth Board of Works*, in *Hopkins v Smethwick Local Board of Health*, and in *Urban Housing Co Ltd v Oxford Corpn*. Similarly a right to be heard in regard to removal from an office was recognised in *Osgood v Nelson*, in *Ex p Ramshay* and in *R v Gaskin*. So also it has been recognised that expulsion from a club must not take place in disregard either of the rules of the club or of the rules of
40 natural justice. (The cases of *Fisher v Keane* and *Dawkins v Antrobus* may be mentioned as typical examples.)

Being of the view that even if there had been no applicable regulations a decision to dismiss the appellant for neglect of duty ought only to have been taken in the exercise of a quasi-judicial function which demanded an observance of the rules of

natural justice—I entertain no doubt that such rules were not observed. Before 7 March there was neither notice of what was alleged nor opportunity to deal with what was alleged. It was contended that the criminal trial had been the appellant's opportunity. My lords, I cannot think that such a contention is valid. The trial was concerned with specific charges. In respect of them the appellant was found not guilty. If there were other charges or charges of a different nature which were not submitted to the jury but which the watch committee proposed

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 110

10 to consider, then it was for the watch committee to formulate them and only to reach decision in regard to them after hearing and considering what the appellant or any witnesses of his had to say. For the reasons that I have already given the hearing of 18 March did not remedy the previous defects. The consequence, in my view, is that there was an abnegation of the quasi-judicial duties involved in the function of the watch committee with the result that their decision must be regarded as of no effect and invalid, and so can be declared by the court to be void (see *Bagg's case*, *R v University of Cambridge*, *Wood v Woad*, *Fisher v Keane*).

20 It was submitted that the decision of the watch committee was voidable but not void. But this involves the inquiry as to the sense in which the word “voidable”, a word deriving from the law of contract, is in this connexion used. If the appellant had bowed to the decision of the watch committee and had not asserted that it was void, then no occasion to use either word would have arisen. When the appellant in fact at once repudiated and challenged the decision, so claiming that it was invalid, and when in fact the watch committee adhered to their decision, so claiming that it was valid, only the court could decide who was right.

30 If in that situation it was said that the decision was voidable, that was only to say that the decision of the court was awaited. But if and when the court decides that the appellant was right, the court is deciding that the decision of the watch committee was invalid and of no effect and null and void. The word “voidable” is, therefore, apposite in the sense that it became necessary for the appellant to take his stand: he was obliged to take action for unless he did the view of the watch committee, who were in authority, would prevail. In that sense the decision of the watch committee could be said to be voidable.

40 The appellant could, I think, have applied for an order of certiorari: he was not saying that those who purported to dismiss him were not the watch committee; he was recognising that they had a power and jurisdiction to dismiss but he was saying that whether the regulations applied or whether they did not the committee could only exercise their power and jurisdiction after hearing his reply to what was said against him. In these circumstances he could, I think, have applied for an order of certiorari (though considerations of convenience would probably have pointed against pursuing such a course) or he could have asked for a declaration. In either proceeding the question of acquiescence by him might be raised or the question whether by some binding election he had barred himself from taking proceedings in court or whether in some way he was estopped.

It seems to me that he made it abundantly clear that by his appeal to the Secretary of State he was not in any way abandoning his right to contend that the decision of the watch committee was invalid. An appeal to the Secretary of State raises a question whether a decision, which as a decision has validity, should or should not on the facts and on the merits be upheld. The question raised and reserved by the appellant was the fundamental point that the purported decision of the watch committee was no decision. It would not have been unreasonable if the Secretary of State had asked that that point should first be adjudicated; but in the events which happened I cannot think that the careful steps which were taken to protect the appellant's position ought to be held to have in fact compromised it.

Compare *Annamunthodo v Oilfields Workers' Trade Union*. The appellant never abandoned his point and in my view nothing done by him or by the Secretary of State gave validity to a decision which is now shown to have had none.

My lords, it was submitted to your lordships that the decision of the watch committee should be upheld as having been the only reasonable decision. I consider this to be an entirely erroneous submission. Since no charges have been formulated it is impossible to assess their weight or the weight of the answering evidence of the appellant and others. When the appellant was in the witness-box

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 111

in the present action he was questioned as to what witnesses he would have wished to call in order to deal with the "Leach" and the "Page" matters. As charges in respect of those matters were not formulated, I cannot think that it was appropriate to elicit the names of certain witnesses whom the appellant might have decided to call and then without hearing or being able to hear such witnesses to seek to discount their value and effectiveness and then to seek to draw a vague and artificial conclusion that if matters had been regularly done and if the appellant had been heard and if his witnesses had been heard a result adverse to him would have followed. All the defects and all the unfairness of the original irregularity are inherent in any such approach. The suggested conclusion must fail because it is based on a perpetuation of the very defects which vitiate the dismissal of the appellant and also because the process involves endowing the court with a function that belongs elsewhere.

I do not find it necessary to express any concluded opinion whether, if there were no suggestion of having been negligent in the discharge of duty, a decision to dismiss on the ground of being "unfit" for the discharge of duty could be taken without giving an opportunity to be heard. Clearly it would be desirable and reasonable to give such an opportunity even though the alleged unfitness did not involve misconduct.

For the reasons that I have given I would allow the appeal.

LORD HODSON.

My Lords, I have reached the conclusion apart from the application of the Police Act, 1919, and the regulations which followed, that this appeal should succeed on the ground that the appellant was entitled to and did not receive natural justice at the hands of the watch committee of Brighton when he was dismissed on 7 March 1958. Streatfeild J ([1961] 2 All ER at p 534), who heard the appellant's suit at first instance held that the power given to the watch committee by the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, s 191(4), at any time to dismiss any borough constable, whom they think negligent in the discharge of his duty or otherwise unfit for the same, was a power which had to be exercised in accordance with the principles of natural justice but that the watch committee had acted in that manner.

The Court of Appeal took a different view and held that the watch committee were not bound, in taking the executive action of dismissing their chief constable, to hold an inquiry of a judicial or quasi-judicial nature (per Pearce LJ ([1962] 1 All ER at p 844)). Harman LJ ([1962] 1 All ER at p 849), was of opinion that the watch committee were acting in exercise of their administrative functions just as they were when they made the appointment under s 191(1) of the Act of 1882 and that the principles of natural justice did not come into the case. He pointed out that the defendants were not deciding a question between two opposing parties and that there was no lis and nothing to decide. Davies LJ ([1962] 1 All ER at p 852), said that the exercise by the watch committee of their powers under s 191(4) of the Act of 1882 was not a quasi-judicial but an executive one, emphasising the words "whom they think" as being very strong indeed and much stronger than the sort of words to be found in most of the authorities cited to the court such as "on sufficient grounds shown to his satisfaction" (*De Verteuil v Knaggs*).

I should add that Streatfeild J although holding that the principles of natural justice should prima facie have been applied, held ([1961] 2 All ER at p 536) that in this case the appellant had at the Old Bailey, for the purposes of his trial for all the world as well as the watch committee to hear, convicted himself of unfitness to hold the office of chief constable. The judge concluded that on the evidence which the appellant had himself given at the Old Bailey there was no need for the watch committee to do other than they in fact did, whatever also they might have done to be on the safe side. It would be unrealistic to suppose that the watch committee had not a good idea of what took place at the criminal trial,

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 112

although they were not provided with a transcript of the evidence until after they had reached their conclusion, but in my opinion it will not do to say that the case was so plain there was no need for the appellant to be heard and that, therefore, the claims of natural justice were satisfied.

What the watch committee had before them was primarily the observations of Donovan J who in the course of sentencing the two police officers who were convicted, the appellant having been acquitted, gave as a ground for the moderation of his sentences on these two men the extenuating circumstances that in his opinion

they had not had the leadership to which they were entitled. I think that it is clear from the learned judge's observations at that time, and at the conclusion of the trial, that he intended that what he said should be brought to the notice of the watch committee to act on as they thought fit. The watch committee no doubt felt it necessary to act promptly, but there was nothing in the learned judge's observations which would suggest that the appellant could be dealt with on the basis that any charges had been proved against him and that no further hearing was required.

10 I do not find that the answer put by counsel for the watch committee to your lordships that the case was as plain as a pike-staff is an answer to the demand for natural justice. The case on natural justice does not rest on the events of 7 March 1958, alone for the appellant was given a further opportunity on 18 March 1958, to address the watch committee and of this he availed himself by his solicitor who appeared and was allowed to address the committee without restriction. I agree with Pearce LJ that at that stage the watch committee could have re-opened the matter, and indeed three out of the twelve were in favour of so doing (*cf De Verteuil v Knaggs*) but the position was then that the watch committee had given their decision that the appellant be dismissed not only on the ground of unfitness but also on other grounds which included not only negligence in discharge of his duty but also unspecified matters, which were said to be

20 "certain statements made today by members of the committee and the town clerk".

It was not until 5 April when the watch committee communicated with the Home Secretary prior to the appellant's appeal to the minister that it emerged that these statements had reference to allegations of perjury against the appellant. On 18 March Mr Bosley was given not only a full but a courteous hearing by the watch committee, but received no indication of the nature of the charges which his client had to answer notwithstanding his repeated statements that he did not know what they were. It is plain therefore that, if there were a failure on 7 March to give justice to the appellant, this was not cured on 18 March when the watch committee
30 confirmed their previous decision.

At this hearing it was made plain by Mr Bosley that his client was not seeking reinstatement but only his pension rights of which he had been deprived by his dismissal. This position is maintained by the appellant through his counsel before your lordships.

I should not delay further before referring to the terms of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, itself, for it is on the construction of that statute that the answer to the question posed before your lordships depends. It is quite true that on its terms there is a power to dismiss any borough constable (and this applies to the appellant), whom the watch committee think negligent in the discharge of his duty or otherwise
40 unfit for the same. I entirely accept the reasoning underlying the judgments of the lords justices that, if a statute gives an unfettered power to dismiss at pleasure without more, that is an end of the matter.

The topic is, however, not as simple as would seem. A large number of authorities were cited to your lordships beginning with *Bagg's* case and extending to the present

day. I will not travel over the field of the authorities, which I am bound to say are not easy to reconcile with one another, for if I did I should surely omit some which might be thought to be of equal or greater importance than those I mentioned, but certain matters seem to me clearly to

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 113

10 emerge. One is that the absence of a lis or dispute between opposing parties is not a decisive feature, although no doubt the presence of a lis would involve the necessity for the applications of the principles of natural justice. Secondly, the answer in a given case is not provided by the statement that the giver of the decision is acting in an executive or administrative capacity, as if that was the antithesis of a judicial capacity. The cases seem to me to show that persons acting in a capacity which is not on the face of it judicial, but rather executive or administrative, have been held by the courts to be subject to the principles of natural justice. Perhaps the most striking example is to be found in the old case of *Capel v Child*, which is referred to at length by North J in *Fisher v Jackson* ([\[1891\] 2 Ch 84](#)). The facts were these. By s 50 of the Act, 57 Geo 3 c 99, it was provided that:

20 “Whenever it shall appear to the satisfaction of any bishop, either of his own knowledge, or upon proof by affidavit laid before him, that by reason of the number of churches or chapels belonging to any benefice locally situate within his diocese, or the distance of such churches or chapels from each other, and the distance of the residence of the spiritual person serving the same from such churches or chapels, or any or either of them, or the negligence of the spiritual person holding the same, that the ecclesiastical duties of such benefice are inadequately performed”,

then, to put it shortly, the bishop may appoint a curate

“to perform or assist in performing the duties”

30 and may throw the burden of the stipend of that curate on the person the insufficiency of whose performance of the duties has led to the necessity of the appointment. The Bishop of London on the 18 January 1880, served a requisition on the plaintiff by virtue of the Act of Parliament above mentioned reciting that of his own knowledge the ecclesiastical duties of the vicarage and parish church of Watford were inadequately performed by reason of the plaintiff's negligence and requiring him to nominate a fit person with a stipend to assist in performing those duties.

40 The plaintiff did not appoint a curate and the bishop did so, assigning to him a stipend. The stipend remained unpaid and the plaintiff was accordingly summoned before the bishop. The plaintiff did not attend and the plaintiff was monished to pay the stipend. He then appeared for the first time and alleged that he had not had a proper opportunity of being heard on the original application. Lord Lyndhurst CB used this language ((1832), 2 C & J at p 577):

“Here is a new jurisdiction given—a new authority given: a power is given to the bishop to pronounce a judgment; and, according to every principle of law and

equity, such judgment could not be pronounced, or, if pronounced, could not for a moment be sustained, unless the party in the first instance had the opportunity of being heard in his defence, which in this case he had not; and not only no charge is made against him which he had an opportunity of meeting, but he had not been summoned that he might meet any charge.”

Baron Bayley said ((1832), 2 C & J at pp 578, 579):

10 “Upon the general principles of law, it would have been essential, if the bishop had proceeded by way of affidavit, to have given the opposite party an opportunity of being heard. When the bishop proceeds on his own knowledge, I am of opinion that it cannot possibly and within the meaning of this Act, appear to the satisfaction of the bishop, and of his own knowledge, unless he gives the party an opportunity of being heard, in answer to that which the bishop states on his own knowledge to be the foundation on which he proceeds ... It would be quite sufficient if the bishop were to call the party before him, and to state to him the grounds on which he thought the duties were inadequately performed, by reason of his

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 114

20 negligence; and he should have asked whether he had or had not any grounds on which he could answer that charge. But, is it not a common principle in every case which has in itself the character of a judicial proceeding, that the party against whom the judgment is to operate should have an opportunity of being heard?”

It is true that emphasis is laid on the judicial character of the proceedings in the view of both learned judges but it is not clear to me that it could not be said in that case that the bishop was acting administratively. The situation under the Act, under which the bishop was exercising his powers, was not unlike that of the watch committee here exercising powers under another Act, and it so happens that the charge involved, that of negligence, was the same in each case. The matter which, to my mind, is relevant in this case is that where the power to be exercised involves a charge made against the person who is dismissed, by that I mean a charge of misconduct, the principles of natural justice have to be observed before the power is exercised.

30 One of the difficulties felt in applying principles of natural justice is that there is a certain vagueness in the term and as Tucker LJ, said in *Russell v Duke of Norfolk* ([\[1949\] 1 All ER 109](#)):

“There are ... no words which are of universal application to every kind of inquiry and every kind of domestic tribunal. The requirements of natural justice must depend on the circumstances of the case, the nature of the inquiry, the rules under which the tribunal is acting, the subject-matter that is being dealt with, and so forth.”

40 If it be said that this makes natural justice so vague as to be inapplicable, I would not agree. No one, I think, disputes that three features of natural justice stand out—(1) the right to be heard by an unbiassed tribunal, (2) the right to have notice of charges of misconduct, (3) the right to be heard in answer to those charges. The first does

not arise in the case before your lordships, but the two last most certainly do and the proceedings before the watch committee therefore, in my opinion, cannot be allowed to stand.

10 I have reached this conclusion on the construction of the statute with some hesitation, not only because of the different view taken by the Court of Appeal but also because of that taken by my noble and learned friend Lord Evershed, who also feels that notwithstanding their findings of fault made against the appellant the watch committee had a perfect right to act as they did. In one respect no doubt the watch committee were given an absolute discretion to act as they might think, that is to say, I agree that their residual power to dismiss for unfitness may well be unfettered. I do not accept the contention of the appellant that unfitness is to be construed ejusdem generis with negligence: indeed I think that it is the antithesis of negligence, and covers cases where there is no fault in the accepted sense of the word in the officer dismissed.

20 A man may be unfit because he is stupid, vacillating, unable to meet a crisis or generally to command others, but I do not see this as the subject-matter of a charge. As I have indicated, it is not clear to me that Donovan J necessarily had anything more in mind than absence of the qualities necessary for leadership, when he made the observations that he did, but the watch committee went outside unfitness and made findings of negligence and inferentially of perjury without giving the appellant any notice or opportunity of being heard. Even if the residual power to dismiss for unfitness remains unimpaired, one could not conceive any watch committee exercising this power and at the same time leaving the dismissed officer without a pension. This would only be expected where charges as here were made against him. I cannot see that the general words of the statute are in the light of the authorities as I understand them wide enough to cover a case of this character where allegations of misconduct are involved invoking the loss of an office and an element of punishment for

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 115

30 offences committed. There is imposed a clog on the discretion in that it cannot be exercised arbitrarily without regard to natural justice. I am aware that what I have said may not be thought to be in line with those cases where wide words have been held sufficient to cover the exercise of an arbitrary power as in the matter of issue and withdrawal of licences where no question of punishment arises, *cf Nakkuda Ali v M F de S Jayaratne and R v Metropolitan Police Commissioner*. It may be that I must retreat to the last refuge of one confronted with as difficult a problem as this, namely, that each case depends on its own facts and that here the deprivation of a pension without a hearing is on the face of it a denial of justice which cannot be justified on the language of the subsection under consideration

40 I have little to add to what has already been said about the application of the Police Regulations, 1952. It was not contended before your lordships that the Act of 1882 had been repealed by the Police Act, 1919, or any regulations made thereunder but it was contended, in my opinion rightly, that, where a report or allegation against a police officer has been made, the regulations apply and govern the form of the inquiry which must follow. Here there were no formulated charges, no tribunal

appointed for the purpose of hearing the charges and reporting to the police authority a statement of the charges found to be proved.

The learned judge at the trial and all the members of the Court of Appeal were of opinion that the regulations did not apply, because no report or allegation was received from which it appeared that the appellant had committed an offence. My noble and learned friend Lord Evershed, indeed, is of the same opinion. With all respect, I cannot agree. It is plain that the action taken by the watch committee followed directly from the observations of Donovan J after the trial at the Old Bailey, which were intended for the ears of the appropriate authority and did in fact reach the watch committee before it dismissed the appellant on 7 March. The appellant had been acquitted of the offence with which he had been charged at the criminal trial but on a fair reading of those observations which were severely critical of the appellant it cannot, I think, be said that it did not appear from them that the appellant had committed an offence under the regulations. I need only read two of the offences named in the discipline code set out in Sch 1 to the regulationsⁿ:

- ⁿ Viz, Sch 1 to the Police (Discipline) Regulations, 1952, [SI 1952 No 1705](#)

“1. Discreditable conduct, that is to say, if a member of a police force acts in ... any manner prejudicial to discipline or reasonably likely to bring discredit on the reputation of the force or of the police service.

“4. Neglect of duty, that is to say, if a member of a police force—(a) neglects or without good and sufficient cause omits, promptly and diligently to carry out anything which is his duty as a constable.”

It is difficult to see how any action would be taken in any event in respect of breaches of the police discipline code without a report or allegation of some kind being made and I am quite unable to accept the submission that something different perhaps of a formal nature or some complaint from an extra judicial source is necessary before there can be said to be a report or allegation. *Streatfeild J* ([1961] 2 All ER at p 533), accepted the submission of counsel for the watch committee that their action arose, not as a result of any report or allegation, but from the knowledge which was common to them and the country as a whole that the appellant was unfit for office.

I am unable to accept that this was the position. The watch committee did not act solely on the ground that the appellant was unfit for office irrespective of any offence that he might have committed, as their finding shows. They found him guilty of offences which were founded on a report or allegation which they had received from the learned judge who had presided at the trial and certain statements made by members of the committee and the town clerk.

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 116

I have not taken into account any other reports or allegations, for, whatever the watch committee may have known personally about the trial, they did not have a transcript of the evidence, it now appears, until after they had given their decision on 7 March. There is, I should add, no substance in the point taken that the reference to

a copy of the report or allegation on which the charge is based contained in reg 4 of the Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables etc) Regulations, 1952 ([SI 1952 No 1706](#)), shows that there must be a written report or allegation ab initio. No doubt an oral allegation will have to be reduced to writing, but it may well originate as an oral statement, as it did in this case before the transcript of the observations of Donovan J was sent to the watch committee.

10 Once the position is reached that the Police Regulations apply as, in my opinion, they did, it is clear that no attempt was made by the watch committee to follow the regulations. **These have been set out in detail by my noble and learned friend Lord Morris Of Borth-Y-Gest whose judgment I have had the opportunity of reading and with which I respectfully agree.** As he says, and the Court of Appeal would have taken the same view if they had regarded the Police Regulations as applicable, the watch committee disregarded the regulations and did not begin to comply with them.

On both grounds therefore, failure to comply with the requirements of natural justice and failure to comply with the Police Regulations, I would hold that the decision of the watch committee to dismiss the appellant taken on 7 March 1958, was invalid.

20 This is not an end of the matter for the appellant did not let matters rest but appealed to the Home Secretary as he was entitled to do under the Police (Appeals) Act, 1927, from the dismissal under s 191 of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882. Thus, it is said, since the decision of the Home Secretary by virtue of the Police (Appeals) Act, 1927, was final, the appellant had waived his right to bring an action in the courts alleging that invalidity.

I doubt whether any question of waiver arises, but I appreciate the force of the opinion expressed by my noble and learned friend Lord Evershed that if Parliament has stated that the appeal is final, that is an end of the matter and the appellant cannot, as it were, start again and by an action for a declaration seek to undermine the decision from which he has unsuccessfully appealed. The answer to this point is, 30 I think, and here **again I find myself in disagreement with the Court of Appeal, as well as with my noble and learned friend Lord Evershed,** that the decision of 7 March 1958, taken by the watch committee [was at all times a nullity](#), and nothing that was done thereafter by way of appeal could give it validity.

In all the cases where the courts have held that the principles of natural justice have been flouted I can find none where the language does not indicate the opinion held that the decision impugned was void. It is true that the distinction between void and voidable is not drawn explicitly in the cases, but the language used shows that where there is a want of jurisdiction, as opposed to a failure to follow a procedural requirement, the result is a nullity. This was indeed decided by the Court of 40 Exchequer in *Wood v Woad*, where as here there was a failure to give a hearing.

In *Spackman v Plumstead Board of Works*, referring to another statute Lord Selborne said ((1885), 10 App Cas at p 240):

“There would be no decision within the meaning of the statute if there was anything of that sort done contrary to the essence of justice.”

I would apply this language, whether the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, or the Police Regulations are to be considered. In either case the watch

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 117

committee in failing to give a hearing to the appellant acted without jurisdiction.

I would allow the appeal accordingly.

LORD DEVLIN.

My Lords, I am satisfied that s 191(4) of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, is wide enough to permit the dismissal of a constable on the grounds of unfitness in the sense of inadequacy as well as on the grounds of negligence or misconduct. The way in which this power may be used has, since 1919, been controlled as to “conditions of service” by regulations made by the Home Secretary under s 4(1) of the Police Act, 1919, which requires that “every police authority shall comply with the regulations so made”.

10 The Police (Discipline) Regulations, 1952,^o create a number of disciplinary offences contained in a disciplinary code, and provide in detail for the way in which a charge of such an offence is to be investigated and determined before a decision to dismiss is taken. I do not find it necessary to determine whether, before 1919, the power to dismiss for neglect of duty could be exercised administratively and without any sort of judicial inquiry. Nor do I need to decide whether or not the power to dismiss for inadequacy is purely administrative. I am satisfied that in all matters to which the regulations apply the power to dismiss must be exercised in accordance with them.

- ^o 183 Viz, [SI 1952 No 1705](#), as amended by [SI 1953 No 636](#), and cf, the Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables, etc) Regulations, 1952 ([SI 1952 No 1706](#))

20 It is argued that the regulations do not apply in the present case for two reasons. It is said in the first place that the disciplinary code is expressed in phraseology unsuited to the activities of chief constables, and in particular does not cover the gravamen of the charge against the appellant as indicated by Donovan J which was that he was revealed by his conduct as a bad example to and a bad influence on the Brighton constabulary. Undoubtedly the discipline code appears to be drafted with the lower ranks in mind. But by [SI 1952 No 1706](#) it is expressly made applicable to chief constables^p and it must be construed accordingly.

30 It contains a number of specific offences which a chief constable could hardly commit but also a number which he certainly could. There are specific matters put against the appellant in this case which I think certainly fall under the head of “discreditable conduct”, if not also of “neglect of duty”. In my judgment the disciplinary code should be regarded as a compendium covering all misconduct and neglect of duty in the case of all ranks from chief constable downwards. I find it impossible to believe that there was intended to be a residue of neglect to be dealt with at large and in relation to which the offender is deprived of the protection afforded by the regulations. If a case of inefficiency or inadequacy can be made without proof of misconduct or neglect, the regulations do not apply; but if the case involves an allegation (and I use that word as will be seen hereafter in its widest sense) of a disciplinary offence the procedure laid down by the regulations must be followed.

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- ^p Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables, etc) Regulations, 1952, reg 18

This in my opinion is the result of the impact of the Act of 1919 on the earlier one of 1882. This division of the power under the Act of 1882 is in practice less inconvenient than it might sound. In and before 1919 there was a power, such as is now contained in the Police Pensions Act, 1948, s 1(1) (c), to provide by regulation for cases in which policemen “may be required to retire otherwise than on the ground of misconduct”. It is difficult to believe that the power of summary dismissal would now be exercised in any case in which no fault is alleged, so that in practice the power under s 191(4) of the Act of 1882 has become a controlled one. Legally, however, the power remains and can be used. It is unnecessary to consider whether or not it could have been used in this case because one of the grounds given for the appellant's dismissal was “neglect of duty”. The watch committee ought not to have reached a decision on this ground without following the regulations, unless it can be said (and this is the second

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 118

point to be considered) that the regulations are by their own terms inapplicable on the facts of this case. It is argued that reg 2 requires^q that before the procedure laid down can be instituted “a report or allegation” must be made; and that where as in the present case a matter comes to the knowledge of the watch committee as one of public notoriety, the regulations do not apply. I need not elaborate on the extraordinary results—my noble and learned friends Lord Reid and Lord Morris of Borth-y-Gest have mentioned them—which as it seems to me would follow if the protection against dismissal depends on whether or not the supposed misdemeanours of a police officer have been reported in the press.

Such a construction ought not to be put on reg 2 unless the language compels it, and in my opinion the language of the regulation does not. I think that the word “allegation” is to be given a wide meaning. The main object of reg 2, as is shown by the introductory words italicised^r in [SI 1952 No 1706](#), is not to provide for some formal initiation of proceedings, equivalent to a writ of summons or an information, but to ensure that an officer is told of any allegation made against him so that nothing is done behind his back. I do not see how the watch committee can deal with any disciplinary matter unless an allegation of some sort is made even if it be only by one of their own number; and I think it fair to assume that the word is chosen as the widest one that could be thought of to comprehend every way in which such proceedings could be started.

- ^q Police (Discipline) Regulations, 1952, reg 2; cf, reg 1 of [SI 1952 No 1706](#)
^r Regulation 1 of [SI 1952 No 1706](#) is printed beneath a heading, which is in italics and reads “Right of accused to be informed of, and to make a personal explanation concerning, allegations”. Regulation 2(1) of [SI 1952 No 1705](#) and reg 1 of [SI 1952 No 1706](#) both begin “Where a report or allegation is received from which it appears ... “

It is not disputed that if the regulations are applicable, as I think that they are, they were not complied with. On this basis two further questions arise. The first is whether it is open to the House to question the decision of the watch committee on this ground, and **here I agree entirely with the conclusion reached by my noble and learned friend Lord Morris of Borth-y-Gest** that it is. The second is what is the

effect of non-compliance on the decision. It is argued for the appellant that the effect is to avoid ab initio the decision of the committee. That must mean that the committee had no statutory authority to make any decision at all. If they had, then, although the decision they made might be a bad one and one that could be quashed by the court by virtue of its supervisory jurisdiction over the proceedings of inferior tribunals, it would not be void ab initio, but would be good until quashed. To make it void ab initio there must be some condition precedent to the conferment of authority on the committee which has not been fulfilled.

10 It is argued that compliance with the regulations is a condition precedent. It is not expressly made so and I am not prepared to make the implication. I am very reluctant to imply such a condition where none is expressed, for the utter avoidance of a decision of this sort is a very grave matter. All that has been done on the face of it falls to the ground. Even if the appellant were satisfied with it, it could be impugned by any third party. The court would have no discretion to quash or not to quash. It can only declare to be a nullity that which in law has never been done at all.

I see no reason therefore why I should do more than read the regulations into the Act of 1882, not as a condition precedent to the power to dismiss, but simply as rules that the committee is required to observe. I do not hold that compliance with all the rules is by implication a condition precedent to the power to dismiss under s 191(4).
20 But if one of the regulations itself imposes expressly a condition precedent, it is another matter. I am driven to the conclusion that reg 11(1) does^s. Regulation 5 provides^t that the case shall be heard by a tribunal appointed by the police authority and reg 11(1) provides that^u

- ^s Viz, reg 5 and reg 11(1) of the Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables, etc) Regulations, 1952 ([SI 1952 No 1706](#))

^t Viz, reg 5 and reg 11(1) of the Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables, etc) Regulations, 1952 ([SI 1952 No 1706](#))

^u Viz, reg 5 and reg 11(1) of the Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables, etc) Regulations, 1952 ([SI 1952 No 1706](#))

30 *[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 119*

“the decision of the police authority on receipt of the report of the tribunal shall be either to dismiss the case or to impose”

various punishments, including dismissal. I cannot regard the power of dismissal under reg 11(1) as something distinct from the power of dismissal under s 191(4), and I think that the effect of reg 11(1) is to make the power to dismiss conditional on the receipt of the report. I do not say that any defect in a report would invalidate a dismissal. But where, as here, there has been no report at all and no inquiry to substantiate one, I think that the statutory authority to dismiss never was created, so that the act of dismissal was a nullity. If it was a nullity, it is not seriously argued that
40 any subsequent proceedings before the Secretary of State could bring it to life. The result in my opinion is that your lordships should allow the appeal and declare the dismissal to be void.

My lords, I cannot say that I regard this result as altogether satisfactory. It is not that I regard the watch committee's decision as inevitably right or as one that can be

faulted only on the ground that justice has not appeared to be done. The appellant has not seriously complained about being put out of office; and since he has told your lordships that he will not seek to be reinstated, it is permissible for me to say that I think the decision on that point to have been inevitable.

But he could, instead of being dismissed, have been compelled to retire, and thus he would have been saved some or all of his pension rights. That is an issue of substance deserving of careful consideration. What is unfortunate about the result is that it means that during the whole time taken up in the elucidation of this difficult point of law, the appellant has legally been in office and entitled to the appropriate emoluments.

That would be so, I suppose, even if he had been in profitable employment elsewhere, for his claim would be for salary and not for damages for wrongful dismissal. Whatever course is now taken, the appellant is likely to reap a substantial benefit from the fact that the committee fell into the pardonable error (pardonable if only because their view of the law was the same as that taken by all the lords justices in the Court of Appeal) that they were entitled to deal with this matter administratively and in their unfettered discretion.

It can be said with much force that all this is the result of ousting the ordinary jurisdiction of the courts. If the statute was drafted so as to make a dismissal, as the common law does in contracts of service, effective whether rightful or wrongful and to give compensation for wrongful dismissal, the issue would have been tried by an ordinary court of law and the appellant would have got no more and no less than his deserts. But the statute gives the judicial power to a committee or tribunal. If the object of that were to make one side a judge in its own cause, I should not be sad to see it miscarry.

But the object here is the creation of a special code, stricter in some respects at least than the ordinary obligations of a contract of service, and of an independent tribunal to aid in its administration. Such tribunals must always be subject to the supervisory jurisdiction of the High Court. But it does not by any means follow that a defect of natural justice sufficiently grave to be a ground for quashing the resulting decision, inevitably leads as in the present case to a declaration that the decision is void ab initio. It is necessary always to bear in mind the distinction so clearly drawn by Lord Sumner in *R v Nat Bell Liquors Ltd* ([\[1922\] All ER Rep 335](#), letter *h*; [\[1922\] 2 AC 128](#)) between a wrong exercise of a jurisdiction which a judge has and a usurpation of a jurisdiction which he has not.

If there is no jurisdiction, the decision is a nullity whether the court quashes or not. If there is jurisdiction but there has been a miscarriage of natural justice, the decision stands good until quashed. The occurrence of a miscarriage does not require the court to quash if it is satisfied that justice can be done in some other way. The court in a case like the present, for example, if the decision had been voidable and not void, might have left the appellant to his remedy in damages, if any. Your lordships heard some argument about

[1963] 2 All ER 66 at 120

whether the court could, if it exercised its discretion to quash, do so on terms which would have put the parties back into the position in which they would have been if the proper procedure had been followed from the outset. I need not say more than that I should be prepared to listen to such a contention in an appropriate case and I should certainly be glad if the court had the power to do justice in that sort of way when reviewing the decisions of inferior tribunals.

10 In the view that I take of this case there is not much that I can usefully say about the principles of natural justice and their application to the procedure under s 191(4) of the Act of 1882. Whether or not they are to be applied to any statutory procedure depends on an implication to be drawn from the statute itself; and the question whether such an implication should be drawn in this case cannot be answered without a consideration of the Police Act, 1919, and the regulations made thereunder from which s 191(4) cannot be divorced. Since the regulations themselves prescribe the rules of justice that are to be followed, it seems to me that there is nothing to be gained by seeking to ascertain what the position would be if the discipline code did not apply.

20 There are three points, however, on which I desire to comment. First, I express no dissent from the view that if s 191(4) stood alone the decision to be made under it is not purely administrative. Secondly, I do most emphatically dissent from the view that natural justice did not require the watch committee to hear the appellant because, as it was said, he had had a full opportunity of putting his case before the trial judge. The appellant was not and could not have been compelled to put any case at all before the trial judge; he was there to answer an indictment on trial by jury.

30 It would be quite wrong if an accused was to be embarrassed in the conduct on a criminal charge by the reflection that if he did not also satisfy the trial judge about the propriety of his actions in other respects, it might thereafter be the worse for him. Thirdly, if there was apart from the regulations a miscarriage of justice in this case (and I think on the whole that there was), **I agree with the opinion of my noble and learned friend Lord Evershed for the reasons which he has given that the miscarriage rendered the watch committee's decision voidable and not null and void ab initio.**

I agree with the order proposed by my noble and learned friend on the woolsack.

Appeal allowed.

Solicitors: *Haslewoods* agents for *Bosley & Co*, Brighton (for the appellant); *Sharpe, Pritchard & Co* agents for *Town clerk*, Brighton (for the defendants).

C G Leonard Esq Barrister.

