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# TRIBUNE



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# Letter From The Editor

TRIBUNE welcomed the adoption of the Public Security (Amendment) Act by the NSA on January 31, 1978 because it provides very necessary safeguards for the operation of Emergency Powers in Sri Lanka. It will be recalled that after 1972 or thereabouts, the then Government had refused to provide any opportunity to the Opposition to debate the Emergency which had, for years, become the normal way of government in the island. Everything—from the dissolution of local Government bodies to the promulgations of draconian regulations affecting personal liberty and human rights—was done under the cover and the sanction of the Emergency. This dangerous situation has now been remedied. No Emergency can in future be continued beyond 90 days without a full debate in the NSA and its approval. A government with a majority can always secure the adoption of a resolution to continue the Emergency, but in the course of a debate any government will be compelled to open its eyes to excesses and misdemeanours that may have been committed. In this connection, it is essential to reject the way Singapore operates its Internal Security Act. Singapore is often held up as a model for Sri Lanka to follow in economic development, but its Internal Security Act is a disgrace. The Act, itself, is a travesty of human rights and the rule of law. Amnesty International on February 2, 1978, publicly called upon the Singapore government to release immediately four prisoners of conscience who have now spent fifteen years in prison without trial. On that day, Amnesty International published the second edition of a booklet entitled *Briefing on Singapore* which stated that it was "the beginning of the sixteenth year of detention without trial of three of the political prisoners—Said Zahari, Dr. Lim Hock Siew and Ho Toon Chin—leaders of the now defunct opposition party, the Barisan Sosialis (Socialist Front), who were arrested on 2nd February 1963. A fourth prisoner, Lee Tse Tong, who at the time of his arrest in October 1963 was a Barisan Sosialis member of parliament, has been detained without trial since then under the Banishment Act. The undated briefing paper draws attention to a number of issues of particular concern to AI. The Internal Security Act (ISA), which in practice allows for indefinite detention without trial, has been repeatedly used to repress and discourage opposition and dissent in Singapore. One example of such repression was the arrest on the eve of national elections in December 1976 of an opposition candidate, Shamsudd'in Tung, who is now held under the Internal Security Act. Another case is that of Dr. Poh Soo Kai, an opposition leader who was detained without trial under the act from 1963 to 1973. After his release he continued to criticise the Singapore government for curtailing civil liberties and in particular for its use of the Internal Security Act to detain political opponents and others without trial. He was re-arrested in 1977 and is held once again under the ISA. In February 1977 more arrests took place, among them that of Mr. G. Raman, an outspoken critic of the government and one of the few Singapore lawyers to defend political prisoners. A small group of political prisoners has been held for several years without trial under the Banishment Act. These prisoners, some of whom were formerly held under the Internal Security Act, have consistently refused deportation to China or Malaysia and remain imprisoned in Singapore. In addition there are at all times an indeterminate number of prisoners held for interrogation before being served with detention orders. The justification for the detention of prisoners is often that they have been implicated by the "confessions" of other detainees. Amnesty International does not accept such "confessions" as grounds for detaining political prisoners, particularly as there is considerable evidence that such "confessions" are obtained under extreme pressure. Since the publication of the first edition of the briefing paper in February 1976 human rights violations in Singapore have increased with new arrests, serious and consistent allegations of ill-treatment during interrogation and the continued detention of not less than 70 prisoners without trial. The length of time that many of them have now spent in detention gives cause for grave concern. No formal charges are ever brought against political prisoners and there is no opportunity for the government's allegations concerning prisoners to be tested in a court of law. Amnesty International urges the government of Singapore to present any evidence which it has against political prisoners in open court or to release them immediately and unconditionally." Elsewhere in this issue, we have published the first of four instalments of Amnesty International's "Briefing on Singapore." Readers in Sri Lanka will realise that it will be disastrous for this country to follow Singapore in the matter of Internal Security.

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## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

New Era And  
The Press

Colombo, February 7.

A new era has undoubtedly been ushered in on February 4/5, everything solemn, done with a pervading sense of dignity. Historical perspectives were sustained without the jarring overtures of racial, religious or linguistic chauvinism. The compelling need for national unity and amity was stressed without hurting the self-respect of minority groups and denominations. The way everything was done will help to pave the way for a final solution of the minority problem. For the first time in contemporary times, the declaration that the country will not be divided in terms of race, religion, language or caste found concrete expression in practice, symbolically at least, in the Raja Maha Perahera, by ensuring the participation of all 22 districts (including districts regarded as Tamil or Muslim) and all religious denominations.

The Galle Face Green ceremony was secular and was based mainly from the military, political and administrative traditions derived from the British with quiet interpersing of new Sri Lankan flavouring to give everything a "native" touch. What was significant was that the swearing-in was a simple and secular ceremony. Religious gimmickry, which in the years after Independence and especially in the UF-SLFP period had dominated all "secular" ceremonies, was totally absent. The new era began with religion being accorded its due and honoured place. Mr. Jayawardene and other Buddhist leaders attended an appropriate religious ceremony at a Buddhist temple early that morning before going on the Galle Face Green for the swearing-in and the Parade. Similar religious ceremonies were also held at the same time in Hindu, Muslim and Christian places of worship.

There is no doubt that for the first time since Independence, the most important function of a political nature was on a truly secular democratic basis—appropriate for a Republican Constitution. The Chief

Justice, before whom the new President was sworn in, was a Christian. Some of the Service Commanders and Parade chiefs were Christians. Not very long ago, it was an unwritten imperative that every high office should be held by a Sinhala Buddhist of an appropriate caste. The fact that the J. R. Jayawardene government has decided to break away from this regrettable practice is one of the most important and significant developments of the new era that has been ushered in.

The fact that there were hardly any Tamil officials or officers in noticeable positions during the Galle Face Ceremony was no doubt due to the recruitment and promotion policy of the last government. The fact that no Tamil leaders of stature participated in the Galle Face and other ceremonies was because the TULF decided to keep out of the official functions after felicitating Mr. Jayawardene on his assumption as President in the NSA on February 3. It would have been gracious (and politically wise) for the TULF to have actively and wholeheartedly participated in the official functions and ceremonies. It would have eased many tensions and made lasting solutions possible more expeditiously.

The TULF, unfortunately, has still not developed the maturity to be able to lead all the Tamils. It still continues (decreasingly, fortunately) to tail behind a small strident, slogan-shouting, extremist group that has been able to dominate TULF politics because of the many acts of commission, omission and discrimination perpetrated by previous governments. J. R. Jayawardene has given ample proof that his government has turned away from discrimination and the sooner the TULF responds to this in full measure the better for the country.

In the same way, the other Opposition Parties in the NSA and outside, the SLFP, LSSP and CP should have wished the new President well on the occasion of his assumption of office whilst expressing their reservations and criticising the policies of the government. As long as they say they believe in parliamentary democracy, this is the least they could have done.

Whilst the Galle Face Green ceremonies struck a totally secular, democratic and republican note,

the ceremonies in Kandy recreated the historical greatness of Sri Lanka, emphasising the glories of the Sinhala past without hurting the susceptibilities or the self-respect of the Tamil and other minorities. Ceremonies of this nature in the past were utilised to make minorities feel that they were subservient unwanted people who would be only accorded equality if they were willing to become Sinhalas and Buddhists through the process of genocidal assimilation.

The ceremonies in Kandy on February 5, and more especially the Raja Maha Perahera, is the first serious attempt in this country since Independence to demonstrate that national unity in the modern democratic republican sense was possible whilst maintaining the diversity of cultural heritages, religious beliefs and minority fundamental rights.

We make these observations on the basis of second-hand reports and hearsay. We were unfortunately not accorded any facilities by a helpless and hapless Department of Information to have first-hand impressions of the ceremonies in Colombo and Kandy to write, review and comment on these events in depth, in a way that would have been possible only through personal observations. This is a kind of reportage we ourselves have not done for a long time, but our desire to go back to our speciality in the days of our early journalism, tempered with the mellowness of age, was thwarted by bureaucrats, who are not concerned with the written word that has a chance of surviving the day's headlines.

Elsewhere in this issue we have made a protest about the manner the Press continues to be treated by Bureaucrats. The Sun has taken up this matter in a big way. Very rightly it has drawn attention to the fact that even police officers—except for a few at the very top—treat journalists, as they do other citizens, like dirt. Most of the lower, middle and many of upper police officers still seem to act and behave as if an Emergency is on and they strut about and behave as if the ordinary citizen must cower before them and do their bidding. Most gazetted police officers seem to think they know what is good for the country; and under cover of the magic word "security" they think they can ride roughshod over the rights of

## President's Message

citizens. The incident when a petty police officer dealt with a photographer of the Sun is typical of the attitude and conduct of police officers, especially in the outstations. It is time that police officers get it into their heads that they are servants of the people and not petty tyrants to lord it over the ordinary man while they themselves servilely kowtow to politicians and others in authority. The spirit of the new era must be understood by all bureaucrats, and more especially police officers.

The President's address to the nation from the Pattiruppuwa of the Sri Lanka Dalada Maligawa in Kandy on February 5, reiterated what he said from the same place shortly after the UNP government came to power in July 1977 and he had become the Prime Minister. In his speech on February 5, the President had briefly and concisely summed up what he has been stressing during the time he was the Prime Minister:

The President, Mr. J. R. Jayawardene yesterday gave a solemn pledge to the nation from the Patthiruppuwa of the Sri Dalada Maligawa that he would, as the head of the country and its people, carry out the heavy responsibilities of his office devoid of racial communal or religious bias. He also pledged that it would be his endeavour to bring about unity, peace prosperity and progress to the country. "I want to be the head of a government which will be a government of everybody. I am no longer a political leader but the leader of this nation, its people and the country," the President declared. The President said that when he addressed the nation six months ago as Prime Minister, he set out the program of his United National Party government. The government has already fulfilled some of the promises it gave the people and has also taken steps to fulfil others, he said. "Within the first two months it was regrettable that there was a state of violence and the shedding of blood. I do not know for what reasons human beings sometimes without any reason at all act like animals. If a person does harm to another he must remember that the person who injures or kills may be the father, mother, son or daughter of a fellow human being," the President said. The government was, however, able to contain the situation without the dec-

laration of an emergency and the consequences that flow after such a declaration. "The government declared that its aim was to set up a free and just society. During the last 6 months, it has removed all laws that had enslaved the people. If we look at true democratic freedom of this country today, there is no other country in the world which has given so much freedom. A person has the full right and liberty to walk on the road as a free man. No person will be taken to the fourth floor or Paget Road and held in custody for months and years after this. We have also removed the laws that made it possible for thousands of youths to be held in prison without any charge. They were all released. We have passed a law that an emergency can only be declared with the approval of the National State Assembly and with a two-third majority. We have done this to see that the democratic freedom of the individual are safeguarded. We are aware that our people are facing two main problems—that of unemployment and the high cost of living. When this government took over, thousands of young men and women were walking the streets looking for employment. The cost of living is intolerable. We decided that the only way to solve these two main problems was to provide employment. We have taken steps to solve the problem by accelerating the Mahaweli Scheme. Ten lakhs of new acres of land will come under the plough doubling the country's food production. It will also provide immediate employment to ten lakhs of people. Work on this scheme has already started. Within the next two or three months, we will start the Free Trade Zone and through this we hope to attract Much foreign investment in a bid to earn foreign exchange for this country and stop our perennial begging. Towns close to Colombo like Ja-ela, Wattala, Negombo and Panadura will develop under the zone. We hope to develop the city of Colombo to make it habitable for ten lakhs of people. Through the appointment of District Ministers the government will launch an intensified development program. The United National Party government started on these schemes during the last six months. I assure the people that within a short time they will reap the

benefit of all these schemes."

The President said that he was speaking on this occasion not as the Leader of a political party, or the head of the government but as the head of the nation, its people and the country as a whole. He said that when he was in the Opposition he felt that it was necessary for this country to appoint an elected President with sufficient powers to lead the nation. "Never for a moment on that occasion did I ever think that the people of this country will give me the mandate to be appointed to this high and responsible position. I take this oath and promise the people from this sacred place that I will endeavour to carry out the responsibility of my office for the benefit of every person irrespective of caste, creed, community or religion. I am the leader of 14 million people and I will act without any bias towards anybody. We cannot divide this country into different communities or different governments. We have to realise, that this country needs one leader who should act on behalf of the entire nation if it is to develop" the President said. He said that it was not possible for a President or a Prime Minister to develop a country or make it proper or solve the problems facing the people. The co-operation and unity of all persons is required to achieve this. Before any person gives sermons to another he must live according to the precepts of that sermon. This is the reason that today all Members of his government are called upon to live and act according to a code of conduct. The Lord Buddha in his teachings said that a person is judged not by his birth but by his actions. I as the Head of the nation will live according to these teachings, the President added.

He expressed special concern about the cost of living and unemployment. He said that the FTZ and Mahaweli Diversion Project, together with the Greater Colombo Development Scheme and the Crash Programme to build a 100,000 houses would help to minimise, if not eliminate these problems. He appealed to all people to co-operate with him to make this country a rich and strong nation. There is no doubt that he will get this co-operation immediately and for sometime, but it may wither away if the policies, programmes conduct and behaviour

of his Ministers bring disrepute to the government.

There are, however, happy signs that many Ministers respond to constructive criticism in a way which alone makes democracy meaningful. The manner in which Mr. Premadasa and Mr. Gamini Dissanayake had reacted to certain criticisms in the *Tribune* augurs well for the future of this government and especially the future of the two Ministers concerned. Their response is in sharp contrast to the reactions of some other Ministers of this government—but more especially Ministers of the last regime.

Persons who had known and associated with *Tribune* for nearly two decades, after they became Ministers and MPs in 1970 resented even the mildest constructive criticism and their only response was to banish *Tribune* to the outer darkness and declare the criticisms in the *Tribune* were because the paper had become "reactionary" and that it had become a tool of "sinister forces". Their totally undemocratic response to honest press criticism brought them defeat from which they will find hard to emerge.

