

CHRISTIAN WORKER



MOVING TOWARDS WHAT ?

The Farce of Mahaveli "Acceleration"

— Gamini Iriyagolle

Heading for National disaster

— Colvin R. de Silva



- World affairs
- Ecology
- Religion & Politics
- Human rights

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Armed offensive or peace with justice ?

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who have signed our Appeal*

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A Cease Fire !
A Negotiated Settlement !

Campaign organized by

**The Citizens Committees of Colombo, Jaffna,
Batticola, Mannar, Baddegama, Trincomalee and Vavuniya**

281, Dean's Road,
COLOMBO 10.

(This Advertisement is donated by Lionel)

From our readers

Sent with a Christmas Card

I am sending this verse as it is meaningful:

"What can I say this Christmas
When the mind
is splintered and numbed
by the bullets
of hatred and vengeance?
When our complacency
is shaken
And the world stands bared
to reveal
the stark realities
of bitterness, injustices and greed.
When the fumes of scientific
experiments
breathe death that envelops us all
while the throbbing pulse fortells
a crisis
as the summit of human
endurance is reached.
When the love that was born at
Christmas
lies crushed by the monsters of
power
And the heart of God
is ever breaking
as the cries
of the dying
of the hungry
of the oppressed
are heard
and yet he is patiently waiting
for mankind to believe
that Jesus is God incarnate
And the Giver of life to all.
So let us accept him this Christmas
and offer our garlands
of love
our lamps
of hope
And sing this prayer with the
angels:
Lord make us instruments of thy
Peace!"

From Vivie
37/2, Pedris Road
Colombo 3

Dear Friends,

Every time I have the privilege of reading the quarterly journal of the C.W.F (the latest copy of which more than justifies the epithet, "Excellent" and/or "Splendid") I am overcome by two emotions: **Admiration** for the spirit of dedication that is so obviously behind all your activities, and **Regret** that age prevents me from active physical participation in your Christian commitment of "establishing the Kingdom of God on Earth".

It is in a spirit of 'substitute service' that I enclose Rs. 100/- (though in my view this is inadequate, but economic realities are harsh) as a donation to assist in the rehabilitation of the village of Vanniyapalugollawa.

Thank you and with best wishes.

Yours sincerely & fraternally

G. J. R. Samarasingha
24/A Shady Grove Avenue,
Colombo 8.
12 Nov. 1984

Dear Editor,

I, subscribed for the "Christian Worker" purely to oblige a friend. Though I had seen copies of it at the news stands, I did not care to pick one up even for a glance.

Sectarianism, in my opinion, is a major contribution to Sri Lanka's present predicament. In that context sub division of the working class on religious grounds does not appeal to me. That explains my reservations regarding a publication promoting "Christian" Workers as distinct from Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim workers.

When I started receiving copies of the "Christian" Worker, I felt that I had missed quite a treat. I will not miss this treat in future and I welcome those others like me to join the readership.

The coverage of both local and world affairs provides the English reader, a dimension which the national media fights shy of. Therefore, this quarterly publication is a much awaited treat.

Lets hope 1985 will enable at least a bi-monthly publication despite all obstacles and road blocks for dissemination of news and views.

Tissa Samaranyake
Colombo
3. 1. 85

To our Readers

This issue of **Christian Worker** was delayed mainly due to the somewhat confused political situation that prevailed as a result of the Roundtable debacle. It therefore covers events in January 1985 too.

Please note that further increase in printing costs have compelled us to raise the price of **Christian Worker**. The **1985 Subscription** will accordingly be Rs. 20.00 for the year inclusive of postage. Please send in your subscription if you have not done so already. **You could use the form enclosed for this purpose.**

We are still endeavouring to keep the magazine at a price within reach of the average reader and will have to rely on the generosity of our friends to meet the deficit!

Thank you,
Editorial Board.

FOURTH QUARTER 1984
(January 1985)

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Quarterly of the Christian Workers Fellowship
**CHRISTIAN
WORKER**

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Comment

Moving towards What?

The cover scene in this issue of *Christian Worker* is that of people on the move, leaving their accustomed homes and migrating to fresh pastures. This is not just indicative of our journeying into the new year 1985, but even more, deeply symbolic of what in fact has been taking place in our country in more recent years.

Forced migrations

People have been moved out of their traditional homelands in the name of "development" — out of villages rich with legend and history both at Kotmale and at Kundasale, the latter including some of the most highly developed and intensively cultivated land in the country now to be submerged by the waters of the Victoria dam to generate more electricity and to provide yatching pleasures for foreign tourists.

Then again we have had the migration of people both to the North and abroad after the racist holocaust of July 1983 to be followed now in late 1984 by a virtually total migration from the North of Sinhala people in the wake of attacks

unleashed on them. All very reminiscent of Christmas, itself a story of journeys — Bethlehem and the flight to Egypt accompanied by a massacre of the innocents. And it is indeed the innocents who in any case have been the sufferers in our own country too.

More violence and counter-violence

In the last issue of this journal we referred to the escalation of violence in our comment: "Roundtable and Terrorism". But this escalation reached a peak in the period that subsequently followed with the killing on November 19th of the Army Commander in the North, Colonel A. Ariyaperuma (posthumously promoted to the rank of Brigadier) and the total destruction the very next day of the Chavakachcheri police station, claiming the lives of 24 policemen and a few 'Tiger' youth who launched the attack. Fortunately, in this instance, the imposition of a 30-hour all Island curfew by the Government prevented counter-violence and even perhaps a repetition of the black days of July 1983.

Then came a series of 'Tiger' attacks, hijacking of State vehicles, capture of bowsers loaded with fuel, robbing of State property and funds from banks and State institutions, skirmishes with the forces followed by retaliatory action on the part of the latter, and climaxed by the assault on the Kent and Dollar farms in the Nedunkerny area and the killing of some 40 Sinhalese resident there. TULF leader A. Amirthalingam tried to explain these farm killings in a telephone interview broadcast over the BBC on December 1st by saying that the attack was provoked by the action of the Government in settling Sinhalese on lands earlier occupied by Tamil refugees, which had embittered the feelings of the Tamil youths. Describing this as an "isolated incident", Mr. Amirthalingam went on to say: "Sinhala civilians living in Jaffna have so far never been harmed by the militants and in the same way. Sinhala fishermen in the eastern coast of Mullaitivu and other places in Trincomalee and Batticaloa have never been harmed." He had hardly spoken when on the very next day i. e. Sunday, December 2nd, fisherman in the villages of Kokkilai and Nayaru in the Mullaitivu district were attacked and 11, including children, killed. The press also reported an attack on some Sinhalese in Jaffna including the kidnapping of 9 Cement Corporation employees in Jaffna with a demand for a ransom and a demand that all Sinhala workers at the two cement factories in Kankesanturai be withdrawn. Two police inspectors were also reported to be kidnapped before Christmas. No further news about the kidnapped have been made available, but attacks and threats have had the effect of expelling virtually all the Sinhala residents in the North.

As against reports of terrorist attacks on policemen, members of the armed forces and civilians, there have been complaints about the conduct of the Forces in "combing out" operations especially in the North. An alleged rampage by the Army in Mannar on December 4th was denied by the Government spokesmen, but a documented report of the incidents there addressed to President Jayewardene by the Mannar District Citizens Committee has appeared in *Saturday Review* of December 22nd. Government spokesmen have of course stated that that the Army in their operations could not often distinguish between terrorists and innocent by-standers when they opened fire. In regard to another incident in Mannar in which the Revd George Jeyarajasingham, a Methodist Minister and two others were shot and killed, there have been conflicting reports although Government spokesmen have maintained that terrorists were responsible for these killings. The clergyman

concerned (together with his Sinhala wife who died more recently) ran a community farm in Murunkan and had been greatly loved by the people. Government authorities also announced on December 19th that terrorists had destroyed a church and the statue of our Lady at Kokilai. More recently the Catholic Bishops' Conference has asked the government for an impartial inquiry at the highest levels into the alleged killing by the security forces of a priest of the Mannar diocese in the precincts of his church on Sunday January 6th morning (Epiphany) in the course of what was officially reported as a shoot-out with terrorists.

However, the report of an army attack on a 'Tiger' hide-out at Atchuvely and the death of a prominent leader during that attack is not disputed.

More recently, 'Tiger' action has included the blasting of four major causeways in the North on January 14th (Thaipongal Day) and the bomb attack on the 'Yal Devi' train carrying soldiers and policemen mainly on January 19th night, leaving many dead and injured. To add to all this, the enforcement of a Surveillance Zone even led to an arrest of Indian fishermen for alleged trespassing on our territorial waters followed by the arrest of a Sri Lankan navy patrol boat by the Indian authorities for an alleged trespassing on their waters, though settled finally by a reciprocal return of both men and craft!

Hard Facts

Whatever one may think about the different reports that are received, there are two hard facts which we think need to be underlined.

The first is that this country belongs to all Sri Lankans and that **all** the citizens of this country, whatever their race or religion, must enjoy **the basic human right to live wherever they please in any part of the country**. While the rights of minorities need of course to be respected and given effect to, it is neither politic nor fair on the part of Tamil leaders to claim **exclusive** possession of a part of this country as a "traditional homeland". Such claims can only end in sterile dissension and conflict. And it must never be forgotten too that the indigenous Tamils (12.60% of the population), even if they are resident in large numbers in the North and East, are **essentially an interspersed minority** (like the other minorities) living in appreciable numbers in other parts of the country as well. If narrow racial prejudices, suspicions and distrust are to be transcended, this intermingling of races must be encouraged rather

than hindered. Only then would we be enabled to emerge truly as a single and united Sri Lankan nation. The alternative would be to sink back into tribalism.

The second is the senselessness and futility of violence and fratricidal strife as a means to "solve" the present crisis. We are to enter the **"Year of Youth" in 1985 and it is good to remember that whether it is on the side of the armed forces or on that of the armed protagonists of Eelam, it is in fact the youth of our country who today are engaged in destroying one another in a senseless carnage.** As we have reiterated over and again in these columns, it is imperative that this criminal slaughter be stopped without delay.

It may well be that the armed Eelamist offensive, especially since late November, was also one organized in this context of the impending General Election in India to attract attention and draw support particularly from Tamil Nadu. However that may be, the costly nature of this fratricidal warfare has been highlighted by that offensive. The continuance of such a violent policy would however be meaningless and counter-productive except to those expatriates who have more sinister designs. Any war must surely give way to negotiations for peace if anything is to be achieved. (Meanwhile the Government's declaration of "Prohibited Zones" and "Security Zones" under the Emergency Regulation are causing untold hardship to fishermen and the poor especially.)

On the other hand, from the viewpoint of the Government or the "Sinhala" interests, it is surely stupid to merely focus on the dangers of "terrorism" and the need for "national security" while the underlying causes of such "terrorism" go un-remedied. It is time we learnt to distinguish between causes and results. The present outburst of violence and counter-violence are in truth only the results of what through the sins of commission and omission on the part of successive governments has now developed into a malignant sore and whose real cause lies is an unresolved national question. And it is surely the elimination of the real cause of the malady that we must now turn to rather than to concentrate purely on what are only its external manifestations. In short, it is the need to recognise the absolute imperative for a political solution as against a purely militaristic approach

The irony of the situation however is that this is conceded by almost everyone **theoretically**. "Terrorism cannot be killed by killing the terrorists" declaimed Prime Minister Premadasa in Parliament.

SLFP leader Mrs. Bandaranaike has said that only a political solution is possible. The Commander of the Armed Forces in the North, Brigadier Nalin Seneviratne has unequivocally told Reuters that there is no military solution. And all the parties to the Roundtable Conference including the TULF were in agreement that "devolution" of power which is in effect a political solution is necessary. All of which brings us to the Roundtable Conference (described in official documents as the All Party Conference) begun a year ago and concluded only a few days before Christmas but without any resolution of the problem.

No Military Solution !

"Brigadier Seneviratne trained at Britain's Sandhurst Military College described the (Chavakachcheri) raid as 'sophisticated' and 'well-planned'. He said the guerillas who staged the raid were under the command of one man.

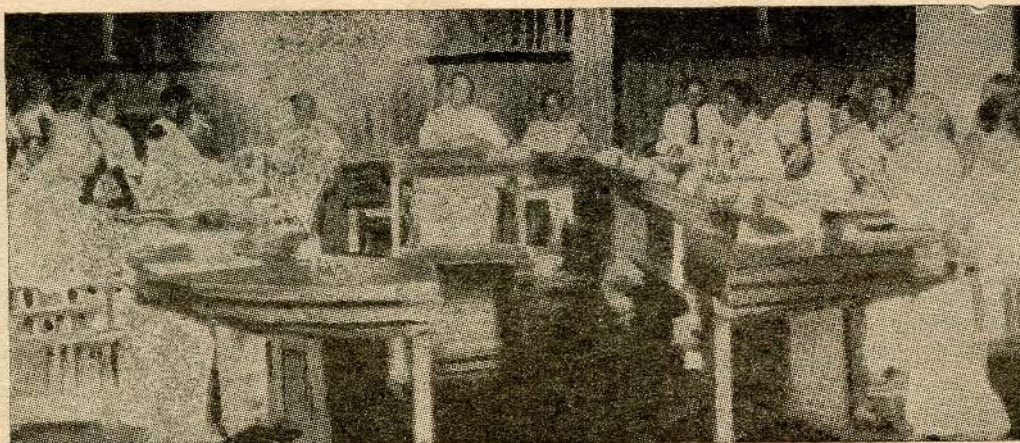
"He had no illusions about what security forces with their present manpower could achieve against an increasingly well-trained guerilla force who could count on the support of many local residents.

"'All we can do is hold and contain' he said. 'We control areas but the ones we really dominate stop at the fences of our bases'".

(**Reuter**, reproduced in **Daily News** of 24.11.84.)

The Roundtable Tragedy

Whatever the shortcomings of the Roundtable Conference and however (unnecessarily) prolonged its continuance, it did result in the devising of certain proposals and draft legislation on the part of the Government ostensibly designed to give effect to a devolution of power agreed on by the participants as being necessary. We ourselves have serious objections to some of the provisions in the draft legislation especially as regards the constitution of the District Councils, for we are firmly of the view that the members of such Councils should be elected and not take on the form of the earlier District Development Councils which were near farcical bodies dominated by MPs and Ministers and hardly conducive to any genuine democratisation of the administration in favour of the people. But whatever objections there could be to the draft legislation, it did constitute for the first time something definitive on the part of the Government by way of a proposed solution to the crisis. In this sense it was a document on which discussion could have taken place in a more concrete manner towards reaching a satisfactory settlement.



The Roundtable
or All Party
Conference in
session

It was therefore disappointing to find such negative responses to the draft legislation on the part of both the SLFP and the TULF especially. Having herself no constructive plan of any kind either to effect a devolution of power or have a political settlement in some other way, Mrs. Bandaranaike on behalf of the SLFP merely contented herself with characterising the draft legislation as "a series of 'give-aways' devoid of results with the problem of terrorism in the North and East unresolved..." It is indeed a pity that the SLFP should have only sought to pursue a sectarian political advantage from the very commencement of the Roundtable proceedings instead of attempting to bring about a constructive solution, but this is hardly surprising considering its past record (like that of the UNP) on this question! Not to be outdone, Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs Cyril Mathew sought in this context to emerge as a Sinhala-Buddhist hero with his attack on the proposals put forward by the Government, for which act he was removed from office by President Jayewardene. (Ex-Minister Mathew, who is also President of the UNP Trade Union — JSS — has been widely reputed to be backed by armed pro-government muscle men commonly referred to as the "bicycle chain gang", who are said to specialise in attacks on defenceless pickets, strikers and critics of the Government including clergy and intellectuals, even if they are not known to have as yet taken on any armed Eelam fighters in the North). If the dismissal of Minister Mathew was seen as an indication of the President's determination to go ahead with his proposals, the TULF's statement rejecting the proposals on the ground that "the bills do not enable a proper scheme of devolution or autonomy", gave the President and the Government a reason for not proceeding any further with them!