P. C.

1962

 RIZIKI
 v.
 SHARIFA.

as operating as a valid wakf during the respective lives of the two adopted daughters would involve an interpretation of the instrument different in respect of the interests given to the adopted daughters from that of the language appropriate to the other beneficiaries. In the circumstances their Lordships have been unable to derive from the cases cited by Mr. Foot sufficient authority for such a partial validation. Their Lordships add also that it is in any case far from clear what the effect would be of such a partial validation upon the operation of the instrument after the death of the survivor of the adopted daughters. As a matter of the construction of the language there would appear to be no justification for "advancing" clause 6 of the deed so as to allow it to take effect on the happening of that event.

For the reasons they have given, their Lordships think that the appeal must fail. Their Lordships make no reference to sections 16 and 21 of the Ordinance, discussed in the judgment appealed from, as counsel intimated that no point based upon them was being made before their Lordships.

Their Lordships will accordingly humbly advise Her Majesty that this appeal should be dismissed. In all the circumstances of this case their Lordships are of opinion that no order should be made as regards the costs of the present appeal.

Solicitors: *T. L. Wilson & Co.; Knapp-Fishers and Blake & Redden.*

 [HOUSE OF LORDS.]

H. L. (E.)* RIDGE APPELLANT;

AND

1962
 Nov. 5, 6, BALDWIN AND OTHERS RESPONDENTS.
 7, 8, 12,

13, 14, 15,

1963

Mar. 14.

Police—Dismissal of chief constable—Power of watch committee to dismiss for misconduct—Exercise of power—Requirements of natural justice—Appeal to Home Secretary—Municipal Corporations Act, 1882 (45 & 46 Vict. c. 50), s. 191 (4)—Police Act, 1919 (9 & 10 Geo. 5, c. 46), s. 4 (1)—Police (Appeals) Act, 1927 (17 & 18 Geo. 5, c. 19),

* *Present*: LORD REID, LORD EVERSHERD, LORD MORRIS OF BORTH-Y-GEST, LORD HODSON and LORD DEVLIN.

s. 1 (1)—*Police Discipline Regulations, 1952 (S.I. 1952 No. 1705)*
 —*Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables, Assistant Chief Constables and Chief Constables) Regulations, 1952 (S.I. 1952 No. 1706)*—*Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables, Assistant Chief Constables and Chief Constables) Regulations, 1954 (S.I. 1954 No. 1688).*

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Natural Justice — Opportunity to meet charge — Dismissal of public servant—Chief constable dismissed by watch committee after acquittal on criminal charge—Censure of conduct at trial—No hearing—Whether dismissal an administrative act.

Crown—Minister, determination by—Whether subject to review by courts—Minister's decision "shall be final"—Dismissal of chief constable by watch committee—Dismissal of appeal by Minister—Watch committee's decision alleged void—Police (Appeals) Act, 1927, s. 2 (3).

Void or Voidable—Decision contrary to natural justice—Appeal to Minister—Whether whole proceedings void.

Election or Option—Appeal—Election to appeal to Minister—Whether jurisdiction of court ousted.

By section 191 of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882: "(1) 'The watch committee shall from time to time appoint a sufficient number of fit men to be borough constables . . . (4) The watch committee . . . may at any time suspend, and . . . dismiss, any borough constable whom they think negligent in the discharge of his duty, or otherwise unfit for the same.'"

In 1956 the appellant was appointed chief constable of a borough police force, the appointment being subject to the Police Acts and regulations. On October 25, 1957, he was arrested and charged, together with other persons, with conspiracy to obstruct the course of justice. On October 28, 1957, he was suspended from duty by the borough watch committee. On February 28, 1958, he was acquitted by the jury on the criminal charges against him, but Donovan J. in passing sentence on two police officers who were convicted, said that the facts admitted in the course of the trial "establish that neither of you had that professional and moral leadership which both of you should have had and were entitled to expect from the chief constable." On March 6, 1958, on a charge alleging corruption against the appellant, on which no evidence was offered, the judge referred to the borough's police force and remarked on its need for a leader "who will be a new influence and who will set a different example from that which has lately obtained." After his acquittal the appellant applied to be reinstated, but on March 7, 1958, the watch committee at a meeting decided that he had been negligent in the discharge of his duties as chief constable and, in purported exercise of the powers conferred on them by section 191 (4) of the Act of 1882, dismissed him from that office. No specific charge was formulated against him, either at that meeting or at another on March 18, when the appellant's solicitor addressed the committee, but the watch committee, in arriving at their decision, considered (inter alia) his own statements in evidence and the observations

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

made by Donovan J. on February 28 and March 6. On the appellant's appeal to the Home Secretary, the decision given was "that there was sufficient material on which the watch committee could properly exercise their power of dismissal under section 191 (4)." The appellant then brought an action against members of the watch committee for a declaration that his dismissal was illegal, ultra vires and void, and payment of salary from March 7, 1958, or, alternatively, payment of pension from that date and damages:—

Held (Lord Evershed dissenting), that the decision of the respondents to dismiss the appellant was null and void; and that, accordingly, notwithstanding that the decision of the Home Secretary was "final and binding on the parties" by section 2 (3) of the Police Appeals Act, 1927, that decision could not give validity to the decision of the respondents (post, pp. 81, 125, 135, 139).

The decision of the respondents was a nullity (post, pp. 81, 117, 125, 135, 139), since:

Per Lord Reid, Lord Morris and Lord Hodson. As the appellant was not the servant of the respondents and they could dismiss him only on grounds stated in section 191 (4) of the Act of 1882, and they dismissed him on the ground of neglect of duty, they were bound to observe the principles of natural justice (post, pp. 66, 79, 121, 124, 127, 132) by informing the appellant of the charges made against him and giving him an opportunity of being heard, and that they had not done.

Per Lord Reid, Lord Morris, Lord Hodson and Lord Devlin. The requirements of the discipline regulations code made under the Police Act, 1919, although they did not operate in cases of dismissal under the Act of 1882 for inefficiency or inadequacy, did apply to a case such as this where a charge of misconduct was involved and, accordingly, on this ground also the purported dismissal was a nullity. The expression "report or allegation" which under the discipline regulations must precede the investigation of charges under those regulations should be given a wide meaning (post, pp. 79, 110, 113, 133, 135, 137).

Per Lord Devlin. I cannot regard the power of dismissal under article 11 (1) of the Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables, Assistant Chief Constables and Chief Constables) Regulations, 1952, as something distinct from the power of dismissal under section 191 (4), and I think that the effect of article 11 (1) is to make the power of dismissal conditional on the receipt of the report submitted to the police authority by the tribunal appointed under the regulations (post, p. 139).

Per Lord Devlin (agreeing with Lord Evershed). If this matter fell to be decided on the ground of a breach of the principles of natural justice, such a breach would render the decision to dismiss voidable and not null and void ab initio (post, p. 142).

Cooper v. Wilson [1937] 2 K.B. 309; 53 T.L.R. 623; [1937] 2 All E.R. 726, C.A. and *Hogg v. Scott* [1947] K.B. 759; 63 T.L.R. 320; [1947] 1 All E.R. 788 considered.

Nakkuda Ali v. Jayaratne [1951] A.C. 66; (1950) 66 T.L.R. (Pt. 2) 214, P.C. distinguished.

De Verteuil v. Knaggs [1918] A.C. 557; 34 T.L.R. 325, P.C. and *Annamunthodo v. Oilfield Workers' Trade Union* [1961] A.C. 945; [1961] 3 W.L.R. 650; [1961] 3 All E.R. 621, P.C. applied.

Decision of the Court of Appeal [1963] 1 Q.B. 539; [1962] 2 W.L.R. 716; [1962] 1 All E.R. 834, C.A. reversed.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

APPEAL from the Court of Appeal (Holroyd Pearce, Harman and Davies L.JJ.).

This was an appeal by Charles Feild William Ridge (who was the plaintiff in the action) by leave of the House of Lords (Lord Reid, Lord Hodson and Lord Devlin) given on March 6, 1962, from a decision of the Court of Appeal dated January 30, 1962, whereby it affirmed the judgment of Streatfeild J., who had dismissed the appellant's claim against the respondents (the defendants in the action), George Bernard Baldwin, Charles Herbert Tyson, John Edward Hay, Ernest Marsh, Dorothy Elsie Stringer, Timothy Norman Barber, Bernard Arthur Crabbe, Mrs. May Hay, Alfred Arthur Illman, Leonard Knowles, Leonard Varville Ledden, Thomas James Ledden Taylor and Sidney Armstrong Wheeler, who were members of the watch committee and therefore the police authority of the County Borough of Brighton. The appellant's claim arose out of his purported dismissal from the office of chief constable of Brighton effected by the respondents on March 7, 1958.

The appellant, who was 58 years and 10 months of age, had become a constable in the Brighton police force in 1925 after a short period in another police force. Thereafter he received progressive promotions in the Brighton police force. In 1935 he became a detective sergeant and in 1948 a detective inspector. In 1949 he was made detective chief inspector and in 1950 detective superintendent. In 1954 he was promoted to be deputy chief constable. Early in 1956 there was a vacancy in the office of chief constable. The appellant was an applicant for the appointment. He was one of five candidates interviewed by the watch committee. The committee resolved that, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State, the appellant should be appointed. He was so appointed. Amongst other terms and conditions, the appointment was to be made "subject to the Police Acts and Regulations."

On October 25, 1957, the appellant and two police officers, Detective Inspector J. R. Hammersley and Detective Sergeant T. E. Heath of the Brighton police force, and two other men, Samuel Bellson and Anthony John Lyons, were arrested and

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

charged with conspiring to obstruct the course of public justice. The watch committee decided to suspend the appellant from duty under the provisions of the Police Discipline (Deputy Chief Constables, Assistant Chief Constables and Chief Constables) Regulations, 1952 (as amended) and, as notified in a letter dated October 29, 1957, they resolved in accordance with regulation 15 to pay him certain suspension allowances.

On December 6, 1957, the appellant was committed for trial at the Central Criminal Court. An indictment dated January 7, 1958, charged him with conspiring to obstruct the course of public justice. The particulars alleged that he conspired with the four other accused and with other persons unknown to obstruct the course of public justice in that he and the two other police officers accused should act contrary to their public duty as police officers in relation to the administration of the law. The conspiracy was alleged to have been between January 1, 1949, and October 18, 1957. The trial before Donovan J. began on February 3, 1958, and after a hearing lasting 19 days the appellant was acquitted on February 27, 1958. Lyons was also acquitted. Hammersley, Heath and Bellson were convicted. On February 28, 1958, the appellant's solicitors, Bosley & Co., by letter requested the watch committee to remove his suspension and reinstate him. On the same day the police officers convicted were sentenced and the judge said that "there is this also to be said, and it is based not "on disputed allegations but on facts admitted in the course of "the trial. These facts established that neither of you had that "professional and moral leadership which both of you should "have had and were entitled to expect from the chief constable "of Brighton, now acquitted, for, if he could contrive, as he "did, to go to a suspected briber of the police in private and "alone, it is small wonder that you, Heath, followed that example "in the case of Mrs. Brabiner; and if he could admit, as he did, "to his private room a much convicted and hectoring bookmaker "and there discuss with him, almost as a colleague, the policy "of the police in certain matters, well then, it is small wonder "that you, Hammersley, saw little or no wrong in going off on "holiday with a local man with a serious criminal record."

On March 6, 1958, the appellant stood his trial on a second indictment. The charge was that, "being a person serving under "the Crown," he corruptly obtained a gift of £20 from a named person as a reward for showing favour to such person in relation to the affairs of the Crown. He pleaded "Not Guilty." The

prosecution offered no evidence. On the direction of the judge he was acquitted. After he had left the dock the judge, addressing the Solicitor-General, said: "It is not difficult now, " however, to foresee the use to which the incidents I mentioned, " and others like them to be found in the case, will or may be " put for the purpose of discrediting the officers of that force " when they give evidence in future prosecutions, and the results " in some cases may be unfortunate. This prospect and this " risk will remain until a leader is given to the force who will be a " new influence, and who will set a different example from that " which has lately obtained. I realise that this is a matter " which is about to engage the attention of those persons whose " responsibility it is, and I have no desire to trespass upon their " domain, but since the matter will also affect the administration " of justice in the courts, I felt it right to make these " observations."

H: L. (E.)

1963

 RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.

On March 7, 1958, there was a meeting of the watch committee. The appellant had not been invited to attend and was not sent for. He received a letter the same afternoon telling him that he had been summarily dismissed. He was informed of certain resolutions which the watch committee had passed. Information as to those resolutions was given to the press. The minutes of the meeting read: "RESOLVED (unanimously):— " (1) The committee after carefully considering (a) the request " by Mr. Ridge's solicitors that Mr. Ridge's suspension be " removed and Mr. Ridge be reinstated in his office as chief " constable, (b) the length of Mr. Ridge's period of service " in the Brighton Police Force, (c) the trial of Mr. Ridge, Detective Inspector J. R. Hammersley and Detective Sergeant T. E. " Heath, two senior members of the criminal investigation department of the Brighton Police Force and others on a charge of " conspiring to obstruct the course of public justice and the conviction of Hammersley and Heath and another, (d) the statements of Donovan J. on February 28, 1958, and March 6, 1958, " (e) the statements made by Mr. Ridge in evidence at his trial, " and (f) certain statements made today by members of the committee and the Town Clerk, decide that Mr. Charles Feild " William Ridge has in the opinion of the committee been negligent in the discharge of his duty and is unfit for the same and " the committee in exercise of the powers conferred upon them " by section 191 of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, " accordingly hereby dismiss him from his office as chief constable

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.

“ of Brighton forthwith. (2) That in accordance with the
“ provisions of regulation 7 of the Police Regulations, 1955, the
“ amount of Mr. Ridge’s aggregate pension contributions be paid
“ to him. (3) That the Town Clerk be requested to arrange the
“ foregoing resolutions to be conveyed to Mr. C. F. W. Ridge and
“ to Messrs. Bosley and Co. (4) That resolutions (1) and (2) be
“ made available to the press at a conference to be held at
“ 2.45 p.m. this day and the chairman and the Town Clerk be
“ requested to inform the press that no other statement will be
“ made or questions answered in amplification thereof. (5) That
“ no statements or disclosures be made by members of the
“ committee concerning the matter other than the foregoing
“ resolutions.”

The transcripts of the proceedings at the criminal trial were not available to the watch committee on March 7, 1958, but there was a transcript of the statement which had been made by the judge.

On March 7, 1958, the appellant’s solicitors wrote to the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, contending that the committee’s decision was “ contrary to natural justice and bad in law,” giving notice of appeal under the Police (Appeals) Act, 1927, and the regulations made thereunder and concluding: “ The notice of alleged dismissal merely . . . recites a general finding of negligence and unfitness without specifying any details.” On March 10, 1958, they wrote further to the Under Secretary of State “ that any notice of appeal is without prejudice to Mr. Ridge’s rights to contend that the purported notice of dismissal is bad in law, as being contrary to natural justice and not in accordance with the appropriate statutes and regulations.”

On March 12, 1958, the appellant’s solicitors sent to the Secretary of State a formal notice of appeal. The document set out some 30 grounds of appeal. It denied any neglect or unfitness and set out that the appellant had been given no notice of what was alleged against him and no opportunity of being heard. By paragraph 9 it was stated: “ Mr. Ridge does not yet know what are the statements made by members of the watch committee referred to in the letter of March 7, 1958.” By paragraph 27: “ This notice of appeal is without prejudice to the validity of the decision of the watch committee and is given within the limited time in case it should be held that the watch committee’s procedure is valid. Mr. Ridge reserves his rights to contend that the procedure is bad as not complying with the appropriate statutes and regulations and as a denial of natural justice.”

On the same day Mr. J. C. Bosley, of Bosley & Co., called on the Town Clerk of Brighton to request that the watch committee should reconsider their decision with regard to the appellant's pension. He also submitted to the watch committee certain written observations in 14 numbered paragraphs, stating that the notice of appeal would be in the hands of the Town Clerk and further, by paragraph 15, asking that the appellant be allowed to retire on full pension forthwith. On the same day the Town Clerk wrote to the appellant's solicitors stating that on March 18, the committee "will consider such representations as may then be made by or on behalf of Mr. Ridge, either orally or in writing, or both, as may be preferred." On the following day the Town Clerk wrote further "that the decision of the committee does not limit the representations that may be made by or on behalf of your client to the matter of pension."

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

On March 18, 1958, the watch committee met. Mr. Bosley attended and addressed them, stating (inter alia) that before being dismissed the appellant had been given no notice of what was charged against him or an opportunity of being heard. He was received with courtesy but in silence and given no particulars of the case against the appellant beyond those given to him in the letter of March 7, 1958. The watch committee resolved to adhere to their previous decision, nine voting in favour of the resolution and three against it. The resolution, which was communicated to Mr. Bosley by letter on the following day was as follows: "The committee having received a request that they should hear representations by Mr. J. C. Bosley on behalf of Mr. C. F. W. Ridge have at a special meeting for the purpose held this day heard all that Mr. Bosley had to say, have considered also Mr. Bosley's written representations and the notice of appeal to the Home Secretary and the grounds thereof, and have decided to adhere to their previous decision."

On April 18, 1958, the watch committee submitted a written statement to the Secretary of State containing the facts and contentions on which they relied. These included the following:

"(c) In the course of the said trial the appellant gave false evidence in respect of two matters of material importance, namely (i) that he had reported to the Deputy Town Clerk and also to the chairman of the watch committee the facts relating to an interview between Alderman Cullen and one Page, and (ii) that he had reported to the then Chief Constable the facts relating to an interview which he (the appellant) had had with one Mrs. Cherryman.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.

“(d) The appellant failed to investigate and to take any action whatsoever in respect of complaints of a serious nature made by the said Mrs. Cherryman as to the manner in which the Astor Club was conducted and as to the trustworthiness of the Brighton criminal investigation department.

“(e) Following a report of an attempt to bribe a police officer, the appellant went to the house of the man concerned, namely, Harry Leach, and there interviewed him privately and alone.

“(f) The appellant permitted a man with a criminal record, namely, the said Page, to interview him in his private room and to discuss with him matters of police policy. . . .

“(i) The respondents contend that, having regard to the facts and matters aforesaid, the appellant has both been negligent in the discharge of his duties and is also unfit for the same and that, therefore, they were entitled to dismiss him pursuant to the provisions of section 191 of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882.”

The Home Secretary's order dated July 5, 1958, recited the watch committee's decision and the appeal against it and recorded: “Now I, . . . having considered: (i) the appellant's notice of appeal and the other documents forwarded on his behalf, and (ii) the written statement and other documents, referred to therein, forwarded on behalf of the watch committee, and having decided that the case is of such a nature that it can properly be determined without taking oral evidence, hereby order as follows: (1) I dismiss the appeal; (2) I give no direction as to the costs of the appellant.”

On July 7, 1958, the Under Secretary of State wrote to the appellant's solicitors: “The Secretary of State has come to the conclusion that there was sufficient material on which the watch committee could properly exercise their power of dismissal under section 191 (4) of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, and he has accordingly decided to dismiss the appeal. I am to add that, as no evidence in support of them was before him, the Secretary of State did not take into account the allegations that Mr. Ridge (i) did not report to the Deputy Town Clerk and the chairman of the watch committee the facts relating to an interview between Alderman Cullen and one Page; (ii) did not report to the then Chief Constable the facts relating to an interview which Mr. Ridge had with one Mrs. Cherryman and (iii) in giving evidence at his trial that he had so reported these matters, gave false evidence.”

In this action, begun on October 28, 1958, the appellant claimed by his writ: "(A) A declaration that the purported termination of the plaintiff's appointment as chief constable of Brighton was illegal, ultra vires, and void and that the plaintiff is and at all material times has been the chief constable of Brighton. (B) Payment of salary of £1,990 per annum from March 7, 1958. (C) Alternatively, a declaration that the plaintiff is entitled to a pension of £1,070 per annum for the term of his natural life from March 7, 1958."

H. L. (E.)

1963

 RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.

At the trial of the action he gave evidence that after his arrest on October 25, 1957, the Town Clerk came to him on the same day and said that he had been suspended from duty. His recollection was that the Town Clerk added "under police regulations" or "in accord with police regulations." His recollection was not challenged in cross-examination. With regard to two episodes relating to his conduct in connection with suspected attempts at bribery relating respectively to one Leach in 1954 and one Page later he claimed that there was evidence which he could have called had there been a hearing before the watch committee.

D. Ackner Q.C. and *J. MacManus* for the appellant. The questions arising are (1) whether the powers under section 191 (4) of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, could be exercised (as happened here) without regard to the regulations made by the Secretary of State under the Police Act, 1919, and providing for the chief constable being given notice of an alleged offence and an opportunity of being heard; (2) whether, if those powers could be so exercised, the police authority was bound to have regard to natural justice, that is, to give the accused notice of what was alleged against him and an opportunity of answering it; (3) whether the principles of natural justice were in fact observed in this case; (4) whether the appellant is precluded from recourse to the courts by purporting to exercise the right of appeal to the Secretary of State under the Police (Appeals) Act, 1927.

On the first point arising out of the Police (Discipline) Regulations, 1952 (S.I. 1952 No. 1705) and the Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables, Assistant Chief Constables and Chief Constables) Regulations, 1952 (S.I. 1952 No. 1706) it is submitted that the respondents could only dismiss the appellant in one of two ways. (1) The Act of 1882 is still in force providing a power of dismissal, but the regulations are grafted onto it. (2) On the facts of the present case, there was a "report or allegation"

H. L. (E.)
1963

RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.

here within regulation 2 of S.I. 1952 No. 1705 and regulation 1 of S.I. 1952 No. 1706, so that it was obligatory that these regulations should be adhered to. Schedule I to S.I. 1952 No. 1705 contains a Discipline Code providing the procedure which must be followed if the powers under the Act of 1882 are to be exercised; the code covers all those powers. See also regulations 2 and 11 of S.I. 1952 No. 1706, section 1 (1) (c) of the Police Pensions Act, 1948, and regulations 51 and 52 of the Police Pensions Regulations, 1955, in Part IX dealing with compulsory retirement. This is not a case of a master and servant relationship, but of a police officer, and the dismissal was void by reason of the disregard of the relevant regulations. The exercise of the powers given by the Act of 1882 must be in accordance with the disciplinary regulations. Though the power to dismiss under the Act still exists, the Police Act, 1919, and the regulations made under it have laid down a procedure which must always be used. Every indiscipline and incapacity of every rank is within the regulations. Further, it is a condition precedent to the application that a "report or allegation" must first be received by the watch committee (see regulation 15 (1) of S.I. 1952 No. 1706), and here the watch committee had before it such reports or allegations. It is hard to conceive of deliberations of a watch committee which do not involve the consideration of a "report or allegation." The regulations lay down a procedure providing for notice of a charge being given to the accused who must have an opportunity of answering it. This condition precedent goes to the root of the matter. The regulations are drafted so that the principles of natural justice must be complied with and they are imperative and obligatory. The Court of Appeal and the trial judge have indirectly accepted that the powers under the Act of 1882 have been restricted by the regulations under the Act of 1919.¹ There has been an erosion of the unfettered powers. See also *Fisher v. Oldham Corporation*² and *Cooper v. Wilson*.³ The regulations apply in every case. The joint effect of the Act of 1882 and the Act of 1919 is as if there were an enactment that: "The watch committee may at any time "dismiss any borough constable whom they think negligent in "the discharge of his duty or otherwise unfit for the same and

¹ [1963] 1 Q.B. 539, 566, 580; [1962] 2 W.L.R. 716; [1962] 1 All E.R. 834, C.A.

² [1930] 2 K.B. 364, 370-371; 46 T.L.R. 390.

³ [1937] 2 K.B. 309, 316, 322, 324; 53 T.L.R. 632; [1937] 2 All E.R. 726, C.A.

"shall comply with any regulations made by the Secretary of State prior thereto affecting such dismissal." The words "otherwise unfit" are ejusdem generis what has gone before and mean "otherwise unfit in that regard," that is, in regard to negligence. The powers of the Act of 1882 can only be exercised on material which is provided to the committee. They must deliberate and can only deliberate if they have material, that is, a report or allegation, which is a statement, oral or in writing, made to them. A report is anything which is brought back in relation to a given event. Public notoriety is only knowledge gained by the public to whom it has been brought back by a variety of means. The words "report or allegation" should be interpreted literally. These regulations were meant to produce a uniform code, and it is conceded that they apply equally to the policemen who were convicted. Compliance with the regulations is a condition precedent to dismissal.

H. L. (E.)

1963

 RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.

As to the judge's observations at the end of the criminal trial, see what was said in the Court of Appeal.⁴ His statement was not one of admitted facts. The minutes of March 7, 1958, show the materials which the watch committee considered. They had no transcript of the evidence. It does not appear what offence the appellant is alleged to have committed. The consequences of the appellant's interpretation of the relevant enactments is that an important officer faced with a serious charge must have the justice associated with the procedure of this country. The consequence of the respondents' interpretation is that he need have no notice of the charge nor any chance of being heard.

On the second point, even if the respondents had power to dismiss without complying with the regulations, they were bound to observe the principles of natural justice. Here the appellant was deprived of an office of a public character and of his statutory pension rights and was thus injured in his proprietary rights. The relevant authorities on this branch of the case are *Bagg's Case*⁵; *Rex v. Cambridge University*⁶; *Cooper v. Wandsworth Board of Works*⁷; *Hopkins v. Smethwick Local Board of Health*⁸; *Smith v. The Queen*⁹; *Urban Housing Co.*

⁴ [1963] 1 Q.B. 539, 575, 581.⁵ (1615) 11 Co.Rep. 93b., 99.⁶ (1723) 1 Str. 557, 561, 565, 567.⁷ (1863) 14 C.B.N.S. 180, 183, 186-187, 187, 192-193.⁸ (1890) 24 Q.B.D. 712, 714-715; 6 T.L.R. 286, C.A.⁹ (1878) L.R. 3 App.Cas. 614, 625, P.C.

H. L. (E.). *Ltd. v. Oxford Corporation*¹⁰; *Osgood v. Nelson*¹¹; *Spackman v. Plumstead Board of Works*¹²; *Local Government Board v. Arlidge*¹³ and *De Verteuil v. Knaggs*.¹⁴ The requirements of natural justice are not limited to giving an adequate hearing. There must be adequate notice of the charges to be met. The appellant here did not have a hearing of the kind required by natural justice.

1963

RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.

Although at the hearing of March 18, 1958, the appellant's solicitor was "given a run," that did not meet the requirements of natural justice, since he was appearing to meet unspecified charges, and he was not given an opportunity to answer them. There is no attack made on the watch committee's bona fides, but they should have revealed what was supposed to support a charge of negligence. Some of the observations of Donovan J. are not only not admitted but are strongly denied by the appellant.

Reliance is also placed on *Fisher v. Keane*¹⁵; *Dawkins v. Antrobus*¹⁶; *Weinberger v. Inglis*¹⁷; *Rex v. Hendon Rural District Council*¹⁸; *Reg. v. Manchester Legal Aid Committee*¹⁹; *General Medical Council v. Spackman*.²⁰ But *Nakkuda Ali v. Jayaratne*²¹ is out of line with the old cases, including *Urban Housing Co. Ltd. v. Oxford Corporation*.²² In any event, it was a case where certiorari was being sought, whereas in the present case a declaration is asked for and this is a far wider remedy: see *Taylor v. National Assistance Board*.²³ When certiorari is asked for the court cannot act unless the tribunal is judicial or quasi-judicial. But in other cases where the rights of the citizen are involved the court will readily assume the necessity for an inquiry, in which case there is also a necessity to act judicially. The expression "quasi-judicial" indicates a case where the principles

¹⁰ [1940] Ch. 70, 83-84; 56 T.L.R. 68; [1939] 4 All E.R. 211, C.A.

¹¹ (1872) L.R. 5 H.L. 636, 646, 648-649, H.L.

¹² (1885) 10 App.Cas. 229; 1 T.L.R. 313, H.L.

¹³ [1915] A.C. 120, 132, 141-142; 30 T.L.R. 672, H.L.

¹⁴ [1918] A.C. 557, 560; 34 T.L.R. 323, P.C.

¹⁵ (1878) 11 Ch.D. 353, 362-363.

¹⁶ (1879) 13 Ch.D. 615, 630, 631, 632, 636, C.A.

¹⁷ [1919] A.C. 606, 616, 631, 640; 35 T.L.R. 399, H.L.

¹⁸ [1933] 2 K.B. 696, 704-705; 49 T.L.R. 482, D.C.

¹⁹ [1952] 2 Q.B. 413, 424 et seq.; [1952] 1 T.L.R. 476; [1952] 1 All E.R. 480, D.C.

²⁰ [1943] A.C. 627, 634, 638, 640-641; 59 T.L.R. 412; [1943] 2 All E.R. 337, H.L.

²¹ [1951] A.C. 66, P.C.

²² [1940] Ch. 70.

²³ [1957] P. 101, 111; [1957] 2 W.L.R. 189; [1957] 1 All E.R. 183, C.A.; [1958] A.C. 532; [1958] 2 W.L.R. 11; [1957] 3 All E.R. 703, H.L.

of natural justice should be observed. The group of cases just cited are administrative, but engrafted onto the circumstances there was an obligation to act according to the rules of natural justice. Even if "quasi-judicial" indicates the performance of a function of a judicial kind, as against an administrative action, there may yet be administrative functions which, by their very nature, oblige one to apply the principles of natural justice. For the distinction between certiorari and a declaration see *Pyx Granite Co. Ltd. v. Ministry of Housing and Local Government*²⁴ and *Barnard v. National Dock Labour Board*.²⁵ Reliance is also placed on *Russell v. Duke of Norfolk*,²⁶ per Denning L.J.

As to the third point, if the principles of natural justice should have been applied, they were not observed here and, in such circumstances, the court should not speculate as to what would have happened if they had been observed. Here there was a total disregard of the Police Regulations on the basis that they did not apply, nor was there any application of the principle audi alteram partem save for the inadequate hearing given to the appellant's solicitor on March 18, 1958. Reliance is placed on *Kanda v. Government of Malaya*²⁷ and *New Zealand Dairy Board v. Okitu Co-operative Dairy Co. Ltd.*²⁸ The watch committee did not have before them the totality of the evidence which might have been called on behalf of the appellant. It would be entering into the realm of speculation to say what would have been the impact on the tribunal if it had had that evidence before it. It is accepted that the appellant might on the principle of respondeat superior have expected to be asked to resign, but the watch committee made their decision in circumstances which ignored natural justice. So, though the appellant would have accepted their decision if it had been made in another way, he is not prevented now from complaining of the lack of natural justice. This case was not "as plain as a pike-staff" and the watch committee should have considered matters other than those gone into at the criminal trial. "The principles of natural justice" represent the forensic

H. L. (E.)

1963

 RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.

²⁴ [1958] 1 Q.B. 554, 570-572; [1958] 2 W.L.R. 371; [1958] 1 All E.R. 625, C.A.; [1960] A.C. 260, 290; [1959] 3 W.L.R. 346; [1959] 3 All E.R. 1, H.L.

²⁵ [1953] 2 Q.B. 18, 41; [1953] 2 W.L.R. 995; [1953] 1 All E.R. 1113, C.A.

²⁶ (1948) 65 T.L.R. 225, 231; [1949] 1 All E.R. 109.

²⁷ [1962] A.C. 332, 337; [1962] 2 W.L.R. 1153, P.C.

²⁸ [1953] N.Z.L.R. 366, 380.

H. L. (E.) way of saying "fair play." On this part of the case what was
1963 said in the courts below is to be referred to.²⁹

RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.

As to the fourth point, the appellant was not debarred from recourse to the courts by reason of his appeal to the Secretary of State: see sections 2 (3) and 19 of the Police Appeals Act, 1927, section 1 of the Police Appeals Act, 1943, regulations 1 and 8 of the Police (Appeals) Rules, 1943, and regulation 18 of S.I. 1952 No. 1705, as amended by S.I. 1954 No. 1687. When section 2 (3) says that "the order shall be final and binding," it means so far as the facts are concerned. See also *Reg. v. Medical Appeal Tribunal, Ex parte Gilmore*.³⁰ The appellant was still free to contend before the courts that the decision was a nullity in law. That right could only be taken away by the clearest possible words in a statute. Alternatively, where natural justice is not observed, that is akin to acting without jurisdiction and results in the decision being a nullity. If the dismissal was a nullity, there was nothing about which to appeal to the Secretary of State and, if the appellant chose to appeal and the Secretary of State purported to deal with the matter, that was also a nullity. Indulging in an appeal which was no appeal did not debar him from the courts. Accordingly, there was no election as to his remedy. The appellant was not debarred from applying to the courts: see *Annamunthodo v. Oilfield Workers' Trade Union*³¹; *Toronto Railway Co. v. Toronto Corporation*³² and *Bennett & White (Calgary) Ltd. v. Municipal District of Sugar City No. 5*.³³ The analogy of the proviso to section 4 of the Criminal Appeal Act, 1907, should not be invoked: see Halsbury's Statutes of England, 2nd ed., vol. V, pp. 929-930, and *Fisher v. Keane*.³⁴

The result of the proceedings of the watch committee is that its decision was void and of no effect. The cases which establish that this is the effect of a denial of natural justice are *Bagg's Case*³⁵; *Rex v. Cambridge University*³⁶; *Wood v. Woad*³⁷; *Weinberger v. Inglis*³⁸; *Fisher v. Keane*³⁹; *Kanda v. Government*

²⁹ [1963] 1 Q.B. 539, 557; [1961] 2 W.L.R. 1054; [1961] 2 All E.R. 523; [1963] 1 Q.B. 539, 569, C.A.

³⁰ [1957] 1 Q.B. 574; [1957] 2 W.L.R. 498; [1957] 1 All E.R. 796, C.A.

³¹ [1961] A.C. 945; [1961] 3 W.L.R. 650; [1961] 3 All E.R. 621, P.C.

³² [1904] A.C. 809, 814 et seq.; 20 T.L.R. 774, P.C.

³³ [1951] A.C. 786, P.C.

³⁴ 11 Ch.D. 353.

³⁵ 11 Co.Rep. 93b, 98.

³⁶ 1 Str. 557, 567.

³⁷ (1874) L.R. 9 Ex. 190.

³⁸ [1919] A.C. 606, 640-641.

