McAuslan’s Law & Development: Portrait of a pracademic

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Patrick McAuslan’s Odyssey
12-13 January 2012
Setting the Scene

Law and Development
• Law as a means, end, obstacle or irrelevance to ‘improvement’ of human lives.

Pracademic
• One who makes both practical and academic interventions in a field.

Patrick McAuslan…
Peaceful | Generous | Low Key
the message I [bring] is that law does matter. It matters for the poor because they’re the ones that suffer from abuse of power [when they and bureaucrats] don’t know what their property rights are.
‘Rigid’ revolutionary

People might say I am rigid because I rely on the constitution or on principles.

I start off with the constitution [which is] often full of flowery phrases but its’s there and that’s the last line of defence.

If the constitution says, for example, “Women have equal rights” then that’s your starting point: if some official doesn’t like it you say “I’m sorry but, you know, I can’t draft law contrary to the constitution.”
Self-improver

You do see some consultants that regard local counterparts as a bloody nuisance but as far I’m concerned counterparts are part of the team. We talk together, I listen to them, they make suggestions and I respond. It certainly helps that as a law teacher, part of your job is to listen to people’s ideas and respond. Also [that I started my career] in Dar es Salaam in a position of ignorance.

I can’t think of a job that I haven’t come away from saying

‘Well I’ve learned something from that. This has been a very interesting experience. I’ve learnt something new, I can feed it into what I write, what I teach or just, absorb it and be a better consultant next time around.’
Critical member of the British Empire

I think they gave it to me because I refused to continue a project that was wasting their money.

It is becoming increasingly clear to virtually everyone involved, or taking an intelligent interest, in Afghanistan, except, it would seem, the British Government, that the war in Afghanistan is unwinnable.
Friend \( x \)
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