One would have normally expected the TULF to have at least kept the lines of communication on the draft legislation open for some further negotiation. But TULF leader A. Amirthalingam having made his press statement rejecting the government proposals lost no time in flying back to India for reasons best known to him! (After the Cabinet decision to drop the proposals by the Government on the ground that the TULF had rejected them, Mr. Amirthalingam has announced in Madras that he was still willing to negotiate!) Indeed it would seem that the criticism we made in our last issue of the TULF leadership "who appear to be 'playing games' only to keep their position, having lost the credibility and ability to give any effective leadership to their people" now seems more than justified. It would in fact have been more worthwhile for President Jayewardene to have pursued a course he at one time mooted of a dialogue with the militant Eelam groups or at least some of them that were amenable to such negotiation, for as we have pointed out in these columns, "an acceptance by these youth of any proposals that genuinely lead to an ending of the present impasse will undoubtedly help to resolve matters more definitively than the present discussions with the TULF." Indeed anyone concerned about a realistic appraisal of the situation would have at least to concede that these youth are in their own way — however mistaken and counter-productive in their methods — honestly reacting to existing reality as they see it, in contrast to the TULF. In any case, it is these youth who are at war in the North and a definitive resolution of the conflict will not be possible if they are not in some way brought into negotiation or dialogue. Peace talks surely can fruitfully take place only between the combatants themselves and not through some

discredited political leaders on their behalf. Intermediaries can at best only pave the way towards such a dialogue.

In this context of increasing tension and conflict, we are beholden to the clergy and especially the Maha Sangha for the constructive role they have played so far in helping to prevent the recurrence of mass violence fomented by unscrupulous elements stirring up racist animosities among the Sinhala people. However, the more recent stance of the Supreme Council of the Maha Sangha that no political solution is possible while terrorism continues, is most disappointing. Even more distressing are the utterances reported to have been made by certain learned bhikkhus at an important meeting held in the Bellanvila Temple which tend to evoke in us memories of Christian prelates of the organized Church blessing troops before battle both in the Crusades (said to be a "holy war") of old and in the less "holy" wars of the not so distant past! The Maha Sangha could, surely, seek inspiration and guidance in this instance from the Enlightened One who in his own time intervened in disputes between warring clans to bring about a peaceful settlement of their problems. Today more than ever, we fervently hope that the members of the Maha Sangha will resolutely continue to foster communal peace and harmony, especially when ambitious and scheming politicians seem bent on manipulating people for their own opportunistic ends.

The Role of India

We have repeatedly drawn attention to the unfortunate tendency on the part of some Government leaders to make attacks on India. As for alleged training camps in Tamilnadu, we have pointed out that it would be passing strange if such pro-Eelamist activity is not pursued by Northern militants in India when there is already a sizeable number of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in that country following our racist outburst of July 1983. It may well be that the Tamilnadu Government prefers to turn a blind eye in the circumstances to such activity in view of the strong feelings there about the Sri Lankan situation. But what makes the position ludicrous is that it has been disclosed by arrested suspects that there are even places for terrorist training in Jaffna, which our own intelligence and Government have obviously not been aware of! (*Sunday Observer* of 25.11.84). And it has been also reported in the press that notwithstanding surveillance zones, patrolling, curfews and the like



Madras Airport : Bomb blast damage

those in the North who engage in attacks including those on police stations like Chavakachcheri often escape by boat to Tamilnadu for medical attention and to avoid detection!

Quite apart from the problem of our own refugees in India, certain actions of our Government too would hardly have allayed possible Indian fears of foreign pressures on Sri Lanka. Disregarding the official visits of Sri Lankan and U.S. dignitaries more recently, to and from the United States, we must draw attention especially to the setting up on 1000 acres in Sri Lanka of what is said to be the biggest Voice of America station outside the United States and the recent holding in Colombo of a strategic conclave of all U.S. Ambassadors in the South Asian region to co-ordinate U.S. Schemes in that region where India is in fact the dominant country. It is surely foolish to antagonise a friendly neighbour with whom we have had the most cordial relations and try to curry favour with a Big Power who in any case (despite its eagerness to make use of our country) will not hesitate to sell us rather than endanger any of its interests in India. That this is in fact the position is borne out by a report taken from the *Economist* of December 22, appearing in the *Daily News* of December 29th where General Vernon Walters is said to have "refused American arms to fight the Tamil guerillas" unless there was a political solution — "and that means devolving some real power to the Tamils even at the cost of upsetting the Sinhalese". The *Economist* report captioned "No help till you do a deal" also reported that in New Delhi, General Walters proposed a renewal of India's offer of good offices

to resolve the communal problem here. Significantly, in a recent talk in Colombo, Professor Ralph Bultjens, a well known "India watcher" cautioned: "We must cultivate the South rather than depend on the North. We cannot hope to solve our problems in Washington or Peking. The solution lies in Madras and New Delhi." The Sri Lankan Government lost the good opportunity it had, if it needed help, to solve this problem by making use of Mrs. Gandhi's good offices when she was alive. We hope that with the sweeping electoral victory of Rajiv Gandhi a saner approach will be adopted by our Government leaders.

The Present Impasse

At the 1977 General Elections, the Tamil population helped substantially to elect the UNP Government to power in terms of its manifesto "to take all possible steps to remedy... the numerous problems confronting the Tamil speaking people." Well over seven years have elapsed and the situation has deteriorated to a state unheard of earlier. It has now become virtually impossible

for the Sinhalese to live in the North. It is surely incumbent then on any Government in such a situation to resign if it was unable to find a satisfactory settlement of this issue instead of trying to fool the people with the bogey of Marxist inspired terrorism. **And if we as a people are unable to find a solution to what is now an internal problem, it may well be that a solution will have to be imposed upon us under external pressures, with more "give-aways" than either the UNP or SLFP ever even imagined!**

In the meantime, it is important that all who stand for a unitary state and a united Sri Lankan nation, should seek to create a proper climate for a negotiated resolution of the conflict. In a realistic appraisal of present Government propaganda, *The Island* of 27 December through its editorial entitled "Don't Ignore the North", questioned whether the Government's message really reaches the "unsophisticated Tamils living behind the cadjan curtains of the Northern and Eastern provinces." The editorial asked: "Are they being told that the vast majority of the Sinhala people want a peaceful settlement to

An Appeal from the North

"This is the context of our existence today. We are not given a chance to feel that we are Sri Lankans and that this country is our mother-land too.

"The military operations are undertaken without any concern for the basic needs of the people.

"Long curfews are being imposed and suddenly reimposed without looking into such vital matters like issuing of passes, transport facilities, availability of essential foodstuffs etc. Illiterate old people have been shot at for gathering vegetable in their gardens during curfew hours. To-date even the doctors within the Municipal area of Jaffna have not been issued with passes to use vehicles.

"We do not oppose the right of a State to fight those who oppose it, but we are unable to understand how it could treat its own citizens as enemies.

"The truth is that there is a war on, but it is not a war between the militants and the military. It is a war waged on law abiding ordinary citizens by the military ... It is true that they are scoring victories, not against militants, but against ordinary citizens.

"Has the Government declared war on the entire Tamil population? Is this the method in which they wish to ensure the unity of our people in this

little land? What steps has it taken to appeal itself to the non-militants?

"We are most disturbed by the type of distortions, and the Goebellian blasts of the media. Those who have been appointed to solve the national problem of security are creating more problems by thinking that a war of words is going to decide the question.

"We are a Citizens Committee and have come into being as the normal channels of administration collapsed. We act as a non-political group and have been working so. But we are not that apolitical not to realise that the very nationalistic base of Sri Lanka is being eroded by these military activities in the North and the East, worse so, by its policy planners than by its executors.

"An impenetrable wall is being built between the Sinhalese and Tamils. Let us not think the interests of a party, or worse still the interests of the various sections within a party are more important than a country. Please do not allow such considerations to taint your vision and fetter your approach to this truly national question."

— Excerpts from an Appeal of Joint Committees of the Citizens' Committees of Jaffna, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu Districts dated 25. 12. 84. (ie Christmas Day 1984)

the current problems?" It went on to say: "In this battle of winning over the Tamil people, the terrorists are positively at an advantage. The presence of troops, retaliatory measures taken by the Security Forces, raids on towns and villages, mass arrests, are bound to bring adverse reactions against the authorities... Our entertainment programmes on radio and T.V, beamed from Sri Lanka are popular in Tamilnadu. But the less said of the news programmes, the better... Whatever the solutions that are being attempted to resolve the present crisis, it should be realised that no solution would be possible unless the majority of the Tamils are won over."

Security on the Plantations

In this connection, we have once again to add a word of caution to the Government about its handling of the Tamil population of recent Indian origin on the plantations. The unfortunate attempt recently to blow up the Rupavahini tower on Pidurutalagala peak in Nuwara Eliya in which a few misguided plantation youth were involved with Northern Eelamists, has led to a "security hysteria" in the plantation areas on the part of the authorities. It is of course in the interests of the Northern militants to embroil the plantation areas too in their strategy by

making it out that they have substantial support there as well, when this is furthest from the truth. It should at least now be recognised by the authorities concerned that apart from some individuals who have been involved, the estate population as such have no truck whatever with the Northern politics of Eelam; what they in fact desire is to live in peace and amity with the Sinhalese people. Not to recognise this, is only to play into the hands of Eelam agitators. It is therefore of the utmost importance that under cover of a "security" blanket, these innocent estate people should not be harassed and their democratic organizations (Trade Unions and Voluntary bodies) intimidated and suppressed and a second front of dissidence thereby opened up unwittingly on the plantations! We must learn from the mistakes already committed in the North. In this connection we would also draw attention to the need for the implementation of the consensus reached at the Roundtable on the matter of the Stateless. The solution of this problem, which significantly enough (according to the official report) was proposed by the Maha Sangha and had the support of Christian, Hindu and other organizations must obviously be pursued expeditiously to further strengthen the identity of interests between the Tamil plantation workers and the Sinhala working people among whom they live.

Budget Stock-taking

The 1985 Budget presented by Sri Lanka's Hon. Minister of Finance in November 1984 has been described by the local press as a "non-controversial Budget", "a budget that imposes no **additional** burdens, and a budget that pleases everybody." If one looks around for a more accurate descriptive phrase, the one given by a government M. P. seems to be appropriate — "a stock-taking budget" — a budget reflecting on the performances of the last seven budgets introduced by the same Minister.

In his first budget of 1977, the Minister complained that he inherited a 'run-down economy', but after seven years he is still unable to say that the country's economy is on a sound footing, or that being a third world country, we are close to the 'take-off' stage. This, is inspite of

our having received the highest per capita foreign-aid among third world countries from the World Bank, the IMF and from developed countries. During the previous regime (between 1970 and 1977), Sri Lanka received only Rs. 700 million per annum (approximately) as foreign aid, whereas during 1977-84 we have received Rs. 10,000 million (approximately) per annum. As one opposition M. P. pointed out, at least 10 percent of this, or Rs. 6 billion fattened the pockets of the newly revived capitalist class of this country, and that is one of the 'achievements' of the "outward looking", "pragmatic", economic policies incorporated in the budgets of the last six years. But this was not one of the listed achievements spelled out by the Honourable Minister in his last budget speech. Instead, he said that between 1977 and 1982 —

- (a) the country's growth rate increased from 2.6 percent (1970-77) to 6.2 percent (1978-83) of the GDP;
- (b) that unemployment was halved from 26 percent of the work-force to 12 percent;
- (c) that investment as a percentage of the Gross National Product was increased from 16 percent to 30 percent. According to the Minister, "this is a combination of achievements to which any country can be proud."

While granting that these achievements are impressive, one has to weigh them against their economic and social costs of the financial policies pursued after 1977.

Inflation

Whereas inflation was contained during the first five years after 1970 by a Finance Minister committed to the welfare of the people, during the period 1977-84, inflation was 35% in 1980 and prices were going up even during 1984, though at a lower rate. The following comparison of prices is revealing :-

Commodity	Price in June 1977	Price in December 1984	Percentage increase
1 kilo of Rice	Rs. 2.75	Rs. 8.89	223.27
1 lb. Bread (loaf)	0.75 cts	Rs. 3.05	306.67
1 kilo Seer Fish	Rs. 5.00	Rs. 29.50	586
1 Coconut	.50 cts	Rs. 3.50	700
1 Litre Kerosene Oil	.76 cts	Rs. 6.58	765.79

As a result of high rates of inflation, real wages have fallen in all sectors. This is especially so in industry and commerce where a 25% decline is recorded.

According to a government publication, "the cost of 100 calories has increased by 500 percent" ("National Agriculture, Food and Nutrition strategy"). The increasing poverty of the middle and lower income earners has resulted in a widening disparity between the richest and poorest sections of the

people. This is revealed in the 1981/82 Socio-Economic Survey carried out by the Central Bank.

Little wonder that the Hon. Minister of Finance had to refer to malnutrition in his Budget Speech: "Unfortunately there are some signs that those at the lower end of the income scale have seen their position erode in recent years... indicators such as malnutrition appear to suggest that there is a risk that a section of the population could fall below minimum acceptable nutritional levels..." This means that the rise of the Gross National Product, and all the foreign aid has not resulted in an improvement of living conditions of the poor people! The removal of the food subsidies, combined with inflation (partly as a result of devaluation of the rupee), which caused this state of affairs, are an integral part of the economic policies implemented after 1977.

Significantly, the Government which did not hesitate to ruthlessly crush the 1980 strike of public sector workers who demanded a Rs 300 monthly pay increase, has only recently increased the monthly emoluments of MPs by Rs 3250, that of Ministers by Rs 4100 and that of the Prime Minister by Rs 5833, while handing out a mere Rs 100 pay increase to the workers.

The comparatively high Physical Quality of Life, that Sri Lanka was enjoying among third world nations is declining. Even the aid donor countries are concerned that "the level of living of Sri Lanka's citizens has been permitted to slip over the past several years" (Report by Mr. David Hopper, Vice-President of the World Bank at an Aid Group Meeting).

Debt Service Ratio

The debt service ratio, which stood at 19 percent in 1982, rose to 22% in 1983, and came down to 16% in 1984. The decrease in 1984 was due to a substantial increase in export incomes. According to the Finance Ministry projections, the ratio is expected to come down in the 1990's, assuming increased exports and an expanding GNP. But this is what the same Mr. David Hopper has to say in the same report: "Sri Lanka must reduce its commercial borrowings... The burden of debt service will eventually force a retrenchment of economic activity to the level of the national means. All of us here (i.e. Aid Group) are apprehensive that Sri Lanka is close, too close to that line."

In the Budget Speech, the Hon. Minister laments that we have been "living beyond our means". The liberal import policy and open-economy, has caused such strains on the Balance of Payments, that the good days of unlimited consumer imports seem to be at an end. (The deficit on Current Account was Rs. 1032 million in 1978 and Rs. 11,185 million in 1983).

The debt service ratio may come down, but the ability to expand our exports, despite all the incentives, has been shown to be poor. If not for the recent boom in tea prices, debt servicing could have been a big burden to the country in the immediate future. The production of tea, rubber and coconut declined during the first six years after 1977 though fortunately production in tea and rubber has increased in 1984.

The Foreign Debt is of such magnitude that even though there may be a fall in the debt servicing ratio, the cost of repayment will be high for a very long time in the future. The continuous financing of imports through foreign borrowings is neither feasible nor desirable, and the warning of Mr. David Hopper will necessarily cause restriction of imports, and the curtailment of new projects requiring heavy import of capital in the very near future.

Results of Budgetary Policies

The Central Bank's **Review of the Economy 1983** supports the remarks made by Mr. David Hopper that the Food-stamp Scheme does not adequately benefit the poorest sections by pointing out that there is a decrease of 14% in the total expenditure on food stamps from 1982 to 1983 (page 261). This is of serious consequence, as the Physical Quality of Life in Sri Lanka was in large measure dependent on Food Subsidies. (See Later Comment) According to **Consumer Finance and Socio-Economic Survey 1981/82**, 35% of the people get less than Rs. 500/- monthly, so the removal of food subsidies, and a declining expenditure on Food Stamps, can only increase destitution. The figures in infant mortality and life-expectancy will also reverse the favourable trends shown during the past years, unless a determined attack is made on poverty and malnutrition. This involves the allocation of increasing proportions of budgetary expenditure on Food Subsidies, Health and Social Welfare —

which is a reversal of the budgetary policies of of the past seven years. This is a conclusion that should in fact emerge after "a stock-taking" of the past seven budgets.

We make no comment here on the other ramifications of the 'stock-taking' — the cost and the benefits of the "Accelerated" Mahaveli project; the devaluation of the rupee; the "ugly face" of the open economy (which the government has announced is under review) and the determined efforts to rebuild a capitalist economy in a third world country. We may however draw attention to yet another observation made by Mr. David Hopper of the World Bank: "Corruption and waste in all spheres of economic and political life has become endemic in the last seven years." But there is one more important point calling for comment, namely, ethnic tensions and their impact on economic development. The Hon. Minister of Finance, in his concluding remarks of the Budget debate stated: "What worries us today is not so much the economy — we have to worry about it — but the political situation in the country, a political situation of deepening crisis..." How is the government meeting the crisis? As far as the Budget is concerned, there is a hundred percent increase in "**defence expenditure**", — **an allocation of five billion rupees!**

The economic consequences of the ethnic tension is felt not only in the Tourist trade. Apart from the enormous increase in defence expenditure that cannot be sustained for more than a couple of years at the most, the envisaged programme of foreign investment, exports, and the foreign aid programme can be jeopardised if the tensions continue. Mr. David Hopper (in the same report) referred to the "economic foundation of the Terrorist Problem" which the Finance Minister did not explain satisfactorily. He urged the government "to make an early address to the economic components of the communal problem". He was obviously not referring to an increase in defence expenditure! Apart from the possible complaints by the World Bank and the donor countries on the consequences of defence expenditure, it should be patently clear that the failure to find a speedy political solution to the ethnic conflict will have a crippling effect of the economic development of the country, and the ability to ease the burdens of the poorest sections of our population.