³⁹ 11 Ch.D. 353.

of *Malaya*⁴⁰; *Dawkins v. Antrobus*⁴¹; *Andrews v. Mitchell*⁴²; *Vine v. National Dock Labour Board*⁴³; *Lapointe v. L'Association de Bienfaisance et de la Retraite de la Police de Montréal*⁴⁴; *Cooper v. Wilson*⁴⁵ and *Kilduff v. Wilson*.⁴⁶

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Further, the appeal to the Secretary of State was itself a nullity, because that right of appeal was limited to cases where the disciplinary regulations had been complied with and *ex concessis* they were not complied with in this case.

Neville Faulks Q.C. and *Anthony Harmsworth* for the respondents. Three points arise: (1) Was there a "report or allegation" within regulation 15 (1) of S.I. 1952 No. 1706? (2) Was the appellant entitled to natural justice and, if so, did he get it? (3) What effect has waiver, estoppel or election on this case?

If there can be no dismissal under the Act of 1882 unless the regulations have been complied with, the effect will be to strangle the Act with the regulations. But the watch committee can dismiss either under the Act of 1882 or under the Act of 1919 between which there is peaceful co-existence. The appellant was dismissed under the Act of 1882 for lack of powers of leadership, just as he might have been dismissed because he had contracted rheumatoid arthritis or some mental illness. The present case is only covered by the Act of 1882, but it is conceded that when an offence is to be punished, that is, when the whole matter falls within the regulations, they must be grafted onto the Act of 1882 and complied with. The Police (Discipline) Regulations, 1952, were drafted with the lower ranks in mind. The wording of the Discipline Code is unsuited to chief constables and does not cover the real charge that the appellant was a bad influence and a bad example. Section 191 (4) must be read with section 191 (1), which postulates a duty on the watch committee to appoint fit persons as constables, and accordingly a man who is unfit must be dismissed. The appellant is in a position analogous to that of a general who is sent home because he is unfit to command or the Minister of Agriculture who resigned after the Crichel Down revelations. Here it is as plain as a pike-staff that a reasonable watch committee would have "gone the whole hog" in dealing with the appellant. What was operating on the minds

⁴⁰ [1962] A.C. 332.

⁴¹ 17 Ch.D. 615.

⁴² [1905] A.C. 78, 82-83, H.L.

⁴³ [1957] A.C. 448, 509-510; [1957] 2 W.L.R. 106; [1956] 3 All E.R. 939, H.L.

⁴⁴ [1905] A.C. 535; 22 T.L.R. 768, P.C.

⁴⁵ [1937] 2 K.B. 309, 324-325, 339-340, 346, 348.

⁴⁶ (1939) 160 L.T. 103; [1939] 1 All E.R. 429, C.A.

H. L. (E.)
1963

RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.

of the respondents was that he was altogether unfit to lead the Brighton police force. In paragraphs 1 and 4 of the Discipline Code in Schedule I to the Police Discipline Regulations, 1952, where the code deals with discreditable conduct and neglect of duty, that conduct and that neglect are limited to the acts specified. The suggestion made is that the appellant so comported himself in the witness-box at his trial as to show that he was no longer fit to be a chief constable. He was suspended originally under regulation 18 (1) of the Police (Discipline) Regulations, 1952, as amended by the regulations of 1954, which authorise suspension when an officer "may have committed . . . a criminal offence." When the two other police officers were convicted at the Central Criminal Court there was no longer any "may have" in their case and they were therefore dismissed, but on the argument for the appellant these two men could have claimed that they were wrongly dismissed.

As to the first question, in the case of the appellant the regulations do not, in any event, apply because there was no "report or allegation" but only a matter of public notoriety. Where a judge has said that a man ought to be dismissed that is something of which the watch committee can take notice but it is not a "report or allegation." Here the corporation bought the transcript of what Donovan J. said; it might have been otherwise if he had sent it to them, or if someone else had reported those observations to them. Regulation 4 of the regulations of 1952, requires that a "report or allegation" must be in writing. As to the regulations, see what Streatfeild J. said in the court below.⁴⁷

The respondents were entitled to dismiss the appellant under the Act of 1882 for the two reasons given. There is nothing wrong in bringing up everything which will support his dismissal, even things which came out without a criminal trial. *Hogg v. Scott*⁴⁸ supports the respondents' contentions. Even if a report was received, it was not a report of an offence under the disciplinary regulations. Further, article 17 of the Discipline Code does not touch a case where the respondents from their own knowledge are aware that the man in question has committed a criminal offence.

As to the second question, relating to natural justice, it is conceded that *Liversidge v. Anderson*⁴⁹ is not to be extended,

⁴⁷ [1963] 1 Q.B. 539, 547-548.

⁴⁹ [1942] A.C. 206; 58 T.L.R. 35;

⁴⁸ [1947] K.B. 759; 63 T.L.R. [1941] 3 All E.R. 338, H.L. 320; [1947] 1 All E.R. 788.

but what Lord Atkin said ⁵⁰ about the difference between the Secretary of State having reasonable cause and thinking that he has reasonable cause helps the respondents.

Reliance is placed on what was said in the courts below in the present case on the point relating to natural justice.⁵¹ The appellant's case was heard in the witness-box at his trial when his whole career was examined, so that he was not condemned unheard. Reliance is placed on the distinction made in *Reg. v. Manchester Legal Aid Committee*.⁵² Under these regulations a question is determined. Under the Act of 1882 an executive action is being taken. Admittedly the general principle of English law is that when something is done which may interfere with another's rights, natural justice must be exercised, unless this requirement is excluded by statute. In section 191 (4) of the Act of 1882 the words "whom they think" do not connote a prior inquiry because of the words "at any time," which mean that, if one catches a man red-handed, one does not have to observe a lot of procedure before dismissing him. If the chief constable assaulted the chairman of the watch committee or if the watch committee saw him drunk in the gutter, he could be dismissed out of hand. See what Davies L.J. said in this case about the power under the Act of 1882.⁵³ One can "think" and one can act reasonably without acting judicially. *Franklin v. Minister of Town and Country Planning*⁵⁴ is relied on. *Nakkuda Ali v. Jayaratne*,⁵⁵ which was rightly decided, covers this case, although it is a decision on certiorari. See also *Reg. v. Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Ex parte Parker*.⁵⁶ There can be punishment, poena, without a crime. The two do not necessarily go together. A constable who is dismissed for not coming up to the requisite standard of physical fitness is in a sense being punished, although he has committed no crime. Note the form in the Schedule to the Police (Appeals) Rules, 1943, with the direction in the side note: "Here state the charge . . . or such "other grounds, if any, as were given for the punishment." This postulates grounds other than those in the regulations.

It is common sense that normally the principle audi alteram

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.

⁵⁰ [1942] A.C. 206, 227-228, 232.

⁵¹ [1963] 1 Q.B. 539, 556, 569-570, 577.

⁵² [1952] 2 Q.B. 413, 431.

⁵³ [1963] 1 Q.B. 539, 581.

⁵⁴ [1948] A.C. 87, 96, 102; 63 T.L.R. 446; [1947] 2 All E.R. 289, H.L.

⁵⁵ [1951] A.C. 66.

⁵⁶ [1953] 1 W.L.R. 1150, 1154, 1155-1156; [1953] 2 All E.R. 717, D.C.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

partem should apply, but in each case the obligation depends on the words of the particular statute: see *R. v. Legislative Committee of the Church Assembly, Ex parte Haynes*.⁵⁷ When a person appointed to an office as a fit person is found not to be fit there is no determination between two people. For those who are responsible for a police force such a dismissal is a matter of the policy of the borough and therefore in acting they need not apply the principles of natural justice.

The appellant was perfectly well aware what the complaints against him were and he did have a fair determination of his case. Once it was shown that the Brighton police force contained corrupt officers and that its condition invited the judge's strictures, it was inevitable that the appellant should be dismissed; and once his conduct in relation to Page and Leach was known, it was inevitable that he should be dismissed without pension rights. *Hogg v. Smith*⁵⁸ shows that it would have been a farce to hold an inquiry to determine whether or not the appellant should have his pension rights. Under the Act of 1882 a man may be discharged for negligence in the discharge of his duty or for unfitness. A man may be unfit to be a chief constable for many reasons, because he has disseminated sclerosis or because undesirable activities are going on and he is not controlling them or because he is misbehaving himself. The appellant was in effect charged with conduct prejudicial to good order and police discipline, contrary to article 1 of the Discipline Code. That was enough to justify the watch committee in terminating his appointment, and he knew that that was the complaint against him. On March 18 he had the opportunity of dealing with it. It is a pity that there was not a charge sheet, but nevertheless there was an overall fairness in the conduct of the matter. The law and common sense would not be in harmony if now the appellant could claim that all those matters must be treated as if they had never been. Even if the ex parte dismissal of March 7 was a nullity, the watch committee reviewed it in accordance with natural justice on March 18. Reliance is placed on *Killduff v. Wilson*⁵⁹ and *Tomlinson v. London, Midland & Scottish Railway Co.*⁶⁰ The duty with which the watch committee was entrusted was wide enough to justify instant dismissal. In any event the decision of the watch

⁵⁷ [1928] 1 K.B. 411; 44 T.L.R. 68, D.C.

⁵⁸ [1947] K.B. 759.

⁵⁹ 160 L.T. 103, 109-110.

⁶⁰ [1944] 1 All E.R. 537, 538.

committee was voidable and not void. It was the only reasonable one and should not be interfered with by the court, since the granting of a declaration is a discretionary matter.

On the third point, as to waiver, estoppel or election, under regulation 15 (1) of the regulations of 1952 if there is a report or allegation that a chief constable may have committed an offence, it is mandatory to follow the procedure under those regulations. The unfettered power under the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, to dismiss him at any time remains, but in certain circumstances the procedure set up by the regulations must be observed. Reliance is placed on section 220 of that Act which excludes certiorari. The powers under section 191 are thus unbounded so that there is an absolute bar to the appellant's claim. The observance of the regulations is not a condition precedent to the exercise of the power.

The appellant adopted the procedure of appealing to the Home Secretary, whose decision is by statute final and binding, and by doing so he waived his other rights. It was then too late to start all over again taking all the points which he had taken in that appeal. One cannot both approbate and reprobate. *H. Tolpudd & Co. Ltd. v. Mole*⁶¹ is helpful. By going to the Home Secretary by way of appeal, the appellant in fact submitted to a new jurisdiction and he cannot now try to say that its decision was a nullity. He can only have gone to the Home Secretary on the basis that he had been dismissed. The watch committee incurred costs in that appeal on the faith that the appellant accepted that he had been dismissed. See what was said in the Court of Appeal on this point.⁶² The Home Secretary is the designated appeal tribunal and the effect of going to him is that it can no longer be contended that the decision of the watch committee to dismiss is voidable, so that the appellant cannot go to the court and ask for a discretionary remedy: see *Barraclough v. Brown*.⁶³

The appellant does not come within regulation 18 (4) (a) of the Police (Discipline) Regulations, 1952, as amended by S.I. 1954 No. 1687. In common sense he cannot come within it after dismissal under section 191 of the Act of 1882, since his suspension ceased after the decision to dismiss him.

As to the power of dismissal, reliance is placed on the following cases: *Reg. v. Darlington School Governors*⁶⁴; *Ex*

H. L. (E.)

1963

 RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.

⁶¹ [1911] 1 K.B. 836, C.A.⁶² [1963] 1 Q.B. 539, 578-579.⁶³ [1897] A.C. 615, 620, 622; 13 T.L.R. 527, H.L.⁶⁴ (1844) 6 Q.B. 682, 694, 714.

H. L. (E.) *parte Teather*⁶⁵; *Brown v. Dagenham Urban District Council*⁶⁶
 1963 and *McManus v. Bowes*.⁶⁷

RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.

D. Ackner Q.C. in reply. It is the function of the watch committee to deliberate on such a matter as this, to direct their conscious faculties to the material, to hear argument on the report or allegation. Reliance is placed on regulation 1 of S.I. 1952 No. 1706: "Right of accused to be informed of, and to "make a personal explanation concerning, allegations." The draftsman intended to cover anything which might help the watch committee's deliberations. *Hogg v. Smith*⁶⁸ was wrongly decided. The inclusion of article 17, "conviction of a criminal "offence," in the Discipline Code of the Police (Discipline) Regulations, 1954, shows that such conviction is not in itself enough to justify dismissal. Regulation 15 (1), as amended by S.I. 1954 No. 1687, applies to this case. A man cannot be summarily dismissed because of strictures passed on him by a judge after his acquittal. It is not common justice so to dismiss him within 14 months of the date when he would qualify for a pension. The watch committee must have believed him guilty of more than inefficiency. In the resolution of March 7, 1958, they found that the appellant had been negligent in the discharge of his duty. That brings one to article 4 of the Discipline Code. If the statements referred to in paragraph 1 (f) of the resolution were included in the minutes, it is because they were considered by the watch committee, and the appellant should have been told what they were.

A "report or allegation" within the Police (Discipline) Regulations need not be in writing: see what Harman L.J. said in the Court of Appeal.⁶⁹ An oral report calls more urgently for the protection of natural justice than a written report. The observations of Donovan J. were such as to suggest that the appellant might have committed an offence. There was here a sufficient "report or allegation" to bring the matter within the regulations.

It is hard to imagine inefficiency which does not involve neglect, but such inefficiency would not be an offence. Every exercise of the power of dismissal under the Act of 1882 is a punishment, and punishment presupposes an offence. There

⁶⁵ (1850) 1 L.M. & P. 7.

⁶⁶ [1929] 1 K.B. 737; 45 T.L.R. 284.

⁶⁷ [1938] 1 K.B. 98, 118-124, 128-129; 53 T.L.R. 844; [1937] 3 All E.R. 227, C.A.

⁶⁸ [1947] K.B. 759.

⁶⁹ [1963] 1 Q.B. 539, 575.

should not be a power of summary dismissal for something which is in no way culpable, as for inefficiency resulting from ill-health. There is no offence outside those which are laid down in the Discipline Code. Retirement for inefficiency or ill-health is dealt with adequately in regulations 53 and 54 of the Police Pensions Regulations, 1955. Medical incapacity and inefficiency fall short of a disciplinary offence. The Police Pensions Act, 1921, provides a complete code running alongside the Act of 1882. In section 191 (4) of the Act of 1882 the words "or otherwise unfit" should be construed ejusdem generis with being negligent, neglect of duty in article 4 of the Discipline Code being the same as culpable neglect. Such inefficiency not resulting from ill-health would be within the regulations, which apply here. Alternatively, the rules of natural justice apply.

It is accepted that when administrative actions are to be considered, policy is always a factor. But the rules of natural justice are concerned with a fair form of procedure, not with controlling policy. They require a minimum procedure to be followed. Parliament presumes that the powers it grants will be exercised fairly and regularly, and it is not bound to say so explicitly on every occasion. It is not essential for there to be a special provision to this effect in every enactment, because Parliament regards it as self-evident that powers must not be abused. See *Errington v. Minister of Health*⁷⁰; *Stafford v. Minister of Health*⁷¹; *B. Johnson & Co. (Builders) Ltd. v. Minister of Health*⁷²; *Cooper v. Wandsworth Board of Works*⁷³; *General Medical Council v. Spackman*⁷⁴ and *Reg. v. Ngwevela*.⁷⁵

Even where a case seems plain on the face of it, an inquiry cannot be dispensed with. Thus for a chief constable to strike the chairman of a watch committee would be so inconsistent with his position that it would require some explanation. If a barrister were reported to have been drunk in court, the Benchers would not act without an inquiry. Again, a man apparently drunk in the gutter may be a diabetic who has run out of insulin. As to the duty of holding an inquiry and informing the person concerned of the charge, see *Franklin v. Minister of Town and Country Planning*,⁷⁶ distinguishing the approach of the Court of Appeal

H. L. (E.)

1963

 RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.

⁷⁰ [1935] 1 K.B. 249, 253, 264, 268, 270, 273, 279-280, 280-281; 51 T.L.R. 44, C.A.

⁷¹ [1946] K.B. 621; 62 T.L.R. 451.

⁷² (1947) 177 L.T. 455; [1947] 2 All E.R. 395, C.A.

⁷³ 14 C.B.N.S. 180, 194-195.

⁷⁴ [1943] A.C. 627, 640-641.

⁷⁵ 1954 (1) S.A. 123.

⁷⁶ (1947) 176 L.T. 312; 63 T.L.R. 185, C.A.; [1948] A.C. 87, 102-103; 63 T.L.R. 446; [1947] 2 All E.R. 289, H.L.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.

from that of the House of Lords. See also *Attorney-General v. Hooper*.⁷⁷ *Reg. v. Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Ex parte Parker*,⁷⁸ relied on by the respondents, was wrongly decided. That case went ex concessis. When one is punishing, as in the present case, one is acting quasi-judicially: see *Rex v. North, Ex parte Oakey*.⁷⁹ But the watch committee never told the appellant what were the charges against him and would not let him make his explanations. Those were conditions precedent before he could be validly dismissed. It is also a condition precedent that the regulations at least must be implemented. If they are not, there is no jurisdiction and the decision is void.

As to *Nakkuda Ali's* case,⁸⁰ relied on for the respondents, see two articles by Professor H. W. R. Wade (1951) 67 L.Q.R. 103, 106 and (1962) 78 L.Q.R. 188, 199n. Lord Radcliffe cannot have intended to overrule the old cases of the highest authority which were not cited in argument, but are now relied on by the appellant.

As to the supposed right of dismissal, see *Ex parte Ramshay*⁸¹; *Willis v. Childe*⁸²; *Dean v. Bennett*⁸³; *Hayman v. Governors of Rugby School*⁸⁴; *Reg. v. Smith*⁸⁵ and *Rex v. Gaskin*.⁸⁶

As to certiorari, section 220 of the Act of 1882 does not apply here; it only applies to cases in which the question relates to purely formal matters. As to the scope of certiorari, see *Colonial Bank of Australasia v. Willan*⁸⁷; *Reg. v. Gillyard*⁸⁸ and *Ex parte Bradlaugh*.⁸⁹

As to estoppel, see *Maritime Electric Co. Ltd. v. General Dairies Ltd.*⁹⁰ and *In re a Bankruptcy Notice (No. 62 of 1924)*.⁹¹

As to natural justice, see *Ceylon University v. Fernando*.⁹²

As to the alleged finality of the appeal to the Home Secretary, see Wade's *Administrative Law* (1961), p. 112.

As to the right approach in construing the Act of 1882, see *Thomson v. Lord Clanmorris*.⁹³

As to whether the ignoring of the regulations was fundamental,

⁷⁷ [1893] Ch. 483; 9 T.L.R. 632.

⁷⁸ [1953] 1 W.L.R. 1150, 1154.

⁷⁹ [1927] 1 K.B. 491, 497-498, 500, 502, 504, 505-506; 43 T.L.R. 60, C.A.

⁸⁰ [1951] A.C. 66.

⁸¹ (1852) 18 Q.B. 173.

⁸² (1851) 13 Beav. 117, 127.

⁸³ (1870) L.R. 6 Ch. 489, 494.

⁸⁴ (1874) L.R. 18 Eq. 28.

⁸⁵ (1852) 5 Q.B. 614, 616-617, 620.

⁸⁶ (1799) 8 Term Rep. 209, 210.

⁸⁷ (1874) L.R. 5 P.C. 417, 440, 442-443, P.C.

⁸⁸ (1848) 12 Q.B. 527, 529.

⁸⁹ (1878) 3 Q.B.D. 509, D.C.

⁹⁰ [1937] A.C. 610; 53 T.L.R. 391; [1937] 1 All E.R. 748, P.C.

⁹¹ [1924] 2 Ch. 76, 97, C.A.

⁹² [1960] 1 W.L.R. 223, 232; [1960] 1 All E.R. 631, P.C.

⁹³ [1900] 1 Ch. 718, 725; 16 T.L.R. 296, C.A.

see *R. v. Paddington & St. Marylebone Rent Tribunal, Ex parte Bell Land & Provincial Properties Ltd.*⁹⁴ H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.

As to relief, if the respondents acted without jurisdiction or in defiance of the rules of natural justice, then their decision is a nullity and the appellant is entitled as of right to the declaration he seeks. In such circumstances the court can neither impose terms upon the appellant nor require undertakings from him as a condition of granting the relief. In fact he will not seek reinstatement as chief constable and his main concern is the financial consequences of his having been dismissed instead of being allowed to resign. If, contrary to the above submission, the court has a discretion as to whether to grant or refuse the declaration sought, then the appellant would undertake not only to resign but to accept that such resignation should be treated as effective as from March 7, 1958, and to limit his claim against the respondents merely to his being heard as to his entitlement for a pension.

Anthony Harmsworth. It is not desired to say anything about the additional cases cited in the reply.

As to relief, when declaratory relief is asked for the court will take the consequences into account in deciding whether to make the declaration and can impose terms unless there are adequate undertakings. Any relief *ex debito justitiae* must be unfettered. A rehearing before the watch committee would replace the faulty hearing.

Their Lordships took time for consideration.

March 14, 1963. LORD REID. My Lords, the appellant, Mr. Ridge, became chief constable of the County Borough of Brighton in 1956, after serving in the Brighton Police Force for some 33 years. At a meeting of the watch committee, the police authority, on March 7, 1958, it was resolved that he should be dismissed and he now maintains that that resolution was void and of no effect because he had no notice of the grounds on which the committee proposed to act and no opportunity to be heard in his own defence.

The appellant had been arrested on October 25, 1957, and subsequently tried on a charge of conspiring with the senior members of his force and others to obstruct the course of justice,

⁹⁴ [1949] 1 K.B. 666, 681; 65 T.L.R. 200; [1949] 1 All E.R. 720, D.C.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.
Lord Reid.

and had been suspended from duty on October 26. He was acquitted on February 28, but the other two members of the force were convicted, and in sentencing them the trial judge, Donovan J., made a statement which included grave reflections on the appellant's conduct. He was then indicted on a charge of corruption and was on March 6 acquitted, no evidence having been offered against him. On this occasion Donovan J. made a further statement. On the day following that statement the watch committee met and summarily dismissed the appellant. I shall not deal further with these matters because my noble and learned friend, Lord Morris of Borth-y-Gest, intends to do so.

The power of dismissal is contained in section 191 (4) of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882. So far as I am aware, that subsection is the only statutory provision regarding dismissal, and the respondents purported to act under it. It is in these terms: "The watch committee, or any two justices having jurisdiction in the borough, may at any time suspend, and the watch committee may at any time dismiss, any borough constable whom they think negligent in the discharge of his duty, or otherwise unfit for the same."

The appellant maintains that the watch committee ought to have proceeded in accordance with regulations made under section 4 (1) of the Police Act, 1919, which authorised the Secretary of State to make regulations as to, inter alia, the conditions of service of the members of all police forces in England and Wales. Regulations were duly made, but the respondents maintain that they do not apply to this case. For the moment I shall assume in their favour that that is so and consider whether the Act of 1882, taken by itself, authorised them to do as they did.

The appellant's case is that in proceeding under the Act of 1882 the watch committee were bound to observe what are commonly called the principles of natural justice. Before attempting to reach any decision they were bound to inform him of the grounds on which they proposed to act and give him a fair opportunity of being heard in his own defence. The authorities on the applicability of the principles of natural justice are in some confusion, and so I find it necessary to examine this matter in some detail. The principle *audi alteram partem* goes back many centuries in our law and appears in a multitude of judgments of judges of the highest authority. In modern times opinions have sometimes been expressed to the effect that natural justice is so vague as to be practically meaningless. But I would regard these as tainted by the perennial fallacy that because something cannot

be cut and dried or nicely weighed or measured therefore it does not exist. The idea of negligence is equally insusceptible of exact definition, but what a reasonable man would regard as fair procedure in particular circumstances and what he would regard as negligence in particular circumstances are equally capable of serving as tests in law, and natural justice as it has been interpreted in the courts is much more definite than that. It appears to me that one reason why the authorities on natural justice have been found difficult to reconcile is that insufficient attention has been paid to the great difference between various kinds of cases in which it has been sought to apply the principle. What a minister ought to do in considering objections to a scheme may be very different from what a watch committee ought to do in considering whether to dismiss a chief constable. So I shall deal first with cases of dismissal. These appear to fall into three classes: dismissal of a servant by his master, dismissal from an office held during pleasure, and dismissal from an office where there must be something against a man to warrant his dismissal.

The law regarding master and servant is not in doubt. There cannot be specific performance of a contract of service, and the master can terminate the contract with his servant at any time and for any reason or for none. But if he does so in a manner not warranted by the contract he must pay damages for breach of contract. So the question in a pure case of master and servant does not at all depend on whether the master has heard the servant in his own defence: it depends on whether the facts emerging at the trial prove breach of contract. But this kind of case can resemble dismissal from an office where the body employing the man is under some statutory or other restriction as to the kind of contract which it can make with its servants, or the grounds on which it can dismiss them. The present case does not fall within this class because a chief constable is not the servant of the watch committee or indeed of anyone else.

Then there are many cases where a man holds an office at pleasure. Apart from judges and others whose tenure of office is governed by statute, all servants and officers of the Crown hold office at pleasure, and this has been held even to apply to a colonial judge (*Terrell v. Secretary of State for the Colonies*¹). It has always been held, I think rightly, that such an officer has no right to be heard before he is dismissed, and the reason is clear. As the person having the power of dismissal need not have

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Reid.

¹ [1953] 2 Q.B. 482; [1953] 3 W.L.R. 331; [1953] 2 All E.R. 490.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.
—
Lord Reid.

anything against the officer, he need not give any reason. That was stated as long ago as 1670 in *Rex v. Stratford-on-Avon Corporation*,² where the corporation dismissed a town clerk who held office *durante bene placito*. The leading case on this matter appears to be *Reg. v. Darlington School Governors*³ although that decision was doubted by Lord Hatherley L.C. in *Dean v. Bennett*,⁴ and distinguished on narrow grounds in *Willis v. Childe*.⁵ I fully accept that where an office is simply held at pleasure the person having power of dismissal cannot be bound to disclose his reasons. No doubt he would in many cases tell the officer and hear his explanation before deciding to dismiss him. But if he is not bound to disclose his reason and does not do so, then, if the court cannot require him to do so, it cannot determine whether it would be fair to hear the officer's case before taking action. But again that is not this case. In this case the Act of 1882 only permits the watch committee to take action on the grounds of negligence or unfitness. Let me illustrate the difference by supposing that a watch committee who had no complaint against their present chief constable heard of a man with quite outstanding qualifications who would like to be appointed. They might think it in the public interest to make the change, but they would have no right to do it. But there could be no legal objection to dismissal of an officer holding office at pleasure in order to put a better man in his place.

So I come to the third class, which includes the present case. There I find an unbroken line of authority to the effect that an officer cannot lawfully be dismissed without first telling him what is alleged against him and hearing his defence or explanation. An early example is *Bagg's Case*,⁶ though it is more properly deprivation of the privilege of being a burgess of Plymouth. *Rex v. Gaskin*⁷ arose out of the dismissal of a parish clerk, and Lord Kenyon C.J. referred to *audi alteram partem* as one of the first principles of justice. *Reg. v. Smith*⁸ was another case of dismissal of a parish clerk, and Lord Denman C.J. held that even personal knowledge of the offence was no substitute for hearing the officer: his explanation might disprove criminal motive or intent and bring forward other facts in mitigation, and in any event delaying to hear him would prevent yielding too hastily to first impressions. *Ex parte Ramshay*⁹ is important. It dealt

² (1809) 11 East 176.³ (1844) 6 Q.B. 682.⁴ (1870) L.R. 6 Ch. 489.⁵ (1851) 13 Beav. 117.⁶ (1615) 11 Co.Rep. 93b.⁷ (1799) 8 Term Rep. 209.⁸ (1844) 5 Q.B. 614.⁹ (1852) 18 Q.B. 173.

with the removal from office of a county court judge, and the form of the legislation which authorised the Lord Chancellor to act is hardly distinguishable from the form of section 191, which confers powers on the watch committee. The Lord Chancellor was empowered if he should think fit to remove on the ground of inability or misbehaviour, but Lord Campbell C.J. said ¹⁰ that this was "only on the implied condition prescribed by the principles "of eternal justice." In *Osgood v. Nelson* ¹¹ objection was taken to the way in which the Corporation of the City of London had removed the clerk to the Sheriff's Court, and Lord Hatherley L.C. said: "I apprehend, my Lords, that, as has been stated by the "learned Baron who has delivered, in the name of the judges, "their unanimous opinion, the Court of Queen's Bench has "always considered that it has been open to that court, as in "this case it appears to have considered, to correct any court, or "tribunal, or body of men who may have a power of this descrip- "tion, a power of removing from office, if it should be found "that such persons have disregarded any of the essentials of "justice in the course of their inquiry, before making that re- "moval, or if it should be found that in the place of reasonable "cause those persons have acted obviously upon mere individual "caprice."

That citation of authority might seem sufficient, but I had better proceed further. In *Fisher v. Jackson*,¹² three vicars had power to remove the master of an endowed school. But, unlike the *Darlington* case,¹³ the trust deed set out the grounds on which he could be removed—briefly, inefficiency or failing to set a good example. So it was held that they could not remove him without affording him an opportunity of being heard in his own defence. Only two other cases of this class were cited in argument, *Cooper v. Wilson* ¹⁴ and *Hogg v. Scott*.¹⁵ Both dealt with the dismissal of police officers and both were complicated by consideration of regulations made under the Police Acts. In the former the majority at least recognised that the principles of natural justice applied, and in deciding the latter Cassels J. in deciding that a chief constable could dismiss without hearing him an officer who had been convicted of felony, appears to have

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Reid.

¹⁰ 18 Q.B. 173, 190.¹¹ (1872) L.R. 5 H.L. 636, 649, H.L.¹² [1891] 2 Ch. 84; 7 T.L.R. 358.¹³ 6 Q.B. 682.¹⁴ [1937] 2 K.B. 309; 53 T.L.R. 623; [1937] 2 All E.R. 726, C.A.¹⁵ [1947] K.B. 759; 63 T.L.R. 320; [1947] 1 All E.R. 788.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Reid.

proceeded on a construction of the regulations. Of course, if the regulations authorised him to do that and were intra vires in doing so, there would be no more to be said. I do not think it necessary to consider whether the learned judge rightly construed the regulations, for he did not expressly or, I think, by implication question the general principle that a man is not to be dismissed for misconduct without being heard.

Stopping there, I would think that authority was wholly in favour of the appellant, but the respondent's argument was mainly based on what has been said in a number of fairly recent cases dealing with different subject-matter. Those cases deal with decisions by ministers, officials and bodies of various kinds which adversely affected property rights or privileges of persons who had had no opportunity or no proper opportunity of presenting their cases before the decisions were given. And it is necessary to examine those cases for another reason. The question which was or ought to have been considered by the watch committee on March 7, 1958, was not a simple question whether or not the appellant should be dismissed. There were three possible courses open to the watch committee—reinstating the appellant as chief constable, dismissing him, or requiring him to resign. The difference between the latter two is that dismissal involved forfeiture of pension rights, whereas requiring him to resign did not. Indeed, it is now clear that the appellant's real interest in this appeal is to try to save his pension rights.

It may be convenient at this point to deal with an argument that, even if as a general rule a watch committee must hear a constable in his own defence before dismissing him, this case was so clear that nothing that the appellant could have said could have made any difference. It is at least very doubtful whether that could be accepted as an excuse. But, even if it could, the respondents would, in my view, fail on the facts. It may well be that no reasonable body of men could have reinstated the appellant. But as between the other two courses open to the watch committee the case is not so clear. Certainly on the facts, as we know them, the watch committee could reasonably have decided to forfeit the appellant's pension rights, but I could not hold that they would have acted wrongly or wholly unreasonably if they had in the exercise of their discretion decided to take a more lenient course.

I would start an examination of the authorities dealing with property rights and privileges with *Cooper v. Wandsworth Board*

of Works.¹⁶ Where an owner had failed to give proper notice to the Board they had under an Act of 1855 authority to demolish any building he had erected and recover the cost from him. This action was brought against the board because they had used that power without giving the owner an opportunity of being heard. The board maintained that their discretion to order demolition was not a judicial discretion and that any appeal should have been to the Metropolitan Board of Works. But the court decided unanimously in favour of the owner. Erle C.J. held that¹⁷ the power was subject to a qualification repeatedly recognised that no man is to be deprived of his property without his having an opportunity of being heard and that this had been applied to "many exercises of power which in common understanding would not be at all a more judicial proceeding than would be the act of the district board in ordering a house to be pulled down." Willes J. said¹⁸ that the rule was "of universal application, and founded upon the plainest principles of justice," and Byles J. said¹⁹ that "although there are no positive words in a statute requiring that the party shall be heard, yet the justice of the common law will supply the omission of the legislature."

This was followed in *Hopkins v. Smethwick Local Board of Health*.²⁰ Wills J. said: "In condemning a man to have his house pulled down, a judicial act is as much implied as in fining him £5; and as the local board is the only tribunal that can make such an order its act must be a judicial act, and the party to be affected should have a notice given him; . . . the judgment of Willes J. [in *Cooper's case*²¹] goes far more upon the nature of the thing done by the board than on the phraseology of the Act itself. It deals with the case on principle; from the nature of the thing done it must be a judicial act, and justice requires that the man should be heard." In the Court of Appeal Lord Esher M.R. in dismissing an appeal expressly approved the principles laid down in *Cooper's case*.²¹

The principle was applied in different circumstances in *Smith v. The Queen*.²² That was an action of ejectment on the alleged forfeiture of a Crown lease in Queensland. The Governor was entitled to forfeit the lease if it had been proved to the satisfaction of a commissioner that the lessee had abandoned or ceased to

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Reid.

¹⁶ (1863) 14 C.B.N.S. 180.¹⁷ Ibid. 189.¹⁸ Ibid. 190.¹⁹ Ibid. 194.²⁰ (1890) 24 Q.B.D. 712, 714-715;
6 T.L.R. 286, C.A.²¹ 14 C.B.N.S. 180.²² (1878) L.R. 3 App.Cas. 614, P.C.