In retrospect, it might be mentioned, that until the correct response we have recently received from some Ministers of the present government, the only politician who had reacted in the same way was S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike. We had supported and commended many of his legislative measures, but we had criticised him bitterly over the Sinhala Only and some other policies we regarded as chauvinist. But right up to the time of his assassination he read the *Tribune*, reacted in one way or another to the comments made in its columns by various writers and accorded the paper the rights a political weekly was entitled to enjoy. *Tribune* was even included in Press Delegations to foreign countries. Though *Tribune* was only 2 or 3 years old, at that time, some of its comments were cited by newscasts of the SLBC, as an expression of a different point of view. After Bandaranaike, politicians, MPs, Ministers have use for any paper only if it supported them and echoed their praises. The worst period was in the years of permanent darkness from 1970-1977 during which time *Tribune* had heroi-

cally carried on in spite of many visible and invisible obstacles and harassments (from which we have not yet fully recovered).

A new spirit of press freedom has now dawned in the country. But, only the *Sun-Dawasa* group has begun to appreciate this and has made vast strides to make itself a free press publishing all the news fit to print. It has begun to develop the art of investigative reporting. The *Lake House* and the *Times* group have yet to emancipate themselves from the shadow of official control.

The new Prime Minister, Mr. R. Premadasa, has the good wishes of the nation. He has already succeeded in making Colombo a cleaner and better city and people have confidence that he can get things done. The President has made no changes in the rest of the Cabinet, but he has indicated that he will do so shortly in "consultation with the persons" concerned. It is very essential that changes are made soon in some sensitive areas of work which have serious impact on ordinary people.

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## BUDGET — II \*

### TAX PROPOSALS—1 Indirect Taxes

On November 15, 1977, after the tea interval the Minister of Finance and Planning, Mr. Ronnie de Mel had continued his Budget Speech in the NSA—the longest on record. This week we publish the second part of his Tax proposals relating to Indirect Taxes.

Mr. Speaker, I now come to indirect taxes. In connection with my proposals for economic liberalisation and exchange reform, I have already stated that the Import Tariff and BTT rates will be moderated and rationalised. I now wish to give further details regarding the Business Turnover Tax:

(i) **BUSINESS TURNOVER TAX.** The present operation of the Business Turnover Tax has become somewhat unwieldy and complicated in view of the multiplicity of differing rate-bands

which have increased over the years. At the time the Business Turnover Tax was first introduced in 1964, there was a single flat rate of tax of 1/2 percent for retail goods and 3 percent rate of tax on manufactured goods. This position has changed substantially and at present there are 10 rate bands ranging from 1 percent to 35 percent. A certain amount of progressivity has been built into the rate structure by having increased rates on luxury goods. Since the BTT is levied as a multi-stage tax operating at the manufacturing level as well as at the retail level, its cascading effect on prices and its regressivity have had their adverse impact on the consumer. An elaborate rate structure, such as this, might I dare say, have had its place in the containment of excessive demand in the context of rigid controls and scarcities. But in our new situation where controls are being liberalised, I see no point in keeping the same rate structure. I, therefore, intend modifying these rate bands in order to reduce prices and to enable amount of relief to the consumer. I propose having only three simple rate bands of 1 percent, 5 percent and 10 percent, and all taxable articles will be brought under this, with the exception of tobacco, liquor and the assembly of motor vehicles which would have special rate bands assigned to them. I intend, in particular, reducing all items of food which presently bear tax at 15 percent and 25 percent to 1 percent. This should reduce the prices of these food items considerably. I expect the manufacturers and retailers to pass the benefits of these reductions straightway to the consumer.

A Gazette Extraordinary is being issued tonight giving the new rate schedule. At present a trader or manufacturer having a turnover of Rs. 18,750 for a quarter and having Rs. 75,000 in the aggregate for the year, is liable to Turnover Tax. As a measure of relief to the small trader/manufacturer I propose to raise this exemption limit to a turnover of Rs. 25,000 for a quarter and an aggregate of Rs. 100,000 for the year. Despite the reduction in the rates of BTT, I expect to collect the same revenue as in the pre-budget estimates as a result of the substantially increased turnover consequent to the liberalisation of trade.

(ii) **IMPORT DUTIES.** Mr. Speaker, I have already referred to the fact that with the unification of the exchange rates and import liberalisation, a new import tariff which harmonizes with the new BTT rates would come into effect. The objective of the import liberalization has been the removal of specific import licensing as much as possible, leaving only a very small list of items requiring import licenses. In all cases, protection through a higher tariff has been preferred to protection by import restriction. The tariff would afford the necessary degree of protection which, while ensuring the continued existence of efficient local industries, also ensures that inefficient, poor quality, and unreasonably high priced local production resulting in the exploitation of the consumer does not take place.

To prevent unplanned, haphazard and wasteful creation of unnecessary capacity in any economic sector, new industrial investment will be subject to the prior approval of an Investments Advisory Board to be set up by statute with legal powers. It is also proposed to set up by law, regulatory bodies such as a Fair Trading Practices Commission and an Anti-Monopoly Commission, to safeguard the interests of the consumer. We are determined to remove the ugly face of unbridled capitalism and to have a fair and just society based on democratic socialism.

In the import tariff structure being gazetted tonight, there will be six rate bands—duty free, 5 percent, 12½ percent, 25 percent and 100 percent. Goods have been distributed amongst these rate bands according to the degree of essentiality and processing. Certain basic consumer items like essential foodstuffs and pharmaceuticals have been brought under the lowest rate bands. Adequate protection has been given to local industry by way of a sufficiently high level of tariffs competing import products. The highest rates of duty have been imposed on luxuries.

Mr. Speaker, this exercise in liberalisation of imports and the consequential revisions in the Import Tariff Schedule, you will appreciate, had to be done in a very short period of time. I, therefore, propose to set up a permanent Tariff Commission which will be

entrusted with the task of harmonizing, reviewing and revising the various fiscal levies with special emphasis on import tariff rates. As mentioned before, I expect to collect an additional revenue of Rs. 1,150 million by way of Import Duties in 1978.

(iii) **EXPORT DUTIES.** Mr. Speaker, consequent upon the reform of the exchange system, I propose to adjust export duties applicable to the traditional export crops:

(a) **TEA.** The unification of exchange rates will result in the f.o.b. rupees earning of the industry increasing by a substantial amount. This increase will be utilised both for Government revenue as well as for leaving adequate margins in the hands of the producers for the development of the tea industry, for the establishment of a higher wage level in the tea plantation sector and such consequential increases as may arise in the cost of production. The estimated increase in rupee earnings from tea exports will be around Rs. 2,860 million for 1978.

Consequent to the unification of the exchange rates, the following changes will be made in the rates of tea duties and cesses:—

(i) The Export Duty will be increased to Rs. 75/50 per kilo for Bulk Tea and Rs. 13/50 per kilo for Packetted Teas and Tea Bags. In the case of Instant Tea, there will be concessionary duty at the rate of Rs. 40/- per kilo. (ii) The application of the ad valorem Sales Tax will commence at Rs. 10/15 per kilo. There will be no change in the rate of levy which will remain at one half of the excess over the new commencing point of Rs. 10/15 per kilo but there will be no ceiling limit. (iii) The rate of cess levy will be increased to -/70 cents per kilo.

In order to improve the rate of tea replanting, it is proposed to increase the tea replanting subsidy from Rs. 4,750 per acre to Rs. 6,000 per acre. These new rates will become operative from midnight tonight. The new scale of duties is estimated to yield a total amount of Rs. 3,460 million to Government revenue. This comprises of Rs. 3,046 million by way of export duty and Rs. 414 million ad valorem tea tax. Since the pre-budget estimates of revenue from export duty as well as ad

valorem tax were Rs. 167 million and Rs. 598 million respectively, the additional revenue from duties on tea would amount to Rs. 2,695 million.

Mr. Speaker, the tea industry, for the first time in many years, enjoyed reasonable returns during the first half of 1977 though, even during this period, external prices, in real terms, left much to be desired. A progressive restructuring and re-organisation of the industry is under way and this includes a re-adjustment of priorities and development programmes. In order that the long-term objectives of the industry should be clearly defined, a Master-Plan for the tea industry will be formulated shortly.

The main development programmes for tea are being critically examined and some of these programmes will be funded to a larger extent than in the past. One of the urgent priorities will be the improvement of conditions of workers in the plantation sector and this will include both housing and other facilities. Special attention will also be paid to the small-holders' sector.

Mr. Speaker, our Government will take steps to ensure that the cup of tea will be available to the consumer at a reasonable price. Already, the Janawasama, the State Plantations Corporation and the Sri Lanka Tea Board have commenced a scheme to distribute tea in the domestic market at a reasonable price. Our aim will be to broaden the coverage of this scheme so as to cover the whole country.

In view of the reduction in the price of sugar from Rs. 5/- per lb. to Rs. 3/-, the price of a cup of plain tea and milk tea should decline. If it does not happen our Government will be compelled to take stern measures to bring this about.

(b) **RUBBER.** The unification of the exchange rate also provides an opportunity to restructure the prevalent duties and cesses on rubber and to provide adequate margins to the producer as well as to assist in the rehabilitation of the rubber industry. A new sliding scale of duties has been devised and these duties will become operative from midnight tonight. This revised scale of duties will permit rubber producers to earn margins which

are more favourable than at present. The pre-budget estimate of revenue from rubber export duties is Rs. 287 million. The new sliding scale of duties on rubber is estimated to bring in an additional Rs. 840 million.

Mr. Speaker, the rubber industry has been plagued with low productivity and consequential poor returns to the producer. The main development programme in the rubber industry has been the Rubber Replanting Scheme. The replanting performance has, however, been well below the targets that have been set and the competitive position of the industry has been adversely affected. It is, therefore, proposed as an incentive to replanting, to increase the replanting subsidy from Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 3,000 an acre.

(c) **COCONUT.** The three major coconut kernel products that are exported are desiccated coconut, copra and coconut oil. During the year 1977, the export of coconut oil and copra has not been permitted and only the export of desiccated coconut has been allowed under special permits issued by the Coconut Marketing Board. In the case of desiccated coconut, the millers are given quotas of production by the Coconut Development Authorities, while the Coconut Marketing Board decides on the price and quantity for export. A similar procedure will continue in future in order to ensure that Sri Lanka which is one of the major desiccated coconut producers, obtains the most favourable international market price for this commodity. During the year 1977 only about 28,000 metric tons of desiccated coconut will be exported. However, with the increase in coconut production in 1978 it is estimated that about 40,000 metric tons of desiccated coconut will be available for export. With the unification of the exchange rate the prices of export products will increase substantially. A part of this increase will be siphoned off as Government revenue by way of an ad valorem duty whilst the balance will be given back to the industry to improve the producers margin as well as to enable the producers to meet increased costs of production. It is also intended to commence a programme for replanting and new planting of coconut.

I am imposing an export duty on desiccated coconut at the rate of 60 per cent of the f.o.b. value. This will be brought into effect from midnight to night.

Exports of coconut oil will be regulated in order to keep the prices of coconut and coconut oil in the domestic market at reasonable levels. With the expected increase in production in 1978, it is estimated that about 25,000 tons of coconut oil will be available for export. It is not intended, however, to levy an export duty on coconut oil, but to collect a levy administratively through the Coconut Marketing Board which will purchase oil from oil-millers at certain determined rates, taking into account international market prices of coconut oil and the need to keep the price of coconut oil to the consumer at reasonable levels.

The estimated revenue I hope to raise by these two measures would be Rs. 300 million.

Mr. Speaker, you will thus see that although a large increase in export tax receipts will obtain from these adjustments, we are determined that returns to traditional and other export producers be maintained at adequately remunerative levels.

(d) **EXPORT DUTIES ON NON-TRADITIONAL EXPORTS.** I do not propose to change the present duty structure on the non-traditional exports. However, with the increased incentives in the form of higher rupee earnings, an additional revenue of Rs. 10 million is expected from their source.

(iv) **CIGARETTES.** I have already increased the price of cigarettes with effect from 4th November by -.03 cents by way of an increase of the BTT rate to 20 percent. There will, however, be a slight reduction effected in the excise duty levied on tobacco. The additional revenue I expect to collect by this measure is Rs. 140 million.

(iv) **EXCISE DUTY.** The Excise Duty on arrack manufactured by the State Distilleries Corporation and also molasses arrack will be revised to increase the price of these varieties of arrack by Re. 1/- per bottle. The Excise Duty on beer and on "other country made foreign liquor" will also be revised so as to increase prices by -.50 cents to Re. 1/- per bottle. The price of imported liquor will

also increase due to the revision of the rate of exchange. The additional revenue expected is Rs. 30 million.

(vi) **FOREIGN POSTAL RATES.** Foreign postal rates at current levels, except air parcel rates, have failed to reflect the increased cost of local and foreign conveying and handling charges since the last revision of rates. As a measure of covering these necessary cost increases, some of which represent payments due to other countries, I am revising the foreign aerogramme rates upwards by 50 percent from the present Re. 1/- to Rs. 1/50 while in respect of first class airmail letters, the revised rates will range from 15 to 55 percent, depending on the final destination. Second class air-mail rates would rise by between 20 to 25 percent. However, the price of foreign post-cards will remain unchanged.

Foreign surface rates for letters, printed paper, periodicals, books, pamphlets and small packets will also increase by an average of 50 percent. No change will be made in respect of post-cards, while literature for the blind, up to a maximum 15 pounds will continue to be handled free of charge. Similar increases in rates will apply to foreign surface parcels. All these higher rates, which will take effect from January 1, 1978, would bring in to revenue a total of Rs. 7 million.

There is no change in inland postal rates.

(vii) **TRANSFER TAX ON MOTOR CARS.** A tax of 80 percent of the difference between the landed cost and the appraised value was charged by Finance Act, No. 11 of 1963, on the transfer of a car by an importer within 7 years of such importation. Several persons have resorted to various methods of evasion of this tax and there are a large number of cars which have changed hands without proper registration. I propose to abolish this tax and instead levy a transfer fee of Rs. 5,000 on motor cars 17 cwts. and below in weight and 10,000 on motor cars above 17 cwts. in weight. This transfer fee will be charged on the first transfer after importation. I expect to collect Rs. 10 million as additional revenue from this proposal.