"No Erasing Mistakes !"

— Sarath Muttetuwegama M. P.
in Parliament

Speaker E. L. Senanayake presided when Parliament met at 9 a.m. on Thursday, November 22. **Sarath Muttetuwegama (CP—Kalawana)**: Sir I start by saying that it is almost futile to debate the budget in the present situation the country is faced with. I suppose there is no alternative, but to carry on.

First and foremost I must congratulate the Minister of Finance personally for his record in presenting eight budgets. But the acid test the Minister has to face is the state of the economy.

The Minister is today lamenting that the private sector has not joined in the development process. These laments I must say were cast by former Finance Ministers like J. R. Jayewardene, and M. D. H. Jayawardane too.

The 'land owning' class has no interest in industrialising the country. With all its faults it was the MEP government in 1956, which laid the basis for industrialisation.

After 1956, it was in 1977 that the country recorded a trade surplus. This was due to the strategy adapted by Dr. N. M. Perera. But today with devaluation, what is the position of the rupee? Could the Minister state the position with regard to the nett public debt?

When the Finance Minister spoke the other day, he said that the people were now better off.

The government's whole strategy is based on exports. While exports have gone up five fold, imports have gone up eight fold. Exports have increased by seven per cent and imports have increased by 60 per cent. Why have you permitted this? Should not the government curb imports? Even items like erasers are imported.

Member: They are better than Sri Lanka erasers.

Sarath Muttetuwegama: But no amount of erasers can erase your mistakes. The government boasts about an investment ratio of 30 per cent. But out of this only 14 per cent is local investment.

There are no figures available on the hotel industry. Hotels are undercutting each other to keep their business going.

Why has the government reduced the duty on air conditioners? Is it to benefit the voters of Minneriya?

I must ask the Foreign Minister, what need a country like Sri Lanka has for foreign banks. Before 1979 foreign banks had only a few investments here. But now they have

exceeded the investment of local banks. By allowing the foreign banks to come into the country you have made the local banks redundant.

The government has set up a free trade zone which employs about 30,000 people. Now, does the FTZ meet the objectives of the government? Is the government happy with the garments and the electronics industries set up there?

About 75 per cent of the jobs in the FTZ is held by women who are paid less than 25 rupees a day. The foreign firms only do so much as export Sri Lanka's quota of garments.

It is only President Jayewardene, who can solve the ethnic problem. He has been re-elected with a great amount of good-will, but he has frittered it away. Today due to this lives are being lost unnecessarily and a coup'detat situation has developed in the country. There is a climate for a military take over.

I do not endorse the government policies, but a parliamentary government is better than waking up in the morning and finding that a military dictatorship has taken over.

— Sun 24. 11. 84

What's happening to Our Quality of Life ?

Sri Lanka has been justly proud of its Quality of Life measured by the Physical Quality of Life Index. There is no doubt that the Sri Lankan population has enjoyed considerably better living conditions than many of her neighbours and that of most third world countries. It is also true that several social indicators place Sri Lanka very high compared to even developed countries. It has been observed that Sri Lanka has the best social indicators compared to its

income of any country for which data are available. We have achieved more in meeting basic needs than most countries with several times our per capita income.

The physical quality of life (PQLI) on which this assessment of Sri Lanka's achievements are based uses three indicators. The level of literacy, life expectancy and infant mortality. All 3 of these indicators place Sri Lanka very favourably with other countries. (See Box 1).

BOX I

Excerpts from Central Bank of Ceylon NEWS SURVEY November 1981

What is PQLI? — An Indicator of Economic And Social Development

The Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI) was developed to supplement the Gross National Product (GNP) and its growth rate as indicators of economic and social performance. The need to develop a new indicator of economic and social development arose out of the realisation that while GNP increases indicated general economic performance it did not tell us how people lived in these countries. **It was possible for GNP to increase while at the same time poverty and unemployment also increased.**

The shift in emphasis on development strategies which focused on meeting basic human needs found the conventional Gross National Product a poor criterion of living conditions and satisfaction of basic human needs of the general population. It did not give an idea of distribution of incomes which could have an important bearing on whether the poorer sections of the population were obtaining their basic requirements of food, housing, clothing, medical attention and education.

The PQLI uses three well-known separate indicators combined into one to provide a single measure or composite indicator. The three indicators used are:

1. Life expectancy
2. Infant mortality
3. The literacy rate

The three indicators have the merit of being a resultant of economic attainments and provision of basic amenities. Changes in life expectancy and infant mortality tell us in summary concise form about the quality of physical life, such as nutrition levels, health conditions and other amenities, for healthy living. The literacy rate is a useful measure of development as it is a basic requirement for achieving development and development without literacy indicates inadequate opportunities and access to educational and cultural opportunities.

Computation of PQLI

Each country is ranked according to its performance in each of the indicators of life expectancy, infant mortality and literacy rate. The most unfavourable performance in 1950 is given zero, while hundred is given for the best performance expected by the end of this century.

For the life expectancy index, the most favourable figure expected to be achieved by any country by the year 2,000 is 77 years. This is valued at 100 while the most unfavourable performance in 1950 (38 years in Guinea-Bissau) is at 0. Similarly, for infant mortality, the best performance expected by the year 2000 (7 per 1000) is rated 100 and the poorest performance in 1950 (229 per 1000 in Gabon) is rated 0.

For literacy, the figures being percentages, they are automatically on a 0 to 100 scale. For example India with her literacy rate of 34 per cent was ranked 34.

The composite PQLI is calculated by averaging the three indices giving equal weight to each of them. The PQLI for any country is the simple average of her ranks on the three indicators.

The year 1950 was chosen for poorest performance as it was the year of lowest performance by any country for each indicator. The use of this figure allows comparison over the whole period after 1950 without the inconvenience of using a negative number occasionally.

PQLI is not only a measure of the current level of achievement, but is also a fairly sensitive measure of changes over time. For instance Sri Lanka had a PQLI of 18.9 in 1921 (comparable to today's PQLI for Afganistan and to India's PQLI in 1950); by 1946, it had reached 45 (comparable to India's PQLI today); and by the early 1970s its PQLI was 80. The table below shows the quality of life changes for seven countries over the last two decades.

The merit of the PQLI over the GNP as a measure of social and economic progress is that it indicates the level of attainment of basic human needs and enables comparison between different societies. Although the GNP gives the level of economic attainment in money terms, it does not indicate how people are living. But innovators of this index are careful to point out its limitations. (It is not all inclusive, it does not measure security, justice, satisfaction, or the general level of development. But it does seek to determine how well societies are able to satisfy certain very elemental needs that are of immediate concern to the very poor."

1. Morris David Morris & Florizelle B. Liser, **The PQLI: Measuring Progress in Meeting Human Needs, Communique, on Development Issues.**

PQLI Changes from 1950s to 1970s of Selected Countries

	1950s	1960s	1970s
Algeria	35	38	42
India	28	36	41
Egypt	32	41	45
Brazil	53	-	66
Sri Lanka	62	77	83
Poland	72	86	93
France	87	94	97

The literacy rate in Sri Lanka has been continuously increasing and had achieved 77 per cent in 1971 and increased further to 86 per cent in 1978/79. Our life expectancy is 66 years and is very high compared to other Asian countries. Even in the U.K. and U.S.A. life expectancy is only few years more. In 1974 infant mortality was 51 per thousand, and in 1980 it was as low as 34. These are all significant and no one denies it.

These achievements have been made possible by several policy measures which have been essentially welfare oriented.

In explaining the reasons for these achievements Paul Isenman of the **World Bank** in an article published in 1980 in **World Development** attributed the achievements to the large social expenditure incurred in such programmes as health, education and the food ration scheme. His summary assessment of the situation is that "...Sri Lanka has accomplished more in meeting basic needs than most countries with three or four times its per capita income."¹

There are two issues which this comment attempts to address itself to. The first is that we Sri Lankans tend to be proud of our achievements and thereby be complacent. Although these are worthy social achievements, it must be realised that we are basically a poor country and that there is very much room for further achievement. Merely because our policies and economic conditions resulted in Sri Lanka achieving these things much ahead of many other countries, to be lulled into complacency by them is the most foolish thing we could do. What is striking about the situation in Asia is that while Sri Lanka was much ahead of its neighbours and even East-Asian countries, these countries have made

much headway in the last few decades and have caught up and even bettered Sri Lanka's achievement. Some of these can be seen in Table (1).

Literacy and Educational Levels

The second issue of greater significance is that we may be going backward in several areas. The most startling example is that **there are indications that our literacy and educational levels are declining.** First, it must be remembered that literacy is defined for purposes of these statistics to be a very basic requirement like the ability to read a simple sentence and sign one's name. Often many people who have this ability have very little else. They are not effectively literate though they can read a sign post or write their name. Secondly, those who have any schooling are counted as literate. Yet we know from our own experience that many who have gone to school have not attained any literacy or have lapsed into illiteracy. Given these considerations the effective literacy of the country is much less.

According to the **Consumer Finance and Socio Economic Survey of 1981/82**, there has been a decline in the rate of literacy in the country. In 1978/79 Sri Lanka had a literacy rate of 86.3 per cent. This had fallen to 85.4 per cent in 1981/82. This is of course a marginal decrease. **Yet a decrease in an indicator like literacy is a serious warning about socio economic policies. It is rarely, if ever, that a country's literacy goes down.** To say the least, we can hardly be proud of it.

What is more important than the statistic itself is to understand the factors which have resulted in this decline. While a system

Table 1 Social Indicators 1960 and 1982 — Sri Lanka Compared

Country	Crude Death Rate		Life Expectancy at Birth					Infant Mortality Rate		Literacy
	1960	1982	1960		1982			1960	1982	1980
			Male	Female	Male	Female	All			
Sri Lanka	9	6	62	62	67	71	69	71	32	85
India	24	13	43	42	55	54	55	165	94	36
Thailand	15	8	50	55	61	65	63	103	51	86
Singapore	6	5	62	66	70	65	72	35	11	84
Malaysia	15	6	52	56	65	69	67	72	29	60
Korea, Republic of	14	9	52	56	64	71	67	78	32	63
China, People's Republic of	24	7	41	41	65	69	67	165	67	90

Source : IBRD — World Development and ABD — Key Indicators.

of free education continues, it is likely that many children in recent times have been unable to go to school as they do not have the other requirements of clothing, transport, stationery and books.

The Central Bank's survey states that the rate of school avoidance has increased in 1981/82 compared to 1978/79. The school avoidance rate has increased to 15 per cent in 1981/82. This is indeed a high rate particularly in a country which has boasted of a high level of literacy. As the Central Bank's Report points out **"the main reason for school avoidance is the inability to provide the basic requirements. 19 per cent of males and 18 per cent females were in this category"**.² The other reasons adduced for school avoidance were the lack of interest among parents and children and there being no convenient schools.

Health Standards

What has happened to literacy and education may easily occur in the area of health. **The poor state of hospitals which lack doctors and drugs** may contribute to an increase in the infant mortality rate and a decrease in life expectancy. But even more than these factors

is the possibility that **the deterioration in economic conditions among the poor may result in a deterioration in nutrition**. It need hardly be stressed that malnutrition is the precursor of poor health.

With the withdrawal of rice ration scheme, and the introduction of the Food Stamp Scheme, which is totally inadequate to ensure basic nutrition for the poor and needy, the health standards in the country could deteriorate seriously. A deterioration in the nutritional status of the population has already been disclosed... The Socio-Economic Survey conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics in 1980/81 revealed a **sharp decrease in the calorie intake of the low income groups. Over half the population did not get an adequate calorie intake**. Similarly, the Central Bank report too pointed out that the daily calorie intake from major food items has decreased from 1201 calories in 1978/79 to 1197 in 1981/82. Our hunch is that there has been a further decrease in 1983 and 1984 owing to the increase in prices of rice and wheat flour. The findings of several surveys summarised in the Ministry of Plan Implementation's journal **Progress** of March 1984 put this beyond doubt. (Box 2).

BOX 2

The analysis of Socio-Economic Survey 1980/81 indicated a deterioration of the overall calorie and protein consumption in the country when compared to the 1969/70 survey period. The average calorie consumption during 1980/81 survey period was 2,161 calories as against 2,264 calories in 1969/70. But when per capita calorie consumption is calculated using household sizes, the average calorie consumption is put at 2,200.

However, a number of factors suggests that the food consumption situation has deteriorated. First, the per capita food intake for all sectors combined as well as when the Urban, Rural, Estate Sectors are taken separately is lower in 1980/81 than in 1969/70. Second, according to Government figures the Gini concentration ratio has risen, an evidence of the worsening in the income distribution since the 1970's. Third, the starchy staple ratio has increased and the percent of proteins from animal sources has decreased since a decade earlier. All these trends indicate that families are facing an increasingly difficult struggle to achieve dietary adequacy.

The general nutritional situation of the country as reflected in the analysis of most current surveys can be summarized as follows:—

- (1) Annual food availabilities appear to be adequate to meet recommended calorie requirements on the average. But, disaggregated analysis have shown serious energy and protein deficiencies faced by lower income groups. Seasonal

fluctuations in food supplies have serious nutritional repercussions on poor farm and non-farm households.

- (2) Based on socio-economic surveys conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics, the percentage of households not reaching calorie adequacy has increased from around 40 percent in 1969/70 to around 55 percent in 1980/81. The worsening of the calorie situation has spread over all three sectors.
- (3) Budget and allocation to food within households for nutritional purposes has increased the food share to around 70 percent in terms of the lowest deciles in all sectors. The food share in 1969/70 was close to 52 percent.
- (4) Higher overall costs of calories have tended to move households towards greater consumption of cheaper calories basically from starchy staples. Over the last decade, the cost of 100 calories for the bottom 10 percent of the population has increased from 4 cents to around 20 cents.

R. M. K. Ratnayake

Prevalence of Protein Calorie Malnutrition in Sri Lanka,

PROGRESS

Volume 4, Issue 1, March 1984,
Ministry of Plan Implementation.

The inadequacy of current wages of low income workers to meet the basic nutrition requirements owing to the soaring prices of food items is undoubtedly the main reason for the deterioration in nutritional conditions. As pointed out by Ratnayake: "Over the last decade the cost of 100 calories for the bottom 10 per cent of the population has increased from 4 cents to around 20 cents" (Box 2). Perhaps the severest hit in this context are the urban workers and the unemployed in the urban areas. This has been borne out in a recent study of nutrition conditions in the Colombo Municipality.

Poor nutrition has already impaired the health of the population. Wide prevalence of stunting among children and an alarming rate (13 per cent) of wasting have already surfaced. (Box 3). These are danger signs about the country's future generation whose productivity would also be affected.

BOX 3

The Anthropometric Data of the Food and Nutrition Policy Planning Division (1980/82) reveals that 37.4 percent of the Sri Lankan Child Population who are less than 5 years of age, are suffering from retarded linear growth or stunting. The stunting of growth is indicative of sustained periods of dietary inadequacy and/or infectious diseases in the population. Out of the total child population about 13.0 percent has been wasted; The problem of wasting which reflects acute inadequacies at present is also a serious problem in Sri Lanka.

R. M. K. Ratnayake
**Prevalence of Protein Calorie
Malnutrition in Sri Lanka,**

PROGRESS
Volume 4, Issue 1, March 1984.
Ministry of Plan Implementation.

It is obviously these conditions which have promoted the Government to vote Rs. 5 million for nutrition education. The Finance Minister in his Budget Speech indicated that "the government is anxious to maintain the nutrition standards of the people in this country which are higher than those of other developed countries with income levels similar to our own". Perhaps the Minister's anxiety is due to the warning indicated by the studies quoted by the Ministry of Plan Implementation. Yet the basic issue in nutrition is whether spending money "for bringing home to people the importance of proper nutrition" is the correct strategy. People, especially poor people, need no convincing about the importance of proper nutrition. **What they lack is the money to buy their basic requirements of food especially cereals.**

It is important to realise that there has been a deterioration in the real incomes of the people and the poorer have got poorer. Their ability to buy basic requirements has been reduced. Wages of a sizeable section of people are too little in the wake of higher prices for basic food. Unemployment is still high and the Urban poor in particular are facing great hardships. Remedial action is required on many fronts. Wages should be revised to levels realistic with increases in prices of basic requirements. The poorest should have a more realistic welfare support system. There is perhaps no need to give seven million people in the country, food stamps, as those who are actually unable to meet their requirements are probably much less. But the needy must be identified and given a means of obtaining their basic requirements of food.