H. L. (E.)
 1963
 RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.
 Lord Reid.

reside on the land. The commissioner did not disclose to the lessee the case against him so that he had no opportunity to meet it, and therefore his decision could not stand. The Commissioner was not bound by any rules as to procedure or evidence but he had to conduct his inquiry²³ "according to the requirements of substantial justice." In *De Verteuil v. Knaggs*²⁴ the Governor of Trinidad was entitled to remove immigrants from an estate "on sufficient ground shewn to his satisfaction." Lord Parmoor said that²⁵: "The acting Governor was not called upon to give a decision on an appeal between parties, and it is not suggested that he holds the position of a judge or that the appellant is entitled to insist on the forms used in ordinary judicial procedure," but he had "a duty of giving to any person against whom the complaint is made a fair opportunity to make any relevant statement which he may desire to bring forward and a fair opportunity to correct or controvert any relevant statement brought forward to his prejudice." The duty of an official architect in fixing a building line was stated in somewhat similar terms in *Spackman v. Plumstead District Board of Works*.²⁶

I shall now turn to a different class of case—deprivation of membership of a professional or social body. In *Wood v. Woad*²⁷ the committee purported to expel a member of a mutual insurance society without hearing him, and it was held that their action was void, and so he was still a member. Kelly C.B. said of *audi alteram partem*²⁸: "This rule is not confined to the conduct of strictly legal tribunals, but is applicable to every tribunal or body of persons invested with authority to adjudicate upon matters involving civil consequences to individuals." This was expressly approved by Lord Macnaghten giving the judgment of the Board in *Lapointe v. L'Association de Bienfaisance et de Retraite de la Police de Montréal*.²⁹ In that case the board of directors of the association had to decide whether to give a pension to a dismissed constable—the very point the watch committee had to decide in this case—and it was held³⁰ that they had to observe "the elementary principles of justice."

Then there are the club cases, *Fisher v. Keane*³¹ and *Dawkins*

²³ L.R. 3 App.Cas. 614, 623.

²⁴ [1918] A.C. 557; 34 T.L.R. 325, P.C.

²⁵ [1918] A.C. 557, 560.

²⁶ (1885) 10 App.Cas. 229; 1 T.L.R. 313, H.L.

²⁷ (1874) L.R. 9 Ex. 190.

²⁸ Ibid. 196.

²⁹ [1906] A.C. 535; 22 T.L.R. 768, P.C.

³⁰ [1906] A.C. 535, 539.

³¹ (1878) 11 Ch.D. 353.

v. *Antrobus*.³² In the former, Jessel M.R. said of the committee³³: "They ought not, as I understand it, according to the ordinary rules by which justice should be administered by committees of clubs, or by any other body of persons who decide upon the conduct of others, to blast a man's reputation for ever—perhaps to ruin his prospects for life, without giving him an opportunity of either defending or palliating his conduct." In the latter case it was held that nothing had been done contrary to natural justice. In *Weinberger v. Inglis*³⁴ a member of enemy birth was excluded from the Stock Exchange, and it was held that the committee had heard him before acting. Lord Birkenhead L.C. said³⁵: "... if I took the view that the appellant was condemned upon grounds never brought to his notice, I should not assent to the legality of this course, unless compelled by authority." He said this although the rule under which the committee acted was in the widest possible terms—that the committee should each year re-elect such members as they should deem eligible as members of the Stock Exchange.

I shall not at present advert to the various trade union cases because I am deliberately considering the state of the law before difficulties were introduced by statements in various fairly recent cases. It appears to me that if the present case had arisen thirty or forty years ago the courts would have had no difficulty in deciding this issue in favour of the appellant on the authorities which I have cited. So far as I am aware none of these authorities has ever been disapproved or even doubted. Yet the Court of Appeal have decided this issue against the appellant on more recent authorities which apparently justify that result. How has this come about?

At least three things appear to me to have contributed. In the first place there have been many cases where it has been sought to apply the principles of natural justice to the wider duties imposed on Ministers and other organs of government by modern legislation. For reasons which I shall attempt to state in a moment, it has been held that those principles have a limited application in such cases and those limitations have tended to be reflected in other decisions on matters to which in principle they do not appear to me to apply. Secondly, again for reasons which I shall attempt to state, those principles have been held

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Reid.

³² (1879) 17 Ch.D. 615, C.A.³³ 11 Ch.D. 353, 362-363.³⁴ [1919] A.C. 606; ³⁵ T.L.R. 399, H.L.³⁵ [1919] A.C. 606, 616.

H. L. (E.)
1963
RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.
Lord Reid.

to have a limited application in cases arising out of war-time legislation; and again such limitations have tended to be reflected in other cases. And, thirdly, there has, I think, been a misunderstanding of the judgment of Atkin L.J. in *Rex v. Electricity Commissioners, Ex parte London Electricity Joint Committee Co.*³⁶

In cases of the kind I have been dealing with the Board of Works or the Governor or the club committee was dealing with a single isolated case. It was not deciding, like a judge in a law-suit, what were the rights of the person before it. But it was deciding how he should be treated—something analogous to a judge's duty in imposing a penalty. No doubt policy would play some part in the decision—but so it might when a judge is imposing a sentence. So it was easy to say that such a body is performing a quasi-judicial task in considering and deciding such a matter, and to require it to observe the essentials of all proceedings of a judicial character—the principles of natural justice.

Sometimes the functions of a minister or department may also be of that character, and then the rules of natural justice can apply in much the same way. But more often their functions are of a very different character. If a minister is considering whether to make a scheme for, say, an important new road, his primary concern will not be with the damage which its construction will do to the rights of individual owners of land. He will have to consider all manner of questions of public interest and, it may be, a number of alternative schemes. He cannot be prevented from attaching more importance to the fulfilment of his policy than to the fate of individual objectors, and it would be quite wrong for the courts to say that the minister should or could act in the same kind of way as a board of works deciding whether a house should be pulled down. And there is another important difference. As explained in *Local Government Board v. Arlidge*³⁷ a minister cannot do everything himself. His officers will have to gather and sift all the facts, including objections by individuals, and no individual can complain if the ordinary accepted methods of carrying on public business do not give him as good protection as would be given by the principles of natural justice in a different kind of case.

We do not have a developed system of administrative law—perhaps because until fairly recently we did not need it. So it is

³⁶ [1924] 1 K.B. 171; 39 T.L.R. 715, C.A.

³⁷ [1915] A.C. 120; 30 T.L.R. 672, H.L.

not surprising that in dealing with new types of cases the courts have had to grope for solutions, and have found that old powers, rules and procedure are largely inapplicable to cases which they were never designed or intended to deal with. But I see nothing in that to justify our thinking that our old methods are any less applicable today than ever they were to the older types of case. And if there are any dicta in modern authorities which point in that direction, then, in my judgment, they should not be followed.

And now I must say something regarding war-time legislation. The older authorities clearly show how the courts engrafted the principles of natural justice on to a host of provisions authorising administrative interference with private rights. Parliament knew quite well that the courts had an inveterate habit of doing that and must therefore be held to have authorised them to do it unless a particular Act showed a contrary intention. And such an intention could appear as a reasonable inference as well as from express words. It seems to me to be a reasonable and almost an inevitable inference from the circumstances in which Defence Regulations were made and from their subject-matter that, at least in many cases, the intention must have been to exclude the principles of natural justice. War-time secrecy alone would often require that, and the need for speed and general pressure of work were other factors. But it was not to be expected that anyone would state in so many words that a temporary abandonment of the rules of natural justice was one of the sacrifices which war conditions required—that would have been almost calculated to create the alarm and despondency against which one of the regulations was specifically directed. And I would draw the same conclusion from another fact. In many regulations there was set out an alternative safeguard more practicable in war time—the objective test that the officer must have reasonable cause to believe whatever was the crucial matter. (I leave out of account the very peculiar decision of this House in *Liversidge v. Anderson*.³⁸) So I would not think that any decision that the rules of natural justice were excluded from war-time legislation should be regarded as of any great weight in dealing with a case such as this case, which is of the older type, and which involves the interpretation of an Act passed long before modern modifications of the principles of natural justice became necessary, and at a time when, as Parliament was well aware,

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Reid.

³⁸ [1942] A.C. 206; 58 T.L.R. 35; [1941] 3 All E.R. 338, H.L.

H. L. (E.) 1963 the courts habitually applied the principles of natural justice to provisions like section 191 (4) of the Act of 1882.

RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.
—
Lord Reid.

The matter has been further complicated by what I believe to be a misunderstanding of a much-quoted passage in the judgment of Atkin L.J. in *Rex v. Electricity Commissioners, Ex parte London Electricity Joint Committee Co.*³⁹ He said: “. . . the “ operation of the writs [of prohibition and certiorari] has extended “ to control the proceedings of bodies which do not claim to be, “ and would not be recognised as, courts of justice. Wherever “ any body of persons having legal authority to determine “ questions affecting the rights of subjects, and having the duty “ to act judicially, act in excess of their legal authority, they “ are subject to the controlling jurisdiction of the King’s Bench “ Division exercised in these writs.”

A gloss was put on this by Lord Hewart C.J. in *Rex v. Legislative Committee of the Church Assembly, Ex parte Haynes-Smith*.⁴⁰ There it was sought to prohibit the Assembly from proceeding further with the Prayer Book Measure, 1927. That seems to me to have no resemblance to a question whether a person should be deprived of his rights or privileges, and the case was decided on the ground that this was a deliberative or legislative body and not a judicial body. Salter J. put it in a few lines⁴¹: “ The person or body to whom these writs are to go must be “ a judicial body in this sense, that it has power to determine “ and to decide; and the power carries with it, of necessity, “ the duty to act judicially. I think that the Church Assembly “ has no such power, and therefore no such duty.” But Lord Hewart said,⁴² having quoted the passage from Atkin L.J.’s judgment: “ The question, therefore, which we have to ask ourselves in this case is whether it is true to say in this matter, “ either of the Church Assembly as a whole, or of the Legislative Committee of the Church Assembly, that it is a body “ of persons having legal authority to determine questions “ affecting the rights of subjects, and having the duty to act “ judicially. It is to be observed that in the last sentence which “ I have quoted from the judgment of Atkin L.J. the word is not “ ‘ or,’ but ‘ and.’ In order that a body may satisfy the required “ test it is not enough that it should have legal authority to “ determine questions affecting the rights of subjects; there must “ be superadded to that characteristic the further characteristic

³⁹ [1924] 1 K.B. 171, 205; 39 T.L.R. 715.

⁴⁰ [1928] 1 K.B. 411; 44 T.L.R. 68.

⁴¹ [1928] 1 K.B. 411, 419.

⁴² Ibid. 415.

“ that the body has the duty to act judicially. The duty to act judicially is an ingredient which, if the test is to be satisfied, must be present. As these writs in the earlier days were issued only to bodies which without any harshness of construction could be called, and naturally would be called courts, so also today these writs do not issue except to bodies which act or are under the duty to act in a judicial capacity.”

I have quoted the whole of this passage because it is typical of what has been said in several subsequent cases. If Lord Hewart meant that it is never enough that a body simply has a duty to determine what the rights of an individual should be, but that there must always be something more to impose on it a duty to act judicially before it can be found to observe the principles of natural justice, then that appears to me impossible to reconcile with the earlier authorities. I could not reconcile it with what Lord Denman C.J. said in *Reg. v. Smith*⁴³ or what Lord Campbell C.J. said in *Ex parte Ramshay*,⁴⁴ or what Lord Hatherley L.C. said in *Osgood v. Nelson*,⁴⁵ or what was decided in *Cooper v. Wandsworth Board of Works*⁴⁶ or *Hopkins v. Smethwick Local Board*,⁴⁷ or what Lord Parmoor said in *De Verteuil v. Knaggs*,⁴⁸ or what Kelly C.B. said, with the subsequent approval of Lord Macnaghten, in *Wood v. Woad*,⁴⁹ or what Jessel M.R. said in *Fisher v. Keane*,⁵⁰ or what Lord Birkenhead L.C. said in *Weinberger v. Inglis*,⁵¹ and that is only a selection of the earlier authorities. And, as I shall try to show, it cannot be what Atkin L.J. meant.

In *Rex v. Electricity Commissioners, Ex parte London Electricity Joint Committee Co.*⁵² the commissioners had a statutory duty to make schemes with regard to electricity districts and to hold local inquiries before making them. They made a draft scheme which in effect allocated duties to one body which the Act required should be allocated to a different kind of body. This was held to be ultra vires, and the question was whether prohibition would lie. It was argued that the proceedings of the commissioners were purely executive and controllable by Parliament alone. Bankes L.J. said⁵³: “ On principle and on authority it is in my opinion open to this court to hold, and I consider that it should hold, that powers so far-reaching,

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Reid.

⁴³ 5 Q.B. 615.⁴⁴ 18 Q.B. 173.⁴⁵ L.R. 5 H.L. 636.⁴⁶ 14 C.B.N.S. 180.⁴⁷ 24 Q.B.D. 712.⁴⁸ [1918] A.C. 557.⁴⁹ L.R. 9 Ex. 190.⁵⁰ 11 Ch.D. 353.⁵¹ [1919] A.C. 606.⁵² [1924] 1 K.B. 171.⁵³ Ibid. 198.

H. L. (E.) “affecting as they do individuals as well as property, are powers
 1963 “to be exercised judicially, and not ministerially or merely, to
 RIDGE “use the language of *Palles C.B.*, as proceedings towards legis-
 v. “lation.” So he inferred the judicial element from the nature
 BALDWIN. of the power. And I think that *Atkin L.J.* did the same.
 Lord Reid. Immediately after the passage which I said has been misunder-
 stood, he cited a variety of cases and in most of them I can see
 nothing “superadded” (to use Lord *Hewart’s* word) to the duty
 itself. Certainly *Atkin L.J.* did not say that anything was
 superadded. And a later passage in his judgment convinces me
 that he, like *Banks L.J.*, inferred the judicial character of the
 duty from the nature of the duty itself. Although it is long I am
 afraid I must quote it⁵⁴: “In the present case the Electricity
 “Commissioners have to decide whether they will constitute a
 “joint authority in a district in accordance with law, and with
 “what powers they will invest that body. The question neces-
 “sarily involves the withdrawal from existing bodies of under-
 “takers of some of their existing rights, and imposing upon them
 “of new duties, including their subjection to the control of the
 “new body, and new financial obligations. It also provides in
 “the new body a person to whom may be transferred rights of
 “purchase which at present are vested in another authority. The
 “commissioners are proposing to create such a new body in
 “violation of the Act of Parliament, and are proposing to hold a
 “possibly long and expensive inquiry into the expediency of such
 “a scheme, in respect of which they have the power to compel
 “representatives of the prosecutors to attend and produce papers.
 “I think that in deciding upon the scheme, and in holding the
 “inquiry, they are acting judicially in the sense of the authorities
 “I have cited.”

There is not a word in *Atkin L.J.’s* judgment to suggest dis-
 approval of the earlier line of authority which I have cited. On
 the contrary, he goes further than those authorities. I have
 already stated my view that it is more difficult for the courts to
 control an exercise of power on a large scale where the treatment
 to be meted out to a particular individual is only one of many
 matters to be considered. This was a case of that kind, and, if
Atkin L.J. was prepared to infer a judicial element from the
 nature of the power in this case, he could hardly disapprove such
 an inference when the power relates solely to the treatment of a
 particular individual.

⁵⁴ [1924] 1 K.B. 171, 206-207.

The authority chiefly relied on by the Court of Appeal in holding that the watch committee were not bound to observe the principles of natural justice was *Nakkuda Ali v. Jayaratne*.⁵⁵ In that case the Controller of Textiles in Ceylon made an order cancelling the appellant's licence to act as a dealer, and the appellant sought to have that order quashed. The controller acted under a Defence Regulation which empowered him to cancel a licence "where the controller has reasonable grounds to believe that any dealer is unfit to be allowed to continue as a dealer."

The Privy Council regarded that⁵⁶ as "imposing a condition that there must in fact exist such reasonable grounds, known to the controller, before he can validly exercise the power of cancellation." But according to their judgment certiorari did not lie, and no other means was suggested whereby the appellant or anyone else in his position could obtain redress even if the controller acted without a shred of evidence. It is quite true that the judgment went on, admittedly unnecessarily, to find that the controller had reasonable grounds and did observe the principles of natural justice, but the result would have been just the same if he had not. This House is not bound by decisions of the Privy Council, and for my own part nothing short of a decision of this House directly in point would induce me to accept the position that, although an enactment expressly requires an official to have reasonable grounds for his decision, our law is so defective that a subject cannot bring up such a decision for review however seriously he may be affected and however obvious it may be that the official acted in breach of his statutory obligation.

The judgment proceeds⁵⁶: "But it does not seem to follow necessarily from this that the controller must be acting judicially in exercising the power. Can one not act reasonably without acting judicially? It is not difficult to think of circumstances in which the controller might, in any ordinary sense of the words, have reasonable grounds of belief without having ever confronted the licence holder with the information which is the source of his belief. It is a long step in the argument to say that because a man is enjoined that he must not take action unless he has reasonable ground for believing something he can only arrive at that belief by a course of conduct analogous to the judicial process. And yet, unless that proposition is valid,

H. L. (E.)

1963

 RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.

 Lord Reid.

⁵⁵ [1951] A.C. 66; 66 T.L.R. (Pt. 2) 214, P.C.

⁵⁶ [1951] A.C. 66, 77, P.C.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Reid.

“ there is really no ground for holding that the controller is acting
 “ judicially or quasi-judicially when he acts under this regulation.
 “ If he is not under a duty so to act then it would not be
 “ according to law that his decision should be amenable to review
 “ and, if necessary, to avoidance by the procedure of certiorari.”

I would agree that in this and other Defence Regulation cases the legislature has substituted an obligation not to act without reasonable grounds for the ordinary obligation to afford to the person affected an opportunity to submit his defence. It is not necessary in this case to consider whether by so doing he has deprived the courts of the power to intervene if the officer acts contrary to his duty. The question in the present case is not whether Parliament substituted a different safeguard for that afforded by natural justice, but whether in the Act of 1882 it excluded the safeguard of natural justice and put nothing in its place.

So far there is nothing in the judgment of the Privy Council directly relevant to the present case. It is the next paragraph which causes the difficulty and I must quote the crucial passage⁵⁷:
 “ But the basis of the jurisdiction of the courts by way of
 “ certiorari has been so exhaustively analysed in recent years
 “ that individual instances are now only of importance as
 “ illustrating a general principle that is beyond dispute. That
 “ principle is most precisely stated in the words of Atkin L.J.
 “ in *Rex v. Electricity Commissioners, Ex parte London Elec-*
 “ *tricity Joint Committee Co.*⁵⁸ ”—and then follows the passage with which I have already dealt at length. And then there follows the quotation from Lord Hewart, which I have already commented on, ending with the words—“ there must be superadded to that
 “ characteristic the further characteristic that the body has the
 “ duty to act judicially.” And then it is pointed out⁵⁹: “ It is
 “ that characteristic that the controller lacks in acting under
 “ regulation 62.”

Of course, if it were right to say that Lord Hewart's gloss on Atkin L.J. stated “ a general principle that is beyond dispute,” the rest would follow. But I have given my reasons for holding that it does no such thing, and in my judgment the older cases certainly do not “ illustrate ” any such general principle—they contradict it. No case older than 1911 was cited in *Nakkuda's* case⁶⁰ on this question, and this question was only one of several difficult questions which were argued and decided. So I am

⁵⁷ [1951] A.C. 66, 78.⁵⁹ [1951] A.C. 66, 78.⁵⁸ [1924] 1 K.B. 171, 205.⁶⁰ [1951] A.C. 66.

forced to the conclusion that this part of the judgment in *Nakkuda's* case⁶⁰ was given under a serious misapprehension of the effect of the older authorities and therefore cannot be regarded as authoritative.

I would sum up my opinion in this way. Between 1882 and the making of police regulations in 1920 section 191 (4) had to be applied to every kind of case. The respondents' contention is that, even where there was a doubtful question whether a constable was guilty of a particular act of misconduct, the watch committee were under no obligation to hear his defence before dismissing him. In my judgment it is abundantly clear from the authorities I have quoted that at that time the courts would have rejected any such contention. In later cases dealing with different subject-matter, opinions have been expressed in wide terms so as to appear to conflict with those earlier authorities. But learned judges who expressed those opinions generally had no power to overrule those authorities, and in any event it is a salutary rule that a judge is not to be assumed to have intended to overrule or disapprove of an authority which has not been cited to him and which he does not even mention. So I would hold that the power of dismissal in the Act of 1882 could not then have been exercised and cannot now be exercised until the watch committee have informed the constable of the grounds on which they propose to proceed and have given him a proper opportunity to present his case in defence.

Next comes the question whether the respondents' failure to follow the rules of natural justice on March 7 was made good by the meeting on March 18. I do not doubt that if an officer or body realises that it has acted hastily and reconsiders the whole matter afresh, after affording to the person affected a proper opportunity to present his case, then its later decision will be valid. An example is *De Verteuil's* case.⁶¹ But here the appellant's solicitor was not fully informed of the charges against the appellant and the watch committee did not annul the decision which they had already published and proceed to make a new decision. In my judgment, what was done on that day was a very inadequate substitute for a full rehearing. Even so, three members of the committee changed their minds, and it is impossible to say what the decision of the committee would have been if there had been a full hearing after disclosure to the appellant of the whole case against him. I agree with those of

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Reid.

⁶⁰ [1951] A.C. 66.⁶¹ [1918] A.C. 557.

H. L. (E.) your Lordships who hold that this meeting of March 18 cannot
1963 affect the result of this appeal.

RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.
Lord Reid.

The other ground on which some of your Lordships prefer to to proceed is the respondents' failure to act in accordance with the Police Regulations. I have had an opportunity of reading the speech about to be delivered by my noble and learned friend, Lord Morris of Borth-y-Gest, and I agree with his views about this. I will only add that the circumstances in which the 1919 Act was passed, and the consequent regulations were made, show that the regulations must have been intended to have a very wide application, and I see nothing unreasonable in applying them to this case. Dismissing a chief constable who has not been convicted of any criminal offence is not a thing to be done lightly. If the whole of the matters against him are disclosed to him and he refuses to admit some or all of them, it seems to me perfectly proper that there should be such an inquiry as the regulations require. In particular, to exclude this case from the ambit of the regulations because the watch committee did not proceed on any report or allegation is a very narrow interpretation of the regulations and it would lead to a strange result. Counsel for the respondents was constrained to admit—he could not reasonably have done otherwise—that if some busybody had formally reported to the watch committee the observations of Donovan J. and required them to deal with these allegations, then the watch committee would have been bound to apply the regulations. But it would be absurd if the substantive rights of the appellant were to depend on whether or not someone happened to have made a formal report or allegation to the watch committee before they proceeded to deal with the case.

Then there was considerable argument whether in the result the watch committee's decision is void or merely voidable. Time and again in the cases I have cited it has been stated that a decision given without regard to the principles of natural justice is void, and that was expressly decided in *Wood v. Woad*.⁶² I see no reason to doubt these authorities. The body with the power to decide cannot lawfully proceed to make a decision until it has afforded to the person affected a proper opportunity to state his case.

Finally, there is the question whether by appealing to the Secretary of State the appellant is in some way prevented from now asserting the nullity of the respondents' decision. A person

⁶² L.R. 9 Ex. 190.

may be prevented from asserting the truth by estoppel, but it is not seriously argued that that doctrine applies here. Then it is said that the appellant elected to go to the Secretary of State and thereby waived his right to come to the court. That appears to me to be an attempt to set up what is in effect estoppel where the essential elements for estoppel are not present. There are many cases where two remedies are open to an aggrieved person, but there is no general rule that by going to some other tribunal he puts it out of his power thereafter to assert his rights in court; and there was no express waiver because in appealing to the Secretary of State the appellant reserved his right to maintain that the decision was a nullity.

But then it was argued that this case is special because by statute the decision of the Secretary of State is made final and binding. I need not consider what the result would have been if the Secretary of State had heard the case for the appellant and then given his own independent decision that the appellant should be dismissed. But the Secretary of State did not do that. He merely decided "that there was sufficient material on which the watch committee could properly exercise their power of dismissal under section 191 (4)." So the only operative decision is that of the watch committee, and, if it was a nullity, I do not see how this statement by the Secretary of State can make it valid.

Accordingly, in my judgment, this appeal must be allowed. There appears to have been no discussion in the courts below as to remedies which may now be open to the appellant, and I do not think that this House should do more than declare that the dismissal of the appellant is null and void and remit the case to the Queen's Bench Division for further procedure. But it is right to put on record that the appellant does not seek to be reinstated as chief constable: his whole concern is to avoid the serious financial consequences involved in dismissal as against being required or allowed to resign.

LORD EVERSHERD. My Lords, upon the difficult problem presented by this appeal I regret to find myself differing from your Lordships; but I have felt myself constrained to agree with the conclusions reached by Streetfeild J. at the trial and by all the members of the Court of Appeal.

It will be logical for me to deal first with the question whether the watch committee of the Brighton Corporation were bound to observe the requirements of what I will compendiously call

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Reid.

H. L. (E.) 1963
 RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.
 Lord Evershed.

the Police (Discipline) Regulations of 1952 before purporting to exercise, as regards the appellant, the jurisdiction now admittedly vested in them by section 191 (4) of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882; for if they were so bound, then, in the absence of such observance, it may be said—and was so contended on the appellant's part—that the watch committee had in truth no jurisdiction to reach their decision for the appellant's dismissal. By "the Police (Discipline) Regulations of 1952" I refer compendiously to the two Statutory Instruments, namely, (1) the Police (Discipline) Regulations, 1952 (S.I. 1952 No. 1705) and (2) the Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables, Assistant Chief Constables and Chief Constables) Regulations, 1952 (S.I. 1952 No. 1706), as respectively amended by the two Regulations, S.I. Nos. 1687 and 1688 of 1954, being regulations of the same respective titles as those of 1952 already mentioned. The two Instruments of 1952 were both made on September 17, 1952, and came into operation on October 1, 1952. Similarly the two amending Instruments of 1954 were both made on December 17, 1954, and came into operation on January 1, 1955. The several Instruments clearly form together a single code. I shall have to make some references to them hereafter and I shall then refer to them respectively as "Statutory Instrument 1705" and "Statutory Instrument 1706," the references being in each case intended to comprehend the amendments made in 1954.

I have been unable to accept the argument that every case of indiscipline or of incapacity of any police officer, whether a chief constable or any other member of a police force (save only cases of incapacity arising from mental or physical illness), falls or was intended to fall within the scope of the regulations. For my part, I accept the view propounded by Mr. Faulks which appealed to the learned judge at the trial, that "discreditable conduct" and "neglect of duty," which constitute the first and fourth headings in the Discipline Code set out in Schedule I to Statutory Instrument 1705, should be construed as limited to the kinds of conduct specified in those headings, each of which, be it observed, begins with the words "that is to say." In the present case the substance and gravamen of the appellant's incapacity as chief constable, upon which the watch committee proceeded to act, was that expressed by Donovan J. after presiding at a trial, lasting 19 days, of the appellant and others charged with conspiring to obstruct the course of public justice, namely, that the appellant had not, in that learned and experienced judge's view, the "professional" or

"moral" qualities requisite for one holding the office of chief constable. Although, therefore, the appellant was himself acquitted of the charge, the learned judge thought it right to treat the appellant's limitations which he had expressed as justifying remission of the sentences appropriate to be passed upon his two subordinate officers whom the jury had convicted. As I understand the language of Donovan J. (and as, I doubt not, the watch committee also understood it) the appellant had been shown not to possess a sense of probity or of responsibility sufficient for the office which he held, and so had been unable to provide the essential leadership and example to the police force under his control which his office properly required.

The first of the relevant headings in the Discipline Code, "*Discreditable conduct*" is thus defined: "... that is to say, "if a member of a police force acts in a disorderly manner or "any manner prejudicial to discipline or reasonably likely to "bring discredit on the reputation of the force or of the police "service." I will not take time by reciting the more detailed expansion of the second heading "*Neglect of duty*," but I cannot (as could not the learned judge in the first court) hold that the shortcomings of the appellant as chief constable, described by Donovan J., fall within either of the respective headings as expanded by their definitions. I add only that the two headings in question, being part of the code specified in Statutory Instrument 1705, should be construed with regard to the fact that they were originally intended to apply to members of a police force of lower rank than chief constables or deputy or assistant chief constables, though it is true to say that by Statutory Instrument 1706 they were made applicable also to chief constables and deputy and assistant chief constables.

My Lords, it follows, in my opinion, that the watch committee were entitled to exercise their residual powers under section 191 (4) of the Act of 1882 without observance of the Police (Discipline) Regulations. I do not forget the terms of paragraph (1) (f) of the watch committee's resolution of March 7, 1958. It is said that the subject-matter of this paragraph was that mentioned in paragraph (c) of the watch committee's answer to the appellant's appeal to the Secretary of State, namely, the suggestion that the appellant had given false evidence at the trial before Donovan J.; and that such a charge was in terms within paragraph (b) of the heading numbered 5 in the Discipline Code, namely, "*Falsehood or prevarication*, that is to say, if a

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Evershed.

H. L. (E.) 1963
 RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.
 Lord Evershed.

"member of a police force . . . (b) wilfully . . . makes any "false . . . statement." But, assuming the premise, it is nevertheless, in my opinion, still clear that the reference was but to an incident in the trial upon the conclusion of which the watch committee were manifestly founding themselves; and must have been so understood. I cannot think that such an incidental reference can sensibly have the startling result of making the watch committee's jurisdiction dependent upon a strict application of the Police (Discipline) Regulations. It follows, if I am right in thinking that the case against the appellant did not fall under any of the provisions of the Discipline Code, that it was not brought within the regulations by clause 11 of Statutory Instrument 1706.

I also find myself in agreement with all the learned judges below in thinking that, in any event, this was not a case of there having been a "report or allegation" to the watch committee as contemplated by the regulations. I have, for my part, been unable to accept Mr. Ackner's argument that any deliberation by the watch committee necessarily supposes the presence of a "report or allegation" by someone. I do not attempt any definition of the phrase; but, in my opinion, the context of the regulations suggests necessarily something in the nature of an accusation as distinct from a conclusion reached after proper inquiry; and cannot sensibly be said to include a judicial conclusion after the protracted investigation of a trial. If this view be wrong, I would ask your Lordships to observe the consequences. If Mr. Ackner's submission be accepted, it must follow (as Mr. Ackner indeed conceded) that the regulations were or would be equally applicable to any disciplinary action taken by the watch committee in regard to Detective Sergeant Heath and Detective Inspector Hammersley, each found guilty at the trial and sentenced to terms of imprisonment. If the argument submitted be correct, it must follow that the watch committee's duty must be or have been (notwithstanding the conclusion of their trial) to refer the cases of these two officers to an "investigating officer," under Statutory Instrument 1705, who would report to the chief constable, the officers having a right of appeal from the chief constable to the watch committee. (See regulations 2, 3, 8 and 16.) And so, on this view, it was the watch committee's duty, as regards the appellant, under Statutory Instrument 1706 first to instruct a solicitor to formulate the case against him; and then to appoint a tribunal (which might consist of five members of the watch committee itself) whose duty

it would be to report to the watch committee. My Lords, I cannot think it right to accept an argument involving results which appear to me so manifestly absurd. In the present case the conduct of the appellant had been the subject of a public trial lasting 19 days; and if the observations of Donovan J. can sensibly be called a "report" at all they were equivalent to the "report" of the investigating tribunal to the watch committee contemplated by Statutory Instrument 1706. In this respect the situation after the conclusion of the trial was to my mind wholly different from that at the time when Mr. Ridge was first charged and when, therefore, as it seems to me, the watch committee rightly felt itself bound to act in accordance with the regulations in ordering Mr. Ridge's suspension. My Lords, any other view, in my opinion, makes the regulations gravely offend against common sense. I agree, therefore, with the view of the Court of Appeal—and particularly with that of Holroyd Pearce L.J.—that this was a special and entirely exceptional case outside the scope of the regulations, and, as a matter of public notoriety, requiring instant action by the watch committee. The extent of the public notoriety can fairly be gauged from the letter written by the appellant's solicitor explaining the remarkable request for his client's reinstatement as chief constable by reference to the telephone calls and offers of rewards by newspapers to which he had been incessantly subjected.

I turn accordingly to what have appeared to me to be the most difficult questions raised in this appeal; that is to say, first, whether the exercise of the statutory jurisdiction by the watch committee, which, in my opinion, was vested in them without regard to the regulations, required the observance by the watch committee of what are called the principles of natural justice; and, second, if so, whether on the facts of this case such principles were in fact observed.

It has been said many times that the exact requirements in any case of the so-called principles of natural justice cannot be precisely defined; that they depend in each case upon the circumstances of that case. According to Sir Frederick Pollock, the meaning of the phrase "natural justice" is "the ultimate principle of fitness with regard to the nature of man as a rational and social being"; and he went on to point out that the origin of the principles could be traced to Aristotle and the Roman jurists. ("Jurisprudence and Legal Essays" (1961), p. 124.) Your Lordships were, therefore, not unnaturally referred to a great many cases, but, as I believe that your Lordships

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Evershed.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Evershed.

agree, it is by no means easy to treat these decisions as entirely uniform and still less easy to be able to extract from them the means of propounding a precise statement of the circumstances or of the cases in which the principles can be invoked before the courts. I am, however, content to assume that the invocation should not be limited to cases where the body concerned, whether a domestic committee or some body established by a statute, is one which is exercising judicial or quasi-judicial functions strictly so called; but that such invocation may also be had in cases where the body concerned can properly be described as administrative—so long as it can be said, in Sir Frederick Pollock's language, that the invocation is required in order to conform to the ultimate principle of fitness with regard to the nature of man as a rational and social being.

On the other hand, it is (as I venture to think) no less plain now that Parliament may by appropriate language in a statute make it clear that the activity or discretion of the body constituted by the statute is not to be subject to any control or interference by the courts.

At this stage I venture to make two points. First, since there is no question here of bias or any suggestion that the watch committee acted otherwise than entirely in good faith, the only principle of natural justice here involved is that enshrined in the Latin phrase "*audi alteram partem*." Second, I for my part conclude that if the principles of natural justice can properly be invoked in this case and if it should be held that such principles were not observed, then the decision of the watch committee was not void but voidable only.