(To be Concluded)

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## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

by ARIEL

### Sadat And The Middle East

Whilst the Sri Lanka government continues to maintain a total and complete silence on the developments in the Middle East, India has reiterated its position in no uncertain terms. Repeatedly, especially after President Sadat had taken the risky path to peace by operating bi-lateral talks with Begin, the Indian External Affairs Minister, Vajpayee has stressed that Israel was an aggressor and that it would have to vacate every inch of occupied land. According to a report in the Madras *Hindu* of January 30, Mr. Vajpayee had stated that, "...aggression should be condemned, whether committed in West Asia or in any corner of India. The Palestinians who had been deprived of their homes, should have the right to return to them he added. Mr. Vajpayee felt that a lasting solution to the problem could not be found or peace ensured in the zone by keeping the Palestine Liberation Organisation out of any negotiations. Urging the Palestinians not to lose hope, Mr. Vajpayee said, "India was with them and was prepared to raise its voice wherever necessary and fight with them shoulder to shoulder....."

In view of the current Sri Lanka silence on the matter and which is being misinterpreted in many quarters as due to the post-July 1977 tilt to the Western world by the UNP government, it is interesting to read what Vajpayee had to say about a similar accusation of a pro-West tilt by the Janata government.

"When the Janata Government took over, there were expectations among some and apprehensions among others that there would be a dramatic change in India's relations with the Arab countries. People thought that as a Jan Sangh member and as one who has had relations with the RSS, he would antagonise the Arab world and wage a war against Pakistan. He declared 'such people do not know me' and added that their hopes and fears were now belied. It

was true that the Government had changed at the Centre, but that did not mean that the ability to see where justice lay would also change. Till 1957, the Jan Sangh had declared that Israel had no right to retain occupied lands. But now there has been a change in India's policy of friendship with the Arabs. Mr. Vajpayee derided those who said India sought the Arab world's friendship because of expediency as it needed its petroleum. He pointed out that long before the discovery of petroleum there was friendship between India and the Arabs. The Arab world acted as a conduit for both goods and ideas from India to the Western world. He pointed out that when the Jews were persecuted in the European countries, Mahatma Gandhi and others condemned the action. At the same time, they made it clear that the crime could not be redeemed by the Palestinian Arabs being ousted from their homeland. In 1947, India suggested a Federal State, but it was not favourably received. India held the view and would continue to do so that no country should benefit from the fruits of aggression and that all occupied territories should be evacuated. The Palestinians should have a right to determine their own future and to have a home of their own. He pointed out that India itself had suffered the humiliation of being enslaved and therefore, it supported the just cause of the Arabs."

*Sri Lanka has in the past taken a similarly firm position with regard to Israeli aggression, the occupation of Arab lands and need for a Palestinian State. The attitude was not a peculiar fetish of SLFP or ULF foreign policy postures. It is the only democratic human rights position that any independent country can take—if it is not subservient to international Zionist pressures.*

Before one enters into an analysis of the zig-zags of the present under-currents and cross-currents of the Middle East tangle, it would be useful to review Egypt's effort to secure peace in the Middle East. It is said that Sadat's action in starting direct talks with Begin has broken "Arab solidarity and unity", but the truth is that so-called Arab solidarity and unity had not brought peace any nearer. Egypt had at all times carried the main burden of the Arab fight against Israel: as a result its eco-

nomy was in shambles in spite of subsidies from oil-rich Arab countries, in spite of all the aid it had earlier received from the Soviet Union and more recently from the USA and the IMF.

*There is no going back for Egypt. It has to achieve peace to begin economic rehabilitation—or it is war to win a military victory. All the efforts of the world community to bring a Middle East settlement have been deadlocked for no fault of Egypt. It is in this background that Sadat's road to Jerusalem must be examined without being inhibited by Sadat's policies of de-Nasserisation, by his breaking away from the Soviet Union, by his tilting heavily to the USA in the belief that America alone could bring Israel to heel without war.*

There is no doubt that Egypt has, for a long time, wanted peace and a durable solution to the Middle East problem with Israel. Egypt accepted Security Council Resolution in 1967, because it envisaged a peaceful comprehensive solution, including the withdrawal of Israeli Forces from occupied territories and also because it recognised the right of every state in the area to live in peace. By accepting that, Egypt showed its *bona fide* desire for a just and peaceful solution, but Israel has at all times rejected the UN Security Council resolution. For over ten years, the world community has done everything to make Israel to accept this Resolution or even come to the Conference Table for negotiation on the basis of the Resolution. Israel has not only rejected all overtures, but has also violated the spirit of the Resolution by establishing settlements in the occupied areas.

In 1967, the Security Council appointed Ambassador Gunnar Jarring as a special representative of the United Nations to implement that resolution. Ambassador Jarring visited all the capitals of the parties involved many times over. Egypt gave him all assistance and co-operation he wanted; but Israel resorted to evasions and subterfuges to avoid a settlement arguing that without direct negotiations between the parties the Resolution could not be implemented. The Jarring mission was a failure.

Egypt then went a step further and accepted the initiative of American Secretary of State William Rogers. The Roger's Plan called for the withdrawal of Israeli occupying forces to "international

borders." But once again Israel refused to co-operate and argued that direct negotiations were the only way for peace in the Middle East and had stressed that once such talks took place Israel would be willing to make enormous concessions.

Israel had contended that direct negotiations would mean security for Israel and that it would lead to genuine peace: that it would mean that Israel was accepted by her neighbours. This was, at that time, the only guarantee Israel had sought in return for the withdrawal of its troops from the territories it occupied. Sadat, today, has acceded to this Israeli pre-condition, but Israel has now conjured up other hair-splitting legalistic objections to reject peace except on its own terms which implies Arab and Palestinian subservience.

In February 1971, Ambassador Jarring had once again tried to implement the Resolution 242 of the Security Council, and introduced what was known as the Jarring Initiative to the parties of the conflict. This was endorsed by the Big Powers and was tailored on the American Secretary of State's Roger's Plan. But once again, Israel resorted to transparent evasions. This continuous side-stepping and hide-and-seek by Israel was clear proof that Israel was determined to keep the Arab territories it had occupied in 1967 and that its aims were expansion and not peace. Under pretext of state security, Israel wanted to annex territories belonging to neighbouring Arab countries, contrary to International Law, the UN Charter, Security Council Resolutions, and the weight of world public opinion.

President Sadat, it must be said, has tried every avenue to peace. In the search for peace he had even experimented with a military option and in that process had shattered the Israeli theory of security through expansion and acquisition of territories. By the October war of 1973, Sadat showed that no defensive lines or so-called defensive borders were of any avail against those who sought to regain lost territory; that no security for Israel could be achieved through expansion under the myth of "secure and defensible borders".

The October War also demonstrated that Israel, with all its military might and with its Barley Line of defence in occupied Sinai, and with all its theories of defensible borders through expansion, could not hold this line for six hours when Egypt decided to break through it. But for US massive airlift of new and sophisticated arms to Israeli forces in Sinai during the October war, Israeli's occupation of Sinai would have been terminated then.

Peace efforts were renewed by American Secretary of State Kissinger immediately after the ceasefire agreement in October 1973, on the basis of the Geneva Peace Conference proposed by President Sadat in October 1973 at the peak of Egyptian victories, and though Israel kept dodging and procrastinating as usual, under American pressure two partial agreements in Sinai and one in Golan Heights

in Syria were signed and implemented, by withdrawing Israeli forces to new lines in both areas. Israel thereafter considered these lines as new defensible borders and started once again to dodge all attempts to secure a general peace in the region behind the old slogans of direct talks and secure borders.

Israel has resorted to every possible stalling tactic to by-pass all new peace efforts. Israel sabotaged all the efforts made by Nixon and Kissinger to have a Middle East Settlement. President Carter and his Secretary of State Cyrus Vance made fresh efforts to reconvene the Geneva Conference for a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. This time Israel used procedural evasions in addition to substantive objections. Weeks and months were lost in discussing who will negotiate with whom, and who will represent whom etc. etc.

COVER

FREEDOM OF THE MOUNTAIN TOP

THIS IS THE SECOND TIME in recent times that we have used a picture of Adam's Peak on our cover. On this occasion we have a picture in which the mountains soar over the clouds into the regions of pristine freedom. This is symbolic of the sense of freedom which has now begun to pervade all walks and all levels of life in this country. There was a time, not very long ago, when fear, often unsaid, mainly unwritten, had gripped the souls of all thinking persons in this island. There was fear that if one spoke the truth and criticised anyone in the Establishment, from the top-most to the lower-most, reprisals would follow secretly, quickly and inevitably. The punishment meted out to critics was severe: permits were cancelled; lands were compulsorily acquired; relations were transferred or demoted; children were denied schooling; fertilisers were refused; police incursions into privacy increased; income tax harassment was stepped up; houses were stoned... there are a million ways in which an Administration, which exercised a dictatorship under Emergency Powers, could crush personal freedom and instill a reign of terror. Often it is argued (wrongly) that the curbing freedom of certain classes of individuals was justifiable if it was done for the benefit of the greater freedom of larger numbers. But in Sri Lanka, in the dictatorship of Emergency Rule that devastated this country for seven years, individual freedom was curbed only for the glory and benefit of a caucus of a small ruling hierarchy bound by ties of kinship and blood. Many high-minded people who refused to bow to the many big and small dictators and tyrants under the Emergency now wonder how they came through it at all! Whatever the other shortcomings of the regime that has now come into being, there is today a greater sense of personal freedom among all sections of the people. There is no fear that the Police can lock you up indefinitely. There is no fear that a Minister can make life hell for you if you say that the Minister has done wrong. There is no fear that an MP can set up thugs to assault you. There is no fear that your complaints will not be entertained by the Police. The list be multiplied. The fact that the media has not utilised the freedom to write freely without fear (within the law) is not because of any restraints, but because the press has yet to learn to use the right of free expression in a responsible manner. There is either too much of deference to authority in some quarters or there is a desperate resort to yellow journalism in other quarters. The people and the press must learn to use the freedom that is now a reality.

## Israeli Intransigence

These deceptive tactics were used to gain time to consolidate Israeli's occupation of Arab territories and to create, illegally, new demographic and geographical changes in these occupied territories, by consolidating the Israeli settlements in Sinai, West Bank of Jordan and Golan Heights. All this was done under the theory of Israeli Security, which really meant Israel's annexation and colonisation of Arab lands. And, this is being done in the era in which it is said colonialism has ended.

President Sadat launched his latest peace initiative, when the efforts of the new American Administration were virtually at a standstill, due to Israeli intransigence. In what was obviously a move that was liable to create misunderstanding among many friends of Egypt, Sadat was daring enough to go to Jerusalem and address the Israeli people in their home, in the Knesset, and tell them about the basic Egyptian and Arab stand. He assured them of Egypt's genuine desire for a just peace based on justice for all. In his speech, Sadat removed all doubts about Egypt's intentions towards peace and Egypt's willingness to accommodate Israeli anxiety about security. He also made a more-than-heroic effort to remove all the psychological barriers between Arabs and Israelis. He did this although he must have been aware that if he failed he would be accused of subservience to the West, breaking the unity and solidarity of the Arab nations, of being a tool of the USA, and a scapegoat of the Israelis.

Even if he did not fail, he would be accused of betraying Arab solidarity and unity. In spite of all this, he took the risk of going to Jerusalem to take the Israeli bull (of direct talks) by the horns. Whatever may be said of the merits of his strategy, he started the process of the "direct talks" Israel had wanted. He initiated the Cairo Conference with negotiations face-to-face between Israelis and Egyptians, and then later invited Israeli Prime Minister Begin to Ismailia (last December) for a further session of face-to-face negotiations to work out the principles of a comprehensive settlement for the Middle East. Two committees were set up to continue this process of negotiations in both Egypt and Israel.

This bold initiative taken by President Sadat was welcomed by many

people. They welcomed his courageous and constructive step calling on Israel to match his gesture with similar magnanimity. Furthermore, with this move President Sadat removed what he thought would be the last procedural stumbling block on the road to peace i.e., direct negotiations and genuine security for Israel. That is what Israel had always wanted.

But, so far, Israeli leaders have chosen to ignore the Egyptian gesture and have stuck to their old and outdated slogans and dogmas of "secure borders". They have also now added fresh demands for traditional Hebrew areas in Judea and Samaria and a puppet self-rule area in the West Bank for the Palestinians. The Israelis have forgotten what they had said of the peace that direct talks would bring. Israel continues to justify annexation of Arab lands and reject the rights of the Palestinians for self-determination. Israel also wants to perpetuate the colonial policy of establishing settlements in occupied Arab territories. Begin (and even Carter) want to tell the Palestinians what kind of state they should have—denying them self-determination.

It was when it became clear that the Israeli attitudes had not changed that President Sadat issued his instructions to Mr. Mohamed Ibrahim Kamel, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Head of the Egyptian delegation to the Political Committee in Jerusalem to return immediately to Cairo. It was clear from the statements of Israeli leaders and from Israeli arguments that Israel only wanted temporary partial solutions which could not lead to the establishment of a durable, just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

There is no doubt that many people will now tell Sadat: "we told you so"; and that Israeli statements and promises are meaningless and valueless. Sadat, like any Arab, must have known that it was dangerous to trust Israeli promises, but he obviously wanted to have a propaganda, political and diplomatic showdown with Israel. He gave Israel a chance to show that it had "changed" and that it now genuinely wanted peace. But Israel has once again showed itself in its true colours as an aggressor

wanting to retain territories it has conquered in war.

It was after this obstinate determination on the part of the Israelis to obstruct a just settlement that President Sadat made the decision to stop the negotiations which had kept going round and round in a vicious circle. Egypt had declared its stand from the very beginning of the talks. It is a stand that was the same from the beginning of the Arab struggle against Israel—namely, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied Arab territories and the recognition of the right to self-determination for the Palestinian people who had been expelled from their homeland and had been rendered homeless for nearly half a century.