We must be concerned particularly with the health of children. Schemes must be adopted to ensure that children below the age of 7, in particular, are given adequate nutrition. Measures must be taken to remedy the situation of **adequate medical attention to the poorer sections** and government hospitals should have important drugs. Amenities such as better water supply and toilets should be improved. **Preventive medical attention should get priority.**

Warning Signs

The purpose of this article is not to be critical of government policies for the sake of making a debating point. The intention in presenting these warning signals obtained from government institutions themselves is **to make us aware of the sliding in our economic and social welfare.** We must take these signs seriously and attempt to remedy the position rather than defend statistics with some other considerations or adduce excuses for the deterioration.

It would be a very sad day indeed in Sri Lanka if we rest satisfied with our achievements in the past. What is more important than taking satisfaction in what we have achieved is to take the warning signs that have appeared and take adequate remedial actions before our social conditions deteriorate any further.

1. Paul Isenman: "Basic Needs: The case of Sri Lanka" *"World Development*, vol. 8, p 257.
2. Central Bank of Ceylon: *Report on Consumer Finances and Socio-Economic Survey 1981/82 Sri Lanka*, p. 65.

Mythologies old and new

Thoughts on Christmas and the New Year

The tinsel and glitter of Christmas is behind us with the festivities reluctantly muted by the well-to-do in order to preserve a semblance of decorum by avoiding Christmas and New Year binges and the other goings on in what should be a season of goodwill (not merely good cheer) but is fast showing signs of darker clouds of ill-will.

The ethnic debacle

Although the failure of the Roundtable Conference and the dumping of the proposed legislation for devolution alongside the comic opera exit of Minister Mathew hit the headlines with explosive impact, we must first get things into perspective. Therefore, we dip into some Christian mythology for a guideline.

Good King Wenceslas

The story of Good King Wenceslas — incidentally even today regarded as the patron Saint in Communist Czechoslovakia and immortalised in Wenceslas Square in Prague — the old benevolent King of the Christmas Carol, issuing forth in the sleet and snow with his faithful little page to bring bread, wine and warmth from pine logs to a poor wandering peasant is familiar to us all. Christmas cards show Wenceslas as an old man with a long white beard.

Myth and Reality

This picture of Wencelas is far removed from the historical Wencelas who eventually became the patron Saint of Czechoslovakia. Wenceslas was born in 907 A.D. and in childhood came under the influence of his grandmother Lindmilla who brought him up in the Christian tradition. His mother Drahomira was a pagan. Wenceslas, who belonged to the Premyslid Dynasty of Bohemia (Premysl was a peasant who found the dynasty) did not die an old man.

When Wenceslas succeeded to the throne of Bohemia in 921, he was 14 years old and Lindmilla his grandmother acted as Regent. Perhaps due to consciousness of his peasant ancestry and doubtless due to his Christian upbringing, Wenceslas, encouraged by Lindmilla, tended to treat the peasantry of his realm with lenience. This was not to the liking of the aristocracy, who found a ready ally in Drahomira, who first had her mother-in-law Lindmilla assassinated. Now the path was open to the aristocracy, who disliked any molly-coddling of the peasantry. When Wenceslas, now 23 years old, visited his brother Bolestar in the latter's castle, he was axed to death on his way to Mass at the Church door. Thus was a ruler who tried to do justice to the poor of his realm eliminated in order to ensure that the naked brutality of the nobility will continue. Thus it has always been since the organization of society into classes — the possessing and the dispossessed began — and so, it will be till it ends — either in a socialist society without classes or in the final conflagration and the death of humanity.

Charity over Justice

What is most significant in this myth-making process is how the story of a young prince murdered in cold blood for being just and righteous was transformed into the comfortable picture of a benevolent old man dispensing charity to a poor hungry peasant gathering twigs in the winter cold. Wenceslas instead of dispensing justice (which is what he tried to do and for which he was killed!) is made to dispense charity. It is in the same strain and on the same model that the necessary restructuring of society long overdue is glossed over by the do-gooders — the Lions, Rotarians, Sarvodayites, who attempt to find palliatives for a whole class of the destitute and the oppressed. Their function is to divert the crying demand for structural change through charity and benevolence. The essence of this charity is that you apply the balm of temporary relief to the festering wounds of society, to alleviate the pain, studiously avoiding the root causes of suffering which obviously closely relate to the specific socio-economic and political structures of society, which are the causes of deprivation and poverty.

“When I give food to the
 poor
 They call me a
 saint.
 When I ask why the poor
 have no food
 They call me a
 communist.”

— Dom Helder Camara
 (Brazilian Archbishop)

Current Events and current mythology

The present impasse in our political life caused by the Tamilian insurgency and the intransigence of the Government in offering a political solution, bears striking features of similarity to the Wenceslas story, if one look below the surface. Only the factors involved are more complicated. We shall come to that later

The Esmondian Revelations

Mr. Esmond Wickremasinghe has submitted a 17-paged memorandum to the UNP. Strangely enough, confirmation of the hypothesis of concealment of reality, of dissembling, of prevarication, of downright chicanery comes from a U.N.P. stalwart. Esmond Wickremasinghe driven by Machiavellian realism or even perhaps by fleeting and nostalgic memories of his own L.S.S.P. past, has let the cat out of the bag!! He has accused his own party Government, in which his own son holds office, of driving indigenous labour-intensive industries into bankruptcy while bowing to IMF diktat, enabling certain industries foreign-owned or joint-enterprises to flourish and grow. He berates the Government for “pauperisation of almost the entire population, particularly the middle classes and especially the intelligentsia...” Esmond is hardly capable of callow insouciance. We have, therefore, to assume that, true to the analytical training imbibed in his LSSP heyday, he is intelligently apprehensive of the future.

A UNPer opposes devaluation

He pleads against further devaluation, “pauperisation of almost our entire society that has already taken place.” He claims that “some IMF officials want the parity to be Rs. 40/- to the dollar” and asserts that the “removal of protective tariffs against foreign manufactured goods, which the IMF wanted”, prevented any

industrialisation **save by or with multi-nationals.** This certainly is the crux of the matter but Esmond does not (or maybe, poor man, cannot) draw the appropriate conclusions, namely that the capitalist system itself, embraced by the UNP, is fatally flawed and cannot deliver the goods.

Instead, Wickremasinghe comforts himself with a spurious alternative — the so-called UNCTAD — import-substitution cum export promotion strategies that have proved a success in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

The model economies not really models

But three things have to be remembered here — first, these policies in these countries were evolved under totally different circumstances: in Japan under conditions of intense nationalism and xenophobia persisting after the Meiji restoration and later by the rebuilding of Japanese war-torn industry under American occupation: in Korea and Taiwan as a buffer for the containment of North Korean and Chinese communism. Incidentally both Gamini Corea and Robert McNamara have received the same medicine from the Reagan administration. The latter was replaced from the Chairmanship of the World Bank by the less than liberal Clauson, Bank of America Ex-president and the former, from all accounts, is to be succeeded by the man who was anced nominee for the post of Gaudier in American-occupied Grenada!! So Esmond's prescription turns out to be a pipe dream. He can only lament that the Presidential Tariff Commission has given very little protection to industries producing for the local market. Esmond says “this policy has encouraged the free flow of inferior foreign goods.”

Dumping ground for baubles

Sri Lanka has become the dumping ground for all goods including second-hand goods! Examples not quoted by him are used car tyres still on their rims, shoddy second-hand vehicles and — hey presto — ordinary water from the United States priced at Rs. 29/- per 2 litre flagon available at the Anglo Asian Super Market. Such are the blessings of the ‘Open Society’.

Dialogue

What is more significant than all these vapourisings of Esmond Wickremasinghe is a recent dialogue that took place at Marga Institute on

the **World Development Report 1984** — the annual masterpiece of the World Bank. The discussion led by K. C. Zachariya and Economist Ted Hawkins, apparently did not proceed smoothly. On the claim made in the Report that countries with outward-looking trade policies had done better than those following import substitution policies, a central banker (according to the *Forum* of 15 th December) had asked for the evidence and pat came the answer — South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore. The Central Banker wanted to know why the World Bank prescribed such policies **if the success stories are so few and the failures nine out of ten, Sri Lanka being one.** To this Hawkins apparently had no answer. Esmond of course has highlighted the gross failure of this “outward policy” resulting in “inward corruption” and pauperisation. But the funny thing is that these three countries are held out by Esmond as examples of successful import substitution, while they are held up by the World Bank as beacons of successful outward orientation!! The mythology spun by the World Bank panjandrums is patent, threadbare and shamelessly fragile.

The Eelam Imbroglia and the tissue of mythology

In a little pamphlet on our current problems, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva has stated that while terrorism is a major element in the present crisis it “neither constitutes the crisis nor is it its prime cause”. Nothing truer could have been said. Unfortunately, space and time no doubt has prevented detailed analysis as the pamphlet merely tries to suggest ways of easing out of the crisis. The fact is that it is not merely failures of finding a formula to quieten the insurgents. It is a far more profound failure to solve the basic economic problems of the country — problems both of the Sinhala and Tamil masses — middle classes, workers and peasants — that is at the root of the insurgency.

For years the Sinhala and Tamil leaders have from independence built up ‘exclusive’ constituencies which set off the interests of the Sinhalese and Tamils as mutually opposed and irreconcilable. All this was in aid of masking the fact that the elite leaders of the two ethnic groups had the broadest spectrum of common interests as bourgeois owners of property — mills, factories, trades, businesses and firms. In fact,

Esmond Wickremasinghe in telling the UNP high command that the proposed devaluation “will then create insurgency conditions not only in the North but throughout the rest of Sri Lanka” (Quoted from *Forum* of 1st December 1984) spoke the truth. Finally, Esmond lets the cat out of the bag. He says at the end of his 17-page critique — “Fortunately due to the political popularity of the U. N. P’s ethnic policy against the threat of the Indian invasion of Sri Lanka using the terrorists in the North as their principal tool, **these serious political difficulties of the UNP are masked.**”

We referred to the Wenceslas myth and the real truth about that saintly personality to bring out the fact that authorities both ecclesiastical and lay are uncomfortable in that the truth may become known by the people and are therefore assiduously engaged in more modern types of myth — making to prevent people from opening their eyes. Examples are available daily in the newspapers and will doubtless increase in geometric progression as terrorism and counter-terrorism escalate. Also we cannot discount the possibility of unseen hands as in the case of Wenceslas. Then the unseen hand was that of the aristocracy. Perhaps there are many hands in today’s terrorism too. Esmond gives us proof of this if proof is needed, when he again repeats: “Fortunately the country supports the UNP’s ethnic policy very solidly and this situation **masks our political difficulties**”. He should have added or “economic difficulties”, because ultimately, as we have shown, the political difficulties of the insurgency arise from economic causes (exacerbated by wilful assaults on the dignity of Tamils by the burning of the Jaffna Library and other such actions).

Out of the mouth of a UNP leader we have the truth — namely that the Sinhala chauvinism and build-up of anti-Indian feeling by the mass media are part of the calculated mythology of the leaders to mislead the Sinhala people in order to enjoy the fruits of their control of the economy and deprive people of their rightful place in the country — the people being Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, Burghers and the rest. Sinhalese and Tamils unite! You have nothing to lose but the maniacs of politically inspired mass media mythology! !

C. W. F. Letter to the President

A few days before the final session of the Roundtable Conference, the situation in the country prompted the Christian Workers Fellowship to address the following letter to President J. R. Jayewardena which was acknowledged on behalf of the President the next day i. e. 11th December. It is not without relevance even now after the Roundtable sittings have concluded.

10 December 1984

His Excellency President J. R. Jayewardene,
President's House,
Janadhipathi Mawatha,
Colombo 1.

Your Excellency,

We are gratified to note that Your Excellency, responsible Government spokesmen and all political leaders of our country are agreed on the need for a political solution to the present national crisis. We also note that no less a person than the present commander of the Northern Range, Brigadier Nalin Seneviratne is also reported to have stated that "there is no military solution".

In this context, the steps taken by the Government in the face of the sharp escalation of armed and violent activity in the North, to prevent a recurrence of racist violence in the South, have helped to promote a world opinion more favourable to the Government and to the disadvantage of the Eelam fighters in their recourse to violence. It is necessary however that the Armed Forces in this situation should act with the utmost disciplined restraint however difficult, if such a climate of favourable world opinion is to be sustained.

While the absence of violent reaction in the South is a heartening and welcome sign, we fear that the present preoccupation with the immediate need to counter terrorism with a military response may promote a dangerous and perhaps unforeseen trend counter to the Government's avowed commitment to working out a political settlement. In this respect even the Government's present decision to have an Emergency Civil Administration Plan to ensure the security of the civilian population may tend, however unwittingly, to foster racist hysteria and militate against the more urgent need to effect a negotiated settlement.

The crucial need of the hour therefore is for the Government without any delay to publicly present a set of concrete proposals to be tabled at the Round Table Conference on December 14th for immediate implementation. Such positive action would also have the effect of creating a strong current of public opinion among the Tamil people in favour of a negotiated political settlement as against the present counter-productive violent solution advocated by the young protagonists of Eelam in their desperation and frustration. Indeed this may even lead to a willingness on the part of the latter to enter into a dialogue and give up their armed struggle as was proposed by Your Excellency recently in an interview with the *London Times*.

Yours faithfully,

Secretary C.W.F.

cc. Hon. Lalith Athulathmudali,
Minister of National Security.

MIRJE Statement

(Excerpts)

MIRJE (Movement for Inter-Racial Justice & Equality) has continued to stress the need for a negotiated just political solution, as it is convinced that the ethnic problem cannot be solved by increasing military action or by repressive laws.

MIRJE therefore welcomed the negotiations that commenced at the end of last year, even though the format of the negotiations did not involve all the political forces of the country whose consensus would have been necessary for acceptable solution.

MIRJE regrets that the conference has ended with no acceptable solution. The proposals for District Councils, Provincial Councils and a Council of State that had emerged out of Conference have been rejected by many Organisations and individuals claiming to represent the Sinhalese, by political parties like the SLFP and found to be inadequate by the TULF.

The proposed laws might have offered a structure of decentralisation and devolution which could, through further honest negotiations, be invested with sufficient powers to be, at least, a solution of transition. It is unfortunate that Government has now decided not to proceed with further negotiations.

MIRJE is convinced that the results of an abandonment of the search for a political solution will be disastrous for the country. The past few months have seen a tremendous escalation of military activity, on the part of both the State security forces and the Tamil militants. The security forces have behaved with great ferocity not only towards militants but also towards the Tamil population at large. Incidents at Mannar, Vavuniya, Mullaitivu, and in numerous parts of Jaffna appear to indicate that the security forces conceive of the Tamil population as enemies. The general Tamil population is also being subjected to new harassments in the form of security zones, prohibited zones, surveillance zones and inordinately long curfews. As far as MIRJE can gather, economic life in the North is being seriously disrupted by these measures and the people are facing shortages of food. On the other hand, the incidents on the Kent and

Dollar farms and at Nayar and Kokkilai indicate that the Tamil militants, who had so far confined their attacks to the security forces, are also moving against non-combatant civilians. Whatever the explanations may be for these specific acts, MIRJE must deplore the fact that increasingly, non-combatants of both sides are becoming unwilling victims.

Any interruption or cessation of the search for a political solution can only make matters worse and result in new levels of brutality and carnage.

MIRJE would therefore strongly urge:

- 1) all those Sinhala groups and individuals who have stood out against a political solution to reconsider their positions; any insistence that devolution should not move beyond the district and the powers given to the DDCs is to ignore the present reality, to ignore the developments of the last two years; any insistence that Tamil militancy must be crushed before political negotiations take place is to ignore the real nature of the militancy and the political causes which have given it birth and sustained it;
- 2) the State and the Tamil militants to deescalate the present level of violence and refrain from actions against non-combatants;
- 3) the State to organise its law and order operations so as to cause no more inconvenience to the civilian population;
- 4) the Government, all political forces and mass organisations to reinforce and strengthen the drive towards a negotiated and just political solution;
- 5) the Government to initiate a new stage of political discussions that will involve all the political forces in the country, including the Tamil militants.