Upon this second question (whether the decision afterwards impugned can be said to be void or voidable only) the cases provide, as I think, no certain answer; nor have I found one in the textbooks. Indeed, in the vast majority of circumstances, it does not in the end matter whether the decision challenged is void or only voidable; for if the court does decide to quash a decision or otherwise set it aside, then the effect is in general the same whether such decision be considered as void or only voidable. For my part, however, I have come to the conclusion that in a case where a body is acting within its jurisdiction but of which the court will say that it has failed properly to act in accordance with the principles of natural justice, then the decision is only voidable and cannot properly be described as a nullity.

Though I am in this respect anticipating what later follows,

I refer first to the extremely wide and general terms of section 191 (4) of the Act of 1882: "... the watch committee . . . may at any time dismiss any borough constable whom they think negligent in the discharge of his duty, or otherwise unfit for the same." My Lords, in my opinion it is impossible to accept the suggestion put forward on the appellant's part that the final words of the subsection, "otherwise unfit for the same," must be regarded as ejusdem generis with what has gone before; that is to say, that they are intended only to refer to some kind of negligence. I know of no authority in a case of this kind, where the jurisdiction of the body in question is expressed in two alternatives, for supposing that the second of the alternatives does not mean what it says but is somehow limited by the terms of the first alternative. Put in other words, where, may I ask, is the genus to be found of which the second part of the alternative is said to be but a part? As I interpret the language used, the second part of the power conferred is, as the language inevitably imports, intended to cover the case of someone who is regarded as unfit for his position for reasons other than negligence.

I observe again that there is, as I think, no question here of the watch committee's jurisdiction. If I had taken a different view on the first question, namely, whether the exercise of the jurisdiction had to be subject to compliance with the regulations, then my answer might have been different. Upon that assumption it is unnecessary for me to express any concluded opinion and I do not do so. But, if I am right in thinking that there was here no question of compliance with the regulations, the only question for your Lordships is whether, admitting the jurisdiction of the watch committee, it was properly exercised having regard to any application of the principles of natural justice to which the exercise of the jurisdiction was subject. I observe further that the plaintiff in his action seeks a declaration. There was some discussion before your Lordships concerning the office of a declaration as contrasted with that of an order for certiorari. In my judgment, it must be accepted as tolerably clear that (subject to what follows) the granting of a declaration in a case of this kind must *prima facie* be discretionary: and if that is so it must equally follow that the question whether the decision of the watch committee is such that the court can quash it or otherwise interfere with it involves the conclusion that such decision was voidable and not void. If the decision was a complete nullity (for example, on the ground that the watch committee never had

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Evershed.

H. L. (E.)
 1963

 RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.

 Lord Evershed.

any jurisdiction), then no doubt it would follow that the court would have to say so in some form or other. But this is not, in my judgment, such a case. My Lords, I have in mind upon this matter decisions such as that of the Privy Council in the recent case of *Annamunthodo v. Oilfields Workers' Trade Union*,⁶³ where the plaintiff had been expelled from the union and the Board thought that the expulsion was wholly invalid. In fact, however, in that case the plaintiff had been charged under one rule but was later expelled under another. It is also to be noted that the case was dealing, not with powers conferred by Act of Parliament, but with a domestic tribunal; the point submitted (but rejected) was that the appeal which the plaintiff had taken under the rules of the union constituted an affirmance of the jurisdiction of the council which had dismissed him. I have also in mind the case of *Wood v. Woad*.⁶⁴ My noble friend, Lord Reid, has stated in his opinion that in this case the Court of Exchequer expressly decided that a decision by a body acting in a quasi-judicial capacity which failed to have due regard to the principle of natural justice, *audi alteram partem*, is void and not merely voidable. With all respect to my noble friend, I am unable to agree with this conclusion.

My Lords, it is, I think, necessary to have in mind what was the nature of the plaintiff's claim in *Wood v. Woad*.⁶⁴ The plaintiff alleged that he had been a member of a mutual marine insurance association and, as such member, having paid to the treasurer the appropriate deposit, had therefore been entitled to recover from the association the amount of loss incurred by him in respect of a particular ship; that in the committee of the association was vested by its rules the whole power of the management of its affairs and also the power, if they deemed the conduct of any member to be suspicious or that he was for any other reason unworthy of remaining in the association, to exclude such member by appropriate notice from further participation in it; but that the committee had "wrongfully, collusively and improperly" expelled the plaintiff from the association without any just reason or probable cause; so that the plaintiff had been deprived of his right to the sum of money in respect of the damage done to his ship and that he was accordingly entitled to recover as damages from the members of the committee the amount of such loss.

⁶³ [1961] A.C. 945; [1961] 3 W.L.R. 650; [1961] 3 All E.R. 621, P.C.

⁶⁴ L.R. 9 Ex. 190.

This being the nature of the claim, the court decided upon demurrer that the plaintiff could have, upon his allegations, no cause of action for damages at law against the members of the committee. I emphasise the important fact that the claim formulated was for damages at law against the members of the committee (not all of whom in fact were or need have been members of the association).

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Evershed.

It is clear from the headnote to the case that the learned Barons of the Court of Exchequer did not arrive for entirely the same reasons at the conclusion that the plaintiff could not succeed in his action. It is true that certain language in the judgment of Kelly C.B. appears to support the view that in his opinion the committee's failure to give to the plaintiff any opportunity of answering the charge made by the committee against him rendered the committee's decision "void and a nullity." See, for example, the Chief Baron's citation of the decision in *Blisset v. Daniel*.⁶⁵ But if so, it was, in my judgment, because, in the view of the Chief Baron,⁶⁶ there was "enough on this record to "show a collusive and unlawful exercise of power on the part of "the committee"—in other words, not a true exercise of the power at all or, at best, an exercise of the power of the exceptional kind to which I later refer in the case of *Osgood v. Nelson*.⁶⁷ It is essential to have in mind the nature of the plaintiff's claim as formulated by him which the Court of Exchequer rejected. On the one hand (as Kelly C.B. pointed out⁶⁸) if the discretion of the committee was absolute and if the committee in fact exercised their power under the rules, the plaintiff could not question it. On the other hand, if, as the plaintiff in his declaration alleged, the committee's act was collusive and unlawful and therefore ineffective, then the plaintiff remained a member of the association and (whatever might be his rights or remedies in a court of equity) he therefore could have no claim for damages in law against the committee. "The claim in this action is for "damages sustained by reason of the expulsion of the plaintiff "from the association; but in law the plaintiff has sustained no "damage at all, for whatever rights he may have possessed before "he possesses still, as if no act had been done calculated "to deprive him of them."⁶⁹ Cleasby B. put his conclusion on somewhat different grounds⁷⁰: "Now, we may suppose either

⁶⁵ (1853) 10 Hare 493.⁶⁶ L.R. 9 Ex. 190, 198.⁶⁷ L.R. 5 H.L. 636.⁶⁸ L.R. 9 Ex. 190, 196.⁶⁹ Ibid. 198.⁷⁰ Ibid. 199-200.

H. L. (E.) 1963
 RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.
 Lord Evershed.

“ that the committee expelled the plaintiff without just cause and
 “ without giving him notice, or that they expelled him without
 “ just cause but did give him notice; and the declaration is
 “ framed so as to comprehend in the breach both modes of wrong-
 “ ful expulsion.” After pointing out that by the rules the
 committee had absolute discretion, the learned Baron concluded
 his judgment by saying that, the allegation not having made
 fraud the basis of the claim, the declaration sought could not be
 sustained. Pollock B.’s judgment was to the same effect—par-
 ticularly in respect of the absence of any claim based in terms
 of fraud. The learned Baron went on to observe that the plain-
 tiff’s declaration having alleged that the committee’s actions were
 a nullity, it was not upon this premise possible for him to formulate
 a cause of action at law against the committee members. Finally,
 Amphlett B. posed the matter thus⁷¹: “ Now, according
 “ to the allegations in the declaration, the defendants never gave
 “ the plaintiff that opportunity, and I cannot entertain a doubt
 “ that if this allegation were proved, the plaintiff would, by filing
 “ a bill in a court of equity, be restored to the enjoyment of his
 “ rights. But if so, what is his damage? He has not ceased
 “ to be a member of the society; he has not lost the rights of a
 “ member. He is to recover damages for what? For an
 “ attempt to expel.”

I have attempted at some length to analyse the reasons for
 the judgments of the Court of Exchequer in *Wood v. Wood*.⁷²
 It is, as I have more than once observed, of the essence of the
 matter in that case that the plaintiff was claiming damages per-
 sonally against the members of the committee. In such
 circumstances it is, as I venture to think, clear that the question
 whether the purported exclusion from the association by the com-
 mittee was “ void ” or “ voidable ” was not essential, nor indeed
 material, to his claim made in the action by the plaintiff for
 damages against the members of the committee. Certainly in my
 judgment, it cannot be asserted that the judgments in the case
 cited, or indeed any of them, support or involve the proposition
 that where a body, such as the watch committee in the present
 case, is invested by the express terms of a statute with a power
 of expulsion of any member of the police force and purport in
 good faith to exercise such power, a failure on their part to observe
 the principle of natural justice, *audi alteram partem*, has the

⁷¹ L.R. 9 Ex. 190, 204.

⁷² Ibid. 190.

result that the decision is not merely voidable by the court but is wholly void and a nullity. H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Evershed.

My Lords, I have, for my part, upon this question, derived the greatest assistance from the case of *Osgood v. Nelson*,⁷³ in which Martin B. gave to your Lordships' House the opinion of the judges. The case was concerned with the removal of the Chief Clerk or Registrar of the Sheriffs Court in the City of London. By section 11 of the Act 15 & 16 Vict. c. lxxvii, power had been given to the Mayor, Aldermen and Commons in Common Council assembled for "inability or misbehaviour . . . or for any other cause which may appear reasonable to the Mayor, Aldermen, and Commons to remove" a person in the position of the chief clerk or registrar. It was the unanimous opinion of the judges expressed by Martin B.⁷⁴ that there was no doubt "that the courts of law in this country would take care that any proceeding of this kind should be conducted in a proper manner"—that is by giving to the person whose removal was in question every opportunity of defending himself. "If," continued the learned Baron, "your Lordships were satisfied that there was any real substantial miscarriage of justice, . . . your Lordships would not permit this amotion to remain." Again⁷⁵: "We also think that it is possible, although there is no necessity for giving any judgment upon it, that if a man was removed from an office of this kind from any frivolous or futile cause, . . . you would in all probability be inclined to treat the removal as a nullity." Lord Hatherley L.C., in adopting the view so expressed of the judges, said⁷⁶: ". . . the Court of Queen's Bench has always considered that it has been open to that court, as in this case it appears to have considered, to correct any court, or tribunal, or body of men who may have a power of this description . . . if it should be found that such persons have disregarded any of the essentials of justice."

From these citations I deduce the conclusion that, save in the case where the "tribunal, or body of men" have acted upon "frivolous or futile" grounds (in which case the court may treat not merely the decision but the whole proceeding as a nullity), the power of the court is to "correct" the decision if, in the court's view, there has been "a real substantial miscarriage of justice." In other words, I think that, save in the excepted cases (of which the present cannot be said to be one), the right or

⁷³ L.R. 5 H.L. 636.⁷⁴ Ibid. 646.⁷⁵ Ibid. 647.⁷⁶ Ibid. 649.

H. L. (E.) duty of the court is to correct, that is, to set aside or otherwise
 1963 restrain, the impugned decision if satisfied that there has been
 RIDGE a "real substantial miscarriage of justice"; a view which, if
 v. well-founded, must mean that (save in the excepted cases) the
 BALDWIN. decision is voidable and not void.

Lord Evershed. My Lords, it is perhaps useful and necessary to inquire what
 in truth is meant by saying that a decision such as that of the
 watch committee in the present case is "void" or "a nullity." Is it
 thereby intended that, though the proceedings up to the pronouncement
 of the decision were proper and effective, the decision itself was a
 nullity? Or is it intended that the whole proceedings ab initio were
 irregular and ineffective so that the decision was similarly and of
 necessity also of no effect? My Lords, the latter must in my judgment
 be the true analysis. In the first place, it does not to my mind appear
 correct, or indeed sensible to say that the decision reached was a
 "nullity" although the proceedings leading up to the decision were in
 order. Secondly, I observe, as I have earlier stated, that in cases of
 this kind it is not the function of the court to impugn the decision as
 such—still less to substitute its own—but to examine the steps taken
 in reaching the decision and to decide whether, in the course of those
 steps, there was "a real substantial miscarriage of justice."

In the vast majority of cases it matters not in the result whether
 the decision is said to be void or voidable but avoided. It is sufficient
 for the court to say that the decision cannot stand. In truth, as Sir
 Frederick Pollock pointed out (see Pollock on Contract, 13th ed., p. 48),
 the words "void" and "voidable" are imprecise and apt to mislead.
 And so it is, as I venture to think, that language such as that used
 by Kelly C.B. in *Wood v. Woad*⁷⁷ ought not to be strictly construed—it
 was, indeed, for reasons which I have attempted to give in any case
 obiter having regard to the nature of the claim in that case.

I do not doubt that in some cases the proper conclusion will be
 that the entire proceeding of the body or tribunal in question (including
 therefore its decision) will properly be found to be wholly irregular
 and ineffective from first to last. The obvious case is where the body
 or tribunal is shown to have been acting in excess of its jurisdiction.
 In this category no doubt will fall the class of case mentioned by
 Martin B. in *Osgood v. Nelson*,⁷⁸ where the body concerned has acted
 upon a "frivolous or futile

⁷⁷ L.R. 9 Ex. 190.

⁷⁸ L.R. 5 H.L. 636.

“cause”; for in such case it could truthfully be said that the invocation by the body of its power was a pretence and its proceedings no more than a sham. It may, indeed, well be that Kelly C.B. so regarded the performance of the committee in *Wood v. Wood*⁷⁹ But save in those cases, as I think, upon true analysis the function and duty of the court is to “correct,” that is to say, to set aside or quash the decision where it is shown that there has been some “real substantial miscarriage of justice” in the steps taken by the body or tribunal in question in arriving at its decision in exercise of the powers vested in it.

My Lords, I do not wish unduly to prolong this opinion, but upon this highly important matter it seems to me that useful analogy may be found in the practice of the criminal courts. Thus, the Court of Criminal Appeal in the exercise of its powers under the Criminal Appeal Act, 1907, may quash a conviction and substitute a verdict of acquittal, and may do so where there has at the trial been what is regarded in effect as a failure to observe the principles of natural justice—for example, where the jury has been told that it must return with its verdict in ten minutes, or where the jury was allowed after retirement under the bailiff’s control to depart from the court for luncheon. In these cases it is essential that there should have been an effective trial at least up to the point when the departure from the principles of natural justice occurred; for otherwise the appeal court could not have ordered the prisoner’s acquittal. If in truth the prisoner had never been really tried at all, he would be liable to be tried again for the same offence and the appeal court could have issued a *venire de novo*. The second of the examples above given (that is, where the jury had been allowed to leave the court for luncheon) was involved in the case before the Court of Criminal Appeal of *Rex v. Neal*⁸⁰ and the point with which I am concerned was in terms dealt with by Lord Goddard C.J. I would also refer your Lordships to the judgment of the Privy Council delivered by Lord Sumner in the case of *Rex v. Nat Bell Liquors Ltd.*⁸¹

I only add that, as I apprehend, the same principles apply to an order for certiorari which has been held to be available, but at the direction of the court, by way of declaration and an injunction in cases of decisions by statutory tribunals where

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Evershed.

⁷⁹ L.R. 9 Ex. 190.⁸¹ [1922] 2 A.C. 128, 152, 153; 38⁸⁰ [1949] 2 K.B. 590, 597 et seq.; T.L.R. 541, P.C.

65 T.L.R. 557; [1949] 2 All E.R. 438, C.C.A.

H. L. (E.) 1963
 RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.
 Lord Evershed.

the persons affected would otherwise be without remedy. (See *Barnard v. National Dock Labour Board*,⁸² following *Andrews v. Mitchell*.⁸³) On the other hand, it has also been held that certiorari will not be granted where the proceedings in the inferior tribunal are not merely voidable but altogether void—for example, where the person purporting to act in a judicial capacity had in truth no authority so to do (see *In re Daws* ⁸⁴).

Finally, I venture to pose to your Lordships the question, what would have been the situation had the Secretary of State allowed Mr. Ridge's appeal and held that he should be reinstated as chief constable? Would it have been open to the corporation to refuse to give effect to such decision on the ground that the proceedings or the decision before or by the watch committee had been a nullity?

I return accordingly to the first of the above-mentioned points, namely, the question whether the watch committee in exercising its powers under the relevant section of the Act of 1882 was in the present circumstances bound to give to the appellant an opportunity of putting forward his case and arguments before the committee. I have already said that the terms of the discretion vested in the watch committee by the Act of Parliament have seemed to me to be of the widest. They are, as I think, much wider than the phrase appearing in the case to which I shall later refer of *De Verteuil v. Knaggs*,⁸⁵ where the relevant language was "if it appears to the governor on sufficient grounds shown to his satisfaction." I also think that the language in the 1882 Act was at least as wide as, if not wider than, the relevant language in the case of *Nakkuda Ali v. Jayaratne*,⁸⁶ upon which the Court of Appeal considerably relied, namely, "[where] the controller has reasonable grounds to believe that any dealer is unfit to be allowed to continue as a dealer." I understand that some of your Lordships feel disposed to say that the decision of the Privy Council in that case ought not to be followed. I must respectfully dissent from that view. It seems to me that on the language of the enactment there in question there was in truth conferred upon the governor an unfettered discretion. I am aware that it is sometimes said that a different result may be appropriate where there is in question the grant or withdrawal of a licence as distinct

⁸² [1953] 2 Q.B. 18; [1953] 2 W.L.R. 995; [1953] 1 All E.R. 1113, C.A.

⁸³ [1905] A.C. 78, H.L.

⁸⁴ (1838) 8 A. & E. 936.

⁸⁵ [1918] A.C. 557.

⁸⁶ [1951] A.C. 66.

from the taking away of some right or proprietary interest. There is no doubt force in this argument and it has been supported by our Court of Criminal Appeal in the case of *Reg. v. Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Ex parte Parker*.⁸⁷ At the same time I would observe that though the withdrawal of a licence, which can be described as the removal of a privilege, is in some respects different in character from the taking away of vested rights or proprietary interests, nevertheless the withdrawal of a licence from the person from whom it is withdrawn may in fact mean the destruction of his means of livelihood.

My Lords, if the only question which was here involved was whether the appellant should have ceased in March, 1958, to be chief constable and whether, therefore, the watch committee was entitled without more so to decide, I would, for my part, say that there was in the circumstances no call for the watch committee to observe the so-called rule, *audi alteram partem*. As I have already observed, the appellant had been subjected to a trial lasting 19 days, and it was a result of the evidence in that trial that Donovan J. (as he then was) expressed the view that the appellant was in fact no longer fitted to act as chief constable. It would seem to me, frankly, somewhat absurd that the watch committee should invite the appellant to state his points again after he had put forward a case before the trial judge for so long a period. Moreover, as Holroyd Pearce L.J. (as he then was) pointed out (and as I have earlier noted), there was here a case of extreme urgency. The trial had attracted the greatest possible notoriety, as had also the observations in regard to the appellant of the trial judge. In my judgment the watch committee had a duty—a duty not only to the corporation of which they were the committee but also to the citizens of Brighton—to act and to act at once so as to give effect to what the trial judge had after so long a hearing in effect determined.

But my difficulty in the present case arises over the question of the appellant's pension. For assuming it to be right that the appellant would have to cease to be chief constable—and I add in regard to that matter the not unimportant fact that his learned counsel has not before your Lordships suggested that he should have been retained as chief constable—then there were two ways in which his appointment might be determined. First, he might have been required to resign, in which case,

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Evershed.

⁸⁷ [1953] 1 W.L.R. 1150; [1953] 2 All E.R. 717, D.C.

H. L. (E.) 1963
 RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.
 Lord Evershed.

though he would have had so to resign, he would under the terms of the pension regulations of 1952 have been entitled to receive the pension which by that date had accrued in his favour. The alternative was the appellant's summary dismissal, which was the course adopted; though I do observe that in the watch committee's minute of March 7, 1958, it is recorded that they had paid regard to the length of the appellant's service.

It is undoubtedly a striking fact that the appellant had at the date when he had been suspended from his office of chief constable served some 33½ years and had risen from the rank of police constable through the various intervening ranks to that of chief constable. During this long period of service it does not appear that there had ever been any criticism of his work in the police force. Moreover, in March, 1958, he had attained the age of 58 years and 10 months—in other words, he was within 14 months of the age on which he would have been entitled to retire voluntarily with full pension. In these circumstances, I cannot conceal from myself that (unless the words of the statute deny it) there is shown an obvious case for giving to the appellant an opportunity to put forward his argument for the first of the two alternatives, namely, that he should be required to resign and not be summarily dismissed.

As I have said, I feel very great difficulty on this matter. I do not wish at all to denigrate the principles of natural justice or of their proper invocation in the courts. On the other hand, we have, as I have already many times pointed out, the very wide terms of the Act of Parliament here in question, and the body in which was invested this wide discretion was an entirely responsible body. To insist, as I venture to think, on the invocation of these principles whenever anyone is discharged from some office seems to me to involve a danger of usurpation of power on the part of the courts and under the pretext of having regard to the principles of natural justice to invoke what may often be in truth little more than sentiment; and upon occasions when the courts, though having necessarily far less knowledge of all the relevant circumstances, may be inclined to think that, had the decision rested with them, they would have decided differently from the body in question. Yet I do observe again that it is not the decision as such which is liable to review; it is only the circumstances in which the decision was reached, and particularly in such a case as the present the

need for giving to the party dismissed an opportunity for putting his case. H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Evershed.

I should therefore, for my part, have been inclined to accept the view of the learned Lords Justices in the Court of Appeal. But since, as I understand, your Lordships take a different view, and having read the exhaustive opinion of my noble and learned friend Lord Reid, I will upon this matter express no concluded opinion of my own. I am ready to assume that the appellant should have been given an opportunity at any rate to put his case for being required to resign rather than being summarily dismissed. If this assumption be made, then the second question arises—Was justice done in all the circumstances of this case?

My Lords, having considered the whole matter with the greatest care of which I am capable, I conclude that justice was here done—or, at least, that there was no “real substantial miscarriage of justice.” I have already observed that in their minutes of March 7, 1958, the watch committee (against whose good faith no kind of charge is made) stated that they had paid due regard to the length of the appellant’s service. But at once after the receipt of notice of that resolution the appellant’s solicitor, Mr. Bosley, asked the watch committee to reconsider the matter and to hear observations that might be put forward upon it. In acceding to this request it is, to my mind, plain that the watch committee (and the corporation) thereupon decided that, notwithstanding their resolution of March 7, the matter of the appellant’s dismissal should be held in suspense—and indeed after they had been informed of the appellant’s appeal to the Secretary of State they also clearly decided that the operation of their previous resolution should be suspended pending the result of that appeal.

It is clear that on March 12 the Town Clerk informed the appellant’s solicitor that the watch committee would reconsider their decision with regard to the appellant’s pension and further told him that a meeting would be held on March 18 at which the committee would consider such representations as might then be made by or on behalf of the appellant “either orally or in writing, or both, as may be preferred.”

Thereupon Mr. Bosley sent to the Town Clerk his written observations dated the same day in which in fourteen numbered paragraphs he set out the heads of his client’s complaints; and in paragraph 15 he asked, first, that the appellant should

H. L. (E.) 1963
 RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.
 Lord Evershed.

be allowed to retire on full pension forthwith. Mr. Bosley also sent to the Town Clerk a copy of his notice of appeal to the Secretary of State, a lengthy document in which every kind of complaint made on the appellant's behalf was enumerated, though I would observe that nowhere in that document was any specific claim made that the appellant's case really was that of his being summarily dismissed instead of being requested to resign with the consequent right to receive his pension. As a result there was a further special meeting of the watch committee held on March 18. An extract from the minutes of that meeting was duly sent to Mr. Bosley, and from the minute it is clear that the watch committee had given to Mr. Bosley the fullest opportunity to make such representations as he should think fit; and it also recorded that the committee, having heard all that Mr. Bosley had to say and considered also his written representations and the notice of appeal to the Home Secretary, had decided to adhere to their previous decision; though it is noted that there were three dissentients on this occasion.

My Lords, having regard to all the circumstances, I have formed the view that your Lordships ought not now to say that a sufficient opportunity was not given to the appellant by himself or through his adviser to put before the watch committee such points as he had and in particular to put before the watch committee the request that he should be required to resign rather than be summarily dismissed. I therefore respectfully agree upon this matter with the conclusion of *Streatfeild J.* at the trial of the present proceedings and also with what I understand and believe to have been the view of *Harman L.J.*⁸⁸ (though the language as there recorded does not contain, as I think from a reading it should have contained, a negative). In reaching this conclusion I have derived support from the case of *De Verteuil v. Knaggs*⁸⁹ above referred to. In that case the governor of Trinidad had acted in emergency with promptitude but without giving to the person concerned any opportunity for a hearing. In the circumstances it was pointed out by Lord *Parmoor*⁹⁰ that this might well be justified, provided that there was opportunity given afterwards when the original decision might be reviewed.⁹¹ Similarly, in my view, the present case was indeed one of grave emergency calling for the greatest promptitude of action. But for reasons which I have attempted to

⁸⁸ [1963] 1 Q.B. 539, 578; [1962] 2 W.L.R. 716; [1962] 1 All E.R. 834, C.A.

⁸⁹ [1918] A.C. 557.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 561.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 562.

state I think that assuming in the first place there was any failure to observe the principles of natural justice by giving to the appellant an opportunity of being heard, this defect was remedied afterwards when the original decision was suspended and an opportunity given to the appellant or his adviser or both to make to the watch committee such representations as they wished.

But, if I were wrong upon the point last mentioned, still, in my opinion, the appellant fails in the end upon another point, namely, by reason of the consequences of his appeal to the Secretary of State. This matter was also dealt with by the learned judges of the Court of Appeal who similarly concluded that in any event the appeal to the Secretary of State barred the appellant from claiming relief now. The case appears then to have been put upon the basis of estoppel or election. For my part, I prefer to rest my conclusion simply upon the terms of the relevant section in the Act itself. The Act is the Police (Appeals) Act, 1927—a date, be it noted, eight years later than the date of the Act of 1919 under which were promulgated the Statutory Instruments 1705 and 1706. By section 1 (1) of the Act: “A member of a police force who after the passing of this Act is dismissed . . .” was given the right to appeal to the Secretary of State. It is also by the Act provided that the Secretary of State is not bound to entertain the appeal by way of hearing oral evidence if it appears to him that the case is of such a nature that it can properly be determined without such evidence. This was in fact the course adopted by the Secretary of State in the present circumstances. By his order of July 5, 1958, after reciting that an appeal had been made against the watch committee’s decision of the previous March, it is recorded that the Secretary of State “having decided that the case is of such a nature that it can properly be determined without taking oral evidence, hereby order as follows”; and then, in paragraph 1, occurs the language: “I dismiss the appeal.”

It was not, as I followed the argument, suggested that the Secretary of State was acting otherwise than within the jurisdiction conferred upon him by the Act of Parliament in deciding to dispose of the appeal as he did upon the written material before him and without hearing oral argument. Indeed section 2 (2) of the Act provides thus: “The Secretary of State after considering the notice of appeal and any other documents submitted to

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Evershed.

H. L. (E.) 1963
 RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.
 Lord Evershed.

“ him by the appellant and the respondent . . . and the report “ (if any) of the person or persons holding the inquiry shall by “ order either—(a) allow the appeal; or (b) dismiss the appeal; “ or (c) vary the punishment . . . ” As it seems to me, the action taken by the Secretary of State was in strict compliance with his powers and duties under the Act, and, with all respect to those who may take a contrary view, I cannot see how it can be said that the order of the Secretary of State is *ex facie* unsustainable. What, then, is the result? By section 2 (3) of the Act it is provided that the decision upon such appeal by the Secretary of State is to be “ final and binding upon all parties.” I agree that if it had been made out that the proceedings of the watch committee were a nullity, then the appeal and the result of the appeal might well be regarded equally as a nullity. But, for reasons which I have endeavoured to justify, it is, in my opinion, not true to say that the decision of the watch committee was a nullity, even if there was a failure on their part to obey the rules of natural justice by their omission to give to the appellant proper opportunity to be heard. Their decision was voidable only. This being so, then the appellant, having invoked his right under the statute to appeal to the Secretary of State, must, as I conceive, be bound by the result which Parliament has enjoined: and that result is that after such an appeal the Secretary of State’s decision shall be final and binding as between himself and the watch committee. I cannot imagine any language more explicit. Nor does it seem to me that the result can be avoided because both in his original letter to the Secretary of State and in the document stating his grounds of appeal itself the appellant’s solicitor stated that his invocation of the power to appeal was without prejudice to his right thereafter to maintain that the watch committee’s decision was in some way “ wrong in law.” In my judgment, the appellant invoked his right to appeal to the Secretary of State under the Act and, having done so, cannot escape the consequences which, as it seems to me, Parliament has stated in the plainest terms.

It follows, therefore, that, whatever might be the right answers to the difficult questions involved in regard to the application of the rules of natural justice, the appellant by proceeding as he did under the Police (Appeals) Act, 1927, to appeal to the Secretary of State cannot now say other than that the conclusion of the Secretary of State, which was entirely in accordance with his statutory powers, was a final and binding conclusion which put an end to any right that the appellant might otherwise have

had to invite the court in the exercise of its discretion to set aside or otherwise interfere with the watch committee's decision.

My conclusion, therefore, with all respect to your Lordships who take a different view, is, *first*, that there was in the present case no requirement that the watch committee should observe the terms of the Police Discipline Regulations of 1952 and therefore that the jurisdiction lay under section 191 (4) of the Municipal Corporation Act, 1882, with the watch committee; that therefore, *second*, the most that could be said against the watch committee's decision was that by failing to observe the rules of natural justice it was liable to be challenged and impugned in the courts; but, *third*, for reasons given, that assuming that there was a failure to comply with the rules of natural justice in the first instance by omitting to give to the appellant the right to be heard (before the passing of the resolution of March 7, 1958), that failure was afterwards remedied; in other words, having regard to the entirely exceptional circumstances, that it cannot now be said on the appellant's part that there was any real or substantial injustice in what was done by the watch committee. But, *fourth*, it is my opinion that if in all other respects I am wrong the result of invoking the Act of 1927 by way of appeal to the Secretary of State involved necessarily the result that the Secretary of State's conclusion must be regarded by your Lordships as having finally disposed of all questions between the appellant and the watch committee.

There was also raised upon the appeal before your Lordships a question of the true interpretation of section 220 of the Act of 1882. That section is as follows: "A conviction, order, warrant, or other matter made or done or purporting to be made or done by virtue of this Act shall not be quashed for want of form, and shall not, unless it is an order of the council for payment of money out of the borough fund, be removed by certiorari or otherwise into the High Court." It was contended on behalf of the appellant that the terms of the section were only applicable to cases in which the question was as regards purely formal matters. For my part, I am not persuaded that this is a right construction of the words which Parliament has used. But I prefer upon this matter not to express any concluded opinion. If the view which I have tried to express and justify were right it would follow that this section would not be a relevant consideration. Further than that, since the point was never taken by the watch committee until the course of the argument before your Lordships, it would, as it seems to me, in any event

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Evershed.

H. L. (E.) 1963 be too late for the watch committee to rely upon this section if in other respects they were wrong. I therefore say no more upon this matter.

RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.

If the matter rested with me, my Lords, I would dismiss the appeal.

LORD MORRIS OF BORTH-Y-GEST. My Lords, the appellant who in March, 1958, was nearly 59 years of age became a constable in the Brighton Borough Police Force in 1925 after a short period of service in another police force. Thereafter he received progressive promotions in the Brighton Police Force. In 1935 he became a detective sergeant and in 1948 a detective inspector. In 1949 he was made detective chief inspector and in 1950 detective superintendent. In 1954 he was promoted to be deputy chief constable. In the early part of 1956 there was a vacancy in the office of chief constable. The appellant was an applicant for the appointment. He was one of five candidates who were interviewed by the watch committee. The committee, who had the opportunities for judging of the competence of the appellant which his prior service afforded them, resolved that, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State, the appellant should be appointed. He was so appointed. Amongst other terms and conditions the appointment was to be "subject to the Police Acts and Regulations."

In October of the following year the appellant and two police officers and two others were arrested. The allegation was one of conspiracy to obstruct the course of public justice. The watch committee (who are the police authority) then took action under the provisions of the Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables, Assistant Chief Constables and Chief Constables) Regulations, 1952 (S.I. 1952 No. 1706) as amended by S.I. 1954 No. 1688. They decided to suspend him from duty and as notified in a letter dated October 29, 1957, they resolved in accordance with regulation 15 to pay him certain suspension allowances. The opening part of regulation 15 (1) as amended provides that: "Where a report or allegation is received from which it appears that a deputy chief constable or assistant chief constable of a borough police force may have committed an offence against discipline or a criminal offence, the police authority may suspend him from duty until such time as either—(a) it is decided that he shall not be charged with an offence against discipline, or (b) the disciplinary proceedings referred to in these Regulations are concluded." Though that regulation

refers to a deputy or assistant chief constable it may under certain circumstances be invoked in the case of a chief constable. This is as a result of regulation 18 which provides: "Where "a report or allegation is received from which it appears that "a chief constable may have committed an offence, these "regulations shall apply with the following modifications, "adaptations and exceptions:— . . ." The regulations provided that the expression "offence" had the same meaning as it has in the Police (Discipline) Regulations, 1952. Paragraph 1 (1) of those Regulations provides: "A member of a police force "commits an offence against discipline (hereafter in these "Regulations referred to as 'an offence') if he commits one "or more of the offences set out in the First Schedule hereto " (hereafter in these Regulations referred to as the 'Discipline "'Code') or such additions thereto as may be made by the "police authority for the police force with the consent of the "Secretary of State."

The position in October, 1957, was, therefore, that the watch committee suspended the appellant under regulation 15 which was applicable on the basis that the watch committee had received a report or allegation from which it appeared that the chief constable may have committed one or more of the offences set out in the discipline code contained in the Police (Discipline) Regulations, 1952. It followed that the suspension would continue either until it was decided that he would not be charged with an offence against discipline or until any disciplinary proceedings were concluded.