The UN and the world community have accepted these principles as a basis for a solution. If Israel still believes that Jewish settlements and a few airfields here and there are a better means for achieving her security than agreement to co-exist peacefully with her neighbours, it means that it prefers an imposed settlement, based on military force, than a peace based on friendship and understanding. The Jews have always complained that they had been scattered throughout the world owing to the actions of anti-Jewish governments. It is foolish and stupid for Israel to impose the same diaspora upon the Palestinians and seek to make them live under the yoke of occupation as a price for Jewish sufferings at the hands of the Nazis and other racist forces.

President Sadat, after failing in his efforts to persuade Begin to establish peace by "direct talks", has set out on a mission to the USA and the West to bring pressure on Israel to accept a just peace. Whether he will succeed in this is a moot question, because a solution in the Middle East cannot be lasting or durable, without the support of the so-called radical Arab countries, the active participation of the non-aligned movement and also the Soviet Union and the socialist countries. It is time that Sadat showed the same bold initiative he showed in going to Jerusalem to once again re-establish friendly relations with the Soviet Union,

the socialist countries and the non-aligned world.

Sadat may have been tempted to cut himself away from the USSR because he had been led to believe that the USA alone could deliver the goods: and that he could urge the USA to apply the screw harder on Israel with the bait of pushing the Soviet Union out of the Middle East. Such cold war calculations have at all times failed to bring lasting solutions. President Carter and his Brains Trust seem to think that the Arabs would fall for the argument that an Independent Palestinian State would mean PLO rule which would involve a Soviet power centre in the region. This is the kind of grand illusion which cold war warriors like John Foster Dulles had nurtured but which had led the USA straight to Vietnam—and ignominy. Carter, moreover, cannot dictate the kind of independent State the Palestinians should create—it could be anything from a head-chopping Arab monarchy (like Saudi Arabia) to a secular democratic socialist society. The Indian Prime Minister, Morarji Desai, had told Carter in no uncertain terms that there could be

no peace settlement in the Middle East without the Soviet Union.

Sadat has a difficult task before him. He has to win the support, once again, of the radical Arab states. It is not enough to have the support of the oil rich Arab countries considering the fact that their enormous surplus wealth is invested in the USA and in the affluent industrialised countries where international Jewry reigns supreme in the finance and trade. The Arab oil countries can be held to ransom by Western bankers.

Sadat has also tended to ignore the Third World, especially the Non-aligned world. He must show the same initiative he has shown in going to Jerusalem, Washington, Bonn, London and Paris by seeking the assistance of Colombo, New Delhi, Lusaka, Havana, Jakarta, Hanoi, and other third world capitals. It is true that in the past the non-aligned movement was not able to bring about a Middle East settlement, but without the non-aligned to back him Sadat will stand isolated from his natural allies. Further more, he cannot take such support for granted, especially in view of the unorthodox unilateral strategies he has adopted. More-

over, he cannot any longer forget or ignore Moscow, Prague and other socialist capitals which have stood Egypt in good stead from 1956 onwards when the USA had steadily built Israel's military might. The fact that USA wants to have "peace" in the Middle East now is only to ensure her oil supplies whilst maintaining the supreme military might of Israel in the region.

As far as people in a country like Sri Lanka are concerned, they are anxious that President Sadat should succeed in securing a peace settlement in the Middle East. But, they have doubts if Sadat can get very far if he isolates himself from the countries and groups that have supported the Egyptian and Arab cause from the beginning and if he depends solely on countries and blocs that have always supported and bolstered the dominant militarist and expansionist power groups in Israel. It was no doubt an act of rare determination and singular fearlessness for Sadat to have embarked, unilaterally, to initiate bi-lateral talks with Israel to achieve a multi-lateral Middle East peace. But courage, alone is not enough in complex matters like the Middle East tangle.

## SRI LANKA CHRONICLE

# Jan. 24 — Jan. 30

DIARY OF EVENTS IN SRI LANKA AND THE WORLD  
COMPILED FROM DAILY NEWSPAPERS  
PUBLISHED IN COLOMBO.

CDN—Ceylon Daily News; CDM—Ceylon Daily Mirror; CO—Ceylon Observer; ST—Sunday Times; DM—Dinamina; LD—Lankadipa; VK—Virakesari; ATH—Aththa; SM—Silumina; SLD—Sri Lankadipa; JD—Janadina; DP—Dinapathi; SU—Sun; DW—Dawasa; CM—Chinthamani; WK—Weekend; RR—Rivirasa; EN—Eelanadu; IDPR—Information Department Press Release DK—Dinakara.

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 24:** With the conclusion of the Rice Ration Book revalidation exercise the Food Department has launched a massive scheme to ensure a steady supply of rice at Rs. 2.90 per measure to those who surrender ration books and also to prevent a price increase in off-ration rice with effect from February 1. The speaker of the NSA addressing a meeting at the conference of Cost and Management accountants said that the government would soon set up a school of printing in Sri Lanka on the lines of the London School of Printing. The Ven. Swithin Fernando, third Ceylonese to rise to the highest office in the Church of Sri Lanka will be consecrated Bishop of Colombo tomorrow morning. The train service between Colombo and Puttalam will be strengthened by the addition of more trains and the extension of the existing services. Arrangements are under way to train more teachers to

implement effectively the link language formula under which Sinhala and Tamil children learn each other's language—CDN. A preliminary assessment of the ration books revalidation exercise has revealed that about 30% of chief householders in the outstations, particularly in agricultural areas, have made false declarations of their income. The TULF will not take disciplinary action against Mr. C. Rajadurai, MP for Batticaloa who has been keeping away from important party meetings. According to official estimates, the consumption of flour will increase to 100,000 tons a month consequent on the invalidation of ration books; at present the monthly rate of consumption is about 75,000 tons—CDM. A Delimitation Commission is to be appointed next month to re-demarcate district boundaries. The situation in Galle is now normal said a defence Ministry source yesterday. A high ranking Soviet official, Mr. L. I. Mendelvitsh who is Moscow's chief negotiator in the US-Soviet talks on demilitarisation of the Indian Ocean held wide ranging discussions last Friday with Sri Lanka's acting Foreign Minister in Colombo. Maldives International Airlines yesterday commenced operating four flights a week schedule from Colombo to Male and back—SU. In the allocation of imports to various importing agencies in the public and private sectors, the CWE has got the major share. The Minister of Health will lay the foundation stone for the Teaching Hospital, Peradeniya on January 28th—CO. Tamil students will not be forced to study Sinhala and vice-versa under the link language schemes said the Minister of Education. Ten teachers Unions will stage a peaceful protest in various parts of the island against revalidation of rice ration books, devaluing the rupee etc—VK.

Legislation will be brought before February 4 to stop any government from declaring a state of emergency unnecessarily and lengthening its tenure of office—DP. The President of the Republic of Korea received the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka and discussed a wide range of subjects including peace in East Asia, economic co-operation in Asia and system of government—IDPR. No. 10/78. The price of flour has gone up from 165 dollars to 222 dollars per ton—LD. District Ministers will not be appointed till the Committee appointed by the President after February 4 has finished demarcating the boundaries of the new districts—DW. The Minister of Food and Co-operatives has said that the prices of essential food items including Lakspray will not go up in price—DM. The SLFP has decided to pass a vote of no-confidence against Mr. E. L. Senanayake mainly because he has presented wrong facts regarding the income tax transactions of Mrs. Bandaranaike—ATH. Since the World Bank has asked for an years time to conduct a feasibility study on the 6 year Mahaweli project, and only after that grant the aid, the UNP government will not be able to finish the project in the stipulated time—JD.

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25:** The credentials of all top appointees to State services and State institutions including boards and corporations are now under scrutiny; if the Select Committee of the NSA now examining all such appointments finds such persons unsuited to hold that position they will be removed from office. Three persons in the UNP have sought nomination for the Colombo West seat in the NSA when it falls vacant soon when the PM resigns to assume the office of President. The PM has indicated that the proposed third amendment to the Constitution should not be rushed through; the Parliamentary Select Committee now studying a revision to the constitution should process memoranda and drafts before it with extreme thoroughness. The government is taking steps to effect changes in the country's health regulations in order to provide a better and more efficient health service and to safeguard the privileges of the department's employees. The Marketing Department has doubled the purchase price of passion fruit in a bid to meet a large number of foreign orders now in hand and those it expects during the year. The Government of Canada yesterday signed an agreement with the government of Sri Lanka where-by they have undertaken to provide a team of Canadian advisers in dryland farming techniques—CDN. The PM has decided that in pursuance of his policy of creating a Dharmista Society, all children of school-going age now being exploited by unscrupulous elements should be freed and rehabilitated so they could become citizens and live a life of dignity. Any teacher who aspires to be a Principal of a school will have to serve at least five years in an un-congenial station. The customs have bared a systematic racket by certain Pettah business tycoons to defraud the government by under invoicing imported goods—CDM. Sri Lanka will invite offers from foreign airlines to float a new international carrier to replace Air Ceylon, the Minister of Shipping, Aviation said yesterday. The Janatha Estate Development Board is to expand its 'Jana' Tea sales from the present over-the-counter services to house-to-house sales, under a scheme called 'Janawasama Consumer Service'. An official Committee has recommended that the Food Department and the Paddy Marketing Board be brought under one Ministry in a bid to ensure better co-ordination in the collection and distribution of rice. Modern weaponry will soon

replace the out-dated arms which the Sri Lanka police force is presently equipped with, the IGP said yesterday—SU. The Minister of Justice has instructed all officials in his Ministry that all letters that come there in Tamil should be replied in that language. Curfew was imposed in Galle last night by the Police from 7p.m. to 6 a.m. 20,000 estate workers went on a token strike following an incident in a bus between a police officer and two labourers—VK. There is a firm belief in TULF circles that the MP for Batticaloa will not leave the Party—EN. A social commemoration stamp will be issued to mark the assumption of office of the first President—IDPR No. 53. The CTB will inaugurate its seventh Green Circle in Kandy—IDPR No. 54. A number of top level Presidents of leading industries have decided to visit Sri Lanka in the next few months; the President of the Republic of Korea has instructed his government to take immediate steps to explore the areas of economic co-operation between the two countries—IDPR IDPR No. 11/78. The Committee for the reduction of the cost of Living index will have talks with the Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs on the reduction of prices of goods produced by government corporations. New rice ration cards will come in 3 colours; a grey card will be issued to person suspected of giving false information about their income. The Minister of Health has said that he will take steps to bring back all the doctors who have gone abroad in the last six years—LD. The department of Posts and Telecommunications has lost Rs. 9 million last year on their inland telephone services. The 3000 newly appointed teachers will get a short training of three months before they assume duties. Businessmen who build houses in order to sell them will be entitled to tax concessions—DM. The SLFP has decided not to attend any of the functions connected with the assumption of office of the first Executive President.—DK. The government has set aside Rs. 2.5 million to provide telephones for the new MP's—JD. Import duties on a number of items considered absolute luxuries have been increased from 100% to about 500% with immediate effect. Two brands of milk powder Macspray and Nespray will be available in the local market shortly. The Marketing Department is launching a drive to extend its consumer services throughout the island—CO.

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 26:** Enhanced penalties including terms of imprisonment will be imposed on persons producing adulterated food items, according to a new draft Food Law Bill which has been prepared by a Committee appointed to study the Food and Drugs Act. The government has referred to the Constitutional Court as 'urgent legislation' three bills—the Parliament Powers and Privileges Amendment Bill, the Public Security (amendment) Bill and the Special Presidential Commissions of inquiry Bill. Western Christian ritual blended in perfect harmony with oriental innovation when the eleventh Bishop of Colombo. The Ven. Swithin Fernando was consecrated in a colourful religious ceremony at the Cathedral of Christ the Living Saviour yesterday morning. The World Food Program of the UN in co-operation with the Federal Republic of Germany, has stepped in to help Sri Lanka in the quick construction of warehouses for paddy storage. The Minister of Public Administration and Home Affairs who was in the Soviet Union recently as the special envoy of the Sri Lanka PM was given one of the biggest receptions any Sri Lanka VIP was accorded in recent times—CDN. All co-operative societies will hold elections to their respective socie-

ties and have a democratic system of administration of their affairs by April; elections to these boards will be conducted under a new system and will be by secret ballot, for the first time in the history of the co-operative movement. With the re-introduction of the London GCEA' level examination there was a marked drop in the number of Sri Lankan students seeking entry visas to Britain for admission to technical colleges according to British High Commission sources. The Deputy Minister of Trade will meet rice dealers at the Ministry on January 31 for discussions on the price structure of rice in the open market. All members of the present Cabinet are to continue as Ministers with their existing portfolios after the PM takes his oaths as President—SU. Construction work of the ultra modern teaching hospital to be built here with Japanese aid will ceremonially commence on the 29 at Peradeniya—IDPR No. 26. 1979 is declared as the International Year of the Child by the UN General Assembly; as a member of the UN, Sri Lanka too expects to launch a programme regarding the work of all sections relevant to the welfare of the children of our country, with the help of the relevant ministries—IDPR No. 61. Salu Sala will distribute 18 million yards of imported chintz and poplin from March this year—CO. Co-operatives will issue 2 million pounds of lakapray from this month. Leave of all police personnel has been cancelled—DW. The Sri Lanka Shipping Corporation has decided to lease ships from foreign companies; so far they have leased five and will increase the number when imports and exports increase—LD. The price of four wheeled tractors has increased by Rs. 10,000 a Ford tractor now costs Rs. 67,000—JD.