MIRJE must sadly point out that the only alternative to a political solution is further carnage, further loss of the democratic rights to which we have been accustomed, further brutalisation of our people and the strengthening of the authoritarian trends that are already evident in our society.

President : Charles Abeysekara

Secretary : Indika Gunawardene

27 December 1984.

Heading for National disaster

— Colvin R. de Silva

*This article on the present national crisis has been specially written for **Christian Worker** by Dr. Colvin R de Silva, pioneer socialist and participant in the All Party Conference (APC) as leader of the L.S.S.P. It poses vital questions for all who are truly concerned about a united Sri Lanka.*

Independent Sri Lanka is passing through the most severe testing time in its 37-years-long history. What is under test is the profound question of whether there is a Sri Lankan nation. The unitary state of Sri Lanka, whose very continuance is being brought into issue by current events, was conceived in the belief that there was in fact a Sri Lankan nation. What is being tested is whether that belief was grounded in reality.

Sri Lanka is of course a multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-lingual country. Even apart from the question whether there is in fact a Sri Lankan nation, it is obvious that if Sri Lanka is to be under a single state structure, **it will have to find the ways and means of building such a state structure in a manner that will serve to hold together within a single state structure the multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-lingual society that history has bequeathed to Sri Lanka, with a finality that is irreversible.**

The pity of it all, which in fact reflects the deep-going nature of the all-embracing crisis in which Sri Lanka finds itself, is that the way to the togetherness which requires to be achieved is known though not taken. That way lies through the re-structuring of the state and the devolution of power from the centre to bodies through which the people can manage their collective affairs at the local, the district and the regional levels. The devolution effected must of course enable self management at the respective levels mentioned above. The centre will of course be vested with the powers and functions necessary for ruling the country in accordance with the re-structured state.

The President's Proposals

Amidst the rows and the recriminations it should not fail to be understood that the now-

abandoned proposals which the President placed before the APC before dissolving it on 21st December, 1984 did constitute an effort towards re-structuring of the state and some devolution of power from the centre to Pradeshiya Sabhas, District Councils and to Provincial Councils. This was the reality of his move even though it was halting, hesitant, defective and even illogical, and even though he ultimately dropped it like a hot potato. The more's the pity of it since it was a sign that he was at long last trying to get on to the only road which could lead to an easing of the situation in regard to the relations of the Tamil minority with the Sri Lankan state.

Those who finally frustrated the President's move bear a heavy inescapable responsibility to history. At long last and after a year-long effort in the APC the President had made his first and only move towards a political solution of what may be called the Tamil problem. That move stood thwarted, first of all and most powerfully, from within his own government when, disregarding the truth, the Cabinet insisted that his proposals were not the Government's proposals but the proposals of the APC. It is well known now that **the APC, as the APC, never made any proposals at all except the proposals to revive the rural local government system and the proposal to grant citizenship to some 95,000 stateless Indian Tamils on the plantations. These two proposals were passed unanimously by the APC in plenary session.** For the rest, no plenary of the APC took up any other proposal for determination, although various delegations, at various times, did advance proposals to the APC.

The Outcome of the Debacle

What has been the outcome of this denouement which has all the marks of a debacle? The main features of the outcome may be outlined here. The progressive forces in our country which had been pressing, both through the APC and outside it, for a political solution of the Tamil question received a serious setback. It was as if they had to start their pressure on the Government anew in some other way or ways, especially as the APC

had been terminated along with the presentation of the President's proposals. No such new way has yet been found.

On the other hand the reactionary forces within Sri Lanka gained in strength from the President's debacle. They learnt from this experience that the Government itself feared that they could exert enough strength in resistance to the Government to defeat it on the Tamil issue and to push the Government along the lines of Sinhalese chauvinism.

Curiously enough the Tigers were also strengthened by this debacle. They stood strengthened among the Tamils in their contention that there was no peaceful road or a united Sri Lanka road for the Tamils in their search for a secure and equal existence in their Sri Lankan home. They could present their military struggle to divide the country into two along racialist lines as a road to progress and not of reaction.

Two sides lost heavily as a result of the debacle. One was the President himself whose defeat had a personal quality which has visibly weakened his Presidential power. The world has had a sight which is more than a glimpse of the rivalries within his government, and the Cabinet and also his party. It was visible that he was not in command as he was when he came to power. It was also visible that the struggle for the succession to his Presidential seat within his own forces was intruding more and more when it came to shaping and implementing policy.

The President seems to be on a slippery summit.

On the other hand the TULF has visibly lost ground heavily both in its claim to be the dominant representative of the Tamil people and in its claim to be a reliable partner in negotiations with the UNP Government. The impact that the TULF's rejection of the President's proposals, especially in its timing, had on the fate and failure of the proposals, has well nigh killed the TULF's claim to be a reliable partner in negotiations with the President. As for the second claim of dominance as a representative of the Tamil people, more than a suspicion has been left that the move of the TULF was the consequence of a loss of control of their following all the way to the top of their own organisation. This conclusion gains emphasis from the growth of the cry and the call to the Government from circles ordinarily loyal to the TULF leadership for talks with "the boys". The political solution has obviously slipped out of the

TULF's hands and time alone can show whether it has slipped out permanently.

On the other hand the President himself and his government find themselves in an impasse in respect of a political solution to the Tamil problem. They certainly have no one to talk with at present in Sri Lanka's domestic political scene. The control has slid out of their hands and oddly enough in the setting of the developing public attack on the Indian government in the press and in parliament, speculation is rife whether Rajiv Gandhi is not the only resort left to the President and the Government. To those in and around the Government who talk freely of recourse to Reagan it is necessary to point out that the Americans show no disposition to draw the chestnuts out of the fire for the Government of Sri Lanka.

Dispiriting Spectacle — Desperate Measures

This dispiriting spectacle has a desperate aspect to it. The collapse of the President's effort to find a political solution, which anyhow was never more than a supplement to the military course on which the government had set itself unitedly, left the government with the military course as its sole course. Indeed the government, which had been steadily stepping up its military effort, now brought its entire strength to bear on it. What is more, they set about propagandizing their stepped-up military effort in the North and East as a national war which demanded a national effort to the exclusion of all other pre-occupations. Already civil defence had begun to be organised and Emergency Regulations had been brought in which converted the North and East into a war-zone. An entire 100-metre wide belt of land, bordering the prohibited sea-belt was created from Mannar on West to Mullaitivu on the East. Anyone seen within that belt, whether on sea or land, could be shot at sight. The fisher-folk of that coastal belt, who had already been severely limited in fishing the coastal waters, were now forced out of their homes and villages to become miserable refugees, without employment or hope. The city of Jaffna was converted into a battle-field in which, in the name of a security-zone, human existence became well nigh impossible. A new strategy was set going which demanded the arming of the villagers around the Southern border of the region encircled by the prohibited zone and, apparently,

a drive to plant Sinhalese villages in that predominantly Tamil area as centres of resistance to the terrorists.

From Nation-State to Racial State

In this way, as comprehensively reflected in its propaganda, the government began sliding rapidly to the conversion of its war against the terrorists into a Sinhalese war against the Tamils in which the Sri Lankan state became a more or less conscious instrument of so-called "Sinhalese nationalism". It is as if the predominantly Tamil areas of the North and East had become occupied areas of the Sri Lankan state held down by sheer military force.

The national crisis, which is grave enough in all conscience, is thus being converted into a Sinhalese-Tamil racial crisis which is the result of an effort to prevent Eelam by subjecting the Tamils of the North and East militarily to a Sri Lankan state which by alienating the Tamils on so large a scale was losing the character of a nation-state of Sri Lanka. The curse of this policy of the UNP government in regard to the question of the relation of the Tamils of Sri Lanka to the Sri

Lankan state is that, even if victory can be won in the war by the UNP, our country will be left with the legacy of an alienated Tamil people that can yet give a wider base to the Eelam demand than the armed Tamil militants have been able to give for the guerilla war that they are conducting in the name of Eelam. If victory is not won the situation in that respect will of course be so much the worse.

This is where the capitalist UNP government has brought our country. We are heading for national disaster on a monstrous scale.

The task before progressive opinion in our country is to find a way of intervening in this process effectively with a view to terminating it as the preliminary to making the opportunity for the new turn and policy which is urgently demanded. The UNP Government is incapable of making that turn by reason of the grip on it of the most reactionary forces in the country. The government insists that it will go on to the end of its appointed term in 1989. It is necessary to tell the government clearly that what is needed is not that it should go on but it should go out!

— 15 January 1985

A new big deal in Milk production

In our last issue of the *Christian Worker*, we had occasion to spotlight the manner in which the government in pursuit of its policy of the open economy is implementing a plan to develop the Vellassa region as a sugar cane producing area. Joint ventures with multi-national companies (or their subsidiaries) were to be started. The main objective was of course, to foster export promotion, earn as much needed foreign exchange and register economic growth while bringing big profits to the big foreign capitalist investors and to their local junior partners. Incidentally also it was to enable the long-suffering small farmers to have good money incomes. We had, however, good reason to raise some relevant and vitally important questions in this regard as to how far in real terms the small village level rural farmers were going to benefit. Hitherto, the world over as far as developing countries like Sri Lanka are

concerned, the policy of the 'open economy', while it might have registered impressive increases in economic growth, has however dismally failed to do so on really equitable terms. The ever widening gap between the upper income and lower income groups, plainly evident to the majority of the population, now crushingly oppressed by a sky-rocketing cost of living, only reflects the bitter reality of this undeniable fact.

The new scheme

Now again the government is proposing to implement a similar project in relation to another rural industry — the production of milk. This has been revealed in an interview which the Rural Development Minister, Mr. S. Thondamen, had with representatives of the *Ceylon Observer* recently.

As reported in that newspaper of 07. 10. 84, the new project is to be implemented as follows :

- (1) Some 1950 private limited companies of milk producers are to be set up at the village level throughout the island.
- (2) These are to be grouped so that 5 Milk Shed companies will be formed out of the 1950 companies.
- (3) Above these will be set up one big public company "Milko". 49% of the shares of this company is to be held by the 'Milk Shed' Companies, while the remaining 51% of the shares will be sold to the public.
- (4) 'Milko' is to obtain aid amounting to 2.4 billion rupees and in turn give aid to the village level private limited companies
- (5) To qualify to become a member of a private limited company at the village level, a farmer must be one who produces a stipulated amount of milk determined by 'Milko'.
- (6) There is also to be set up the "Dairy Development Foundation" as a non-profit making guarantee company, with the task of taking over all milk (in whatever form) imported into the country and assisting in the formation of the above stated companies at the village level.

The new structure

Thus instead of the present system with the Milk Board obtaining its milk mainly from milk co-operatives of village-level producers, we will have a three tiered structure. There is going to be therefore a monopolisation of the whole milk producing industry on an island-wide basis. While of course there is provision made for the small village-level farmer with a cow or two to sell his produce to Milko, it is evident that the joint venture basis of Milko and the greater concentration of capital will enable a large multi-national like Nestle's to buy up a substantial portion of Milko, shares available to the public (if not directly by proxy), give financial aid to Milko (which as stated above is to obtain 2.4 billion rupees in aid), and thereby dominate the island's whole milk producing industry. There is also a proposal for a 2% cess to be charged

on all imports of milk foods, and the money so collected to be given to aid the Milk Shed Companies. Furthermore, the Prices Commission, it is learnt, has increased the duty on imported milk foods at the request of Nestle's. This aspect of the proposed scheme is, of course, designed to make the milk producing industry a more efficiently managed one with enough scope for foreign multi-national capital to have a big hand in converting into a large-scale business enterprise. Big profits are to be made and help to swell the GNP.

The plight of the small producer

In this set-up, the vital question is once again "How really does the small village-level farmer fare?" It would appear that the whole future of the existing milk producers' co-operatives, which have hitherto been managed with the participation of the village level milk farmer, will be jeopardised for a number of reasons. The small milk farmer will find it very difficult indeed to become a shareholder of the proposed private village level milk companies because to qualify to be one he has to be able to supply a quantity of milk whose size is to be determined by Milko (and only shareholders of the proposed companies will be able to receive aid from the World Bank) while they will also not be able to enjoy any of the aid facilities that is to be provided by the Dairy Development Foundation.

In significant contrast, under the existing system of milk co-operatives there is no stipulation that to qualify for membership one has to be able to supply a minimum quantity of milk determined by some higher controlling body. To become a shareholder only Rs.10/-, which is the price of a share, has to be paid.

Considerations of space available do not permit a more detailed examination of the implications of this grand plan for the small milk farmer. He in all probability will feel terribly alienated faced with the operations of a centralised organisation with high powered management expertise and geared to maximum profits not so much for himself as for the big capitalist investors. Indeed a great 'multi-national' milking seems to be in store for Sri Lanka. We are reminded of the poet who sang —

"Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

The Farce of Mahaveli “Acceleration”

— Gamini Iriyagolle

The submergence by the Victoria reservoir of the homes and lands of about 48,000 persons which would result in their exile did not trouble the media or human rights “activists”. The fate of Kotmale valley and the 13,000 souls living in its historic villages were also of no concern to the Government of Sri Lanka, the donor country Sweden, the media or the champions of human rights (whose priorities are incomprehensible).¹

Despite the findings of NEDECO, the Dutch Consultants to the Government of Sri Lanka in their “Mid-term Report” issued in November 1978,² the Minister of Mahaveli Development announced in March 1979 an “accelerated” programme which could be summarised as follows:³

1. The construction of Kotmale, and Maduru Oya Reservoirs at a cost of Rs. 3,200 million, Rs. 3,100 million and Rs. 1,200 million respectively. (Total cost Rs. 7,400 million).
2. Downstream developments of Systems A, B, C, D1, D2, E, H and G (350,000 acres)⁴ at a total cost of Rs. 7,420 million.
3. Moragahakanda Reservoir⁵ at a cost of Rs. 2,100 million.
4. Randenigala Reservoir⁶ at a cost of Rs. 3,500 million.

According to the Minister, the total cost was to be Rs. 20,420 million. “We intend to develop within these six years”⁷ the Minister declared “the entire basin area of the Mahaveli Ganga waters..... I might mention these systems for purposes of record. They would be the entire System A, System B,⁸ System E and the balance of System H amounting to about 350,000 acres.” He gave an undertaking with respect to System H: “I wish to place on record that the settlement in Kalawewa will be completed before the end of this year.”⁹

The official handout “Mahaveli Projects and Programmes 1980” published in December 1979 records that the Accelerated Programme would be (a) the development of irrigated agriculture on 350,000 acres of land (including 30,000 acres of existing land) in “what is known as Systems A,B,

C and D within the Mahaveli Basin.” (b) the construction of Victoria, Kotmale, Maduru Oya, Randenigala and Moragahakanda Reservoirs, (c) the construction of power plants at Kotmale (200 M.W.) and Victoria (210 M.W.) and (d) commencement of construction of Randenigala (122 M.W.) and Moragahakanda Reservoirs. According to this document, feasibility studies for the development of land in Systems B and C however were still not completed and “negotiations are proceeding with the World Bank to commission a study for the purpose of deciding the areas which could be benefited...” by the water expected to be stored in Randenigala and Moragahakanda.

Aid for unnecessary projects

Several reasons, each inconsistent with the others have been given for advancing the construction of Randenigala to 1982-86. The Minister told Parliament that construction of Randenigala and Moragahakanda would be started so as to irrigate

1. These questions will be discussed in an article to appear in the next issue of *Christian Worker*
2. See *Christian Worker* 3rd Quarter 1984, pg 32.
3. Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), Thursday, 22nd March 1979 Col. 1227.
4. Of which 320,000 acres would be new land.
5. Though it was not needed for irrigating any part of 350,000 acres and though its installed power capacity was only 26 M. W.
6. Though not needed for irrigating the land proposed to be developed under the programme and though NEDECO had said it was not needed for power generation till the end of 1988.
7. Hansard of 22. 3. 1979, Cols. 1225-1226; the Minister later said (Col. 1307) that the year of completion would be 1983; the six year period was thus 1978-83.
8. System B is under Maduru Oya; politicians, public servants and school children were being taken there for ‘voluntary’ labour, but the Minister had not known that System B was not in the Mahaveli Basin. System H is also outside this Basin and is not included in the 350,000 acres as disclosed by the Minister himself earlier in his speech (Col. 1224).
9. i. e. 1979. The programme was still incomplete at the end of 1983, vide “Mahaveli Projects and programmes 1984”.

lands in the north-central and northern parts of the island after the "Accelerated" Programme was completed. A draft status statement prepared in Colombo in February 1978 proposed that the conveyance of water to the north and development of land in Anuradhapura District and the Northern Province¹⁰ be studied as a matter of the highest priority "as this study is needed for the feasibility of the Moragahakanda and the Randenigala Projects".¹¹ This concept was reiterated in the official publication "Mahaveli Projects and Programme 1980", according to the introduction¹² to which "as the major part of water resources of Randenigala and Moragahakanda Reservoirs can be used for development outside the Mahaveli Basin, negotiations are proceeding with the World Bank to commission a study for the purpose of deciding the areas which could be benefited and the most economic method of trans-basin conveyance."