In December, 1957, the appellant was committed for trial. An indictment dated January 7, 1958, charged him with the offence of conspiracy to obstruct the course of public justice. The particulars alleged that he conspired with the four other accused and with other persons unknown to obstruct the course of public justice in that the appellant and the two police officers accused should act contrary to their public duty as police officers in relation to the administration of the law. The conspiracy was alleged to have been between January 1, 1949, and October 18, 1957. The trial began on February 3, 1958, and after a hearing which lasted for some 19 days the appellant was acquitted. That was on February 27, 1958. On February 28 his solicitors by letter requested the watch committee to remove his suspension and to reinstate him. On that day two police officers who had been convicted by the jury were sentenced, and in passing sentence

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.

the learned judge made certain observations in regard to the appellant. A second indictment had been preferred against the appellant. The charge was that "being a person serving under "the Crown" he corruptly obtained a gift of £20 from a named person as a reward for showing favour to such person in relation to the affairs of the Crown. The appellant stood his trial on that indictment on March 6, 1958. He pleaded "Not Guilty." The prosecution offered no evidence. On the direction of the learned judge the appellant was found not guilty. After the appellant had left the dock the learned judge made certain observations in regard to the appellant.

On the following day, March 7, 1958, there was a meeting of the watch committee. The appellant had not been invited to attend and was not sent for. He received a letter the same afternoon telling him that he had been summarily dismissed. He was informed of certain resolutions which the watch committee had passed. Information as to those resolutions was given to the press.

The resolutions which were passed by the watch committee as recorded in their minutes were as follows: [His Lordship read the resolutions and continued:] Your Lordships were informed that the transcripts of the proceedings at the criminal trial were not available for the watch committee on March 7, but that there was a transcript of the statements which had been made by the learned judge on February 28 and March 6.

Section 191 (4) of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, is in the following terms: "The watch committee, or any two justices "having jurisdiction in the borough, may at any time suspend, "and the watch committee may at any time dismiss, any borough "constable whom they think negligent in the discharge of his "duty, or otherwise unfit for the same." By section 4 (1) of the Police Act, 1919, it was provided: "It shall be lawful for the "Secretary of State to make regulations as to the government, "mutual aid, pay, allowances, pensions, clothing, expenses and "conditions of service of the members of all police forces within "England and Wales, and every police authority shall comply "with the regulations so made."

At the material times the following regulations made by the Secretary of State pursuant to that power were in force: (a) Police Regulations, 1952 (S.I. 1952 No. 1704); (b) Police (Discipline) Regulations, 1952 (S.I. 1952 No. 1705, as amended by S.I. 1954 No. 1687); and (c) Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables,

Assistant Chief Constables and Chief Constables) Regulations, 1952 (S.I. 1952 No. 1706, as amended by S.I. 1954 No. 1688).

The regulations (S.I. 1952 No. 1705) show that a member of a police force commits an offence against discipline if he commits any of the offences which are set out in the discipline code contained in Schedule I to the regulations. The regulations contain detailed provisions as to the procedure which must be followed "where a report or allegation is received from which it appears that a member of a police force may have committed an offence." Chief constables, deputy chief constables and assistant chief constables are governed by the regulations (S.I. 1952 No. 1706) in fact made on the same day as those in S.I. 1952 No. 1705. These officers are also subject to the "discipline code" and the regulations (S.I. 1952 No. 1706) contain detailed provisions as to the procedure which must be followed where a report or allegation is received from which it appears that a chief constable may have committed an offence, that is, an offence contained in the discipline code (see regulation 18).

Amongst the many offences included in the discipline code are the following:

"1. *Discreditable conduct*, that is to say, if a member of a police force acts in a disorderly manner or any manner prejudicial to discipline or reasonably likely to bring discredit on the reputation of the force or of the police service."

"4. *Neglect of duty*, that is to say, if a member of a police force—(a) neglects, or without good and sufficient cause omits, promptly and diligently to attend to or carry out anything which is his duty as a constable, . . ."

"5. *Falsehood or prevarication*, that is to say, if a member of a police force— . . . (b) wilfully or negligently makes any false, misleading or inaccurate statement, . . ."

"17. *Conviction for a criminal offence*, that is to say, if a member of a police force has been found guilty by a court of law of a criminal offence."

If there is a report or allegation from which it appears that a chief constable may have committed an offence against the Discipline Code, then the police authority, under regulation 1 of S.I. 1952 No. 1706, must "unless they are satisfied that he has not committed an offence, inform him in writing of the report or allegation and ask him whether or not he admits that he has committed an offence and give him an opportunity, if he so desires, of making to the police authority any oral or written

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.

H. L. (E.) "statement he may wish to make concerning the matter."
 1963 Regulation 2 (of S.I. 1952 No. 1706) as applied to chief constables by regulation 18 provides that if the chief constable
 RIDGE "admits that he has committed an offence, the police authority
 v. "may impose a punishment in accordance with regulation 11 of
 BALDWIN. "these regulations without the case being heard in accordance
 Lord Morris of "with the following provisions of these regulations." The power
 Borth-y-Gest. to punish for an offence without a hearing was therefore made
 conditional upon there being an admission of an offence. There-
 after if the police authority are not satisfied with the statement
 of a chief constable who does not admit that he has committed an
 offence the police authority must instruct a solicitor to enter on
 a discipline form the offence with which the chief constable is
 charged and must give such particulars as will leave the chief
 constable "in no doubt as to the precise nature of the alleged
 "offence." That having been done, a chief constable must be
 supplied with (a) a copy of the discipline form, (b) a copy of the
 report or allegation on which the charge is founded and any
 reports thereon notwithstanding that they may be confidential,
 (c) a copy of any statement relating to the charge made by any
 witness to be called in support of the charge together with the
 witness's name and address, and (d) a copy of any statement
 relating to the charge made by any person other than a witness
 to be called in support of the charge, to the police authority or to
 anybody on their behalf, together with the person's name and
 address. Thereafter there must be a hearing by a tribunal (which
 could consist of a person selected from a list of nominated persons
 and assisted on matters pertaining to the police by an assessor,
 or could consist of not more than five members of the police
 authority). The regulations lay down the procedure for the
 hearing and provide that after the hearing the tribunal must
 submit a report to the police authority and send a copy of it to
 the accused chief constable. The report must contain (inter
 alia) a statement as to the facts found or admitted, as to the
 charges found to be proved, and as to any recommendation as
 to any punishment. Then the police authority must come to a
 decision. That will be only "on receipt of the report of the
 "tribunal" (regulation 11 (1)). They may decide to dismiss
 the case: alternatively they may decide to impose any one of
 the following punishments: (i) dismissal, (ii) requirement to
 resign either forthwith or on such date as may be specified in the
 decision as an alternative to dismissal, (iii) reprimand. (See
 regulation 11.)

By the Police Pensions Act, 1948, it was provided that regulations to be made by the Secretary of State were to make provision as to the pensions to be paid, whether as of right or otherwise, and also "as to the times at which and the circumstances in which" members of police forces are or may be required to retire otherwise than on the ground of misconduct" (section 1 (1) (c)). The Police Pensions Regulations, 1955 (S.I. 1955 No. 480), contain the following provisions:

"1.—(1) Subject to the provisions of these regulations, every man or woman who is a regular policeman, that is to say, a member of a home police force who is not an auxiliary policeman and a member of an overseas corps who is a reversionary member of a home police force, shall, on retiring from the force of which he is a member, be entitled to an award under these regulations."

"3.—(1) Subject to the provisions of these regulations, where a regular policeman who is entitled to reckon twenty-five years' pensionable service retires from a police force, the award shall be an ordinary pension."

"7.—(2) Where a member of a police force is dismissed the police authority shall pay an amount equal to the amount of his aggregate pension contributions to such one of those persons hereinafter described as, in their discretion, they may think fit or, if in their discretion they think fit, shall distribute that amount among such of those persons in such shares and in such manner as in their discretion they may think fit."

"52. If a police authority determine that the retention in the force of a regular policeman who if required to retire is entitled to receive a pension of an amount not less than two-thirds of his average pensionable pay would not be in the general interests of efficiency, he may be required to retire on such date as the police authority determine."

It is to be observed that section 191 (4) of the Act of 1882 gives to the watch committee a power of suspension. As I have already mentioned, a power to suspend a chief constable is also given to the police authority by the regulations S.I. 1952 No. 1706, as amended. The case has proceeded on the basis that the watch committee suspended the appellant in October, 1957, under the powers given to them by those regulations. At the trial of the action the appellant gave evidence that after his arrest on October 25, 1957, the Town Clerk came to see him on the same day and said that he had been suspended from duty, and the appellant's recollection was that the Town Clerk added "under

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.

H. L. (E.) " police regulations " or " in accord with police regulations." 1963 The appellant's recollection as to this was not challenged in cross-examination. The suspension allowances which thereafter were paid to the appellant were payable because on October 28, 1957, the watch committee resolved that in accordance with regulation 15 of the regulations such allowances should be paid. It is not suggested by the appellant that there was any irregularity in his suspension. The power to suspend arose because the watch committee must have received a report or allegation from which it appeared that the appellant may have committed some offence against discipline (that is, some offence against the Discipline Code).

RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.
Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.

It seems very probable that the watch committee received an oral report that the appellant had been arrested on criminal charges, and it is abundantly clear that if he were guilty of criminal charges he would have committed one or more of the offences set out in the Discipline Code. Quite apart from various other offences he would have been guilty of the offence under paragraph 17 of the code as set out above.

After the appellant was acquitted of all criminal charges there were various courses which were open to the watch committee. They could have decided not to charge the appellant with any " offence against discipline." In that event his suspension would have ceased. They could have decided to charge him with some offence or offences against discipline. In that event the suspension would have continued. That would be on the basis that there was some report or allegation that the appellant may have committed an offence against discipline. The appellant would then have had the right to be informed of and to make a personal explanation concerning any such report or allegation, and the procedure laid down in the regulations would have had to be followed. Had there been disciplinary proceedings the appellant would have had all the opportunities to defend himself which the regulations give. If any charges were found to be proved and if the case were not dismissed, then there might have been dismissal or a requirement to resign in lieu of dismissal or a reprimand. Another course which was open to the watch committee was to consider (pursuant to regulation 52 of the Police Pensions Regulations, 1955—S.I. 1955 No. 480) whether the appellant was one who, if required to retire, was entitled to receive a pension of an amount not less than two-thirds of his average pensionable pay and if so to consider whether the retention of the appellant in the

force " would not be in the general interests of efficiency " and to decide whether to require the appellant to retire.

The documents show what the watch committee did. The documents further show their reasons for doing what they did. What they did was summarily to dismiss the appellant without any prior communication of any sort to him and without inviting any submission from him. They purported to exercise powers given by section 191 (4). It is beyond dispute that the procedure of the regulations was in no way operated. The issue that is raised is, therefore, whether the powers given by section 191 (4) may be invoked without paying any regard to the provisions contained in regulations S.I. 1952 No. 1706. The further issue that is raised is whether such powers may also be invoked without paying regard to those principles which are conveniently referred to as the principles of natural justice. I propose to deal with these issues separately.

The powers given by section 191 (4) are impressive. There is first a power to suspend. It may well be that different considerations apply to suspensions as compared to dismissals. It may well be that a power to suspend if exercised by a watch committee in good faith may have to be exercised without any hearing and without any procedural requirements. That does not have to be decided in the present case. The power to dismiss (given by the section to a watch committee but not to justices) relates to any borough constable (which term includes a chief constable) whom the watch committee " think negligent in the discharge of " his duty, or otherwise unfit for the same." My Lords, I consider that in the context the word " otherwise " denotes that there may be dismissal of a constable if the watch committee considers that he is unfit for the discharge of his duties even though he may not have been negligent in their discharge. In the section it seems to me that the words " unfit for the same " were designed to cover situations where, even apart from any misconduct or lack of care and even apart from any physical or health condition, a constable was thought to be unfit for the discharge of his duty.

It was not contended before your Lordships that section 191 (4) has been impliedly repealed. Having regard to section 1 (4) of the Police Act, 1946, and paragraph 3 (2) in Schedule II to such Act, that would have been a difficult contention to advance. But, though the powers given by section 191 (4) are still exercisable, I consider, in agreement with the Court of Appeal, that the effect of the Police Act, 1919, is that the powers given by

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.

H. L. (E.) section 191 (4) must be exercised in accordance with any regulations made under the Police Act, 1919, which are applicable.

1963

RIDGE
v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.

Pearce L.J. said that in cases coming within the regulations the statutory power of the watch committee must be used in accordance with the regulations and that in such cases the watch committee must act judicially or quasi-judicially. Harman L.J. said that in cases to which the regulations are applicable the power to dismiss given by section 191 (4) is controlled. Davies L.J. likewise agreed that the power is controlled by the regulations. These conclusions followed and were in accord with the judgment of Greer L.J. in *Cooper v. Wilson*.⁹² In that case Greer L.J., while rejecting a suggestion that the power to make regulations under section 4 (1) of the Police Act, 1919, had impliedly repealed section 191 (4) of the Act of 1882, said ⁹³: "The regulations, in my judgment, must be read as applying to "the way in which the watch committee are to exercise their "powers in a borough . . ."

It may well be that the various police regulations and police pensions regulations were designed to cover all the circumstances and situations with which police authorities are likely to be faced, and in practice I would think that police authorities would invariably wish to follow the spirit as well as the letter of the carefully devised procedures which the regulations lay down. As a matter of construction, however, I am not prepared to say that every power is controlled by the regulations: they do not appear to make provisions in regard to the power to dismiss a constable who is thought by the watch committee to be unfit for the discharge of his duties. If, however, a constable is thought to have been negligent in the discharge of his duties and so guilty of an offence under section 4 of the Discipline Code, or if he is thought to have been guilty of some other offence, then the provisions of the regulations would be applicable.

The action of the watch committee in summarily dismissing the appellant was stated to be for two reasons. In the first place, they decided that the appellant had been negligent in the discharge of his duty. In the second place they decided that he was unfit for the discharge of his duty. Had they been merely of the opinion that the appellant had become unfit for the discharge of his duty but had not been in any way negligent in the discharge of his duty it would seem to be inherently unlikely that they would have exercised a power of summary dismissal. They had

⁹² [1937] 2 K.B. 309.

⁹³ Ibid. 316.

appointed the appellant in 1956 after he had been successively promoted in the period of years after 1925 when he first joined the Brighton Borough Police Force. He was nearing the time when he could have retired on a pension. If the watch committee thought that there were reasons why his retention in the force would not be in the general interests of efficiency they could have required him to retire (see regulation 52 of the Police Pensions Regulations, 1955). If the watch committee had thought that there was no element of misconduct and no suggestion of negligence in the discharge of duty, then, assuming that the power given by section 191 (4) to dismiss where there is unfitness for duty is a power which is not governed by and has not been affected by regulations which have been made, then on such hypothesis I do not suppose that summary dismissal would have been contemplated. In fact, there was a decision that the appellant had been negligent in the discharge of his duty. There was, therefore, a finding of misconduct although there had not been a charge and although there had not been a hearing. A member of a police force is guilty of an offence if he "neglects or without good and sufficient cause omits promptly and diligently to attend to or carry out anything which is his duty as a constable." I do not think that it can be open to doubt that if someone is found to have been "negligent in the discharge of his duty" he is found to have been guilty of the offence defined by these words. The watch committee, therefore, found the appellant guilty of this offence and summarily dismissed him for it. They found him guilty without giving him particulars and without charging him and without giving him any opportunity to defend himself. They made no attempt to pay heed to the regulations. The explanation of this that is advanced is that they were not obliged to do so because they had not received any report or allegation from which it appeared that the appellant might have committed an offence. I find this a most surprising suggestion. If they had not received any report or allegation to the effect that he might have committed an offence, then why did they suddenly decide that he had committed an offence? How could they find him guilty of being negligent in the discharge of his duty without some suggestion or some information which amounted to a report or allegation to that effect? Indeed, it is difficult to understand how the committee could ever act in a disciplinary matter without first having some report or some allegation that an offence may have been committed. The minutes of the meeting record that they carefully considered the trial of the appellant and the other accused.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

 Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.

H. L. (E.) 1963
 RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.
 Lord Morris of
 Borth-y-Gest.

The trial had lasted some 19 days. The transcript of the evidence was not before the committee on March 7. If the committee had acquired knowledge that in the proceedings at the trial there was some material which might lead to the view that the appellant had been negligent in the discharge of his duty, then they were treating that material as a report or allegation. The minutes further record that the committee considered the statements made by the learned judge on February 28 and March 6. They had transcripts before them of what the learned judge had said. The statements made by the learned judge manifestly called for the most careful consideration by the watch committee, who would obviously pay the greatest heed to them. One of the statements, besides commenting on the failure of the appellant to give proper leadership, raised to specific matters, namely, (1) that the appellant had contrived to go to a suspected briber of the police in private (that was a reference to a man named Leach), and (2) that the appellant had admitted "a much convicted and hectoring "bookmaker" to his private room and had discussed with him the policy of the police in certain matters (that was a reference to a man named Page). My Lords, I find it impossible to say that in considering those statements the committee had not received and were not considering a report or allegation to the effect that the appellant might have been guilty of an offence. The learned judge on March 6 had said in terms that he realised that the matter of the leadership of the Brighton Police Force was "about "to engage the attention of those persons whose responsibility "it is." No words used by the learned judge, however, could or did in any way suggest that the matter was to be dealt with in disregard of the requirements of the law.

The minutes of the watch committee further record that the committee considered "certain statements made today by "members of the committee and the Town Clerk." If those were statements that might lead members to conclude that the appellant had been negligent in the discharge of his duty, then they must have been reports or allegations from which it appeared that the appellant might have committed either the offence of neglect of duty or some other offence. As no evidence was called on behalf of the watch committee at the trial of the action it was not possible to ask any member of the watch committee what these statements were. There is, however, material from which their nature may be reasonably inferred. In circumstances to which reference must later be made the solicitors for the appellant gave notice of appeal to the Secretary of State

against his dismissal, while stating that the appeal was without prejudice to the appellant's rights to contend that the purported notice of dismissal was bad in law as being contrary to natural justice and not in accordance with the appropriate statutes and regulations. Thereafter in a written statement submitted by the watch committee to the Secretary of State the facts and contentions on which reliance was placed included the following:

[His Lordship read paragraphs (c), (d), (e), (f) and (i) of the statement and continued:]

It is, in my judgment, a reasonable inference that the statements made at the meeting of the watch committee covered the matters set out under (c). If someone made the serious suggestion that the appellant had at his criminal trial given false evidence on material matters that was surely a report or allegation from which it appeared that the appellant might have committed an offence. There would have been an offence under paragraph 5 of the code.

The watch committee were under a statutory obligation (see Police Act, 1919, s. 4 (1)) to comply with the regulations made under the Act. They dismissed the appellant after finding that he had been negligent in the discharge of his duty. That was a finding of guilt of the offence of neglecting or omitting diligently to attend to or to carry out his duty. Yet they had preferred no charge against the appellant and gave him no notice. They gave him no opportunity to defend himself or to be heard. Though their good faith is in no way impugned, they completely disregarded the regulations and did not begin to comply with them.

My Lords, I cannot think that any decision so reached can have any validity and unless later events have made it valid it ought not to be allowed to stand. Had the regulations been applied but if there had been some minor procedural failure different considerations might have applied. There was, however, no kind of compliance with them. In my judgment, once there was a report or allegation from which it appeared that a chief constable may have committed an offence it was a condition precedent to any dismissal based on a finding of guilt of such offence that the regulations should in essentials have been put into operation. They included and incorporated the principles of natural justice which, as Harman L.J. said, is only fair play in action. It is well established that the essential requirements of natural justice at least include that before someone is condemned he is to have an opportunity of defending himself, and in order that he may do so that he is to be made aware of the charges or

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.

allegations or suggestions which he has to meet: see *Kanda v. Government of Malaya*.⁹⁴ My Lords, here is something which is basic to our system: the importance of upholding it far transcends the significance of any particular case.

The circumstances existing in March, 1958, made it, in my judgment, particularly necessary, quite apart from its being a matter of legal obligation, that before considering whether the appellant had been negligent in the discharge of his duty the procedure of the regulations should be observed. The appellant had after a long trial been acquitted of criminal charges. There had been much publicity. He had not been on trial on charges of neglect of duty or of unfitness for duty. If any facts had emerged which, while insufficient to support the charges of the criminal trial, had seemed to the watch committee to suggest that the appellant had been negligent in the discharge of his duty, it would have been so easy to state them. If at the criminal trial any admission had been made or evidence given which seemed to support the view that there had been negligence—how simple it would have been to state it. If some facts were clear and plain—so that denials would have been unlikely or explanations difficult—then the opportunity to make a statement might have shown a course ahead. But if, on the other hand, facts could be explained, and if conduct could be defended and if charges of neglect or of unfitness could be repelled, was the appellant to be denied a hearing? It is to be noted that whatever suggestion or charge might be formulated in regard to the “Leach” matter raised questions as to the desirability or propriety of a visit that had taken place as far back as 1954, which was some time before the appellant was appointed to be chief constable. The appellant’s case was that he had told his then chief constable in advance of his proposed visit to Leach. His case further was that neither in respect of the “Leach” matter nor in respect of the “Page” matter was there any impropriety in his conduct or actions. On the charges brought against him in a court of law and upon which he was tried he was found not guilty. If a new charge of neglect of duty was to be brought against him, was he not even to be told about it or asked about it? Was he to have no chance of dealing with matters which may have influenced the committee? Were the safeguards of a criminal trial, of which the law is a jealous protector, to find no reflection in the days that followed an acquittal?

⁹⁴ [1962] A.C. 322, 337; [1962] 2 W.L.R. 1153, P.C.

My Lords, before further considering the result of disregarding the regulations, it becomes necessary to mention certain events that followed the dismissal. The solicitor for the appellant addressed a letter to the Secretary of State on March 7, 1958, in which he contended that the dismissal was contrary to natural justice and bad in law and gave notice of appeal. The letter pointed out that the notice of dismissal had merely recited a general finding of negligence and unfitness without specifying any details. The Police (Appeals) Act, 1927, as amended by the Police (Appeals) Act, 1943, by section 1 (1) provides: "A member of a police force who after the passing of this Act is punished by dismissal, by being required to resign as an alternative to dismissal, by reduction in rank, or a reduction in rate of pay, may appeal to a Secretary of State in accordance with this Act and the rules made thereunder, if he gives notice of appeal in the prescribed manner and within the prescribed time." The Police (Appeals) Rules, 1943 (S.I. 1943 No. 473), which apply to all appeals by a member of a police force, provide by rule 2 (2) that notice of appeal must be sent "within ten days from the date when the appellant received on the misconduct form the notification of the decision against which he desires to appeal." The solicitor for the appellant followed his letter of March 7 with another dated March 10, in which he stated that the appeal was without prejudice to the appellant's rights to contend that the purported dismissal was bad in law as being contrary to natural justice and not in accordance with the appropriate statutes and regulations. In this notice of appeal, which was dated March 12, he set out some 30 grounds of appeal. While denying any neglect or any unfitness, he set out that he had been given no notice of what was alleged against him and no opportunity of being heard. He further set out that by lodging his appeal he did not recognise the legality of the watch committee's decision, and that his appeal was without prejudice to his contentions that the watch committee's decision was invalid, and he stated that his notice of appeal was only given within the limited time in case it should be held that the watch committee's procedure was valid. In due course a written statement dated April 18, 1958, was submitted to the Secretary of State on behalf of the respondents: it set out the facts and contentions on which the respondents relied in opposing the appeal.

Following upon the dismissal of the appellant his solicitor made a request to appear before the watch committee. He wished

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.

to be informed about the case against his client so as to be able to deal with it, and, furthermore, he wished to submit that the best way of dealing with the situation would be to allow his client to resign and to have his pension. A copy of the appellant's written statement to the Secretary of State and in addition some written observations were sent to the watch committee. In those observations it was submitted that the appellant should be allowed to retire on full pension forthwith. The committee decided to meet on March 18, and stated that they would consider any representations which were then made by or on behalf of the appellant either orally or in writing, and that such representations need not be limited to the matter of the pension. The appellant's solicitor attended and addressed the watch committee. In the course of his address he stated that before being dismissed the appellant had been given no notice of what was charged against him and no opportunity of being heard. The solicitor was received with courtesy but in silence. It seems, however, to be beyond dispute that he was given no further particulars of the case against the appellant than appeared in the letter of March 7. The respondents' later submissions to the Secretary of State, which were dated April 18, were, of course, not then available. The result of the meeting of March 18 was that the watch committee by a majority resolved to adhere to their previous decision: nine members voted in favour of such resolution and three members voted against it.

The written statement (dated April 18, 1958) submitted to the Secretary of State by the respondents set out their contentions and they included the paragraphs to which I have already referred. The Secretary of State decided that the case could be determined without taking oral evidence (see Police (Appeals) Act, 1927, section 2) and on July 5, 1958, he dismissed the appeal. He came to the conclusion "that there was sufficient material on which the watch committee could properly exercise their power of dismissal under section 191 (4)." He did not take into account, as no evidence in support of them was before him, certain allegations upon which the respondents relied, namely (i) that the appellant did not report to the Deputy Town Clerk and to the chairman of the watch committee the facts relating to an interview between Alderman Cullen and one Page; (ii) that the appellant did not report to the then chief constable the facts relating to an interview which the appellant had with one Mrs. Cherryman; and (iii) that the appellant in giving evidence at his trial that he had so reported those matters gave false evidence.

My Lords, in my judgment, inasmuch as the decision of the watch committee was that the appellant had committed an offence or offences against the Discipline Code and inasmuch as the decision was arrived at in complete disregard of the regulations, it must be regarded as void and of no effect. The power to dismiss for an offence was a power that could only be exercised if the procedure of the regulations was set in motion. A purported dismissal in complete disregard of them cannot be recognised as having any validity. In *Andrews v. Mitchell*⁹⁵ a member of a friendly society who had been duly summoned before the arbitration committee for a breach of the rules was in his absence expelled from the society by a resolution of the committee upon a different charge, that is, of fraud and disgraceful conduct, of which no written notice had been given to him as required by the rules. By one of the general laws of the friendly society any member proved guilty of fraud or any conduct or offence calculated to bring disgrace upon the order before any recognised arbitration committee, provided a charge had been preferred against him as required by the general laws with regard to arbitrations, might be expelled or suffer some less penalty. It was held that the decision of the committee was null and void. In his speech Lord Halsbury L.C. said⁹⁶ that "there are some principles of justice which it is impossible to disregard." He pointed out that while there was a rule which justified expulsion it justified expulsion upon the express proviso that the charge had been made as provided by the rules. He added⁹⁷: "In this case the charge never was made as provided by the rules; and if you have no power given under the rules to expel a member except upon a charge made and tried according to the rules, you have no power to expel in a case like this." He described⁹⁷ the summoning of a member pursuant to the rules and giving him time to consider what he had to do and giving him the charge against him in writing as "matters of substance, and not mere matters of form." He concluded⁹⁸ that the arbitration committee "had no jurisdiction" to entertain the matter. Lord Davey said⁹⁹: "It is not contented by Mr. Lawrence that his charge was made properly according to the rules, but he regarded that as a mere informality which might be set right. But it was an informality which went to the root of the jurisdiction, and the omission to

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.⁹⁵ [1905] A.C. 78.⁹⁸ Ibid. 82.⁹⁶ [1905] A.C. 80.⁹⁹ Ibid. 82-83.⁹⁷ Ibid. 81.

H. L. (E.) “ follow the directions of the rules for preferring charges had the
 1963 “ unfortunate effect of making the resolution which was come to
 “ for the expulsion of the respondent, in my opinion, altogether
 “ null and void.”

RIDGE
 v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Morris of
 Borth-y-Gest.

My Lords, if the regulations were applicable in this case, as in my judgment they were, regulation 2 of S.I. 1952 No. 1706, to which I have referred above, only gives a power to impose punishment without a hearing if a condition is satisfied, namely, if there is an admission of the commission of an offence. In the present case there was no such admission, and the watch committee therefore lacked power to impose punishment for an offence without a hearing: in purporting to dismiss the appellant they acted without jurisdiction and their decision was a nullity.

In *Lapointe v. L'Association de Bienfaisance et de Retraite de la Police de Montréal* ¹⁰⁰ the appellant, who was a member of the respondent benevolent and pension society, had been obliged to resign from the police force. Under those circumstances he became entitled according to the rules to have his case for a gratuity or pension considered by the board of directors and his right to such gratuity or pension determined by a majority of the board. The board in fact acted in a most extraordinary manner. In delivering the judgment of the Privy Council Lord Macnaghten said ¹⁰¹: They first appointed a committee of four from their own “ body to investigate the reason of Lapointe’s resignation. There “ would have been no objection to this course if the committee had “ been deputed to consider and report whether or not there was a “ prima facie case for inquiry. But what the committee did was to “ listen to all sorts of stories about Lapointe’s past history, and “ rake up everything that was against him during his connection “ with the force. Then, without telling Lapointe what the charges “ against him were, or giving him any opportunity of defending “ himself, they advised the board that the pension should be “ refused. Thereupon the board abnegated their judicial duties “ altogether. They summoned a general meeting of the members, “ and submitted a question, which they were bound to determine “ themselves, to a popular vote. The meeting was held on April “ 26, 1892, when by a large majority of the members present it “ was resolved that Lapointe’s name should not be entered on “ the pension roll of the society. The whole of these proceedings “ were irregular, contrary to the rules of the society, and above “ all contrary to the elementary principles of justice. And the

¹⁰⁰ [1906] A.C. 535.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 538-539.

“ position of the board was certainly not improved by a formal
 “ resolution stating solemnly, what was contrary to the truth,
 “ that after having inquired into the facts and circumstances
 “ which brought about Lapointe’s resignation, and having deli-
 “ berated upon his claim, the board ‘ decides that the pension on
 “ ‘ which he claims be refused, seeing that he was obliged to
 “ ‘ tender his resignation.’ ” Lord Macnaghten said that it was
 obvious that the so-called determination of the board was void
 and of no effect and the order which they humbly advised inclu-
 ded a declaration and determination as required by the rules and
 that the proceedings were null and void.

In *Annamunthodo v. Oilfields Workers’ Trade Union*¹⁰² it
 was held in the Privy Council that a decision of the general coun-
 cil of the trade union was vitiated because it convicted the appel-
 lant of an offence against the rules with which he had never been
 charged, and it was held that it should be declared that the pur-
 ported expulsion of the appellant was invalid and that an order
 should be made to set it aside.

My Lords, so here should it, in my judgment, be declared
 that the purported termination on March 7, 1958, of the appel-
 lant’s appointment was void unless it be that later events debar
 the appellant from obtaining this relief. If they do not, then the
 effect of such a declaration will be that the respondents will have
 to consider what action to take and in any course that they follow
 they must act according to law.

The appellant, through his counsel, has stated that he has no
 intention of applying for reinstatement but would be content to
 retire (as from March, 1958), with his pension. I apprehend that
 in all the circumstances it would not be appropriate for your
 Lordships to do more than to declare that the purported termina-
 tion on March 7, 1958, of the appellant’s appointment was void.
 Included in the other claims of the appellant in his action is a
 claim for his salary as from March 7, 1958. It would not seem
 appropriate at the present stage to deal with the appellant’s claim
 for salary and it would not be for your Lordships to decide any
 question as to a pension.

The question next arises whether the events subsequent to
 March 7, form any bar to the appellant’s claim. I have already
 referred to the meeting of March 18. That occasion afforded an

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.¹⁰² [1961] A.C. 945.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.

opportunity for the respondents to tell the appellant and his solicitor what were the allegations that he had to meet. The documents which the solicitor sent to the watch committee emphasised the point that the appellant had been given no notice of them: mention was also made of the fact that the appellant did not know what were the statements made by members of the watch committee referred to in the letter of March 7. He most certainly had no hint that it was being said of him that he had given some false evidence. The appellant's case is that he never had the chance—which he would have welcomed—of refuting that suggestion before the watch committee and the chance of calling such evidence as he might desire to call to deal with the suggestion. The oral request for information made by the solicitor met with no response. Even though the respondents had communicated their previous decision to the press a full inquiry might still have been possible, but the respondents neither took the opportunity then to begin compliance with the regulations nor even, in default of that, to give information to the appellant as to the case that he had to meet. In the result, in my judgment, nothing occurred on March 18 to give validity to what the respondents had purported to do on March 7. Nor, in my view, did the action of the appellant in appealing to the Secretary of State have any such effect. If the decision of March 7 was a nullity and void the fact that the appellant appealed made no difference. The decision of March 7 remained a nullity. The appellant made it as plain as possible that he was adhering to and was in no way abandoning his submission that the decision of March 7 had no validity. In these circumstances, the provision in section 2 (3) of the Police (Appeals) Act, 1927, that the decision of the Secretary of State upon an appeal is to be "final and binding upon all parties" cannot produce the result that validity is given to that which is a nullity.

The respondents referred to section 220 of the Act of 1882. That section was not pleaded and was not mentioned in the respondents' case, but it was argued that it could be relied upon in support of the contention that the court could not declare against the validity of the decision of the watch committee. I deal with the point because if it had validity it would go to jurisdiction. I would not regard the complaints of the appellant as covered by the words "want of form," nor would I regard the words "removed by certiorari or otherwise" as apt to exclude the claims made in this action. Furthermore, it would clearly be contrary to the intention of section 11 (1) of the Tribunals and Inquiries

Act, 1958, if its effect upon section 220 could be construed as having the result that the court could make an order of certiorari but could not entertain an action for a declaration.

In view of the opinions which I have expressed as to the applicability of the regulations and as to the consequences of disregarding them, I propose only to deal briefly with the question whether, had there been no regulations, the police authority would have been bound to have regard to the principles of natural justice. In my view, the regulations incorporate those principles, but had there not been any and had the police authority in the exercise of powers given them by section 191 (4) contemplated dismissing the appellant on the ground of neglect of duty, they would in my view have been under obligation to give him an opportunity to be heard and would have had to consider anything that he might say. I cannot think that the dismissal of the appellant should be regarded as an executive or administrative act if based upon a suggestion of neglect of duty: before it could be decided that there had been neglect of duty it would be a prerequisite that the question should be considered in a judicial spirit. In order to give the appellant an opportunity to defend himself against a charge of neglect of duty he would have to be told what the alleged neglect of duty was.