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 27:** State monopoly of insurance will end very soon; Private and State-aided insurance companies will be set up to compete with the Insurance Corporation of Sri Lanka said the Minister of Trade. The meeting of the NSA on February 3 will be a special occasion; on this day the PM will bid good bye to the country's legislature of which he had been a member for 31 years. The out-going President, Mr. William Gopallawa bid farewell to the Sri Lanka Airforce yesterday. The Japanese government has made an outright grant of 1100 yen for the construction of a teaching hospital in Peradeniya which will be the most modern and sophisticated health cum academic institution in South East Asia. The UNICEF has gifted 500 bicycles to the Department of Health for the use of midwives in rural areas—CDN. Persons found guilty by a Presidential Commission of Inquiry of any act of political victimisation, misuse or abuse of power, corruption or any fraudulent act or in relation to the administration of any law or the administration of Justice are liable to lose their civic rights including the right to vote and contest at an election; this is one of the main provisions of the Special Presidential Commission of Inquiry Bill which will be presented by the PM in the NSA shortly. The government has decided to grant all the benefits and concessions which are being enjoyed by State service employees to employees of the local government sector with immediate effect—CDM. The Sri Lankan Minister of Foreign Affairs arrived in Singapore yesterday on a four-day visit during which he will be given a detailed briefing on export processing facilities. Patients warded in government hospitals will be given rice for lunch and dinner from February 4, the day on which the PM assumes office as the President of Sri Lanka—SU. The Minister of Plantation Industries

has been asked by the PM to take steps to establish a Palmyrah Products Corporation within two months—DP. The Minister of Trade yesterday gave a guarantee that he would totally eliminate shortages of all consumer goods by the end of the year. The price of local red onions is expected to come down to around one rupee a pound by the end of March—CO. Even though immediate changes are not to be effected, here is a great likelihood of the duties of ministers being distributed—EN. 'I do not propose to make any changes in the personnel in the Cabinet or in the functions allotted to Ministers just now; I intend to do so after careful consideration and consultation with all those who may be concerned in the near future'—PM—IDPR No. 69. Representatives of over 12 leading service organisations will take part in one of the biggest workshops its kind to promote a better knowledge and understanding of the problems and needs of rural women through the participation in working programmes of various women's groups—IDPR No. 66. H.E. Mr. Babacar Diop has been appointed by the government of Senegal as first Ambassador concurrently, with residence in New Delhi—IDPR No. 14/78. The Janatha Estate Development Board has decided to take over all the tea lands given to the people by the last government as the quality of tea has gone down considerably due to lack of maintenance and insufficient application of fertiliser—DW. It is becoming clear that the Mahaweli Development Scheme will not be completed in five years; the cost of the schemes has gone up by 100% because of the devaluation of the rupee—ATH.

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 28:** Development to stabilise the national economy and the provision of full employment were the main objectives of the present government in the years to come, said the PM at a mammoth rally of UNP trade unions at Hyde Park yesterday. The Minister of Trade has written in to say that the news item appearing in the CDN yesterday which states that it is the intention of the government to permit private and state aided companies to compete with the Insurance Corporation is incorrect; it is the government's wish to end the monopoly of the Insurance Corporation by creating both subsidiary and independent State owned insurance organisations competing with each other. Mr. M. Canagaratnam 2nd MP for Pottuvil was shot at while crossing the road opposite his Charles Way residence at Kollupitiya last night; he is now warded at the General Hospital and is said to be out of danger. Mr. L. O. Abeyaratne, OBE, FRCP one of Sri Lanka's leading Paediatricians died early yesterday morning—CDN. If Japan, West Germany, Russia and other countries which faced the ravages of the last World War could re-construct their economies in such a short time why could not Sri Lanka accelerate the pace of its development, why should they have to wait for 30 years to complete a scheme like the Mahaweli Scheme the PM said at the Hyde Park rally yesterday. There will be all the goods needed in the country within the next few months but the consumer will have to pay the price at which they are bought; it will not be possible to reduce the price said the PM at yesterday's meeting. The Parliament (Powers and Privileges) Act is to be amended to give more powers to the Parliament to deal with the breaches of privileges—SU. The PM said yesterday that the wages of people will be increased proportionately to the increase in the prices of goods—DP. The Minister of Education was given a tumultuous welcome at the Jaffna railway

station yesterday when he went on an official visit there—VK. The 'Govil Hamudawa' (Land army) will start work from March 1; applications have been called and the Labour Ministry expects at least 6000 applications. The Minister of Food and Co-operatives has said that no one will be settled by force in the Mahaweli Development Scheme—DM. 720 buses are put out of service every year due to their unusable condition—DW. The government has given permission to the National Milk Board to increase the price of Lakspray by Rs. 1; the board had earlier indicated to the government that if the price was not increased they could not carry on—ATH.

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 29:** The US government is seriously considering Sri Lanka for a further 100,000 tons of flour under PL 480 Aid and Title Three entitlement. The PM and several Ministers and top officials of the Ministry of Health visited on Friday night the injured second MP for Pottuvil at the General Hospital. According to police estimates mammoth crowds are expected to converge on Galle Face Green on February 4 to witness the historic Swearing-in of the first executive President of Sri Lanka. The government has already received many inquiries from entrepreneurs in West Germany, Singapore, Hong Kong Japan and South Korea about investment in the FTZ. Bookshops in the city and outside now have plenty of foreign reading material but very few takers; this is because of the sharp hike in prices which have sent up the prices of imported books by 50%. Sri Lanka is losing an average of 1,000 to 2,000 persons to the Middle East each month, the Controller of Immigration and Emigration said yesterday. The first official act of the PM after he is sworn in as the President will be to sign the Sri Sannas Pathra, the Deed of Gift handing over the Wedi-hitikanda Sacred Area, Katragama to the Maha Sangha—SO. The gunmen behind the shooting and wounding of the second MP for Pottuvil are believed to be members of a youth organisation in Jaffna. Maj. Montague Jayawickrema while on a visit to Moscow as the envoy of the PM, held several discussions on economic co-operation and the possibility of Soviet technical assistance for one of the stages of the Mahaweli Project. The Minister of Education in keeping with the policies of the Dharmista Society advocated by the PM, banned the consumption of liquor at the big school cricket matches. 140 policemen were interdicted last year—21 more than in 1976; of them 112 were constables. The traffic warden scheme for the Colombo Fort and Pettah has resulted in a 80% drop in complaints by motorists of loss of car parts according to a Police Department official—ST. All first offenders and those who have been imprisoned for lesser offences are to be given a full pardon; this has been decided by the government as part of a general amnesty to prisoners to mark the inauguration of the first executive President of Sri Lanka. Labour Trincom TribunaIs are to be transformed into Labour Courts; this is apparently necessary due to serious complaints about delays and backlog of cases and their weaknesses in the system—WK. The government is taking steps to incorporate the Tamil Language (Special Commissions) Act as well as give Tamil the status of a national language—CM. Two special units have been sent to up-country areas to arrest 70,000 Indian estate workers who should have left Sri Lanka under the Sirima-Shastri Pact—SLDP.

**MONDAY, JANUARY 30:** The accelerated Mahaweli program will be launched this morning by the PM at the Ulhitiya Oya, Mahiyangana when he cuts the first sod on the Minipe right bank canal; later he will unveil a plaque to mark the occasion. Foreign Minister Hameed is having a busy schedule in Singapore meeting the PM, President and other high ups. Sri Lanka is likely to receive support to the tune of Rs. 5000 million from the IMF on a three year program following discussions between the Minister of Finance and the Managing Director of IMF in Colombo yesterday; this is in addition to the stand-by credit of Rs. 2000 million negotiated last year. Donations from several public and private establishments and public spirited citizens had made it possible for the Ministry of Local Govt. to establish the Singithi Uyana on the little island on Beira Lake—CDN. The Secretary to the Ministry of Education said yesterday that an Intake Board of the University of Sri Lanka was established to deal with University admissions. The Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs is studying the feasibility of beginning a big chemical products factory estimated to cost around Rs. 600 million either at Hambantota or Puttalam. Over 3000 policemen will be deployed in the city to ensure special security arrangements on February 4—for the swearing in of the new President—CDM. The PM is likely to attend the first regional summit of Commonwealth countries in Australia next month; government sources expect this to be his first official tour abroad after assuming as the President. Top CID officers handling investigations into Friday night's shooting of the 2nd MP for Pottuvil strongly believe that there were political undertones to the incident—SU. Over 39 youths have been so far been questioned by the CID in connection with the shooting of the Pottuvil MP; special teams of police personnel have also been sent to North and East for further investigations. About thirteen persons including a University professor have been arrested in Kandy in connection with a signature campaign against the government for taking away the rice ration books and other related incidents—DP. A feasibility study on electric powered public road transport is now under way. Tea production was up by nearly 12 million kilogrammes compared with 196 million kilos in the previous year—CO. New Ministers not necessarily MP's will be appointed for the implementation of development schemes and projects such as the FTZ. Mahaweli Development Scheme etc—LLD. The PM has given specific instructions that no houses should be demolished when new roads are constructed or roads are broadened—DM.



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MAHAWELI IN FIVE YEARS—2

## Can It Be Done?

by R. Kahawita

This is the second and concluding part of this article. We invite comments and contributions from our readers on the question of The Mahaweli Project In Five Years.

What the three phases mean in a programme of resources utilization can best be illustrated by assessing the gross resources available for development. On the completion of these works there will be a total of 4.54 million acres feet of Water under control annually to irrigate a little over million acres of land which in turn will enable 600,000 acres of highland to be developed for other uses. There will be 520.4 MW of hydro-power of installed capacity with a firm power potential of 233.5 MW, which will meet the power requirements of the country, may be, up to 2000 AD. Flood protection of about 300,000 Acres in the lower reaches of Mahaweli flood plane below Mahiyangana and an integrated development programme in Maduru Oya Basin, taking the development activities towards Mundeni Aru and to the left Bank of Gal Oya. These are on the Eastern Bank of Mahaweli.

On the Western Bank, Mahaweli water will reach Ambanganga Basin, Kala Oya basin, Malwatu Oya basin as far as Giants tank; Yan Oya and MaOya basins to augment Hurulu wewa, Wahalkado and Padawiyi tanks. Whether water can be taken further North depends on Transbasin storage, conservation of water in transbasin conveyance, and efficient maintenance of all hydraulic structures within the project area.

To use the water so controlled and to regulate the flow several complementary works in the transbasin areas too have to be taken up for development. These are yet to be studied particularly in the Kala Oya, Malwattu Oya, Maduru Oya, and Yan Oya regions. In these areas the entire irrigation supply and distribution systems have to be planned and worked out which cannot be done without

surveys. And the surveys may have to cover 3 million acres to select the million acres of potential irrigable acreage. If it is to be done in five years there will be hardly 30 working months for field work. With all the good will and enthusiasm in the world it cannot be done. Time and weather are against us and man has no control over them.

All these mean a massive organization of engineers, planners, technicians, surveyors, agriculturists, agronomists, sociologists, Agricultural economists, construction groups, machinery and so on; an ever increasing array of men, materials, machinery and what not as the plans take shape and form. Even to make an incursion into a five year programme, there must be, almost immediately, field groups on surveys and investigations, office groups to analyse the data so collected, Hydraulic structural designers, quantity Surveyors and estimators, equipment managers to study machinery requirements, Irrigation Engineers to design irrigation systems and farmsteads, regional Planners and architects to plan service centres and so on. These are to be supported by construction groups of various disciplines to undertake the work irrespective of whether the work is done departmently or by the Public sector. The problems would remain the same.

In what I have said so far no mention of the money supply to complete the three phases has been made. This is deliberate. One thing is we simply do not have the money, money must come from friendly countries. International lending and assisting institutions; the other is, no useful purpose will be served in estimating for works that may be taken up for construction ten years hence.

The value of money will change as we have experienced since Independence. So estimating will have to be done when the works come up for construction. Then the Lending Institutions too will have a hand in evaluating the works as is being done now.

After the Budget disclosures on 15.11.77 the value of the rupee has fallen further. As a result the forecast of expenditure for Phase I as made by the FAO/UNDP in 1969 will have to be recast to be in line with the new exchange

rates. It may mean a hundred percent increase over the 1969 estimates. Thus the economic appraisal of 1969 is of no value to assess its economic feasibility.

The economic feasibility recommendations of 1969 were based on a capital cost of Rs. 1550 million, for Phase I only.

The Foreign exchange component is as 510.31 million at today's Rupee value the foreign expenditure will be in the region of Rs. 1020.6 millions. The rupee component too has gone up reciprocally. This is the cost of Phase I and its three step which, it may be possible to complete around 1985.

The nature of costing done so far for the other Phases is to study the financial feasibility of the project in the current context of our economy to decide whether a work is worth the expenditure or not. As the economic and social conditions change fresh financial and priority studies have to be made and recommendation made to the Government. It is for this reason I said that there must be a continuous study of development programmes, expenditure, utilization of resources, and potential increase in National incomes. This group must be in action now.

Phase II—The most important structure included in Phase II is the multipurpose Reservoir at Randenigala. This is the point where the Mahaweli water is to be stored and regulated for the development of water in the basin proper of the River. The implications of controlling the main river at this point is far reaching in its hydrologic behaviour after the diversion at Polgolla and Victoria Falls dam in operation, the problem merits a computer model study. Whether this could be done locally I cannot say. However it is necessary, and necessary as an integrated multi-basins operation. This can only be done in a "computer model".

The directive of the Prime Minister is still there. So what is the solution? What could be done even to meet the directive half way? Let us take a bite into Phase I and make an excursion to complete it by 1985. To reach this target date there must be 100% efficiency starting from the importing point, i.e. the harbour down to the impecunious peasant who will be at the final receiving end to get a

parcel of land to grow the crops the agronomists and planners have recommended to increase the National Income and render the project viable. I wonder how many would accept this proposition?

While construction and development are in hand on Phase I, Investigations, surveys, designs etc. for Phase II and Phase III must continue simultaneously. This is by no means an easy task. A bite into Phase I means (a) planning an overall expenditure of Rs. 1550 million (b) To send out designs, specifications and equipment for five hydro-electric stations (c) developing and settling of lands for which distribution systems are to be provided as construction work proceeds.

Settlement is the most difficult and frustrating exercise in this class or work where training and setting up a farmer to get the best out of the capital investment is the end product of irrigation development.

What it involves in Phase I alone can best be illustrated by summarising the scope of each step. The total extent of land, both old and new, to be brought under cultivation in Phase I is 345,200 acres. In Step I there will be 9615 new farming families to be settled. There are 2964 farming families already settled in the area to be rehabilitated in larger farm units, and 1832 Agricultural labour families making a total of 14,411 farming families. In addition there will be about 2100 service and management families. To create proper conditions for community life, there will have to be set up 26 village centres and 8 new townships to support the needs of the new settlers.

In Step II there will be 8500 new farming families, 2200 farming families to be re-habilitated, 587 farming families in the middle group with 587 farm labour and 1,180 workers in the Sugar Cane complex, In addition there will be 200 families in service and administration. To cater for these settlers, 26 Villages and 7 townships will have to be planned and set up.