Extravagance preferred to economy

To follow the reasoning finally employed to justify the construction of Randenigala in the period 1982-86,¹³ we have first to consider the power planning aspects presented by NEDECO in Annex G to their Main Report issued in November 1977. According to this study, the total dependable capacity available in 1978, was 313 M.W. from the existing hydro-plants and 50 M.W. from the existing thermal plant. The Canyon (30 MW) and Bowatenna (40 MW) hydro-projects were under construction and expected to be commissioned well before 1983. The Government had already decided to start with the construction of the Kotmale reservoir, even before making vital investigations. The reasons given were that it was essential to have "on stream" a major hydro-power project with a installed capacity of 200 MW by November — December 1983 and that Kotmale was the only project of that magnitude which could be completed by that time "with a tight construction schedule."¹⁴ Additional thermal facilities with an installed capacity of 150 MW were needed until Kotmale came on stream at the end of 1983. The Ceylon Electricity Board could choose either steam electric plants or gas turbines. The fuel burned in a steam plant is a medium grade residual oil, while a gas turbine uses a heavy diesel oil. The cost of oil used is estimated to be 227% more than that used in a steam plant at 1979 prices.¹⁵ What was the choice of the Ceylon Electricity Board? Gas

turbines. The reason given was that it would take about 4 years to instal and commission a steam plant, which was too long, whereas a gas turbine could be commissioned in a year. Gas turbines were installed; and the country pays dearly in foreign exchange and consumers pay heavy fuel surcharges to compensate the C.E.B. for its failures in planning and incompetence¹⁶ in execution. In the priod 1980-82, 120 MW gas turbine generating capacity was installed. "While such capacity can be installed relatively quickly, it is a very inefficient and costly means of generating electricity" states the IBRD Report on Sri Lanka issued in May 1981.¹⁷

The Victoria project (201 MW) was expected to be commissioned in 1984. NEDECO estimated that no further generating capacity would be required till the end of 1980. Either Samanalawewa or Randenigala should be ready for commissioning in 1983. 400 Million DM were the main attraction of Randenigala. Why it could not have been arranged with the Government of the FRG to invest this money on Samanalawewa on which studies had been made even prior to

10. Disguised as "the Balance NCP Canal Complex"; in Sri Lanka, NCP means the North Central Province; yet from the days of the "Master Plan" study, the proposed 104 mile long canal from Elaheera to Parangi Aru in Vavuniya District in the Northern Province has been called the 'NCP Canal'.
11. We would have the reservoirs. All that was necessary was to see how they could be used!
12. p. x.
13. Which would use up earlier than later those 400 million DM provided by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany.
14. NEDECO, Main Report p. 28. "Nevertheless it was recognized that because implementation of the large Samanalawewa project (120 MW) had not proceeded as originally planned (prior to 1977; and abandoned to create a necessity for a Mahaveli project), the period until the first of the Mahaveli projects was commissioned would be difficult. Implementation of the Kotmale project was therefore given special priority — normal tendering procedures were waived and the contract awarded in the absence of detailed technical and cost studies and adequate foreign financing..." — IBRD Report, "Sri Lanka: Policies and Prospects for Economic Adjustment", May 1981.
15. Feasibility Report on the Randenigala Project prepared by the Joint Venture Randenigala, Part C, pp. 5-19.
16. Consumers are also admonished and threatened occasionally for using electricity excessively; power cuts ("load shedding") are a chronic feature while billions are being spent on power development. Yet public buildings are floodlit.
17. p. 65.

1977 instead of Randenigala has not been explained. Not merely was Randenigala chosen but an interesting argument was developed in 1980 to advance the commencement of Randenigala to 1982: "...it can be seen that after 1985, with the commissioning of Victoria, no new generating capacity would be required at the end of 1988. However, if Randenigala is put to service earlier at the end of 1986, the savings in fuel for these years are higher than the extra cost of advancing two years the construction of the hydro plant."¹⁸ That is to say, Randenigala should be advanced to effect savings in fuel that would be burned in gas turbines yet to be bought and installed! Money talks, but a very large sum of money argues as well.

Proof of failure

It had been clear to everybody who knew anything about the "Accelerated" programme that it could not be fulfilled; that even if it be fulfilled, the investment was more than the country could afford; that even a modified investment overloaded the construction capacity of the country; and that the inflation generated threatened the national economy itself. It was clear enough for those prepared to see that even each individual component did more harm than good.¹⁹

Taking into account power benefits alone²⁰, NEDECO calculated the net benefits of Kotmale, Victoria and Randenigala as follows:²¹

The capacity of Kotmale was later reduced to 140 MW. The project could not be completed in 1983 to meet urgent power needs and lost its justification altogether. It is now scheduled for completion in 1985 at a cost of Rs. 16,000 million²² and is likely to be the first hydro-project in the world, the energy from which would be costlier than thermal power. The cost of Victoria has gone up to approximately Rs. 8500 million, while Randenigala is likely to cost over Rs. 5000 million.

When NEDECO predicted that "a fast implementation of the AP²³ will be accompanied by a serious increase in the rate of inflation", it did not expect that cost escalations would be as high as has actually occurred. Nevertheless,

18. Feasibility Report on the Randenigala Project, Part C, pp. 5-23.

19. To the country; powerful corporate and individual interests benefited of course.

20. Randenigala is not acquired for irrigation; of any land under the "Accelerated" Programme; Kotmale as presently designed yields no irrigation benefits; Victoria would not be needed till at least 2000 A. D.

21. Main Report, Annex P, September 1979, pp. 55-60.

22. Disclosed by engineers on site.

23. Accelerated Programme.

Project	Cost of Construction (Rs. million)	Discount Rate	Net Benefits (Rs. million) Surplus (+) Shortage (-)		Period
			at 1980 fuel prices	at fuel prices 40% higher.	
1. Kotmale	3328	8%	- 663	- 49	1984-2029
		10%	- 964		
		12%	- 1165	- 804	
		14%	- 1291	- 1003	
2. Victoria	3107	8%	+ 54	+ 782	1985-2029
		10%	- 361	+ 172	
		12%	- 631	- 228	
		14%	- 795	- 482	
3. Randeniyagala	1797	8%	+ 140	+ 484	1988-2029
		10%	- 70	+ 172	
		12%	- 187	- 12	
		14%	- 252	- 120	

with the figures available in 1979, NEDECO judged that domestic inflation would attain values up to 15% above the rate of world inflation due to the Accelerated Programme.²⁴ "It goes without saying" observed NEDECO, "that rates of inflation of this order of magnitude would be particularly harmful to the economy of Sri Lanka."²⁵ Real income of the poor would tend to deteriorate considerably,²⁶ while the very rich would become still richer. Events have more than borne out these expectations. NEDECO also considered the rate of land development and settlement and found that it would be impossible to implement the programme proposed by the Government. They argued thus: "A rate of 20,000 hectares per year involves the annual settlement of 140,000 persons. This is an almost inconceivable number... The organisational problems **defy description**... It is therefore considered that an implementation speed based on 10,000 hectares per year as a **maximum** would be more realistic. Even this speed requiring an annual settlement of 70,000 people **is in most countries never achieved.**" Based on this reasoning, NEDECO presented a scenario in which construction of irrigation facilities for the 320,000 acres of new land would not be completed till 1997 i. e. the Accelerated Programme would take not 6 years but 19 years from 1978 for completion. Though this was itself optimistic, it was too much for the Government, which leaned on NEDECO. They issued a final Main Report amending their thinking and their scenario, which was now changed to have construction and settlement completed in 1992, postulating a rate of development declared to be clearly impossible in the earlier draft report.²⁷

From "Acceleration" to "Deceleration"

By 1980, the Government was forced by realities to contract or "decelerate" the Programme. Moragahakanda was abandoned altogether; so was the development 37,500 acres in Systems D and D₂. "Owing to resource constraints and limitations in implementation capacity, the programme for the period 1980-84 has been revised to cover only three of the major projects (Victoria, Maduru Oya and Kotmale) and provision of irrigation facilities to 120,000 acres out of the original programme of 340,000 acres. The possibility of starting on a fourth project (Randenigala) has already been provided for. The total investment envisaged on this project (i.e. the scaled-downed

Accelerated Programme) for the period 1980-84 is Rs.18 billion representing 29% of the total public investment for the period."²⁸ The situation was worse in 1981. "The programme has been restricted to the completion of Maduru Oya, Victoria and Kotmale during the period 1981-85... the provision of irrigation facilities and the agricultural development of approximately 50,000 hectares and commencement of construction of Randenigala in that period. The total investment in the period 1981-85 was to be Rs. 29 million or 38% of the total budget for public investment."³⁰

World Bank wise too late

The IBRD which had encouraged the Government on its disastrous course, especially through its enthusiastic Vice-President, Mr. Hopper, now joined the critics. 1981/85 was 53% larger in rupee terms and 33% larger in dollar equivalent value than the 1980-84 Mahaveli Programme. The reasons according to the IBRD were high levels of inflation, substantially raised base costs for all projects, the decision to bring forward Randenigala without a corresponding adjustment elsewhere in the program such as a "deferral" of Kotmale,³¹ and more realistic financial provision for downstream development.³² "The program as currently proposed therefore continues to place severe pressures on financial and real resources..... The problem largely arises from the decision to pursue four large headworks simultaneously... it is still an open question whether power investments now being proposed under the program represent the least cost

24. Main Report, Annex N. p. 54.

25. Ibid p. 54.

26. Ibid p. 53.

27. Main Report P. 40.

28. Main Report, Ch. 5. Consultants can not only be consulted but also be given advice themselves.

29. Public Investment 1980-84 published by the Ministry of Finance & Planning, May 1980. p. 34.

30. "Public Investment 1981-85."

31. Kotmale went behind schedule in 1980 and would be commissioned in 1985 at the earliest. Victoria was to come on stream in 1984 and Randenigala in 1986. Kotmale, as we shall see later, should have been abandoned in 1980 when serious technical problems were encountered and cost escalated to levels which made it entirely uneconomic.

32. Sri Lanka: Policies and Prospects for Economic Adjustment, Document of the World Bank, May 1981, p. 43.

solution to Sri Lanka's power requirements in the 1980's..... the rephrasing of downstream development throws into doubt the timing of Maduru Oya because it is a project which provides additional storage to a system which will for sometime to come have far more storage (at Victoria in particular) than is necessary for irrigation purposes.³³ In sum, despite various adjustments made, the Government remains seriously over-committed to the (Mahaveli) program, with worrying complications for **macro-economic stability** and the economic liability of individual components of the program."³⁴ For the first time "Accelerated" was written within inverted commas by the IBRD. How much better it would have been had the "worrying implications" been emphasized in 1977!

The Government was even gloomier in 1982. In "public Investment 1982-86", the Ministry of Finance said that "At least three of the headworks cannot be postponed without serious consequences for future energy supplies. The downstream development that is being attempted **is the barest minimum required for settling the people whose homesteads will go under water** after completion of the dams" (p.4). Nothing, however, could trim the Minister's flights into fancy; ³⁵... "the Accelerated Programme is a gilt-edged investment, and indeed some of its bountiful dividends have already begun to be reaped by the Nation, redeeming the programme's conceptual validity... we are today, two years after launching out on the construction work of the Accelerated Programme, actually closing in on the Mahaveli."³⁵.

In May 1983, it was revealed that the extent developed under irrigation in Mahaveli

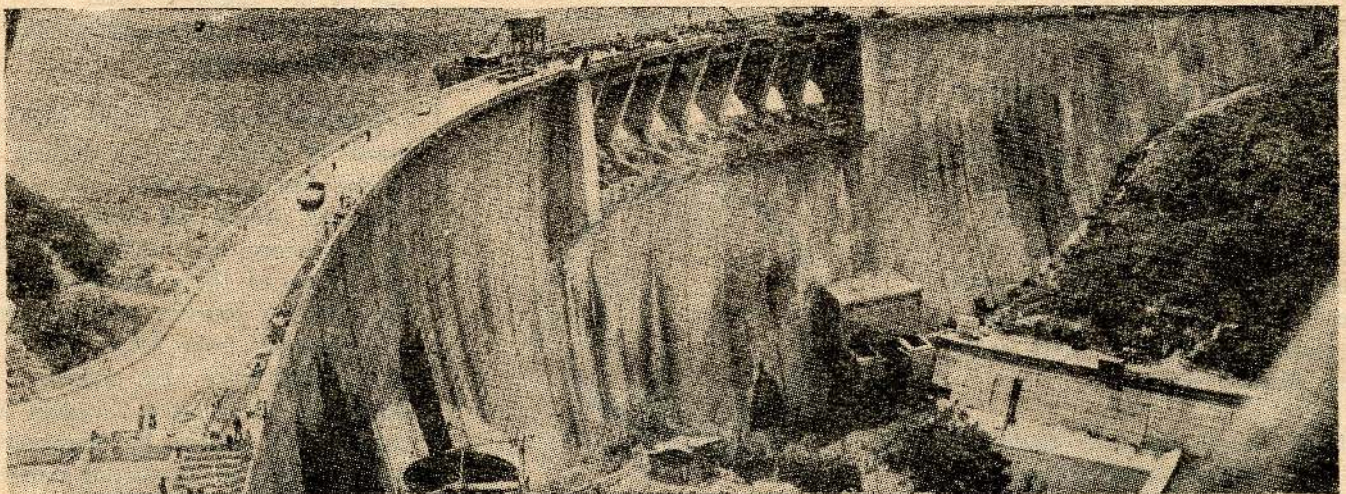
Development Programme in the period 1977-82 was 14,200 hectares (35,500 acres) all in System H outside the "Accelerated" Programme. The extent of new land expected to be benefited in the period 1983-87 was 42,000 hectares (105,000 acres). Assuming that this target would be fulfilled, the shortfall in the "Accelerated" Programme after a 10-year period (1978-87) would be more than 200,000 acres. Developing this acreage would take us well into the next century, if it were ever achieved. The cost and debts are already too much for the country to bear. On a more realistic assessment, the acreage developed by the end of 1987 would be between 50,000 and 70,000. This country would have ruined itself with the assistance of the IBRD and the donor countries. Had we not embarked on such a folly as the "Accelerated" Mahaveli Programme, we may have developed land under major irrigation at the rate of about 20,000 acres per year. In the 20-year period 1981-2000, we would have developed 400,000 acres with a much lower investment and without endangering "macro-economic stability".

33. Maduru Oya Reservoir was completed in 1983 but has been a dead investment since, with no channels to carry water to the land and no lands developed to receive water. It has improved the landscape of the eastern dry zone and is a thing of beauty but a joy only to construction firms, consultants and their associates.

34. World Bank Document, p. 48.

35. Published at public expense to mislead the public.

36. Mr. Gamini Dissanayake, Minister of Mahaveli Development in his Foreword to the handout "Mahaveli Projects and Programme 1982", December 1981.



The Other side of "Development"

A Panel of experts from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) met for the second time in Nairobi in 1982 to discuss "environment management for vector and disease control."

Peter Thatcher, UNEP's Deputy Executive Director, told the opening session that a central purpose before the panel was to advise the sponsoring organisation on how to assist governments with regard to environmental management for vector control. ARUN BHATTACHARJEE gives the background ...

The concept of "development" changed in the last one decade as new side effects in terms of health and environment became better understood.

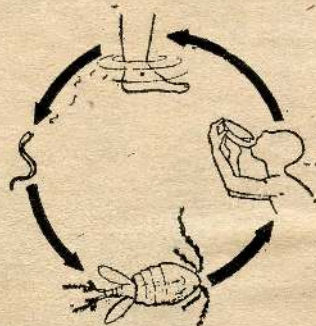
When the famous Aswan Dam was built in Egypt, the planners hardly thought it could bring the dreaded *schistosomiasis* (snail fever) in its wake; something though totally alien to Egyptian soil was localised. The Volta dam in Ghana is having similar effects on the health of the people though the dam's economic impact on the country are considerable.

Similarly malaria which vanished in the post-war years in India has made a come back and with such a ferocity that more than eight million people, equivalent to half of Kenya's population, were affected last year. In 1968 there were three million cases of malaria in Ethiopia, with more than 150,000 deaths.