In a case in which a Consistory Court had made an order requiring a Vicar to pay certain expenses and costs but had given him no opportunity of being heard in his defence, a writ of prohibition directed to the Chancellor was issued (see *Rex v. North. Ex parte Oakey*¹⁰³) and Scrutton L.J. said: "In my view an order that anyone shall pay the cost of restoring work which has been obliterated without a faculty is in the nature of a penalty for an ecclesiastical offence, and one of the most fundamental principles of English law is that if you are going to impose on a person a penalty for an offence, you must first clearly inform him that an application to that effect is going to be made against him, so that he may know what he is charged with and have an opportunity of attending to meet it."

The proceedings in the Consistory Court were therefore "without jurisdiction" and prohibition lay. The application of the "fundamental" principle, however, is not limited to proceedings in courts or to cases where penalties for offences are being imposed. The conduct of James Bagg (see *Bagg's Case*¹⁰⁴) was hardly

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.

¹⁰³ [1927] 1 K.B. 491, 502; 53 T.L.R. 60, C.A.

¹⁰⁴ 11 Co.Rep. 93b, 99a.

H. L. (E.) 1963
 RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.
 Lord Morris of
 Borth-y-Gest.

commendable but it was held that it did not give good cause for his disfranchisement. In any case he had not been heard and the court said: "And although they have lawful authority either "by charter or prescription to remove anyone from the freedom, "and that they have just cause to remove him; yet it appears "by the return, that they have proceeded against him without "hearing him answer to what was objected, or that he was not "reasonably warned, such removal is void, and shall not bind the "party." Such a removal was "against justice and right."

So also did the courts come to the aid of Dr. Bentley and granted a peremptory mandamus to restore him to his degrees (*R. v. University of Cambridge*¹⁰⁵). Though the court was roundly critical of Dr. Bentley's behaviour, they considered that even if he had been guilty of a contempt to the Vice-Chancellor's Court that court had no power to deprive him of his degrees: but they held that in any event he could not be deprived without notice. The words of Fortescue J. were emphatic¹⁰⁶: "Besides, "the objection for want of notice can never be got over. The "laws of God and man both give the party an opportunity to "make his defence, if he has any."

In *Wood v. Woad*,¹⁰⁷ Kelly C.B., in speaking of the "rule "expressed in the maxim *audi alteram partem*," said: "This "rule is not confined to the conduct of strictly legal tribunals, "but is applicable to every tribunal or body of persons invested "with authority to adjudicate upon matters involving civil consequences to individuals."

The relationship between the watch committee and the appellant was not that of master and servant. Nor was the appellant one who held an office at pleasure with the consequence that he could be required at pleasure to relinquish it. He was in a different position from someone possessing a licence to do various acts. The appellant held an office from which the watch committee could at any time dismiss him if they thought he had been negligent in the discharge of his duty. The watch committee did not, however, have an unfettered or unrestricted discretion. If it be assumed that no regulations had been made, then the fact that section 191 (4) is silent as to any procedure for a hearing does not involve that there could be a dismissal without a hearing. The "justice of the common law" would require it, for, as Byles J. said in *Cooper v. Wandsworth Board of Works*,¹⁰⁸ "a long

¹⁰⁵ (1723) 1 Stra. 557.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 566.

¹⁰⁷ L.R. 9 Ex. 190, 196.

¹⁰⁸ 14 C.B.N.S. 180, 194.

“course of decisions, beginning with Dr. Bentley’s case, and ending with some very recent cases, establish, that, although there are no positive words in a statute requiring that the party shall be heard, yet the justice of the common law will supply the omission of the legislature.”

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

 Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.

In that case it was held that although section 76 of the Metropolitan Local Management Act, 1855, empowered the district board to alter or demolish a house where the builder had neglected to give notice of his intention to build seven days before proceeding to lay or dig the foundation, yet the district board were not empowered to demolish the building without first giving the party guilty of the omission an opportunity of being heard. Erle C.J. said ¹⁰⁹: “It has been said that the principle that no man shall be deprived of his property without an opportunity of being heard, is limited to a judicial proceeding, and that a district board ordering a house to be pulled down cannot be said to be doing a judicial act. I do not quite agree with that; neither do I undertake to rest my judgment solely upon the ground that the district board is a court exercising judicial discretion upon the point: but the law, I think, has been applied to many exercises of power which in common understanding would not be at all more a judicial proceeding than would be the act of the district board in ordering a house to be pulled down.”

So Willes J. said ¹¹⁰: “I apprehend that a tribunal which is by law invested with power to affect the property of one of Her Majesty’s subjects, is bound to give such subject an opportunity of being heard before it proceeds: and that that rule is of universal application, and founded upon the plainest principles of justice.”

So also in *Spackman v. Plumstead Board of Works* ¹¹¹ Lord Selborne L.C. said: “No doubt, in the absence of special provisions as to how the person who is to decide is to proceed, the law will imply no more than that the substantial requirements of justice shall not be violated. He is not a judge in the proper sense of the word; but he must give the parties an opportunity of being heard before him and stating their case and their view. He must give notice when he will proceed with the matter and he must act honestly and impartially and not under the dictation of some other person or persons to whom the authority is not given by law. There must be no malversation of any kind.

¹⁰⁹ 14 C.B.N.S. 180, 189.¹¹⁰ Ibid. 190.¹¹¹ L.R. 10 App.Cas. 229, 240.

H. L. (E.) 1963
 RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.
 Lord Morris of
 Borth-y-Gest.

“ There would be no decision within the meaning of the statute “ if there were anything of that sort done contrary to the essence “ of justice.” Lord Selborne was there speaking of the decision of an architect (under section 75 of the Metropolis Management Amendment Act, 1862) as to the general line of buildings in a road. If the principles to which he adverts apply where property rights are in issue surely they must at least apply with equal effect where the issue is whether there has been misconduct which merits dismissal from an office. It is to be remembered also that in the case of the appellant his summary dismissal involved the loss of valuable pension rights. Property rights were at stake in *Local Government Board v. Arlidge*.¹¹² Lord Haldane there¹¹³ expressed his approval of the view indicated by Lord Loreburn in *Board of Education v. Rice*¹¹⁴ that an administrative body to which the decision of a question in dispute between parties has been entrusted must act in good faith and listen fairly to both sides. Lord Parmoor¹¹⁵ said that whether in that case the order of the Local Government Board was to be regarded as of an administrative or of a quasi-judicial character if the order affected the rights and property of the respondent he was entitled to have the matter determined “ in a judicial spirit, in accordance with “ the principles of substantial justice.” A right to be heard before property rights were affected was upheld in the circumstances applying in *Cooper v. Wandsworth Board of Works*,¹¹⁶ in *Hopkins v. Smethwick Local Board*,¹¹⁷ and in *Urban Housing Co. Ltd. v. Oxford Corporation*.¹¹⁸ Similarly, a right to be heard in regard to removal from an office was recognised in *Osgood v. Nelson*,¹¹⁹ in *Ex parte Ramshay*¹²⁰ and in *Rex v. Gaskin*.¹²¹ So also it has been recognised that expulsion from a club must not take place in disregard either of the rules of the club or of the rules of natural justice. (The cases of *Fisher v. Keane*¹²² and *Dawkins v. Antrobus*¹²³ may be mentioned as typical examples.)

Being of the view that, even if there had been no applicable regulations, a decision to dismiss the appellant for neglect of duty ought only to have been taken in the exercise of a quasi-judicial function which demanded an observance of the rules of natural justice—I entertain no doubt that such rules were not observed.

¹¹² [1915] A.C. 120.¹¹³ Ibid. 132.¹¹⁴ [1911] A.C. 179; 27 T.L.R. 378, H.L.¹¹⁵ [1915] A.C. 120, 142.¹¹⁶ 14 C.B.N.S. 180.¹¹⁷ 24 Q.B.D. 712.¹¹⁸ [1940] Ch. 70; 56 T.L.R. 68; [1939] 4 All E.R. 211, C.A.¹¹⁹ L.R. 5 H.L. 636.¹²⁰ 18 Q.B. 173.¹²¹ 8 Term Rep. 409.¹²² 11 Ch.D. 353.¹²³ (1881) 17 Ch.D. 615, C.A.

Before March 7 there was neither notice of what was alleged nor opportunity to deal with what was alleged. It was contended that the criminal trial had been the appellant's opportunity. My Lords, I cannot think that such a contention is valid. The trial was concerned with specific charges. In respect of them the appellant was found Not Guilty. If there were other charges or charges of a different nature which were not submitted to the jury but which the watch committee proposed to consider, then it was for the watch committee to formulate them and only to reach decision in regard to them after hearing and considering what the appellant or any witnesses of his had to say. For the reasons that I have already given the hearing of March 18 did not remedy the previous defects. The consequence, in my view, is that there was an abnegation of the quasi-judicial duties involved in the function of the watch committee, with the result that their decision must be regarded as of no effect and invalid, and so can be declared by the court to be void. (See *Bagg's Case*,¹²⁴ *R. v. University of Cambridge*,¹²⁵ *Wood v. Woad*,¹²⁶ *Fisher v. Keane*.¹²⁷)

It was submitted that the decision of the watch committee was voidable but not void. But this involves the inquiry as to the sense in which the word "voidable," a word deriving from the law of contract, is in this connection used. If the appellant had bowed to the decision of the watch committee and had not asserted that it was void, then no occasion to use either word would have arisen. When the appellant in fact at once repudiated and challenged the decision, so claiming that it was invalid, and when in fact the watch committee adhered to their decision, so claiming that it was valid, only the court could decide who was right. If in that situation it was said that the decision was voidable, that was only to say that the decision of the court was awaited. But if and when the court decides that the appellant was right, the court is deciding that the decision of the watch committee was invalid and of no effect and null and void. The word "voidable" is therefore apposite in the sense that it became necessary for the appellant to take his stand: he was obliged to take action, for unless he did, the view of the watch committee, who were in authority, would prevail. In that sense the decision of the watch committee could be said to be voidable. The appellant could, I think, have applied for an order of

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.¹²⁴ 11 Co.Rep. 93b.¹²⁵ 1 Stra. 557.¹²⁶ L.R. 9 Ex. 190.¹²⁷ 11 Ch.D. 353.

H. L. (E.) certiorari: he was not saying that those who purported to dismiss him were not the watch committee; he was recognising that they had a power and jurisdiction to dismiss, but he was saying that whether the regulations applied or whether they did not, the committee could only exercise their power and jurisdiction after hearing his reply to what was said against him. In these circumstances he could, I think, have applied for an order of certiorari (though considerations of convenience would probably have pointed against pursuing such a course) or he could have asked for a declaration. In either proceeding the question of acquiescence by him might be raised, or the question whether by some binding election he had barred himself from taking proceedings in court, or whether in some way he was estopped. It seems to me that he made it abundantly clear that by his appeal to the Secretary of State he was not in any way abandoning his right to contend that the decision of the watch committee was invalid. An appeal to the Secretary of State raises a question whether a decision which as a decision has validity should or should not on the facts and on the merits be upheld. The question raised and reserved by the appellant was the fundamental point that the purported decision of the watch committee was no decision. It would not have been unreasonable if the Secretary of State had asked that that point should first be adjudicated. But in the events which happened, I cannot think that the careful steps which were taken to protect the appellant's position ought to be held to have in fact compromised it. Compare *Annamunthodo v. Oilfields Workers' Trade Union*.¹²⁸ The appellant never abandoned his point and, in my view, nothing done by him or by the Secretary of State gave validity to a decision which is now shown to have had none.

My Lords, it was submitted to your Lordships that the decision of the watch committee should be upheld as having been the only reasonable decision. I consider this to be an entirely erroneous submission. Since no charges have been formulated it is impossible to assess their weight or the weight of the answering evidence of the appellant and others. When the appellant was in the witness-box in the present action he was questioned as to what witnesses he would have wished to call in order to deal with the "Leach" and the "Page" matters. As charges in respect of those matters were not formulated, I cannot think that it was appropriate to elicit the names of certain witnesses whom

¹²⁸ [1961] A.C. 945.

the appellant might have decided to call, and then without hearing or being able to hear such witnesses to seek to discount their value and effectiveness, and then to seek to draw a vague and artificial conclusion that if matters had been regularly done, and if the appellant had been heard, and if his witnesses had been heard, a result adverse to him would have followed. All the defects and all the unfairness of the original irregularity are inherent in any such approach. The suggested conclusion must fail because it is based upon a perpetuation of the very defects which vitiate the dismissal of the appellant, and also because the process involves endowing the court with a function that belongs elsewhere.

I do not find it necessary to express any concluded opinion as to whether, if there was no suggestion of having been negligent in the discharge of duty, a decision to dismiss on the ground of being "unfit" for the discharge of duty could be taken without giving an opportunity to be heard. Clearly it would be desirable and reasonable to give such an opportunity even though the alleged unfitness did not involve misconduct.

For the reasons that I have given, I would allow the appeal.

LORD HODSON. My Lords, I have reached the conclusion, apart from the application of the Police Act of 1919 and the regulations which followed, that this appeal should succeed upon the ground that the appellant was entitled to and did not receive natural justice at the hands of the watch committee of Brighton when he was dismissed on March 7, 1958. Streatfeild J., who heard the appellant's suit at first instance, held that the power given to the watch committee by the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, s. 191 (4), at any time to dismiss any borough constable whom they think negligent in the discharge of his duty or otherwise unfit for the same was a power which had to be exercised in accordance with the principles of natural justice, but that the watch committee had acted in that manner. The Court of Appeal took a different view and held that the watch committee were not bound in taking the executive action of dismissing their chief constable to hold an inquiry of a judicial or quasi-judicial nature (*per* Pearce L.J.). Harman L.J. was of opinion that the watch committee were acting in exercise of their administrative functions just as they were when they made the appointment under section 191 (1) of the Act, and that the principles of natural justice did not come into the case. He pointed out that the

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Morris of
Borth-y-Gest.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Hodson.

defendants were not deciding a question between two opposing parties and that there was no lis and nothing to decide. Davies L.J. said that the exercise by the watch committee of their powers under section 191 (4) of the Act of 1882 was not a quasi-judicial but an executive one, emphasising the words "whom they think" as being very strong indeed and much stronger than the sort of words to be found in most of the authorities cited to the court such as "on sufficient grounds shown to his satisfaction" (*De Verteuil v. Knaggs* ¹²⁹).

I should add that Streatfeild J., although holding that the principles of natural justice should *prima facie* have been applied, held that in this case the appellant had at the Old Bailey, for the purposes of his trial for all the world as well as the watch committee to hear, convicted himself of unfitness to hold the office of chief constable. He concluded that on the evidence which he had himself given at the Old Bailey there was no need for the watch committee to do other than they in fact did, whatever also they might have done to be on the safe side. It would be unrealistic to suppose that the watch committee had not a good idea of what took place at the criminal trial, although they were not provided with a transcript of the evidence until after they had reached their conclusion, but, in my opinion, it will not do to say that the case was so plain there was no need for the appellant to be heard and, therefore, the claims of natural justice were satisfied.

What the watch committee had before them was primarily the observations of Donovan J. who, in the course of sentencing the two police officers who were convicted, the appellant having been acquitted, gave as a ground for the moderation of his sentences on these two men the extenuating circumstance that, in his opinion, they had not had the leadership to which they were entitled. I think it is clear from the judge's observations at that time and at the conclusion of the trial that he intended that what he said should be brought to the notice of the watch committee to act upon as they thought fit. The watch committee no doubt felt it necessary to act promptly, but there was nothing in the judge's observations which would suggest that the appellant could be dealt with on the basis that any charges had been proved against him and that no further hearing was required.

I do not find that the answer put by counsel for the watch committee to your Lordships that the case was as plain as a pike-staff is an answer to the demand for natural justice. The case

on natural justice does not rest on the events of March 7, 1958, alone, for the appellant was given a further opportunity on March 18, 1958, to address the watch committee, and of this he availed himself by his solicitor, who appeared and was allowed to address the committee without restriction. I agree with Pearce L.J. that at that stage the defendants could have reopened the matter and, indeed, three out of the twelve were in favour of so doing, cf. *De Verteuil v. Knaggs*,¹²⁹ but the position was then that the watch committee had given their decision that the appellant be dismissed not only on the ground of unfitness but also on the grounds which included not only negligence in discharge of his duty but unspecified matters which were said to be "certain statements made today by members of the committee" and the town clerk." It was not until April 5, when the watch committee communicated with the Home Secretary prior to the appellant's appeal to the Minister, that it emerged that these statements had reference to allegations of perjury against the appellant.

On March 18 Mr. Bosley was given not only a full but a courteous hearing by the watch committee but received no indication of the nature of the charges which his client had to answer, notwithstanding his repeated statements that he did not know what they were. It is plain, therefore, that if there were a failure on March 7 to give justice to the appellant this was not cured on March 18 when the watch committee confirmed their previous decision. At this hearing it was made plain by Mr. Bosley that his client was not seeking reinstatement but only his pension rights of which he had been deprived by his dismissal. This position is maintained by the appellant through his counsel before your Lordships.

I should not delay further before referring to the terms of the statute of 1882 itself, for it is upon the construction of that statute that the answer to the question posed before your Lordships depends.

It is quite true that upon its terms there is a power to dismiss any borough constable (and this applies to the appellant) whom they think negligent in the discharge of his duty or otherwise unfit for the same. I entirely accept the reasoning underlying the judgments of the Lords Justices that if a statute gives an unfettered power to dismiss at pleasure without more that is an end of the matter.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Hodson.

¹²⁹ [1918] A.C. 557.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Hodson.

The topic is, however, not as simple as would seem. A large number of authorities were cited to your Lordships beginning with *Bagg's Case*¹³⁰ and extending to the present day. I will not travel over the field of the authorities, which I am bound to say are not easy to reconcile with one another, for if I did, I should surely omit some which might be thought to be of equal or greater importance than those I mentioned, but certain matters seem to me clearly to emerge. One is that the absence of a lis or dispute between opposing parties is not a decisive feature although, no doubt, the presence of a lis would involve the necessity for the applications of the principles of natural justice. Secondly, the answer in a given case is not provided by the statement that the giver of the decision is acting in an executive or administrative capacity as if that was the antithesis of a judicial capacity. The cases seem to me to show that persons acting in a capacity which is not on the face of it judicial but rather executive or administrative have been held by the courts to be subject to the principles of natural justice. Perhaps the most striking example is to be found in the old case of *Capel v. Child*,¹³¹ which is referred to at length by North J. in *Fisher v. Jackson*.¹³² The facts were these. By section 50 of the Act of 57 Geo. 3, c. 99, it was provided: "That whenever it shall appear to the satisfaction of any bishop, either of his own knowledge, or upon proof by affidavit laid before him, that by reason of the number of churches or chapels belonging to any benefice locally situate within his diocese, or the distance of such churches or chapels from each other, or the distance of the residence of the spiritual person serving the same from such churches or chapels, or any or either of them, or the negligence of the spiritual person holding the same, that the ecclesiastical duties of such benefice are inadequately performed," then, to put it shortly, the bishop may appoint a curate "to perform or to assist in performing such duties," and may throw the burden of the stipend of that curate upon the person the insufficiency of whose performance of the duties has led to the necessity of the appointment.

The Bishop of London on January 18, 1880, served a requisition on the plaintiff by virtue of the Act of Parliament above mentioned reciting that of his own knowledge the ecclesiastical duties of the vicarage and parish church of Watford were inadequately performed by reason of the plaintiff's negligence, and

¹³⁰ 11 Co.Rep. 93b.¹³² [1891] 2 Ch. 84, 95.¹³¹ (1832) 2 C. & J. 558.

requiring him to nominate a fit person with a stipend to assist in performing those duties. The plaintiff did not appoint a curate and the bishop did so, assigning to him a stipend. The stipend remained unpaid, and the plaintiff was accordingly summoned before the bishop. The plaintiff did not attend and the plaintiff was monished to pay the stipend. He then appeared for the first time and alleged that he had not had a proper opportunity of being heard upon the original application.

Lord Lyndhurst C.B. used this language ¹³³: "Here is a new jurisdiction given—a new authority given: a power is given to the bishop to pronounce a judgment; and, according to every principle of law and equity, such judgment could not be pronounced, or, if pronounced, could not for a moment be sustained, unless the party in the first instance had the opportunity of being heard in his defence, which in this case he had not; and not only no charge is made against him which he had an opportunity of meeting, but he has not been summoned that he might meet any charge."

Bayley B. said ¹³⁴: "Upon the general principles of law, it would have been essential, if the bishop had proceeded by way of affidavit, to have given the opposite party an opportunity of being heard. When the bishop proceeds on his own knowledge, I am of opinion also that it cannot possibly, and within the meaning of this Act, appear to the satisfaction of the bishop, and of his own knowledge, unless he gives the party an opportunity of being heard, in answer to that which the bishop states on his own knowledge to be the foundation on which he proceeds. . . . It would be quite sufficient if the bishop were to call the party before him, and to state to him the grounds on which he thought the duties were inadequately performed, by reason of his negligence; and he should have asked whether he had or had not any grounds on which he could answer that charge; but, is it not a common principle in every case which has in itself the character of a judicial proceeding, that the party against whom the judgment is to operate should have an opportunity of being heard?"

It is true that emphasis is laid on the judicial character of the proceedings in the view of both learned judges, but it is not clear to me that it could not be said in that case that the bishop was acting administratively. The situation under the Act under which the bishop was exercising his powers was not unlike

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Hodson.

¹³³ 2 C. & J. 558, 577.¹³⁴ Ibid. 578-579.

H. L. (E.) 1963 that of the watch committee here exercising powers under another Act, and it so happens that the charge involved, that of negligence, was the same in each case.

RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.
—
Lord Hodson.
—

The matter which, to my mind, is relevant in this case is that where the power to be exercised involves a charge made against the person who is dismissed, by that I mean a charge of misconduct, the principles of natural justice have to be observed before the power is exercised.

One of the difficulties felt in applying principles of natural justice is that there is a certain vagueness in the term, and, as Tucker L.J. said in *Russell v. Duke of Norfolk*¹³⁵: "There are . . . no words which are of universal application to every kind of inquiry and every kind of domestic tribunal. The requirements of natural justice must depend on the circumstances of the case, the nature of the inquiry, the rules under which the tribunal is acting, the subject-matter under consideration and so forth." If it be said that this makes natural justice so vague as to be inapplicable, I would not agree. No one, I think, disputes that three features of natural justice stand out—(1) the right to be heard by an unbiased tribunal; (2) the right to have notice of charges of misconduct; (3) the right to be heard in answer to those charges. The first does not arise in the case before your Lordships, but the two last most certainly do, and the proceedings before the watch committee, therefore, in my opinion, cannot be allowed to stand.

I have reached this conclusion on the construction of the statute with some hesitation not only because of the different view taken by the Court of Appeal, but also because of that taken by my noble and learned friend, Lord Evershed, who also feels that notwithstanding their findings of fault made against the appellant the watch committee had a perfect right to act as they did. In one respect, no doubt, the watch committee were given an absolute discretion to act as they might think, that is to say, I agree that their residual power to dismiss for unfitness may well be unfettered. I do not accept the contention of the appellant that unfitness is to be construed ejusdem generis with negligence: indeed, I think it is the antithesis of negligence and covers cases where there is no fault in the accepted sense of the word in the officer dismissed. A man may be unfit because he is stupid, vacillating, unable to meet a crisis or generally to command others, but I do not see this as the subject-matter of a charge.

¹³⁵ (1948) 65 T.L.R. 225, 231; [1949] 1 All E.R. 109, C.A.

As I have indicated, it is not clear to me that Donovan J. necessarily had anything more in mind than absence of the qualities necessary for leadership when he made the observations he did, but the watch committee went outside unfitness and made findings of negligence and inferentially of perjury without giving the appellant any notice or opportunity of being heard. Even if the residual power to dismiss for unfitness remains unimpaired, one could not conceive any watch committee exercising this power and at the same time leaving the dismissed officer without a pension. This would only be expected where charges as here were made against him. I cannot see that the general words of the statute are, in the light of the authorities as I understand them, wide enough to cover a case of this character where allegations of misconduct are involved resulting in the loss of an office and an element of punishment for offences committed. There is imposed a clog on the discretion in that it cannot be exercised arbitrarily without regard to natural justice. I am aware that what I have said may not be thought to be in line with those cases where wide words have been held sufficient to cover the exercise of an arbitrary power, as in the matter of issue and withdrawal of licences where no question of punishment arises, cf. *Nakkuda Ali v. Jayaratne*¹³⁶ and *Reg. v. Metropolitan Police Commissioner, ex parte Parker*.¹³⁷ It may be that I must retreat to the last refuge of one confronted with as difficult a problem as this, namely, that each case depends on its own facts, and that here the deprivation of a pension without a hearing is on the face of it a denial of justice which cannot be justified upon the language of the section under consideration.

I have little to add to what has already been said about the application of the Police Regulations. It was not contended before your Lordships that the Act of 1882 had been repealed by the Police Act, 1919, or any regulation made thereunder, but it was contended, in my opinion rightly, that where a report or allegation against a police officer has been made, the regulations apply and govern the form of the inquiry which must follow. Here there were no formulated charges, no tribunal appointed for the purpose of hearing the charges and reporting to the police authority a statement of the charges found to be proved.

The judge at the trial and all the members of the Court of Appeal were of opinion that the regulations did not apply because no report or allegation was received from which it appeared that

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Hodson.

¹³⁶ [1951] A.C. 66.¹³⁷ [1953] 1 W.L.R. 1150.

H. L. (E.)
1963

RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.
—
Lord Hodson.

the appellant had committed an offence. My noble and learned friend, Lord Evershed, indeed, is of the same opinion. With all respect, I cannot agree. It is plain that the action taken by the watch committee followed directly from the observations of Donovan J. after the trial at the Old Bailey which were intended for the ears of the appropriate authority and did in fact reach the watch committee before it dismissed the appellant on March 7. The appellant had been acquitted of the offence with which he had been charged at the criminal trial, but, on a fair reading of those observations, which were severely critical of the appellant, it cannot, I think, be said that it did not appear from them that the appellant had committed an offence under the regulations. I need only read two of the offences named in the Discipline Code set out in the First Schedule to the Regulations:

“ 1. *Discreditable conduct*, that is to say, if a member of a police force acts in . . . any manner prejudicial to discipline or reasonably likely to bring discredit on the reputation of the force or of the police service.”

“ 4. *Neglect of duty*, that is to say, if a member of a police force—(a) neglects, or without good and sufficient cause omits promptly and diligently to attend to or carry out anything which is his duty as a constable. . . .”

It is difficult to see how any action would be taken in any event in respect of breaches of the Police Discipline Code without a report or allegation of some kind being made, and I am quite unable to accept the submission that something different, perhaps of a formal nature or some complaint from an extra-judicial source, is necessary before there can be said to be a report or allegation. Streatfeild J. accepted the submission of counsel for the watch committee that their action arose, not as a result of any report or allegation, but from the knowledge which was common to them and the country as a whole that the appellant was unfit for office.

I am unable to accept that this was the position. The watch committee did not act solely on the ground that the appellant was unfit for office irrespective of any offence he might have committed, as their finding shows. They found him guilty of offences which were founded on a report or allegation which they had received from the learned judge who had presided at the trial and certain statements made by members of the committee and the Town Clerk. I have not taken into account any other reports or allegations, for whatever the watch committee may have known

personally about the trial they did not have a transcript of the evidence, it now appears, until after they had given their decision on March 7. There is, I should add, no substance in the point taken that the reference to a copy of the report or allegation on which the charge is based contained in regulation 4 of S.I. 1952 No. 1706 shows that there must be a written report or allegation *ab initio*. No doubt an oral allegation will have to be reduced to writing, but it may well originate as an oral statement, as it did in this case, before the transcript of the observations of Donovan J. was sent to the watch committee.

Once the position is reached that the Police Regulations apply as, in my opinion, they did, it is clear that no attempt was made by the watch committee to follow the regulations. These have been set out in detail by my noble and learned friend, Lord Morris of Borth-y-Gest, whose judgment I have had the opportunity of reading and with which I respectfully agree. As he says, and the Court of Appeal would have taken the same view if they had regarded the Police Regulations as applicable, the watch committee disregarded the regulations and did not begin to comply with them.

On both grounds, therefore, failing to comply with the requirements of natural justice and failure to comply with the Police Regulations, I would hold that the decision of the watch committee to dismiss the appellant taken on March 7, 1958, was invalid.

That is not an end of the matter, for the appellant did not let matters rest but appealed to the Home Secretary as he was entitled to do under the Police (Appeals) Act, 1927, from the dismissal under section 191 of the Act of 1882. Thus it is said, since the decision of the Home Secretary by virtue of the Police (Appeals) Act was final the appellant had waived his right to bring an action in the courts alleging that invalidity. I doubt whether any question of waiver arises, but I appreciate the force of the opinion expressed by my noble and learned friend, Lord Evershed, that if Parliament has stated that the appeal is final that is an end of the matter and the appellant cannot, as it were, start again and by an action for a declaration seek to undermine the decision from which he has unsuccessfully appealed. The answer to this point is, I think, and here again I find myself in disagreement with the Court of Appeal as well as with my noble and learned friend, Lord Evershed, that the decision of March 7, 1958, taken by the watch committee was at all times a nullity, and

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Hodson

H. L. (E.) 1963 nothing that was done thereafter by way of appeal could give it validity.

RIDGE
v.
BALDWIN.
Lord Hodson.

In all the cases where the courts have held that the principles of natural justice have been flouted, I can find none where the language does not indicate the opinion held that the decision impugned was void. It is true that the distinction between void and voidable is not drawn explicitly in the cases, but the language used shows that where there is a want of jurisdiction as opposed to a failure to follow a procedural requirement the result is a nullity. This was, indeed, decided by the Court of Exchequer in *Wood v. Woad*¹³⁸ where, as here, there was a failure to give a hearing.

In *Spackman v. Plumstead District Board of Works*,¹³⁹ referring to another statement, Lord Selborne said. "There would be no decision within the meaning of the statute if there were anything of that sort done contrary to the essence of justice."

I would apply this language whether the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, or the Police Regulations are to be considered. In either case the watch committee in failing to give a hearing to the appellant acted without jurisdiction.

I would allow the appeal accordingly.

LORD DEVLIN My Lords, I am satisfied that section 191 (4) of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, is wide enough to permit the dismissal of a constable on the grounds of unfitness in the sense of inadequacy as well as on the grounds of negligence or misconduct. The way in which this power may be used has, since 1919, been controlled as to "conditions of service" by regulations made by the Home Secretary under section 4 (1) of the Police Act, 1919, which requires that "every police authority shall comply with the regulations so made." The Police Discipline Regulations, 1952, S.I. 1952 Nos. 1705 and 1706 create a number of disciplinary offences contained in a Discipline Code, and provide in detail for the way in which a charge of such an offence is to be investigated and determined before a decision to dismiss is taken. I do not find it necessary to determine whether before 1919 the power to dismiss for neglect of duty could be exercised administratively and without any sort of judicial inquiry. Nor do I need to decide whether or not the power to dismiss for inadequacy is purely administrative. I am satisfied that in all

¹³⁸ L.R. 9 Ex. 190.

¹³⁹ L.R. 10 App.Cas. 229, 240.

matters to which the regulations apply the power to dismiss must be exercised in accordance with them.

It is argued that the regulations do not apply in the present case for two reasons. It is said in the first place that the Discipline Code is expressed in phraseology unsuited to the activities of chief constables, and in particular does not cover the gravamen of the charge against the appellant as indicated by Donovan J., which was that he was revealed by his conduct as a bad example to and a bad influence on the Brighton constabulary. Undoubtedly the code appears to be drafted with the lower ranks in mind. But by S.I. 1952 No. 1706 it is expressly made applicable to chief constables, and it must be construed accordingly. It contains a number of specific offences which a chief constable could hardly commit, but also a number which he certainly could. There are specific matters put against the appellant in this case which I think certainly fall under the head of "discreditable conduct," if not also of "neglect of duty." In my judgment, the Disciplinary Code should be regarded as a compendium covering all misconduct and neglect of duty in the case of all ranks from chief constable downwards. I find it impossible to believe that there was intended to be a residue of neglect to be dealt with at large and in relation to which the offender is deprived of the protection afforded by the regulations. If a case of inefficiency or inadequacy can be made without proof of misconduct or neglect, the regulations do not apply; but if the case involves an allegation (and I use that word, as will be seen hereafter in its widest sense) of a disciplinary offence the procedure laid down by the regulations must be followed.

This, in my opinion, is the result of the impact of the Act of 1919 on the earlier one of 1882. This division of the power under the Act of 1882 is in practice less inconvenient than it might sound. In and before 1919 there was a power, such as is now contained in the Police Pensions Act, 1948, s. 1 (1) (c), to provide by regulation for cases in which policemen "may be required" to retire otherwise than on the ground of misconduct." It is difficult to believe that the power of summary dismissal would now be exercised in any case in which no fault is alleged, so that in practice the power under section 191 (4) has become a controlled one.

Legally, however, the power remains and can be used. It is unnecessary to consider whether or not it could have been used in this case because one of the grounds given for the appellant's dismissal was "neglect of duty." The watch committee ought

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Devlin.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Devlin.

not to have reached a decision on this ground without following the regulations, unless it can be said (and this is the second point to be considered) that the regulations are by their own terms inapplicable on the facts of this case. It is argued that article 2 requires that before the procedure laid down can be instituted "a report or allegation" must be made; and that where, as in the present case, a matter comes to the knowledge of the watch committee as one of public notoriety, the regulations do not apply. I need not elaborate on the extraordinary results—my noble and learned friends, Lord Reid and Lord Morris of Borth-y-Gest, have mentioned them—which, as it seems to me, would follow if the protection against dismissal depends on whether or not the supposed misdemeanours of a police officer have been reported in the press. Such a construction ought not to be put on article 2 unless the language compels it, and, in my opinion, the language of the article does not. I think that the word "allegation" is to be given a wide meaning. The main object of article 2, as is shown by the introductory words italicised in S.I. 1952 No. 1706, is not to provide for some formal initiation of proceedings, equivalent to a writ of summons or an information, but to ensure that an officer is told of any allegation made against him so that nothing is done behind his back. I do not see how the watch committee can deal with any disciplinary matter unless an allegation of some sort is made, even if it be only by one of their own number; and I think it fair to assume that the word is chosen as the widest one that could be thought of to comprehend every way in which such proceedings could be started.