Step III There will be 2700 new farming families plus 157 families in the mid group. The Cotton group will require another 373 farming families. There will be roughly another 550 families settled in the area in services and management. The total number

of families to be settled is 378 units in seven Villages and two tow ships.

All these mean developing 17 town ships and 59 Villages to house and cater for farming families, government servants, teachers, doctors, tradesmen, and a host of subsidiary services. The new population pouring into the area may be in the region of 60,000 family units. While the settlement programme is on construction in phase I together with investigations, designs, planning and studies in Phase II and Phase III also must go on side by side to complete in five years. This is what the Engineers have undertaken to do. I do not know whether they realise this.

When we consider the supply of materials, where the breakdown will be the quantities required will be in the region of 250,000 tons of Cement a year, 6600 tons of Steel a year, 230,000 cubes of crushed metal 115,000 cubes of sand, millions and millions of bricks, millions and millions of cubic feet of timber. Tons of Hardware; this list is never ending. This does not include the different types of machinery and equipment which will have to be increased five fold to meet the five year programme. At the end of five years, there may still be a considerable fleet of machinery left over with usable life but with no projects to follow up—Scrap re-exported.

The average annual financial support is in the region of Rs. 350 million rupees, even if we have the money can we organise ourselves to spend this in a year? The above figures quoted are only for Phase I add to it the cost of Phases II and III for which we have only tentative figures. This explains why the Development plans have been spread over thirty years. Completion in five years is not a feasible undertaking.

(Concluded)

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## NEXT WEEK

- ① ON BEGGING AND BEGGARS
  - ① POLICE AND PRESS AND "SECURITY RISK"
  - ① CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MPs
- 

## THE FOURTH ESTATE

### Rights Of The Press

The Sun of February 4, had complained of discriminatory treatment in regard to the passes for the Press to the Galle Face Green ceremonies to instal the first executive President. On the next day, Sunday February 5, the Weekend triumphantly proclaimed that owing to the intervention of Mr. J. R. Jayawardene, the Sun-Dawana group was able to cover the parade and ceremonies adequately. The Sunday Times of February 5, had a woeful tale to record under the heading LOCAL PRESS IGNORED: "It is a matter for regret that cavalier treatment should have been meted out to the national and native Press by the Information Department, which issued only two passes—one each for a reporter and a photographer—to cover yesterday's swearing-in of Mr. J. R. Jayawardene as President of Sri Lanka. We are amazed that the Information Department failed to realize that the country's Press should have been given every possible assistance to record this historic event. In sharp contrast, were the facilities afforded to the foreign Press including television teams who were given such a prominent position at the expense even of members of the United National Party's Working Committee whose view was obstructed by these foreign pressmen. We refrained from mention of this yesterday because we did not want to strike a discordant note on an historic occasion when there was national rejoicing."

Tribune has its own tale of woe. We had asked for passes for the Editor, a Reporter and a Photographer (our cover pictures are candid shots of a special kind and the unimaginative pictures supplied by the Information Department are unsuitable). We had been verbally assured that the passes would be forthcoming. But none came. And, on the last two days no responsible official of the Department was "available"—in fact it is clear that they were dodging taking any calls from the Tribune. For a week we had also made vain efforts to ask someone responsible for passes for the Kandy ceremonies on February 5, but we failed. From what we hear the Department of Information was only catering to the needs of foreign journalists (white, mainly) some of whom

## Local Press Denied Rights

claimed to represent little known or totally unknown papers or periodicals (this may be wrong, but this is the general talk in the newspaper world).

*Tribune* has never complained about facilities being given to foreign journalists. But we must protest strongly about the way the local press have been treated and continue to be treated. *Tribune*, in particular, has been the subject of discriminatory treatment ever since the pandemics of the United Front Government resented constructive and valid criticisms from the year 1971. *Tribune* was ostracised. We had expected better treatment from this Government. Small mercies have come our way, but in the matter of facilities for reporting state functions, the position has not improved.

We are told that a weekly paper cannot be accorded the rights of representation and accreditation to which daily papers are entitled. We have no quarrel about this. Daily papers are entitled to passes (or invitations) for every Editor, and several reporters and photographers from each daily. Sunday and magazine papers, which report, or comment on, such ceremonies and functions, are entitled to additional passes or invitations.

Weekly papers which report or comment on such ceremonies are also entitled for passes or invitations for the Editor (he may send a deputy), a Reporter and a Photographer (if a request is made for the same). Well-known columnists and commentators who write on such functions in daily papers or periodicals are also entitled to invitations or passes.

Any government which believes in the freedom of the press should direct the Department of Information to issue invitations and passes to the members of the Fourth Estate who normally report, comment or review such events and functions. The authorities which make the arrangements for such functions should, as a priority requirement, allot space at a vantage point for the Press—foreign and local—large enough to accommodate the entire press corps. It is not difficult to have a full list of editors, reporters, photographers, commentators and columnists in all the local papers, in all languages in Sri Lanka—dailies, weeklies and selected periodicals which comment on these matters—and

issue the invitations after making sure by phone or letter regarding the number who would attend. The Department has the right to refuse admission to relations and friends—at the non-aligned Conference it was officials of the Information Department who had smuggled in their friends and relations into the Press Centre making it impossible for the journalists to function without disturbance.

**The government must look into this matter. If press freedom is to be real and if newspapers are to develop maturity and responsibility, the government must ensure that editors, reporters, photographers and commentators are accorded proper facilities without discrimination or favouritism.**

The arrangements for the local press at the Non-aligned Conference in August 1976 were a sorry mess. The same malady seems to persist to this day. Something must be done to end this step-motherly treatment of the local press, especially the smaller periodical press. It is not wise for a Government to ignore or overlook the weekly and periodical press. It is these papers, more than the bigger papers, that mould public opinion in any country. Mr. Reedy, President Johnson's Press Secretary and now a Professor in an American Uni-

versity's Faculty of Journalism, had said that it was the smaller papers that are read by the elite that make opinion and wield the greatest influence in any country. This is not to pat ourselves on the back and cadge for press passes and invitations. We can do without them as we have been compelled to go without them during long periods in the 24 years since the inception of this paper. But we have raised this matter strongly now as a matter of principle and as a matter of Rights of the Press.

*Tribune* has never been interested in tamashas or political carnivals or such gimmicks. But, as we sensed, that the Galle Face Green ceremony on February 4 and the Raja Maha Perahera in Kandy on February 5 may be something different we had applied for passes because we wanted to report and comment these events in the way *Tribune* views current events. *Tribune* does not publish on-the-spot reports, but we specialise in reportage of a different kind, in depth, with perspective and in the context of socio-political implications. But, the Information Department, probably has no use for such records of contemporary history. We have, therefore, had to make do with hearsay second-hand reports over the SLBC and in the newspapers.

### BIGTIME LOBBYING

#### SUB-STANDARD MALATHION

IS IT NOT A FACT that bigtime pressure is being applied on certain governmental authorities, particularly in the Ministry of Health, to compel officials to accept a consignment of 750 metric tons of Malathion which has been shipped from a continental country on a line of credit? That representations were made by certain quarters to *Tribune* that officials were refusing unreasonably to accept the Malathion because they were anxious to get the Malathion from some other source? That *Tribune* investigations revealed that this allegation is not true? That, on the contrary, the officials concerned have indisputable proof that the consignment of Malathion is sub-standard and fall below specifications? That aid has been given for anti-malaria aid by several foreign countries on the condition that the malathion for spraying and the anti-malaria drugs for radical treatment are of the highest accepted standards? That aid-giving countries will be entitled to withdraw their aid if sub-standard Malathion is accepted? That a bouquet must be handed over to the Ministry of Health and the concerned officials for refusing to accept this consignment? That multi-nationals in big countries must learn that poor developing countries are not the dumping ground for sub-standard goods because they are given on a line of credit? That Sri Lanka wants Malathion conforming to internationally accepted standards and specifications to eradicate malaria? That it is to be hoped that the government will not fall for high pressure lobbying by VIP vested interests? That Sri Lanka must refuse to succumb to the predatory greed of rich developed aid-giving countries that want to dump sub-standard goods on poor developing countries?

It is essential that a Code or Charter should be drawn up. A Code of Charter for Journalists—the rights and obligations of Editors, Reporters, Photographers, Commentators and Columnists—should be drawn up, discussed and finalised in discussions between the Fourth Estate, the Government and others concerned. But even before this is done, it is necessary for the Government in consultation with Editors, Senior Journalists and mass media officials to draw up a list of the minimum and maximum passes and invitations every newspaper and periodical is entitled to for functions which such papers customarily report or comment on. It is not difficult to exclude publications of a specialised nature and confine them to areas of their special interest. Invitations and passes should be issued on the basis of entitlement, not on the whims or fancies of bureaucrats. Moreover, the newspapers should not be left to the mercy of the discriminatory powers of petty bureaucrats who now seem to regard that press passes or invitations for important functions are a matter of patronage or favouritism—rewards for toadyism. *Tribune* has been writing about such events for nearly quarter of a century, but mushroom periodicals that have sprung up recently and with no record for in-depth reportage, and also foreigners who claim to be "journalists", have been accorded facilities denied to us.

We do not seek such press passes or invitations as status symbols. We only want to be able to do a job of work better. We are not asking for charity or favours. We are only asking for our rights—that is, if the Government is serious about its talk of press freedom.

—Editor.

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## NEXT WEEK

- WORLD TODAY  
— Carter, Vietnam
  - SHORT STORY  
— The Return
  - SINGAPORE—2  
— Detention Procedures
- 

## BREACH OF PRIVILEGE

### NSA Fines Observer Editor And Associate

Rs. 1000 Each to Deaf,  
Blind School

From THE CEYLON DAILY NEWS  
February, 1978

The National State Assembly yesterday imposed a fine of Rs. 1000 each on Mr. Harold Peiris, Editor of the *Ceylon Observer* and Mr. Philip Coorey, Associate Editor of the *Ceylon Observer* when it used the penal powers vested in the House under the Parliament (Powers and Privileges) (Amendment) Act with regard to a breach of privilege raised by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. A. C. S. Hameed. The editors were also directed to publish prominently a suitable apology on page 1 of the *Ceylon Observer* in its next issue. The unanimous verdict of the House, the first to be pronounced since the Act was amended this week, was conveyed to Mr. Harold Peiris and Mr. Philip Coorey by the Speaker, Mr. Ananda Tissa de Alwis when they were summoned to the bar of the House.

The Prime Minister, Mr. J. R. Jayawardene speaking to the House which formed into a committee to discuss the breach privilege raised by Mr. Hameed said that the fines should be paid direct to the Deaf and Blind School. He said he was a shareholder of the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Limited, and speaking as a shareholder and not as the Prime Minister would see that the fines are paid by ANCL and not by the Editor and Associate Editor of the *Ceylon Observer*. If the fines were to be paid personally by Mr. Peiris and Mr. Coorey he would certainly not have agreed to the fines being imposed. Mr. Jayawardene said as a shareholder of ANCL he was aware that the establishment was not an indigent organisation. It had enough money to pay the fines imposed on both the Editor and the Associate Editor.

The breach of privilege raised by Mr. Hameed related to two pictures which appeared in the *Ceylon Observer* of January 30 where the captions had wrongly iden-

tified Mr. Hameed as being in a boat with a woman when the picture related to some other person. Mr. Hameed said that the wrong caption to the picture would damage his reputation as a Foreign Minister of this country. The Prime Minister said that he was glad that the House had conducted itself admirably on the first occasion it sat in the capacity of a Court. It was known that the punishment must always fit the crime. The House did not know exactly what crime the two Editors had committed and it did not go into the details of it or the merits of the defence of the two Editors because they had accepted their mistake, apologised and showed the House that they had not in any way made the mistake deliberately or with malice. The House under the powers vested in it could either discharge the suspects, it can commit them to jail or fine them. There were some members of the Government who wanted a bigger fine imposed and others a lesser fine. This showed that there was democracy within the ranks of the Government. The reason why it was decided to impose a fine was firstly because the Deaf and Blind School needed a donation and secondly to show that the House had teeth under the Act.

Mr. R. Premadasa (Minister of Local Government, Housing and Construction) who originally moved that a fine of Rs. 2500 be imposed on each agreed to lessen it to Rs. 1000 as suggested by the Prime Minister. He said that while this Government welcomed fair and just criticism and wanted the newspapers to show where the Government was wrong and reflect the people's thinking and their needs and aspirations it could not condone the character assassination of members of the House on whichever side they were. It could not allow newspapers to belittle the honour of the House or misrepresent facts. If it were the truth then the Government would accept it but deliberate and malicious distortions, particularly affecting the character and integrity of a member of the House could not be part of the freedom of the Press. Referring to the *Ceylon Observer* he said that when a correction was asked to be made even that correction was not done properly. That was admitted by the Editor of the newspaper.

Mr. Premadasa said that the fine imposed on the two news papermen should serve as an example to others. Recently the *Dinakara* newspaper had stated that he had appointed his brother-in-law to some jobs. These people were holding their posts from about 15 to 20 years. The *Dinakara* was trying to show its readers that he was following the example set by the former Prime Minister. Even the *Janadina* had a campaign to malign the members of the House using the lowest language possible. Those were persistent attempts made to damage the character of public men. He remembered that a certain newspaper had carried a picture of the late Mr. Dudley Senanayake in the company of several women. What had been done was to superimpose the face of the late Mr. Senanayake in a deliberate attempt to malign his character. That was certainly not the freedom of the Press, Mr. Premadasa said.

Mr. A. Amirthalingam (Leader of the Opposition) said that the House should accept the fact that the error was a bona fide error and it was corrected as soon as it was discovered. The element of malice therefore did not exist in this instance. But the position must be accepted that the apology and correction had not been adequate. It had not been given the prominence it deserved. The Editor should have seen to it, realising the magnitude of the damage that publication has done, given sufficient prominence to the correction and apology. The TULF was familiar with that sort of ruse adopted by newspapers when a correction was put in an insignificant place to hide the mistake. However, with regard to the fine suggested by the Leader of the House (Mr. R. Premadasa) of Rs. 2500 on each was, he believed far too excessive. The House therefore should bring a judicial mind to bear on the question because it would be a precedent for the future. The fine was not merely a warning but an indication that heavier penalties would be imposed in the future. He felt that a fine of Rs. 1000 on each of them would suffice.