Many people ask how could malaria be back after so many

years? How could there be *schistosomiasis* or *filariasis* in areas where there was none before? While physicians and scientists went on experimenting with powerful drugs for these, particularly malaria as the strains became resistant to common quinine, the environmentalists came out with a different answer.

They found that the return of all these diseases directly relates to the creation of favourable habitats for their breeding and survival. And these habitats largely relate to the development efforts of nations such as by erecting dams, creating vast water reservoirs and digging irrigation canals where mosquitoes can breed and the *schistosomiasis* harbouring snails thrive. *Onchocerciasis* is another deadly disease which you contract from the black flies which breed in the foamy and cascading springs and dam spillways. Their bites could induce blindness in a person over the years, commonly known as river blindness.



The answer before was to spray more DDT, more *Malathea* to destroy the breeding grounds of mosquitoes and physically the snails. But it did not work out as more spraying contaminates the limited fresh water system and causes environmental hazards; it is almost physically impossible to destroy all the *schistosomiasis*-harbouring snails.

Environment and health experts came up with the idea of destroying their habitats by environmentally controlling the vector diseases. Some of these like *Biharzia* (snail fever) cannot be traced in the early stage by the commonly accepted skin tests. When the symptoms become apparent, it is often too late to treat a patient.

In case of *filariasis* common blood tests do not often indicate the disease's existence in the body unless the blood samples or smears are taken in total darkness when these surface in the blood streams.

Between 1973 and 1977 there were 40 deaths due to malaria in the Federal Republic of Germany, which had banished malaria more than half a century ago. Out of these 30 deaths were among tourists who brought the parasites from Africa. In 1978 there were nine malaria deaths in the United Kingdom as these were treated by physicians as influenza, not suspecting malaria

Sometimes the human malaria parasite, *plasmodium* can lie dormant in a human body lodged in the host's liver for years and then surface again. When these take refuge in the body glands no amount of quinine can destroy them.

The vectors or carriers in all these cases are either mosquitoes, black flies or snails. Experiments have been conducted successfully to prove that environmental measures can prevent these by destroying the vector habitats and in turn controlling the vectors.

The methods are often simple. In the United States the Tennessee Valley Authority has shown that by altering the levels of the dam reservoir, it destroyed the habitats of mosquitoes. Similar fluctuation in the water level also proved helpful to destroy the snails.

The side effects of irrigation activities is well demonstrated in Sudan's Blue Nile irrigation project covering a productive areas of 2.3 million acres and over 313,200 cubic metres of irrigation canals. The Blue Nile Health Organisation would cost US \$ 155 million in 21 years to eliminate the environmental and health side effects of the irrigation projects.

UNEP experts, and those from FAO and WHO have launched an integrated programme with the acronym of PEEM (Panel of Experts on Environmental Management of Vector Control) in which environmental management of habitats and the major projects with appropriate health measures

would try to eliminate the obvious side effects of the development projects implemented in various countries and provide guidelines to avoid similar a situation.

The job of environmental control of vector diseases is not an easy one. It needs research, constant monitoring and experiments. For example, the black flies which cause river blindness (*Onchocerciasis*) is prevalent in Africa in the areas where beautiful streams and cascading waters could be tourist attractions. It has been found that by impoundment of water and wave agitation the habitats of these flies could be destroyed. On the other hand, impounded water could be the habitat for mosquito breeding which brings malaria. Irrigation canals out of the impounded reservoirs could be the habitats of *Bilharzia* (*Schistosomiasis*) snails.

Economic models of the environmental management of vector control of diseases have shown that in the long run it pays. What is the use of an irrigation project where the farmers' spend all their earnings on health bills? It has been proved beneficial for land and water management disease control and has led to better agriculture production as a healthy farmer can produce more than a sick one.

The figures for vector diseases sickness are very high starting with more than 200 million people affected by *schistosomiasis*, and it is threatening the health well being of another 600 million in 72 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin

America and the Caribbeans. Formerly about seven out of ten people in the world were exposed to malaria risk; today only four out of these seven are exposed to that risk. Yet that is a very high risk in terms of population figures. River blindness is more common to Africa and the number of people affected by this in Central Africa is also very high. *Filariasis* which causes swollen feet and can lead to *elephantiasis* is another disease which is common to Asia, Africa and Latin America. Experts believe that vector control and environmental management of the habitats could eliminate these diseases when supported with health programmes and controlled use of chemicals. Similarly, *trypanosomiasis* (sleeping sickness) caused by tsetse flies can also be environmentally controlled with chemicals.

All these environmental measures have to be carried out carefully as experience shows that any hasty measures without proper planning have always led to major complications. For example, the destruction of mangrove forests in Indonesia brought back malaria as *anopheles* mosquitoes breed well in sunlight. When the forest was replanted malaria incidence dropped sharply.

A complete econometric study of the cost-benefits of the environmental control of vector diseases is yet to be made because of its complexity, but experts agree that the total benefits to the people through this in terms of health improvement, agriculture production and livestock breeding far surpasses the cost of inputs and efforts.

— Courtesy: ECOFORUM (Kenya)
(December 1982)

Which way high dams ?

Unlike diamonds, dams are not forever. Due to an alarming loss of top soil which runs into rivers, filling the dam's reservoirs and rendering them useless, the lifespans of most dams are often shortened to half of initial projections.

Researchers Patticia Adams and Lawrence Solomon of Canada's Energy Probe report that **Canadian foreign aid officials are just beginning to receive warning signals that their gift of hydro dams may be doing more harm than good in the Third World.**

Dams are being blamed for loss of prime agricultural lands, the displacement of native peoples, and the ruin of local economies,

In Third World countries, hydro-electricity can no longer be considered a renewable resource.

Studies of 17 major reservoirs in India show them to be silting up at three times the expected rate as a result of deforestation. In the Southern slopes of the central snow-covered Himalayas, the hillsides have been denuded of vegetation, leading to an extraordinarily fast rate of erosion. With the river carrying silt for eight months of the year, the giant Tehir Dam downstream is now expected to last only 30 to 40 years instead of the 100 years initially planned on.

"... hydro dams may be doing more harm than good in the Third World."

Kenya's largest hydro-electric complex Kamburu, is receiving 5.6 million tonnes of soil a year, which has reduced its useful lifespan to under 30 years. Numerous other reservoirs in Kenya have filled with sediment in 15 or 20 years, severely reducing their ability to support electricity generation, provide water for irrigation and control floods.

The Ambuklao Dam in the Philippines has silted up so fast — 44.6 tonnes of soil per hectare of the river's watershed runs into it annually—that its lifespan has been reduced to 32 years from the 60 originally predicted.

Shortlived projects like these are the norm and by no means the worst. The Sanmenxia Dam in the Yellow River Basin of China was completed in 1960, but had to be decommissioned in 1964 because so much sediment accumulated in the reservoir that the river bank eroded and threatened to flood the City of Xlan. The Laoying Reservoir, also in China, filled with sediment before the dam was completed.

Along with the flooding of river basins, which often contain the most fertile and highly populated land in the region, comes a vicious cycle of environmental degradation.

Thousands or tens of thousands of farmers are forced to move to less fertile land, often higher up the slopes of the river valley, which soon becomes eroded as crowded conditions leave the soil overworked; silt soon finds its way into the river, increasing the rate at which reservoirs are filled and the dam is rendered useless.

Nor does the damage end there. Normally, the river banks are replenished with nutrients during the river's annual flooding. After dams are built, the nutrients-rich silt becomes trapped in the reservoirs instead of being washed over the river banks.

*Patricia Adams and Lawrence Solomon are researchers with Energy Probe and the authors of the forthcoming book, **Third World Energy Myths.***

At its last Board meeting in May, the Environment Liaison Centre (ELC) decided that issues connected with water management and dams would receive priority attention in ELC activities.

Courtesy: NEWS ALERT (ELC Kenya) Nos 1 & 2, 1984.

SAPUGASKANDA — Another Bhopal ?

A mini Bhopal lies just outside the capital, a growing threat to the lives of thousands of people.

The menace of Sapugaskanda — described by one environmental scientist as a nightmare and a tragedy of negligence — has already bared its teeth, sending 18 adults and four children to hospital in a forerunner to the Bhopal tragedy which claimed 2000 lives and affected 10,000 others.

Ecologists fear this may have been only the tip of the iceberg and that the urea plant at Sapugaskanda could one day bring disaster to the villages surrounding it and the capital city, through leakages of very toxic gases and other pollutants.

The first signs of advanced pollution in the form of acid rain have already been found in the vicinity of Sapugaskanda. This has been attributed to the Sapugaskanda oil refinery known to release harmful waste gases into the atmosphere. The gases are absorbed by rain water forming acid.

The combination of the urea plant and the oil refinery will one day force the authorities to evacuate people living within miles of these complexes, an official of the Central Environmental Authority warned.

Already, nearly 100 acres of paddy lands in the vicinity of Sapugaskanda have been destroyed by industrial effluents, he told 'WEEKEND'.

Acid rain is dreaded in many highly industrialised countries in Europe, and is very difficult to check once it begins, he added.

Meanwhile the CEA which investigated the causes of the recent ammonia leak from a pipeline at the Sapugaskanda urea plant has come to the conclusion that negligence and inadequate pollution control were responsible. Effluents had blocked the pipeline, which had burst under the pressure of the accumulated ammonia.

The authority has recommended that the victims of this leak be compensated.

One official of the CEA, who conceded that the authority did not have the muscle it needed to function effectively, said a number of investigations had been launched into specific factories suspected of large scale pollution. These included factories along the banks of the Kelani Ganga, the Embilipitiya paper mill and industries in the vicinity of the Beira Lake.

'WEEKEND' also learnt that residents of Sri Jayawardanapura are perturbed over the mushrooming factories in their area, and are to make representations to the government following the Bhopal incident. One factory being built for the manufacture of asbestos is causing grave concern to them.

The report of the team of officials who inspected the gas leak at the Sapugaskanda refinery says that it had adverse effects on humans and also plant life.

The report states....

On Friday November 23, 1984 eighteen (18) adults and four (4) children were affected by this gas leak. Emergency first aid had been immediately administered by the nursing staff of the corporation before rushing the affected to hospital. Crop plants and other vegetation were affected.

Under normal running conditions of the main plant, traces of ammonia released are generally diluted and dissipated with air at the exit of the chimney, 230 ft, above the ground. However, on this occasion an unusual transient blocking in the system is said to have led to a discharge of a cloud of ammonia gas in one burst,

Owing to heavy moisture laden conditions of the atmosphere on that day, the cold ammonia gas had combined with moisture and formed a heavy vapour cloud which descended to ground level rapidly causing this major pollution problem.

— WEEKEND of 9. 12. 84.

University Unrest

The last week in January 1985 saw the undergraduates of six University campuses in protest actions and lecture boycotts against the Universities Amendment Act passed the previous week in Parliament.

The new amending Act provides for the establishment of Universities by the private sector whose degrees would be recognised by the State. Under its provisions all student bodies have been abolished and a Students Relations Council headed by the Vice Chancellor set up instead.

This new Act and the protest against it will be covered in the next issue of **Christian Worker**.

Free Education in danger

We must remind our readers however, that when in 1981 this Government decided to have a Private Medical School in Colombo North (Ragama), **Christian Worker** made the following comment: "Nor will it stop with medicine. For already there have been reports of a similar private institution being mooted for Engineering students. So as Dr. Colvin Gooneratne warned at the very inception of the move for a private medical school: 'The proposed medical school is the first of many more private institutions for granting University degrees for the children of the rich, and along with private denominational schools, the beginning of the end of free education in Sri Lanka'" (**Christian Worker** 1981 1st Quarter)

India's General Election

Rajiv Gandhi, at the head of the Congress (Indira) Party has romped home to an unparalleled victory, with more than 50 per cent of the votes polled and with 80 per cent of the seats already filled in the Lok Sabha. To be exact, Rajiv won 401 out of the 508 seats in the Lok Sabha for which voting was completed. Not only is this a feat which even his grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru, assisted by a galaxy of renowned and talented colleagues, could not approach in his time. But it is unlikely that it can ever be repeated.

A breakdown of Rajiv's victory into its components will reveal that there are aspects of this achievement that are full of foreboding. Thus the 50 per cent plus vote for the country as a whole consists of 56.3 per cent for Northern India, 53.8 per cent for Western India, 50.2 per cent for Eastern India and 50 per cent for Southern India. Southern India consists of the four States of Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. In Karnataka Rajiv won 24 out of 28 seats, losing 3 seats that it had previously held. As against this, the Janatha Party, which ran the State Government with the support of the Hindu party (the BJP) and the Communists, increased its vote from 29 per cent in 1980 to 40 per cent. Janatha has now resigned its office in the State assembly and will prove a powerful opponent to the Congress (I) at the State Legislative Assembly elections that will take place shortly.

In Kerala the elections were a contest between two United Fronts led by the Congress (I) and Communist Party (Marxist) respectively. Since the two Communist Parties had not the faintest possibility of winning power at the Centre in New Delhi, the bulk of voters adapted themselves to the countrywide pro-Rajiv wave and voted for the UDF, the pro-Congress front. When the State elections take place, however, the contest between the UDF and LDF will be much fiercer.

In the Tamil Nadu elections, the sympathy wave for the Chief Minister, M. G. Ramachandran, seriously ill in a United States hospital, was even more powerful than that for Rajiv Gandhi. The Congress vote was a mere 20 per cent as against 80 per cent for the two Dravida Kazhagams, AIA-DMK and DMK. Congress (I) will not call the tune in Tamil Nadu for many years to come.

In Andhra Pradesh, Congress (I) was able to win only 6 seats out of 39 that were declared, as against 27 won by Telugu Desam, a regional party, and 6 by Telugu Desam allies of Right and Left. 11 of Telugu Desam's victories were by majorities of more than 1 lakh; 6 by majorities of between 50,000 and 1 lakh; and 8 of between 10,000 and 50,000. These sweeping victories by Telugu Desam will be hard to reverse in the Legislative Assembly elections that are due in the State shortly.

Thus Rajiv's overwhelming hold on power in New Delhi is likely to be counterbalanced by Governments of regional parties in virtually all Southern States. When it is remembered that West Bengal remained firmly CPI (M) at the Lok Sabha elections and Kashmir was divided equally between Faroukh Abdulla's party and the Congress (I) and that elections have yet to be held in Punjab and Assam, it seems that Rajiv Gandhi will be inevitably confronted by the demand for greater devolution of powers and responsibilities on the constituent States of the Indian Union.

Philippines:

The crisis deepens

Government Conspiracy Confirmed

Opposition groups in the Philippines underscored their condemnation of the Marcos regime as being the mastermind behind the slaying of former Senator Benigno Aquino, following the release of reports by the Agrava fact-finding board.

The five-member board, after investigating the assassination of Aquino for about a year, issued two separate reports. The board findings rejected the government claim that the Aquino murder was perpetrated by a lone gunman who penetrated the airport security. The reports said that there was conspiracy in the military for the slaying. But the two reports

varied with regards the extent of the conspiracy.

One report given by Mrs. Corason Agrava, head of the board, blamed the murder on the conspiracy of six soldiers headed by Gen. Luther Custodio, Aviation security chief. Mrs. Agrava's report was released October 23.

Another report submitted October 24 was issued by the four other members of the panel. Also known as the 'majority report', it said that Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff General Fabian C. Ver and 25 other persons were "indictable for premeditated killing".

It will be recalled that within 30 hours after the Aquino assassination on August 21, 1983, Marcos said in a nationally-televised press conference that the "evidence" supported the military's version that a lone "Communist gunman", Rolando Galman, murdered Sen. Aquino. This was at a time when the identity of the alleged gunman, according to the military, had not yet been established.

Summing up the findings of the board, an oppositionist commented: "The (Agrava) board can't name Marcos, Imelda, Cojuangco (a Marcos crony). With Gen. Ver, it was already difficult for the board members." He adds, "They were hand-picked by Marcos. But at the same time they confronted strong public opinion and heaps of evidence. They had to tell the truth — not all of it, but a big part anyway."

Revolutionary Opposition

The Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army under it and other communist-led grassroots organizations, constitute the strongest force op-

posing the US-Marcos dictatorship. But besides the CPP and the forces it leads, there are other significant opposition forces. These are: the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Bangsa Moro Army, the Christians for National Liberation (CNL), the Cordillera People's Democratic Front (CPDF), the People's Liberation Movement (PLM) and the Gerilya Anakpawis, the Marxist-Leninist Group and the different sectoral organizations. All these organizations are in the underground. **Most are now unified within the framework of the National Democratic Front (NDF), the broadest front constituting the biggest threat to the US-backed Marcos regime.**

Outside the vast underground that covers both the cities and the countryside, there are other big and significant organized opposition forces. These forces are active in the open protest movement that are largely based in the main urban centres. But even among these forces the big majority adhere to the strategy of forcible overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship through people's war. This strategy means using a combination of all means — principally armed struggle but at the same time using also mass protests and the parliamentary process; illegal and legal forms; full mobilization of the people in both urban and rural areas; and pursuing the struggle in both domestic and international fronts. For US government officials, these revolutionary organizations in the open protest movement are also tagged as "communists".