It is not disputed that if the regulations are applicable, as I think they are, they were not complied with. On this basis two further questions arise. The first is whether it is open to the House to question the decision of the watch committee on this ground, and here I agree entirely with the conclusion reached by my noble and learned friend, Lord Morris of Borth-y-Gest, that it is. The second is what is the effect of non-compliance upon the decision. It is argued for the appellant that the effect is to avoid *ab initio* the decision of the committee. That must mean that the committee had no statutory authority to make any decision at all. If they had, then, although the decision they made might be a bad one and one that could be quashed by the court by virtue of its supervisory jurisdiction over the proceedings of inferior tribunals, it would not be void *ab initio* but would be good until quashed. To make it void *ab initio* there must be some

condition precedent to the conferment of authority on the committee which has not been fulfilled. It is argued that compliance with the regulations is a condition precedent. It is not expressly made so, and I am not prepared to make the implication. I am very reluctant to imply such a condition where none is expressed, for the utter avoidance of a decision of this sort is a very grave matter. All that has been done on the face of it falls to the ground. Even if the appellant were satisfied with it, it could be impugned by any third party. The court would have no discretion to quash or not to quash. It can only declare to be a nullity that which in law has never been done at all.

I see no reason, therefore, why I should do more than read the regulations into the Act of 1882, not as a condition precedent to the power to dismiss, but simply as rules that the committee is required to observe. I do not hold that compliance with all the rules is by implication a condition precedent to the power to dismiss under section 191 (4). But, if one of the regulations itself imposes expressly a condition precedent, it is another matter. I am driven to the conclusion that article 11 (1) does. Article 5 provides that the case shall be heard by a tribunal appointed by the police authority and article 11 (1) provides that "the decision" of the police authority on receipt of the report of the tribunal "shall be either to dismiss the case or to impose" various punishments, including dismissal. I cannot regard the power of dismissal under article 11 (1) as something distinct from the power of dismissal under section 191 (4), and I think that the effect of article 11 (1) is to make the power to dismiss conditional upon the receipt of the report. I do not say that any defect in a report would invalidate a dismissal. But where, as here, there has been no report at all and no inquiry to substantiate one, I think that the statutory authority to dismiss never was created so that the act of dismissal was a nullity. If it was a nullity, it is not seriously argued that any subsequent proceedings before the Secretary of State could bring it to life. The result, in my opinion, is that your Lordships should allow the appeal and declare the dismissal to be void.

My Lords, I cannot say that I regard this result as altogether satisfactory. It is not that I regard the watch committee's decision as inevitably right or as one that can be faulted only on the ground that justice has not appeared to be done. The appellant has not seriously complained about being put out of office; and since he has told your Lordships that he will not seek to be

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE

v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Devlin.

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Devlin.

reinstated, it is permissible for me to say that I think the decision on that point to have been inevitable. But he could, instead of being dismissed, have been compelled to retire and thus saved some or all of his pension rights. That is an issue of substance deserving of careful consideration. What is unfortunate about the result is that it means that during the whole time taken up in the elucidation of this difficult point of law, the appellant has legally been in office and entitled to the appropriate emoluments. That would be so, I suppose, even if he had been in profitable employment elsewhere, for his claim would be for salary and not for damages for wrongful dismissal. Whatever course is now taken, the appellant is likely to reap a substantial benefit from the fact that the committee fell into the pardonable error (pardonable if only because their view of the law was the same as that taken by all the Lords Justices in the Court of Appeal) that they were entitled to deal with this matter administratively and in their unfettered discretion.

It can be said with much force that all this is the result of ousting the ordinary jurisdiction of the courts. If the statute was drafted so as to make a dismissal, as the common law does in contracts of service, effective whether rightful or wrongful and to give compensation for wrongful dismissal, the issue would have been tried by an ordinary court of law and the appellant would have got no more and no less than his deserts. But the statute gives the judicial power to a committee or tribunal. If the object of that were to make one side a judge in its own cause, I should not be sad to see it miscarry. But the object here is the creation of a special code, stricter in some respects at least than the ordinary obligations of a contract of service, and of an independent tribunal to aid in its administration.

Such tribunals must always be subject to the supervisory jurisdiction of the High Court. But it does not by any means follow that a defect of natural justice sufficiently grave to be a ground for quashing the resulting decision inevitably leads, as in the present case, to a declaration that the decision is void ab initio. It is necessary always to bear in mind the distinction so clearly drawn by Lord Sumner in *Rex v. Nat Bell Liquors Ltd.*¹⁴⁰ between a wrong exercise of a jurisdiction which a judge has and a usurpation of a jurisdiction which he has not. If there is no jurisdiction, the decision is a nullity, whether the court quashes or not. If there is jurisdiction but there has been a miscarriage of natural

¹⁴⁰ [1922] 2 A.C. 128, 151.

justice, the decision stands good until quashed. The occurrence of a miscarriage does not require the court to quash if it is satisfied that justice can be done in some other way. The court in a case like the present, for example, if the decision had been voidable and not void, might have left the appellant to his remedy in damages, if any. Your Lordships heard some argument about whether the court could, if it exercised its discretion to quash, do so on terms which would in effect have put the parties back into the position in which they would have been if the proper procedure had been followed from the outset. I need not say more than that I should be prepared to listen to such a contention in an appropriate case, and I should certainly be glad if the court had the power to do justice in that sort of way when reviewing the decisions of inferior tribunals.

In the view that I take of this case there is not much that I can usefully say about the principles of natural justice and their application to the procedure under section 191 (4). Whether or not they are to be applied to any statutory procedure depends upon an implication to be drawn from the statute itself; and the question whether such an implication should be drawn in this case cannot be answered without a consideration of the Police Act, 1919, and the regulations made thereunder, from which section 191 (4) cannot be divorced. Since the regulations themselves prescribe the rules of justice that are to be followed, it seems to me that there is nothing to be gained by seeking to ascertain what the position would be if the Discipline Code did not apply.

There are three points, however, on which I desire to comment. First, I express no dissent from the view that, if section 191 (4) stood alone, the decision to be made under it is not purely administrative. Secondly, I do most emphatically dissent from the view that natural justice did not require the watch committee to hear the appellant because, as was said, he had had a full opportunity of putting his case before the trial judge. The appellant was not and could not have been compelled to put any case at all before the trial judge; he was there to answer an indictment on trial by jury. It would be quite wrong if an accused was to be embarrassed in the conduct of his defence on a criminal charge by the reflection that if he did not also satisfy the trial judge about the propriety of his actions in other respects, it might thereafter be the worse for him. Thirdly, if there was, apart from the regulations, a miscarriage of justice in this case (and I think on the whole that there was), I agree with the opinion of my noble

H. L. (E.)

1963

RIDGE
v.

BALDWIN.

Lord Devlin.

H. L. (E.) and learned friend, Lord Evershed, for the reasons which he has
 . 1963 given that the miscarriage rendered the committee's decision
 voidable and not null and void ab initio.

RIDGE
 v.
 BALDWIN.

I agree with the order proposed by my noble and learned friend
 on the Woolsack.

Appeal allowed.

Solicitors: *Haslewoods for Bosley & Co., Brighton; Sharpe,
 Pritchard & Co. for the Town Clerk, Brighton.*

F. C.

P. C.* MISTRY AMAR SINGH APPELLANT;
 AND
 1963
 July 22. SERWANO WOFUNIRA KULUBYA RESPONDENT.

ON APPEAL FROM THE COURT OF APPEAL FOR EASTERN AFRICA.

*Eastern Africa — Uganda — Land transfer — Mailo land — Leased by
 registered proprietor to non-African — Absence of necessary statutory
 consent — Lessor's claim to possession — Lessee in illegal occupation —
 Parties not in pari delicto — Public policy — Land Transfer Ordinance
 (Laws of Uganda, 1951 Rev., c. 114), s. 2.*

*Ex turpi causa non oritur actio — Land — Claim to possession — Land
 illegally leased by plaintiff — Uganda.*

The respondent, an African, who was the registered proprietor of certain "mailo" lands, purported by three agreements to lease the lands to the appellant, an Indian, but the consents of the Governor and the Lukiko to the transactions were not obtained as required by section 2 (d) of the Buganda Possession of Land Law, c. 25 of 1957 Revision, and section 2 of the Uganda Land Transfer Ordinance, c. 114 of the 1951 Revision, the result of the omission being that under the above statutes both the respondent and the appellant had contravened the law and committed punishable offences. On a claim by the respondent, based on his registered ownership of the lands — his claim for rent and mesne profits having been abandoned — to possession and eviction of the appellant, the latter pleaded that the agreements by which the lands were leased were illegal in the absence of the necessary consents and that the respondent could not file an action on them. The respondent acknowledged that the transactions were illegal:—

Held, that the appellant was not, and never had been, in lawful occupation of the lands and could not rely on the illegal agreements

* *Present*: VISCOUNT RADCLIFFE, LORD MORRIS OF BORTH-Y-GEST,
 LORD GUEST, LORD PEARCE and SIR KENNETH GRESSON.

Ridge v Baldwin Hearings

19 Apr 1961 [\[1963\] 1 QB 539](#); [\[1961\] 2 WLR 1054](#); [\[1961\] 2 All ER 523](#); 59 LGR 327, QBD

30 Jan 1962 [\[1963\] 1 QB 539](#); [\[1962\] 2 WLR 716](#); [\[1962\] 1 All ER 834](#); 60 LGR 229, CA

14 Mar 1963 [\[1964\] AC 40](#); [\[1963\] 2 WLR 935](#); [\[1963\] 2 All ER 66](#); 61 LGR 369, HL(E)

Subject Matter

CROWN — Minister, determination by — Whether subject to review by courts — Minister's decision "shall be final" — Dismissal of chief constable by watch committee — Dismissal of appeal by Minister — Watch committee's decision alleged void — Police (Appeals) Act, 1927

[\[1963\] 1 QB 539](#); [\[1961\] 2 WLR 1054](#); [\[1961\] 2 All ER 523](#); 59 LGR 327, QBD

[\[1963\] 1 QB 539](#); [\[1962\] 2 WLR 716](#); [\[1962\] 1 All ER 834](#); 60 LGR 229, CA

[\[1964\] AC 40](#); [\[1963\] 2 WLR 935](#); [\[1963\] 2 All ER 66](#); 61 LGR 369, HL(E)

ELECTION OR OPTION — Appeal — Election to appeal to Minister — Whether jurisdiction of court ousted

[\[1963\] 1 QB 539](#); [\[1961\] 2 WLR 1054](#); [\[1961\] 2 All ER 523](#); 59 LGR 327, QBD

[\[1963\] 1 QB 539](#); [\[1962\] 2 WLR 716](#); [\[1962\] 1 All ER 834](#); 60 LGR 229, CA

[\[1964\] AC 40](#); [\[1963\] 2 WLR 935](#); [\[1963\] 2 All ER 66](#); 61 LGR 369, HL(E)

NATURAL JUSTICE — Opportunity to meet charge — Dismissal of public servant — Chief constable dismissed by watch committee after acquittal on criminal charge — Censure of conduct at trial — No hearing — Whether dismissal an administrative act

[\[1963\] 1 QB 539](#); [\[1961\] 2 WLR 1054](#); [\[1961\] 2 All ER 523](#); 59 LGR 327, QBD

[\[1963\] 1 QB 539](#); [\[1962\] 2 WLR 716](#); [\[1962\] 1 All ER 834](#); 60 LGR 229, CA

[\[1964\] AC 40](#); [\[1963\] 2 WLR 935](#); [\[1963\] 2 All ER 66](#); 61 LGR 369, HL(E)

POLICE — Dismissal of chief constable — Power of watch committee to dismiss for misconduct — Whether power exercisable under Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, or Police Act, 1919 — Whether power to be exercised in accordance with natural justice — Appeal to Home Secretary — Home Secretary's decision final — Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, s 191 (4) — Police Act, 1919 — Police (Discipline) Rules, 1952 — Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables, Assistant Chief Constables and Chief Constables) Regulations, 1952 — Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables, Assistant Chief Constables and Chief Constables) Regulations, 1954 — Police (Appeals) Act, 1927

[\[1963\] 1 QB 539](#); [\[1961\] 2 WLR 1054](#); [\[1961\] 2 All ER 523](#); 59 LGR 327, QBD

[\[1963\] 1 QB 539](#); [\[1962\] 2 WLR 716](#); [\[1962\] 1 All ER 834](#); 60 LGR 229, CA

[\[1964\] AC 40](#); [\[1963\] 2 WLR 935](#); [\[1963\] 2 All ER 66](#); 61 LGR 369, HL(E)

VOID OR VOIDABLE — Decision contrary to natural justice — Appeal to Minister — Whether whole proceedings void

[\[1963\] 1 QB 539](#); [\[1961\] 2 WLR 1054](#); [\[1961\] 2 All ER 523](#); 59 LGR 327, QBD

[\[1963\] 1 QB 539](#); [\[1962\] 2 WLR 716](#); [\[1962\] 1 All ER 834](#); 60 LGR 229, CA

[\[1964\] AC 40](#); [\[1963\] 2 WLR 935](#); [\[1963\] 2 All ER 66](#); 61 LGR 369, HL(E)

Appellate History

Ridge v Baldwin [\[1963\] 1 QB 539](#); [\[1961\] 2 WLR 1054](#); [\[1961\] 2 All ER 523](#); 59 LGR 327, QBD

[Decision of Streatfeild J affirmed](#)

Ridge v Baldwin [\[1963\] 1 QB 539](#); [\[1962\] 2 WLR 716](#); [\[1962\] 1 All ER 834](#); 60 LGR 229, CA

Ridge v Baldwin [\[1963\] 1 QB 539](#); [\[1962\] 2 WLR 716](#); [\[1962\] 1 All ER 834](#); 60 LGR 229, CA

[Decision of the Court of Appeal reversed](#)

Ridge v Baldwin [\[1964\] AC 40](#); [\[1963\] 2 WLR 935](#); [\[1963\] 2 All ER 66](#); 61 LGR 369, HL(E)

Legislation Considered

Statutes

Police Act 1919 (9 & 10 Geo 5, c 46)

Police (Appeals) Act 1927 (17 & 18 Geo 5, c 19)

Municipal Corporations Act 1882 (45 & 46 Vict c 50), s 191 (4)

Statutory Instruments

Police (Discipline) Rules, 1952,

Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables, Assistant Chief Constables and Chief Constables) Regulations, 1954(SI 1954/1688),
Police (Discipline) (Deputy Chief Constables, Assistant Chief Constables and Chief Constables) Regulations, 1952(SI 1952/1706),

Cases Considered

Cases considered in: Ridge v Baldwin [1964] AC 40; [1963] 2 WLR 935; [1963] 2 All ER 66; 61 LGR 369, HL(E)

- ✓ | Annamunthodo v Oilfield Workers' Trade Union[1961] AC 945; [1961] 3 WLR 650; [1961] 3 All ER 621, PC Applied
- ! | Nakkuda Ali v M F De S Jayaratne[1951] AC 66, PC Distinguished
- | R v Church Assembly Legislative Committee, Ex parte Haynes Smith[1928] 1 KB 411, DC Dicta of Lord Hewart CJ considered; [1928] 1 KB 411, 415
- | R v Electricity Comrs, Ex parte London Electricity Joint Committee Co (1920) Ltd[1924] 1 KB 171, CA Dicta of Atkin J considered; [1924] 1 KB 171, 205
- ✓ | De Verteuil v Knaggs[1918] AC 557, PC Applied
- | Lapointe v L' Association de Bienfaisance et de Retraite de la Police de Montréal[1906] AC 535, PC Considered
- | Fisher v Jackson[1891] 2 Ch 84, Ch D Considered
- | Spackman v Plumstead District Board of Works 10 App Cas 229; 10 AppCas 229, HL Considered
- | Osgood v NelsonLR 5 HL 636, HL Considered
- | Bagg's Case (1615) 11 CoRep 93b Considered
- | Wood v Woad (1874) LR 9 Ex 190 Considered
- | Ramshay, Ex parte(1852) 18 QB 173 Considered
- | R v Metropolitan Police Comr, Ex parte Parker[1953] 1 WLR 1150, QBD Considered

Cases considered in: Ridge v Baldwin [1963] 1 QB 539; [1962] 2 WLR 716; [1962] 1 All ER 834; 60 LGR 229, CA

- ! | Annamunthodo v Oilfield Workers' Trade Union[1961] AC 945; [1961] 3 WLR 650; [1961] 3 All ER 621, PC Distinguished
- ✓ | Wallwork v Fielding[1922] 2 KB 66, CA Applied
- ! | De Verteuil v Knaggs[1918] AC 557, PC Distinguished
- ! | Andrews v Mitchell[1905] AC 78, HL Distinguished

Cases considered in: Ridge v Baldwin [1963] 1 QB 539; [1961] 2 WLR 1054; [1961] 2 All ER 523; 59 LGR 327, QBD

- | Wallwork v Fielding[1922] 2 KB 66, CA Considered

Cases considered in: Ridge v Baldwin [1962] 2 WLR 716, CA; [1963] 1 QB 539; [1964] AC 40; [1961] 2 WLR 1054; [1963] 2 WLR 935, HL(E)

- | Hogg v Scott[1947] KB 759, KBD Considered
- ✓ | Cooper v Wilson[1937] 2 KB 309, CA Applied

Subsequent Consideration

Cases subsequently considering: Ridge v Baldwin [1964] AC 40; [1963] 2 WLR 935; [1963] 2 All ER 66; 61 LGR 369, HL(E)

- ✓ | Applied in McLaughlin v Governor of the Cayman Islands[2007] UKPC 50; [2007] 1 WLR 2839, PC
- | Considered in Irani v Southampton and South West Hampshire Health Authority[1985] ICR 590, Ch D
- ✓ | Applied in R v East Berkshire Health Authority, Ex parte Walsh[1985] QB 152; [1984] 3 WLR 818; [1984] ICR 743; [1984] 3 All ER 425, CA
- ✓ | Applied in Chief Constable of the North Wales Police v Evans[1982] 1 WLR 1155; [1982] 3 All ER 141, HL(E)
- ✓ | Applied in R v British Broadcasting Corpn, Ex parte Lavelle[1983] 1 WLR 23; [1983] ICR 99; [1983] 1 All ER 241, QBD
- ✓ | Applied in R v Board of Visitors of Hull Prison, Ex parte St Germain[1979] QB 425; [1979] 2 WLR 42; [1979] 1 All ER 701; 68 Cr App R 212, CA
- | Considered in McInnes v Onslow-Fane[1978] 1 WLR 1520; [1978] 3 All ER 211, Ch D
- ✓ | Dicta of Lord Reid applied inBushell v Secretary of State for the Environment(1977) 76 LGR 460, QBD
- ✓ | Dicta of Lord Reid applied inR v Hillingdon London Borough Council, Ex parte Royco Homes Ltd[1974] QB 720; [1974] 2 WLR 805; [1974] 2 All ER 643; 72 LGR 516, DC
- | Considered in Leary v National Union of Vehicle Builders[1971] Ch 34; [1970] 3 WLR 434; [1970] 2 All ER 713; 9 KIR 136, Ch D
- ✓ | Dicta of Lord Reid applied; [1964] AC 40, 65 inSchmidt v Secretary of State for Home Affairs[1969] 2 Ch 149; [1969] 2 WLR 337; [1969] 1 All ER 904, CA
- ✓ | Applied in John v Rees[1970] Ch 345; [1969] 2 WLR 1294; [1969] 2 All ER 274, Ch D
- ✓ | Applied in Pillai v Singapore City Council[1968] 1 WLR 1278, PC
- | Considered in Durayappah v Fernando[1967] 2 AC 337; [1967] 3 WLR 289; [1967] 2 All ER 152, PC
- ✓ | Applied inShareef v Comr for Registration of Indian and Pakistani Residents[1966] AC 47; [1965] 3 WLR 704, PC

- ✓ | [Followed in](#) [Disher v Disher](#) [1965] P 31; [1964] 2 WLR 21; [1963] 3 All ER 933, DC
- ✓ | [Applied in](#) [R v Assistant Comr of Police of the Metropolis, Ex parte Howell](#) [1985] RTR 181
- ✓ | [Dicta of Lord Reid applied in](#) [Lovelock v Secretary of State for Transport](#) [1979] RTR 250, CA
- ✓ | [Applied in](#) [Stevenson v United Road Transport Union G B H Dillon](#) [1977] ICR 893, CA
- ✓ | [Applied in](#) [Fullbrook v Berkshire Magistrates' Courts Committee](#) (1970) 69 LGR 75
- ✓ | [Dicta of Lord Reid applied in](#) [In re Pergamon Press Ltd](#) [1970] 3 WLR 792, CA

Cases citing

Cases citing: [Ridge v Baldwin](#) [1963] 1 QB 539; [1961] 2 WLR 1054; [1961] 2 All ER 523; 59 LGR 327, QBD

[In re Meyer](#) [1971] P 298; [1971] 2 WLR 401; [1971] 1 All ER 378, PDA

[R \(Thapa\) v Secretary of State for the Home Department](#) [2014] EWHC 659 (Admin); [2014] 1 WLR 4138; [2014] WLR (D) 133, QBD

Cases citing: [Ridge v Baldwin](#) [1963] 1 QB 539; [1962] 2 WLR 716; [1962] 1 All ER 834; 60 LGR 229, CA

[In re Pergamon Press Ltd](#) [1970] 1 WLR 1075; [1970] 2 All ER 449, Ch D

[R v National Insurance Comr, Ex parte Viscusi](#) [1974] 1 WLR 646; [1974] 2 All ER 724; 16 KIR 197, CA

Cases citing: [Ridge v Baldwin](#) [1964] AC 40; [1963] 2 WLR 935; [1963] 2 All ER 66; 61 LGR 369, HL(E)

[102 Social Club and Institute Ltd v Bickerton](#) [1977] ICR 911, EAT

[A v HM Treasury](#) (1979) [1979] 1 WLR 1056; [1979] 2 All ER 586, QBD

[A v HM Treasury](#) (Nos 1 and 2) [2010] UKSC 5; [2010] 2 AC 534; [2010] 2 WLR 378; [2010] 4 All ER 745; [2010] 4 All ER 829; [Case details](#), SC(E)

[Al Rawi v Security Service](#) [2011] UKSC 34; [2012] 1 AC 531; [2011] 3 WLR 388; [2012] 1 All ER 1; [2011] WLR (D) 228; [Case details](#), SC(E)

[Alexander v Standard Telephones & Cables Plc](#) [1990] ICR 291, Ch D

[Amey Highways Ltd v West Sussex County Council](#) [2019] EWHC 1291 (TCC); [2019] PTSR 1995; [2019] WLR(D) 302, QBD

[Attorney General's Reference \(No 2 of 2001\)](#) [2003] UKHL 68; [2004] 2 AC 72; [2004] 2 WLR 1; [2004] 1 All ER 1049; [2004] 1 Cr App R 317, HL(E)

[Attorney-General of Hong Kong v Ng Yuen Shiu](#) [1983] 2 AC 629; [1983] 2 WLR 735; [1983] 2 All ER 346, PC

[Attorney-General of St Christopher, Nevis and Anguilla v Reynolds](#) [1980] AC 637; [1980] 2 WLR 171; [1979] 3 All ER 129, PC

[Attorney-General v Ryan](#) [1980] AC 718; [1980] 2 WLR 143, PC

[Bancoult \(Louis Olivier\) \(R on the application of\) v Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs](#) [2006] EWHC 1038 (Admin), QBD

[Banks v Kingston upon Thames Royal London Borough Council](#) [2008] EWCA Civ 1443; [2009] PTSR 1354; [2009] LGR 536, CA

[Boddington v British Transport Police](#) [1998] UKHL 13; [1999] 2 AC 143; [1998] 2 WLR 639; [1998] 2 All ER 203, HL(E)

[Breen v Amalgamated Engineering Union](#) [1971] 2 QB 175; [1971] 2 WLR 742; [1971] 1 All ER 1148; 10 KIR 120, CA

[Brown v Southall & Knight](#) [1980] ICR 617, EAT

[Calvin v Carr](#) [1980] AC 574; [1979] 2 WLR 755; [1979] 2 All ER 440, PC

[Century National Merchant Bank and Trust Co Ltd v Davies](#) [1998] AC 628; [1998] 2 WLR 779, PC

[Chief Constable of the North Wales Police v Evans](#) [1982] 1 WLR 1155; [1982] 3 All ER 141, HL(E)

[Cosar v Governor of HMP Wandsworth](#) [2020] EWHC 1142 (Admin); [2020] 1 WLR 3846; [2020] WLR (D) 301; [2020] ACD 80, DC

[Council of Civil Service Unions v Minister for the Civil Service](#) [1985] AC 374; [1984] 3 WLR 1174; [1985] ICR 14; [1984] 3 All ER 935, HL(E)

[Crosbie \(R on the application of\) v Secretary Of State For Defence](#) [2011] EWHC 879 (Admin), QBD

[Crédit Suisse v Allerdale Borough Council](#) [1997] QB 306; [1996] 3 WLR 894; [1996] 4 All ER 129; [1996] 2 Lloyd's Rep 241; 94 LGR 628, CA

[Delaney v Staples \(trading as De Montfort Recruitment\)](#) [1991] 2 QB 47; [1991] 2 WLR 627; [1991] ICR 331; [1991] 1 All ER 609; The Times, 9 January 1991, CA

[Dietmann v Brent London Borough Council](#) [1987] ICR 737, QBD

[Dymoke v Association for Dance Music Physiotherapy UK Ltd](#) [2019] EWHC 94 (QB), QBD

[Eastwood v Magnox Electric plc](#) [2004] UKHL 35; [2005] 1 AC 503; [2004] 3 WLR 322; [2004] ICR 1064; [2004] 3 All ER 991, HL(E)

[Eclairs Group Ltd v JKC Oil & Gas plc](#) [2013] EWHC 2631 (Ch); [2014] Bus LR 18; [2013] WLR (D) 373, Ch D

[Eves v Hambros Bank \(Jersey\) Ltd](#) [1996] 1 WLR 251, PC

[Ewing \(Terence Patrick\) \(2\) Prankerd \(Peter Henry\) \(3\) Prankerd \(Patricia Yvonne\) \(R on the application of\) v Department of Constitutional Affairs](#) [2006] EWHC 504 (Admin), QBD

[Fairmount Investments Ltd v Secretary of State for the Environment](#) [1976] 1 WLR 1255; [1976] 2 All ER 865; 75 LGR 33, HL(E)

[Furnell v Whansare High Schools Board](#) [1973] AC 660; [1973] 2 WLR 92; [1973] 1 All ER 400, PC

[Gaiman v National Association for Mental Health](#) [1971] Ch 317; [1970] 3 WLR 42; [1970] 2 All ER 362, Ch D

[General Electric Co Ltd v Price Commission](#) [1974] ICR 609, QBD

[Geys v Société Générale, London Branch](#) [2012] UKSC 63; [2013] 1 AC 523; [2013] 2 WLR 50; [2013] ICR 117; [2013] 1 All ER 1061; [2012] WLR (D) 394; [Case details](#), SC(E)

[Gilham v Ministry of Justice](#) [2017] EWCA Civ 2220; [2018] ICR 827; [2018] 3 All ER 521; [2017] WLR (D) 856, CA

Glynn v Keele University[1971] 1 WLR 487; [1971] 2 All ER 89, Ch D

Green v Hampshire County Council[1979] ICR 861, Ch D

Gregory v Turner[2003] EWCA Civ 183; [2003] 1 WLR 1149; [2003] 2 All ER 1114, CA

Gregory v Turner[2003] EWCA Civ 183, CA

Hazell v Hammersmith and Fulham London Borough Council[1990] 2 QB 697; [1990] 2 WLR 1038; [1990] 3 All ER 33; 88 LGR 433; The Times, 26 February 1990, CA

Hazell v Hammersmith and Fulham London Borough Council[1990] 2 QB 697; [1990] 2 WLR 17; [1990] 3 All ER 33; 88 LGR 433, DC

Hill v C A Parsons & Co Ltd[1972] Ch 305; [1971] 3 WLR 995; [1971] 3 All ER 1345; 12 KIR 135, CA

Hounslow London Borough Council v Twickenham Garden Developments Ltd[1971] Ch 233; [1970] 3 WLR 538, Ch D

Howard (R on the application of) v Official Receiver[2013] EWHC 1839 (Admin), QBD

In re Evans[1994] 1 WLR 1006; [1994] 3 All ER 449, HL(E)

In re Golden Chemical Products Ltd[1976] Ch 300; [1976] 3 WLR 1; [1976] 2 All ER 543, Ch D

In re Jacobs (A Bankrupt)[1999] 1 WLR 619; [1998] 3 All ER 250, Ch D

In re Pergamon Press Ltd[1971] Ch 388; [1970] 3 WLR 792; [1970] 3 All ER 535, CA

Irani v Southampton and South West Hampshire Health Authority[1985] ICR 590, Ch D

Jayawardane v Silva[1970] 1 WLR 1365, PC

John v Rees[1970] Ch 345; [1969] 2 WLR 1294; [1969] 2 All ER 274, Ch D

Johnson v Unisys Ltd[2001] UKHL 13; [2003] 1 AC 518; [2001] 2 WLR 1076; [2001] ICR 480; [2001] 2 All ER 801, HL(E)

Krebs v NHS Commissioning Board[2013] EWHC 3474 (Admin), QBD

L (R on the application of) v West London Mental Health NHS Trust[2012] EWHC 3200 (Admin), QBD

Law v National Greyhound Racing Club Ltd[1983] 1 WLR 1302; [1983] 3 All ER 300, CA

Leary v National Union of Vehicle Builders[1971] Ch 34; [1970] 3 WLR 434; [1970] 2 All ER 713; 9 KIR 136, Ch D

Leech v Deputy Governor of Parkhurst Prison[1988] AC 533; [1988] 2 WLR 290; [1988] 1 All ER 485, HL(E)

Lewis v Attorney-General of Jamaica[2001] 2 AC 50; [2000] 3 WLR 1785, PC

Lewis v Heffer [1978] 1 WLR 1061; [1978] 3 All ER 354, CA

Lloyd v McMahon [1987] AC 625; [1987] 2 WLR 821; [1987] 1 All ER 1118; 85 LGR 545, HL(E)

Lunn (R on the application of) v Comrs for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs[2011] EWHC 240 (Admin), QBD

MT (Algeria) v Secretary of State for the Home Department[2007] EWCA Civ 808; [2008] QB 533; [2008] 2 WLR 159; [2008] 2 All ER 786, CA

Mackaill (R on the application of) v Independent Police Complaints Commission[2014] EWHC 3170 (Admin), QBD

Mahon v Air New Zealand Ltd[1984] AC 808; [1984] 3 WLR 884; [1984] 3 All ER 201, PC

Malloch v Aberdeen Corpn[1971] 1 WLR 1578; [1971] 2 All ER 1278, HL(Sc)

Mattu v University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust[2012] EWCA Civ 641; [2013] ICR 270; [2012] 4 All ER 359; [2012] WLR (D) 152, CA

Maxwell v Department of Trade and Industry[1974] QB 523; [1974] 2 WLR 338; [1974] 2 All ER 122, CA

McCabe v Cornwall County Council[2004] UKHL 35; [2005] 1 AC 503; [2004] 3 WLR 322; [2004] ICR 1064; [2004] 3 All ER 991, HL(E)

McClaren v Home Office [1990] ICR 824; [1990] ICR 824, CA

McFadden v Unite the Union[2021] EWCA Civ 199, CA

McInnes v Onslow-Fane [1978] 1 WLR 1520; [1978] 3 All ER 211, Ch D

McKenzie v National Union of Public Employees[1991] ICR 155; The Times, 31 May 1990, Ch D

McLaughlin v Governor of the Cayman Islands[2007] UKPC 50; [2007] 1 WLR 2839, PC

Mukta Ben v Suva City Council[1980] 1 WLR 767, PC

Muse v Brent London Borough Council[2008] EWCA Civ 1447; [2009] PTSR 680, CA

National Crime Agency v Michael Anthony Jardine (Also Known as Michael Anthony Dwyer)[2016] EWCA Civ 941, CA

Norwest Holst Ltd v Secretary of State for Trade[1978] Ch 201; [1978] 3 WLR 73; [1978] 3 All ER 280, CA

O'Rourke v Camden London Borough Council[1998] AC 188; [1997] 3 WLR 86; [1997] 3 All ER 23, HL(E)

Payne v Lord Harris of Greenwich[1981] 1 WLR 754; [1981] 2 All ER 842; [1982] 2 All ER 842, CA

Pearlberg v Varty [1971] 1 WLR 728; [1971] 2 All ER 552, CA

Percy v Board of National Mission of the Church of Scotland[2005] UKHL 73; [2006] 2 AC 28; [2006] 2 WLR 353; [2006] ICR 134; 2006 SC (HL) 1; [2006] 4 All ER 1354; [2006] IRLR 195; The Times, 16 December 2005; The Independent, 20 December 2005, HL(Sc)

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R (Brooke) v Parole Board[2008] EWCA Civ 29; [2008] 1 WLR 1950; [2008] 3 All ER 289, CA

R (Buckinghamshire County Council) v Kingston upon Thames Royal London Borough Council[2011] EWCA Civ 457; [2012] PTSR 854, CA

R (Ewing) v Department for Constitutional Affairs[2006] EWHC 504 (Admin); [2006] 2 All ER 993, QBD

R (Good Law Project Ltd) v Prime Minister[2022] EWHC 298 (Admin), DC

R (Harpers Leisure International Ltd) v Chief Constable of Surrey[2009] EWHC 2160 (Admin); [2010] PTSR 231, QBD

R (Hassett) v Secretary of State for Justice[2017] EWCA Civ 331; [2017] 1 WLR 4750; [2017] WLR (D) 304, CA

R (Howard) v Official Receiver[2013] EWHC 1839 (Admin); [2014] QB 930; [2014] 2 WLR 1518; [2013] CN 997, QBD

R (L) v West London Mental Health NHS Trust[2014] EWCA Civ 47; [2014] 1 WLR 3103; (2014) 137 BMLR 76; [2014] WLR (D) 44; [2014] ACD 79, CA

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Commentary

Blackstone's Civil Practice 2021

Grounds of Judicial Review - Right to a fair hearing

[77.26](#)