Earlier Foreign Affairs Minister Mr. A. C. S. Hameed raised the breach of privilege issue concerning two pictures the *Ceylon Observer* carried on January 30, with captions which he said had damaged

his reputation as a Minister of the Government and Member of the NSA in the conduct of official duties abroad as a representative of the Sri Lanka government.

The Speaker Mr. Ananda tissa de Alwis who had, minutes before announced to the House that he had endorsed the certificate of the passage of the Parliament (Powers and Privileges) (Amendment) Bill said he was satisfied that a prima facie case had been established of a breach of privilege. Under the powers the House derived the day before the Speaker called upon the Leader of the House to move a motion pertaining to the breach of privilege raised by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Earlier Mr. Hameed said he had seen the Speaker in his chambers yesterday morning. The *Ceylon Observer* on January 30 had carried a picture of a young man and a lady and the young man was purported to be him according to the caption. The caption said the President of one of the industrial complexes on South Korea was showing Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Mr. A. C. S. Hameed around its show rooms. Any MP or for that matter any person would get the impression that Sri Lanka's Foreign Affairs Minister was a playboy. And if one went further there was another picture on the same page where he was being shown around an industrial complex of South Korea. But the caption said the Transport Minister Mr. M. H. Mohamed was seen unveiling a plaque to mark the opening of a new railway station in Negombo. It was very subtle Mr. Hameed said, because seeing the pictures one could identify the mistake. One could say it was a blunder. But the subtle position was that anyone seeing the pictures abroad would not identify or distinguish the two personalities and would take the first picture to mean him. Therefore it was defamatory of his conduct as a Minister—under the Constitution one could not be a Minister unless he was a Member of the House—and since the Speaker was the custodian of the rights of the MPs in the House it was his responsibility to ensure that the privileges of Members should not in any way be tampered with.

He said the present Government led by its Prime Minister was for the freedom of the press. It pledged to uphold the freedom of the

press it was for a vibrant press which will be constructive in its criticism yet responsible to realise that the freedom was not a licence to malign anybody—a Minister MP or ordinary citizen. It may be said the state owned the press. But the government's attitude was it did not discriminate between state-owned press and another press. He said he strongly felt that the pictures and the caption stories had damaged his reputation. He had represented the Government of Sri Lanka abroad on various official matters. He appealed to the Speaker and said that what he raised merited an inquiry and trusted that the Chair would take necessary steps in that direction.

The Speaker said he had seen the pictures referred to by the Minister and was satisfied there was a prima facie case of a breach of privilege. He called upon the Leader of the House to move a motion in regard to the matter raised under the powers the House had derived the day before.

Mr. R. Premadasa Leader, of the House, moved that the *Ceylon Observer* of January 30 had published in page 3 a picture purported to be the president of a South Korean industrial complex showing Sri Lanka's Foreign Affairs Minister Mr. A. C. S. Hameed although it was not a picture of Mr. Hameed (a Minister and MP) but of a man travelling in a launch accompanied by a woman. The picture purporting to be Mr. Hameed had been intended and calculated to bring disrepute to him and the publication was of a defamatory nature of an MP and his conduct as an MP. In view of this the House resolves, he said, that Mr. Harold Peiris and Mr. Phillip Coorey of the *Ceylon Observer* be ordered to be produced before the House at 5 pm to produce the relevant newspaper and show cause why they should not be punished for a breach of privilege under section 47 of the Parliament (Powers and Privileges) (Amendment) Act. The Motion was passed unanimously by the House.

When the National State Assembly resumed after the tea adjournment to take up the breach of privilege raised by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. A. C. S. Hameed, the Speaker Mr. Anandatissa de Alwis called upon the the Leader of the House to move the relevant resolution. Mr. R. Premadasa Leader

of the House moving the resolution which said Mr. Hameed had been defamed by the incorrect publication of the pictures and the captions in the *Ceylon Observer* called upon the House to form into a Committee chaired by the speaker to examine the question.

**Mr. V. N. Navaratnam** (TULF Chavakachcheri) said the House should not be in a haste to dispose of the matter. The Editor and the Associate Editor have been given only two hours to appear before the House. There should be adequate time given to them to study the offence alleged to have been committed. The resolution could be moved but the House could discuss the matter when it met on February 23. That matter escaped them when the original motion was moved. The House was acting under powers vested in it only two days ago. The offence had been committed before the Bill was passed. The powers of the House should be used cautiously.

Mr. Premadasa said the question of jurisdiction raised by the Member for Chavakachcheri should have been raised earlier. The time to raise it had already lapsed but the government would bear the matter in mind. He then moved the House should move into Committee.

Prime Minister, Mr. I. R. Jayawardene referring to the change of law said there had been no change in the offence—only a change of court. The House wanted to act in that manner under the law to allow itself to acquit itself as a court of law.

When the House moved into committee the Speaker asked Sergeant-at-arms Mr. Ronnie Abeysinghe to bring Mr. Harold Peiris, Editor, *Ceylon Observer* and Mr. Phillip Coorey Associate Editor, *Ceylon Observer* to the bar of the House. They were asked to introduce themselves to the House and be seated on two chairs at the bar of the Chamber. The Speaker then read out the offence committed under the Act and asked the two editors to show cause why they should not be punished. Mr. Peiris reading a statement said that on January 30 he was not in office since it was his off-day and Mr. Coorey acted for him. The *Ceylon Observer* printed about 5000 copies and went into printing around 11 a.m. At 2.15 p.m. on January 30 he came into office to attend a

staff meeting and learnt there had been a mixup in the captions of two pictures. On the same page next day an apology and correction was carried. About 4000 copies of the *Ceylon Observer* carried an accurate version of the pictures the same day—printed on the run. He expressed his unqualified apology to both the Assembly and Mr. Hameed. Mr. Peiris's statement along with the documents were handed over to the Speaker.

Mr. Coorey reading his statement said on January 30 Mr. Peiris was not in office since it was his off day and he (Mr. Coorey) was acting for him. When the proof of page 3 was brought he noticed the error and asked sub-editor Mr. Ian Jayasinghe to correct it and saw him correcting it. Despite that the error went uncorrected. He then immediately ordered the press to be stopped by then about 900 copies had been printed. Four thousand corrected copies were printed. The matter was brought to the notice of the Chairman of the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon who ordered an investigation. He also informed Mr. Peiris about it. Mr. Coorey tendered his unqualified apology to the House and Mr. Hameed. He also produced the statements of Mr. Jayasinghe and the Works Manager and the statement of Asst. Foreman Ebert.

Under cross-examination by **Mr. Navaratnam**, Mr. Peiris said there had been no deliberate attempt to malign Mr. Hameed. It was a bona fide mistake.

**Mr. R. Sampanthan**, (TULF Trincomalee) asked whether it would not have been appropriate if the correction and apology were published on Page 1 of the newspaper. Mr. Peiris said normally corrections were carried on the same page the error had been made but agreed that Page 1 would have been more appropriate.

Answering questions from **Mr. D. M. Chandrapala** (UNP-Kundasaale) Mr. Peiris said he was responsible as Editor but it was the Assistant foreman of the Works Department who had mixed up the captions.

**Mr. Shelton Ranaraja** (Deputy Minister of Justice): Did you consult lawyers?

**Mr. Peiris**: I consulted the Chairman and the lawyers.

**Mr. Gamini Dissanayake**: (Minister of Irrigation, Power and Highways) said the Editor had agreed that it would have been more appropriate if the apology and correction had been carried on Page 1 and it would have minimised the damage caused to Mr. Hameed. He said the correction and apology had been carried on Page 3 of the next issue in an insignificant corner. Would it not have been more appropriate if the correction and apology had been boxed and carried in the middle?

**Mr. Peiris**: Yes, would have been more appropriate.

Mr. Dissanayake asked whether the *Ceylon Observer* enjoyed a wide circulation abroad and received subscriptions from foreign missions Mr. Peiris said the *Ceylon Observer* had no subscribers abroad.

**Mr. Harindra Corea** (UNP-Chilaw) asked who selected pictures for publication and who wrote the captions. Mr. Peiris said the sub-editor selected pictures. The captions were written by Mr. Jayasinghe.

**Mr. Corea**: When the error was pointed out and asked to be corrected why was it not done? **Mr. Peiris**: Mr. Jayasinghe went to the printing section and told the Asst. Foreman to correct it but he had not done so.

Answering **Mr. X. M. Sellathambo** (TULF-Mullaitivu) Mr. Peiris said disciplinary action had been taken against him the same evening. The Works Manager had called for his explanation.

**Mr. Ronnie de Mel** (Minister of Finance and Planning) asked why after the error was detected after 900 copies were printed the printed copies were not held back. Mr. Peiris said the 900 odd copies had by then been sent out. He said there was no breakdown in discipline between the editorial and the works departments.

**Mr. V. Dharmalingam** (TULF-Manipay): Did you read the offending clause?

**Mr. Peiris**: No.

**Mr. Dharmalingam**: Then why did you plead guilty?

**Mr. P. Sumathiratne** (UNP-Habaraduwa): Did you write to Mr. Hameed apologising for the error?

**Mr. Peiris**: Normally, we don't rite individually but carry the corrections.

## Human Rights in Singapore

**Mr. Sumathiratne:** Don't you think it would have been more courteous if you had written personally to Mr. Hameed?

**Mr. Peiris:** We did communicate although not immediately.

**Mr. A. Amirthalingam** (Leader of the Opposition) This is like a child wearing new clothes. Why carry this so far? The Prime Minister said the Assembly had acquitted itself very well as a court. Questioning Mr. Peiris he said Mr. Hameed had been referred to in a caption what would be the impression anybody would get from that? Those who knew Mr. Hameed would have known it as a mistake but what about foreigners who had never seen him? Mr. Hameed is our Minister of Foreign Affairs and a Member of the NSA. What impression would the foreigners get of him? Not a good one?

**Mr. Peiris:** No Sir.

This Prime Minister said a Foreign Minister in a friendly country Mr. George Brown got drunk but the newspapers did not mention that. On the same page the same day there was another picture. Those who knew Mr. Hameed and who saw both pictures would know it was a mistake—but not a foreigner. Mr. Hameed as Foreign Minister should have a good image. The apology and the correction carried was in a small place—so small he noticed it only yesterday. Was that adequate?

**Mr. Peiris:** Now I think that the apology and correction should have been carried on Page 1.

At this stage the Speaker asked the two editors to have the Chamber and await the decision of the House.

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

### Briefing On Singapore—1

The first edition of Amnesty International's *Briefing on Singapore* was published in February 1976. Since then the Singapore Government has taken a series of actions which have led to serious violations of human rights. More men and women whom the government claims are members of or sympathizers with some branch or sate-

lite organisation of the illegal Communist Party of Malaya have been arrested. However, no formal charges have been brought against them and there is no opportunity to test the government's allegations in court. These people can be imprisoned indefinitely without charge or trial by government order under the Internal Security Act. Those arrested in 1976-77 include people who have been outspoken in their criticism of the Singapore Government.

Former political detainees, some of whom spent up to 10 years in prison without trial in the 1960s, have been arbitrarily re-arrested and once again face indefinite detention without trial.

An increasing number of political detainees have made "confession" on the State run television and in the government-supervised press. Such "confessions", which are usually required as a precondition for release, contain claims relating to allegations that they have engaged in illegal and subversive activities but their statements are not tested in open court according to generally accepted legal practice. The "confessions" often implicate friends and associates of the detainee and are used by the government as a pretext to arrest these people. There is growing concern, both in Singapore and abroad, at the increasing use of public "confession" to justify the arrest and imprisonment of men and women without any involvement of judicial process.

In May 1976, the Singapore Government announced that 50 men and women whom it claimed were suspected communists had been arrested since January that year. This announcement coincided with a televised "confession" by Madam Goh Lay Kuan, a 36-year-old classical ballet teacher, that she had been involved in allegedly "underground" communist activities. The Singapore Government used this "confession" to support its assertion that there is a dangerous communist presence in Singapore. The arrests were announced a few days before the Socialist International—of which Singapore's ruling People's Action Party (PAP) was a member—met in London to discuss accusation by other member parties of the organization that Singapore was violating human rights by detaining political prisoners without trial. The

PAP subsequently withdrew from the Socialist International after the Dutch Labour Party had refused to retract its demand for the expulsion of the Singapore party.

Immediately after the PAP's withdrawal from the Socialist International there was a further series of arrests in Singapore. Among those detained was Dr. Poh Soo Kai, a medical practitioner and former assistant secretary general of the *Barisan Socialis* (Socialist Front) opposition party. Dr. Poh had been detained without trial from 1963 until 1973, and had been adopted by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience. Following his release in December 1973 he returned to his medical practice. He continued to criticize the Singapore Government, particularly for curtailing the application of the rule of law and detaining political prisoners without trial. Dr. Poh was re-arrested under the Internal Security Act in June 1976, a few days after the PAP's withdrawal from the Socialist International. He was subjected to continuous interrogation by the Internal Security Department and was reported to be in a state of exhaustion. The Singapore Government now asserts that from the time of his release in 1973 Dr. Poh had been "directing activities from behind the scenes to get hard core detainees released and to establish a new (communist) united front group". It also alleges that he advised "student agitators" and that he had supplied medicine to a communist activist said to have been injured by his own bomb while trying to assassinate a local factory manager. The latter allegation is based on a "confession" made by a former political detainee. It has been publicized widely in the government supervised press but never tested in a fair and open trial. This is because no formal charges have been made by the government and, like all Singapore's political prisoners, Dr. Poh is denied recourse to the courts. He is still being held in detention without trial.

Dr. Poh's wife, Grace, was arrested early in March 1977. The government did not announce her arrest, the apparent reason for which was partly to induce her husband to make a statement of "confession" and political recantation.

Arrests of political suspects continued throughout the year.

Those arrested included an opposition candidate, Shamsuddin Tung, detained under the Internal Security Act the day after the holding of the general elections in December 1976, five leaders of the Singapore Polytechnic Students Union, journalists, construction and factory workers, and members of the armed forces. The government accused them of subversion and of actively supporting the illegal Communist Party of Malaya. None was brought to trial.

In February 1977 the government announced the arrest of 10 people under the Internal Security Act. Most of those arrested were former political detainees who had spent many years in detention without trial in the 1960s. One of them, Mr. G. Raman, is well-known as one of the few lawyers in Singapore willing to represent political prisoners. He had also been outspoken in his criticism of the government, particularly on the question of detention without trial. Mr. Raman remains in detention without trial.

The Singapore Government related the February 1977 arrests directly to the international criticism of the PAP made by members of the Socialist International in May 1976. It claimed that Mr. Raman and a "group" of alleged associates were the source of "distorted" information about Singapore which was used by "Euro-Communists" to discredit the PAP, thereby justifying its expulsion from the Socialist International.

Within a few days of his arrest, Mr. Raman made a written "confession", widely publicized in the press, in which he implicated many of those arrested with him. Among other things, he claimed that his "group" had supplied "distorted" information to communists in Western Europe because they wanted international pressure brought to bear on the Singapore Government to force it to release "hard core communist detainees" in time to contest Singapore's general elections in December 1976. Mr. Raman's handwritten "confessions" were followed by a televised "confession" at a press conference on 12th March called by the government, at which he appeared together with Arun Senkuttuvan, Singapore correspondent of the London *Financial Times* and *The Economist* and former correspondent of the *Far Eastern*

*Economic Review*, who had been arrested on 15th February. In his "confession", Arun Senkuttuvan implicated the editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* in what he described as an intricate plot, involving confidential tape-recordings, allegedly intended to damage relations between Singapore and its neighbour, Malaysia. Arun Senkuttuvan has since been released from detention, although his citizenship has been revoked. Arun Senkuttuvan said that he was not a communist himself, but implied that the purpose of this plot was to assist communist attempts to undermine the Singapore Government. These allegations were denied by the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, but no formal charges were brought and no evidence could be tested in court.

A number of other detainees arrested in February have also made "confessions" which the government has used to support its repeated claims that Singapore is in grave danger from communist subversion. However, informed observers point out that one of these "confessions" including those of Mr. Raman and Arun Senkuttuvan, contain any substantive evidence of a "communist conspiracy" particularly as no evidence has been presented in court. For example, two of those detained, Michael Fernandez and Ong Bock Chuan, referred in their "confessions" to the proposed activities of a Human Rights Committee in Singapore. Mr. Raman had also referred to this proposed committee in his "confession". According to these "confessions", the committee was ostensibly to be a civil liberties group opposed to detention without trial and other arbitrary restrictions on individual freedoms; but according to the three men, its real purpose was to discredit the Singapore Government and to compel it to release "hard core communist detainees", thereby assisting the activities of the "communist united front" in Singapore. Two men, said in these "confessions" to be connected with the proposed Human Rights Committee, Dr. Gwee Ah Leng, a medical practitioner, and Father Patrick Goh, a Roman Catholic priest, later refuted the allegations and expressed their firm belief that it was the legitimate right of Singapore citizens to be concerned for the protection of human rights and civil liberties.

Amnesty International vigorously questions the admissibility of such "confessions" particularly in view of consistent allegations that political suspects are subjected to extreme pressure in order to secure statements of involvement in communist or pro-communist activities. Amnesty International believes that it is the duty of Singapore Government to prove the guilt of an individual according to generally accepted legal norms, and it continues to urge the Singapore Government to bring all political detainees to trial or to release them immediately and unconditionally.

(To be Continued)

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### LETTERS

## Non Sinhala Public Servants And The Official Language

Sir,

The Hon the Minister of Justice in a New Year message has stated that the Hon the Prime Minister, Mr. J. R. Jayawardene will give a new impetus to the lives of all persons in Sri Lanka without any class distinction in any sphere of life. Mr. Jayawardene himself has often stated that no one will be penalised for his lack of knowledge of the official language. In this context I wish to spotlight the grave hardships non Sinhala speaking public servants are undergoing.

On his appointment, a non Sinhala officer is required to pass the proficiency examinations as follows. Grade one, i.e. third standard level in his first year, grade two, i.e. fifth standard in his second year and grade three, i.e. JSC in his third. If he does not pass these exams which are becoming stiffer and stiffer year by year, he will not receive his annual increments and will not be confirmed in service. This results in officers receiving lesser emoluments throughout their careers, loss in seniority, resulting in delay or loss in promotions and juniors going above them. This affects their entire careers.

In my humble opinion, the time given is all too short and the penalties very severe. Those who are



born, bred and educated in Tamil speaking areas will not have any knowledge of Sinhala. To expect such officers to pass the JSC within three years is asking too much. A child in his impressionable age takes about eight years to reach this standard, studying full time in a school and when Sinhala is his mother tongue.

Is it not therefore harsh to expect an adult to do so in three years by studying in his leisure time? Some public servants who are stationed in very out of the way places, like Forest Officers, Surveyors and Irrigation Dept Officers cannot obtain tuition at all. Some officials like Doctors work round the clock and do not have any spare time.

I have a nephew who is a DMO upcountry, and I have enjoyed his hospitality on a number of occasions. I can state in all truthfulness that he does not have a minute to call his own. He works on weekends and public holidays and is disturbed at all hours of the day and night by an attendant or midwife to examine a new admission. He does not go to a film as he is often waned at the hospital half way through the show. He has put in five years service and has been able to pass only one grade one and has received only one increment so far. In utter frustration he has decided to quit.

Several articles have appeared recently in the press on the brain drain of Engineers, Doctors and Accountants, and many reasons have been adduced. No one has however touched on the main cause of the flight of talent where Tamil public servants are concerned. Over 90% of the Tamil public servants who "chuck up" do so on account of the very heavy penalties they undergo for failure to pass the proficiency exams in time.

I am not against the language policy of the Govt, and those who choose to enter the public service would gain proficiency in Sinhala. My appeal however is that officers should be given reasonable time to pass the exams. I would suggest two years for each grade, making the total six years as against the present three years to reach the JSC. I would also request the Govt that failure to pass the exams should be penalised by stoppage of increments and not deferment as at present. If an officer passes the exams late, his salary

should be restored to what he would have drawn had he passed them, in time. Of course arrears of salary need not be paid. This would result in an officer not being penalised for life.

Advocates of standardisation have laboured to point out that students from backward areas should be given concessions. By the same arguments, a non Sinhala adult who has to study the language in his spare time after a hard day's work should be given at least three times the period a Sinhala child would take to reach the JSC, namely 24 years!

I am confident that the Hon the Prime Minister and the Govt who have often vouched to be fair to all, would view this problem with the sympathy it needs and afford relief to thousands of non Sinhala public servants who are being penalised due to the very harsh requirements mentioned by me. This request, if granted will not run counter to the official language policy of the Govt.

30/1, Martyn Lane,  
Jaffna.  
14.1.78

B.R.A.

## SLFP EXCO Pledges Fight 'Adharmista Acts'

Sir,

Reference the article in the Weekend of the 8th January under the above caption, was not this the same party which rode rough shod over the masses until very recently and whose commissions are presently under scrutiny? Have they not been judged, found wanting and rejected by the masses? Have not these same saviours of the nation been proved inept? Do they for a moment imagine that the hardships suffered by the public has been so soon forgotten? Surely they cannot be so dense as to think that the masses are so insensitive that they would volunteer to commit suicide by backing a party that has proved to be so indifferent to the sufferings of the masses in the recent past.

If the present regime perpetuates the same indifferent attitude to the sufferings they impose on the common man, I am sure that the public will give them too a like answer (as the previous regime encountered) in the Local Government polls to be held shortly.

The mistakes of the past regime cannot be corrected so easily: We have to play fair in this new age of Dharmista by affording ample rope for the new regime to hang itself if it so chooses, and time enough to redeem its election pledges and prove its much voided theory of their new Dharmista Society. We owe it, in justice, to permit them the chance of proving their Dharmista Society not only in sloganeering but also in actual practice.

The writing on the wall is too obvious and true to form (whatever this may mean) to be ignored. Let us therefore abide in patience until we are afforded an opportunity to dispense their own justice according to their laws, but let us not be hesitant nor wavering in its application when the time comes.

A cog in the wheel of the suffering masses.

S. P. R. Fernando

"Pinacle",  
278, Kattuwa,  
Negombo.

Notice under section 7 of the Land Acquisition Act (Cap. 460) as Amended by the Land Acquisition (Amendment) Act No. 28 of 1964.

Reference No. ATH 1/191

It is ended to acquire the land described in the schedule below. For further particulars please see the Gazette of the Republic of Sri Lanka No. 304 (Part 111) of 10/02/1978.

### SCHEDULE

Div. A.G.A.'s Division: Colombo  
Situation: Word No. 23, Hunupitiya within Colombo M.C.  
Village: Slave Island  
Name of Land: Parts of Assmt. No. 175, Vauxhall Street  
Lot Nos.: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 and 9.  
Plan No. P.P.Co.: 4517

H. C. Gunawardane

District Land Officer of  
Colombo District.

The Kachcheri,  
Colombo,  
18th January 1978.

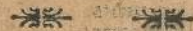
# Confidentially

## Urea Factory Mystery ?

IS IT NOT SURPRISING that after the atombomb-like blast exploded by the Minister of Finance & Planning, Mr. Ronnie de Mel, towards the end of the Budget debate in regard to the Urea Fertiliser factory the government should now decide that it was a worthwhile project which should be completed as expeditiously as possible? That readers will recall that Minister Ronnie de Mel had frightened the wits out of everybody by calling the Urea Fertiliser Project the biggest swindle ever? That he had thundered that some VIPs in the last regime had made as much as Rs. 50 million in illegal commissions abroad? That it was a project, he had said, that would bring only enormous losses to Sri Lanka? That the Finance Minister went so far as to say that he would ask his colleague the Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs to cancel the contract? That the Finance Minister's outburst about the Urea Fertiliser Project was repeated over the radiowaves of the SLBC on more than one occasion? That the SLBC Lobby Correspondent Nimal Karunatilekha had drawn special attention to this exposure in his broadcast and referred to it as a supreme example of the racket-busting which the Budget Debate had generated? That the public was led to expect a Urea Fertiliser Project Commission of Inquiry? That instead of an island-shaking Commission of Inquiry, with revelation that would reverberate in some of the richest countries of the world, the Finance Minister's bombastic house-top pyrotechnics has ended up as a damp squib of the most measely kind? That for sometime there had been whispers for sometime in political circles that Government would go ahead with the project? (That readers will recall that Finance Minister, Ronnie de Mel had stated that it would be cheaper for the government to pay the penalty for Breach of Contract than bear the enormous and recurrent losses the country would have to bear once the factory came into operation?). That the whispers were finally con-

firmed in a report in the *Ceylon Daily News* of February 2, 1978? That the report was tucked away in a corner of the frontpage curd carried over to an insignificant place on an inner page? That the heading read GOVT TO GO AHEAD WITH UREA PROJECT? That the report read: "The Government yesterday decided to go ahead with the Rs. 2,200 million Urea Fertiliser Project at Sapugaskanda, Kelaniya. This follows a recommendation by a four-man committee appointed by Mr. Cyril Mathew, Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs. Last December Mr. Ronnie de Mel, Minister of Finance & Planning asked his Cabinet colleague, Mr. Cyril Mathew, to cancel the ADB (Asian Development Bank) contract to construct the urea fertilizer factory at Sapugaskanda because the project would incur a loss of Rs. 400 million this year and by 1990 it would reach Rs. 600 million. The terms of reference of this committee were (1) to re-evaluate the viability of the urea project in the light of the new budgetary provisions and (2) to consider in the light of this re-evaluation the feasibility of either continuing with this project or abandoning it, considering the financial liability of the sunk costs and the fiscal implications of abrogating the contract, bearing in mind the financial arrangements that have been made in respect of funding the project." The Committee submitted its report to the Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs on Tuesday. The *Daily News* understands that the cancellation of the project would have had far-reaching and serious financial implications and that it would have caused the immediate loss of employment to about 2,000 persons engaged in construction work on the project. The urea fertilizer project is the largest industrial complex so far conceived of or undertaken in Sri Lanka. At current prices the total investment works out to Rs. 2,200 million including a foreign exchange component of US 92 million dollars. The project is co-financed by four groups led by the ADB Kreditanstalt Fver Wiederaufbau (KfW) of West Germany, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and the Government of India. The Government yesterday decided that the project was economically feasible and one that was in the best interests of the country at this stage of its development. It

felt that if the project was cancelled among the implications that it would be burdened with were the immediate repayment of US 53 million dollars to the co-lenders i.e., the three development banks and the Government of India, liquidation of the State Fertilizer Manufacturing Corporation which would mean termination of employment for about 200 persons, compensation payable to about 700 international manufacturing concerns now engaged in fabricating plant for the project, the amount already spent on the project of approximately Rs. 1,000 million will be irretrievably lost. The Ministry of Industries & Scientific Affairs yesterday cabled all the foreign parties concerned of the Government's decision to continue with the project? Is this decision of the Cabinet, on the report of a Committee appointed by the Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs, not a total repudiation of the stand taken by the Minister of Finance? Is it that the Minister of Finance had indulged in an orgy of Urea racket-busting without adequate inquiry and probably on a briefing that was not balanced or complete? That if this is so, it betrays a degree of irresponsibility on the part of the present Minister of Finance that will make many responsible people to sit up! That if it is true, as has been suggested in some quarters, that the Minister had been led up the garden path by some designing bureaucrats, who had an axe to grind, it is time that something is done about these bureaucrats? That, on the other hand, it is also suggested that the present decision to continue with the project is only a "cover-up" to hush up the Finance Minister's true exposure of facts in a bid not to tread on the corns of some of the biggest multi-nationals and petro-dollar investors in the world today? That it will be a long time before the full and true facts are known? That in any case, this incident is a lesson for Ministers not to fly into racket-busting exposures without obtaining prior Cabinet sanction?



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