Progressive Liberals

Most organizations of the progressive liberals are small and new. Majority of these were formed following the Aquino assassination and the political crisis it generated. A few old ones had been set up

by politicians who have abandoned traditional electoral politics and who now rely on organizing the people to achieve social changes. In general, members of these organizations come from the ranks of local businessmen and the upper and middle levels of the middle strata.

The US seeks to pacify the progressive liberals with promises of legal reforms and with seemingly "free" electoral exercises. One recent US move along this line was the US pressure on Marcos to act on the majority report of the Aquino slay fact-finding board.

The US plan appears to be a good blueprint to solve the political crisis of the Philippines and make the country "stable" again for US bases and US big business. The only problem however with the plan is that it is far from reality.

The economy is in shambles. Only the big businesses of American and other foreign corporations as well as those of the Marcos cronies are operating. The country faces a debt and financial crisis that continues to worsen. Filipino businessmen are being pushed to bankruptcy while the workers and peasants are being pushed into a state of famine.

The people, specially the workers and peasants, respond to the increasing burden that US imperialism and the dictatorship have imposed on them, by intensifying their struggles. In the past months, protest actions on economic issues markedly escalated.

The intelligentsia, considered the most politically influential segment of the middle strata, are joining the revolution by the thousands. They have set up large and strong revolutionary legal organizations —

student alliances, teachers associations, media organizations and others. Daily mass actions of these organizations are exposing to the people US imperialism's responsibility for the economic crisis. Joining the militant actions of organizations of the intelligentsia are the other sectors of the middle strata — professionals, health workers, office employees, church groups and others.

Parliament of the Streets

The progressive liberals on their part are marching with the revolutionaries in the "parliament of the streets". Earlier this year, when US embassy personnel were actively campaigning for participation in the May fake elections, the progressive liberals rallied to the call of boycott. After the polls, whenever Marcos troops sprayed bullets at the Mendiola bridge to try to terrorize demonstrators, the progressive liberals,

hand in hand with the revolutionaries, stood their ground. Today as the economic crisis and repression affects the middle strata more intensely, the progressive liberals are more determined to remain in the path of militant struggle and are directing their struggles more sharply against US imperialism.

The reformist oppositionists on the other hand are gradually realizing the uselessness of seeking reforms in the Marcos Parliament. After getting 30% of the seats in the parliament, the reformist oppositionists entertained hopes that they would be able to push for substantial changes in the legislative body. But Marcos refused to give any significant concessions. On the contrary all the major bills that the reformists sought to pass, including a proposal to curb decree-making powers of Marcos, were thrown to the waste basket.

The rapid deterioration of the economy further underscored the importance of the parliamentary process under the dictatorship. The reformist oppositionists were forced to take positions in the burning issues of imperialist exploitation of the economy and fascist repression. Not a few among them were drawn to the "parliament of the streets".

US policy makers envision a puppet government made up of a coalition of the Marcos faction and collaborators from the reformist oppositionists; a regime unopposed by "pacified" progressive liberals. Yet the way things are going, it is an anti-US imperialist coalition that has taken shape and this coalition is rapidly gaining strength.

(NDF UPDATE October and November 1984)

British Govt's War on the Miners

The miners' strike is about the future of the coal industry. It is about the future of men, women and children and of whole communities threatened by pit closures. It is about the Tory government's intention to destroy the power of working people.

In many parts of South Yorkshire, the unemployment rate is already well over 20%. Meanwhile the term, 'uneconomic pit' represents no more than an arbitrary judgement based on short-term profit and loss consideration. It says nothing about the long-term prospects of a pit; nothing about the long-term social and economic costs of unemployment; nothing about the long-term consequences of greater dependence upon oil and nuclear power.

The NUM's (National Union of Miners) view is that it can often

cost more to close pits than to keep them open.

Britain has coal reserves sufficient to last many hundreds of years, but a run-down of the coal industry increases our reliance on imported coal and nuclear power. Oil will be in short supply in twenty years. Because of severe doubts about safety, the USA has already halted its nuclear energy programme and is converting unfinished nuclear power stations to burn coal.

The Tories have deliberately chosen conflict with the NUM. Two years ago it was avoided. Police and judiciary have been bought off with massive pay rises. The appointment of Ian MacGregor to run the NCB was a clear declaration of war; the confrontational style in which he has handled the dispute has brought

dismay to many senior Coal Board officials. Like pay restraint in the public sector, like the cuts and privatisation in health, education and social services, like the banning of GCHQ unions, the attempt to destroy the NUM is another step in the all-out attack on the people of Britain.

The NUM has undoubtedly made errors — not least its refusal in the early days to hold a national ballot. Yet the miners' struggle is the struggle of us all; by fighting for their pits and their jobs the miners are fighting against permanent mass unemployment. They are fighting for a right to a say in the future of their industry, and for a more human future for themselves, their families and their communities.

— **The Revd Brian Jenner**

Excerpts.

*Courtesy: CHRISTIAN STATESMAN
Autumn 1984.*

World Military And Social Expenditures

In **World Military and Social Expenditures 1983**, the ninth annual report on world priorities Ruth Leger Sivard graphically portrays "a world dangerously over-armed and undernourished. Two super-powers, locked into Cold War antagonisms, are the driving force behind an arms build-up without parallel in history... An arms race no country can afford crowds out social needs. Government budgets give lower priority to deep-seated, debilitating problems than to military solutions and the latest technological advances in weapons."

Military Growth

"Reduced to numbers, the world's arms race and its effects on human life easily lose touch with reality" Sivard points out. "The most fertile imagination will boggle at:

- * a current world military budget of \$660,000,000/ year (an increase of 10% from the preceding year);
- * a stockpile of over 50,000 nuclear weapons;
- * 25 million men and women under arms;
- * 1 billion people living under military-controlled governments;
- * more than 9 million civilians killed in 'conventional' wars since Hiroshima."

Buttressed by colourful and handsome graphs, charts, tables and maps, **World Military and Social Expenditures 1983** presents the facts and figures on the arms race, and effectively illustrates the real military madness of today's world.

With a graph comparing current military expenditure to pre-World War II levels, Sivard shows that the enormous military establishments that exist today are a comparatively recent development. Since the 1930's the world's military spending (in constant prices) has increased 13 fold, vastly exceeding the increase in population to be protected and the economic base to support it.

Total US military spending in 1982 was 20 times the pre-War level (in equivalent prices), increasing in per capita terms from \$75 prior to World War II, to \$855 per capita in 1982. The Soviet Union reels under an even larger military burden: while the US uses 6.5% of GNP for military spending, Soviet military outlays consume 10-12% of GNP.

The growing militarisation of the world is illustrated by an unusual map. The Long Arm of Military Power. It details, by location and number, the 1.8 million military forces operating beyond their own national borders. The US, with 461,000 forces overseas, and the USSR with 700,000 forces (514,000 in Eastern Europe) dominate the global reach of today's military power.

Two additional global maps capture the prevalence of repression and war. One on military-dominated governments show that half of the Third World countries have governments under military control, and four in five of those governments use violence in the form of torture and brutality against their own citizens. The other map, on wars fought since



1945, shows that the frequency of major wars (over 1,000 deaths) is on the rise. Although fought only with "conventional arms", Sivard finds that **wars since 1945 have taken over 16 million lives.**

Nuclear weapons, "morally repugnant, unusable in war, and unthinkable in their effects on human life" have nevertheless increased in numbers from 3 in 1945 to 50,000 in 1983. A special section of the report is devoted to these weapons and the incredible power that they represent. The proliferation of both weapons and nuclear facilities is shown on a map of **The Nuclear World 1983.**

Social Neglect

"Social neglect grows out as excessive militarization...an intensive arms build-up also kills whether or not the weapons are put to use...The military-social connection reaches deep into the world economy".

The evidence presented by Sivard reveals that the world's priorities reflect a "persistent slant toward military strength to the neglect of other needs that are vital to society's well-being and its security". Richer countries continue to invest far more in military power than in the development of

their poor neighbours. Between 1960-82, military expenditures of industrialized countries rose by more than \$400 billion, but foreign aid by \$25 billion. In 1982, their military expenditures were 17 times larger than aid budgets. In these terms, the USSR was lowest of all aid givers. The biggest military spenders are also, on the whole poor achievers in Sivard's test of economic-social performance.

Sivard also finds that large appetites for imported arms in Third World countries have aggravated their external debt situations. Among 25 countries which since 1981 have had to negotiate to reschedule their debt, six of them had spent more than \$1 billion each for arms imports in the 5 preceding years. All 25 rang up a bill of \$11 billion for arms imports in that period.

The diversion of financial resource to military rather than to social development, according to Sivard, leads to an underutilized labour force, neglect of education invest-

ments and consequent poor productivity. The enormity of unmet human needs, in sheer numbers, is staggering:

- * Poverty : 2 billion people live on incomes below \$500 year;
- * Jobs : 600 million people have no jobs or are under-employed;
- * Health : 11 million infants die before their first birthday;
- * Sanitation : 2 billion people do not have safe water to drink;
- * Food : 450 million suffer from hunger and malnutrition;
- * Education : 120 million young children are without a school.

World Priorities 1983

- * The cost of a single new nuclear submarine equals the annual education budget of 23 Third World

countries with 160 million school-age children.

- * Among 20 Third World countries with the largest foreign debt, arms imports between 1976 and 1980 were equivalent to 20% of the increase in debt in that period.

* Every minute 30 children die for want of food and inexpensive vaccines, and every minute the world's military budget absorbs \$1.3 million of the public treasury.

* The US now devotes over \$200 billion a year to military defence against foreign enemies, but 45% of Americans are afraid to go out alone at night within 1 mile of their homes.

This is only a sampling of the statistics and analyses on the comparisons between military expenditures and today's social conditions offered by this internationally-renowned report.

(Courtesy: IFDA Dossier 42-
July/August 1984)

Religion & Politics

Vatican's Inquisition Unmasked !

On September 3rd 1984, the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith released a document entitled **Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'**. It was dated August 6, 1984 and signed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger prefect of the Congregation and Archbishop Alberto Bovone, Secretary of the Congregation. Pope John Paul II approved the document and directed that it be published.

In dealing with the theology of liberation, **the Vatican has gone over the heads of the Latin American Bishops' Conference and by-passed collegial structures established to treat these issues.** Indeed the initiative for inquiries into liberation theology came not from the Latin American church but from the Vatican, beginning in March 1983 when Ratzinger as head of Rome's Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (SCDF)

sent the bishops a set of negative "observations" on the work of Gustavo Gutierrez a priest of the Archdiocese of Lima and one of the most prominent Latin American Liberation theologians. Although the bishops were requested to review Gutierrez's writings and to issue their own document on the subject, no such censure was made by these bishops. In fact, in January 1984, 13 bishops joined in concelebrating a Eucharist com-

memorating the 25th anniversary of Gutierrez's ordination to the priesthood. (See *Christian Worker* 2nd Quarter 1984). More recently Ratzinger and the SCDF cited Brazilian liberation theologian Leonardo Boff for questioning in Rome (see "Shades of the Inquisition?" in *Christian Worker* 3rd Quarter 1984.)

Attack on Marxism

The main attack of Ratzinger and his ilk on liberation theology is that it makes use of Marxist social analysis which to them is synonymous with the class struggle. The following brief comment by the noted Belgian theologian Edward Schillebeeckx on this ground of attack contained in the Vatican SCDF's *Instruction* is both illuminating and telling:

"First, we must ask if the struggle of classes is a Marxist principle and whether or not the social contradictions and conflicts are not primarily facts which were first verified and analysed by Marx within his theoretical framework. Liberation theologians also confirm as facts the conflicts that exist in Latin America; they analyse them within a theological framework from a biblical vision about the justice of God as it shows itself in a just human system.

"Those who use a model of harmony conceal the social tensions and put themselves, even voluntarily, on the side of the system of the powerful and the rich. Those who use a sociological mode of conflict, as the liberation theologians do have a productive method of analysing the Latin American society with its oppressive structures that force the poor to become even more impoverished. The sociological modes long ago transcended the Marxist proposal as a legitimate method, although

not the only one, in analysing society...

"The dictators in Latin America will receive this Instruction with joy because it will serve their purposes. Whether it was intended or not, this Instruction is, in fact, being turned into a political instrument in the hands of the powerful in Latin America who, in turn, are supported by the great foreign powers in order to consolidate the system that keeps the poor submissive, in favour of the rich. Is this the good news we might have expected from Rome?" (Quoted in LADOC (Peru) Jan/Feb 1985)

And if one has any further doubts about the nature of Rome's Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith and its presiding genius Ratzinger, the following statements too should help :-

The era of Vatican II "was definitely unfavourable to the Catholic Church."

"Democracy in the church has had very bad results."

"There is one truth and this truth is definable and expressible in a precise way."

The above gems taken from Ratzinger's thoughts and reproduced in *Newsweek* of Jan. 14, 1985 should help to date the era of such sort of thinking — the period of the Holy Inquisition and the burning at the stake of heretics in Europe. The only difference is that at one time such thinking helped to buttress a feudal order; now it readily lends its support to capitalist and neo-colonialist exploitation.

Significantly, the "Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith" which Ratzinger now heads, actually replaced the former Holy Office of the Inquisition in Rome!

Papal attack on Nicaragua

While this issue of *Christian Worker* was in the press, we learnt of the Vatican's ultimatum issued to Fr. Miguel D'Escoto Nicaragua's Foreign Minister that he resign his post in the government or leave the priesthood. Fr. D'Escoto is reported to have said: "To resign would be treason against the people and the poor of this country. It would also be treason against my own conscience as a priest." D'Escoto and three other priests serving in the Government were confirmed in their posts as Ministers when President Daniel Ortega took office on January 10th after elections last November.

Earlier, Fr. Fernando Cardenal Minister of Education (see last issue of *Christian Worker*) was removed from the Jesuit Order and the priesthood on a directive of Pope John Paul II whose policy on Nicaragua appears to coincide with that of President Reagan. It is said that the Pope's policies are also influenced by a powerful, moneyed and politically rightist organization called "Opus Dei".

Space does not permit further comment, but an exclusive documentation on the Vatican's policies in this regard will appear in the next issue of *Christian Worker* to enable our readers to make their own judgement.

Also see enclosed sheet
**Nicaragua: "Life is
Triumphing Over Death"**

Jesus born among the massacred innocents of History

"In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus ordering a census of the whole world. This first census took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria." So says the Gospel of Luke read at Christmas. Matthew adds: "Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea in the days of Herod, the King." These simple texts carry a profound message: Jesus was born in a specific time and place. Under the Emperor Octavianus, called Augustus, when he was at the height of his power; when Quirinius was governor of Syria; in the time of King Herod, the traitor who sold his people out to the Roman occupation forces. At that moment, Jesus was born; his birth was insignificant in the eyes of a deified cynical power, and insignificant in the eyes of cowardice disguised as peace and political realism.

Born in history

Jesus was born in Bethlehem "the smallest among the villages of Judah" as the prophet Micah said, surrounded by shepherds and animals. His parents had come to the stable after they fruitlessly knocked on many doors of the town, according to the Gospel account,... **There, in oblivion, the Word was made history in the flesh of the poor.**

At Christmas time it is often said that Jesus is born anew in each family, in each heart. But these "births" cannot ignore the first, empirical fact: **Jesus was born of Mary in the bosom of a people who at the time were dominated by the greatest power**

of that period. That was Jesus' "here and now." If we forget this, the birth of Jesus becomes an abstraction, a symbol, a figure. **Without its historical coordinates, the event loses its significance. For the Christian, Christmas is recognized as a "bursting in" of God into human history: the birth of smallness and service in the face of the power and arrogance of the great of this world. An arrival accompanied by the smell of the manger.**

The Christian faith is a historical faith. God is revealed in Jesus Christ and, through him in human history. Only by starting from that point is it possible to believe in God. Believers cannot place themselves above history and watch life pass. We must learn to believe out of the concrete conditions of our life: in the midst of oppression and repression, but also in the midst of the struggles and hopes that exist in Latin America today. Under dictatorships that sow death among the poor as well as in the "democracies" that barter away their needs; in the civil war raging in El Salvador; in the harassment experienced by the heroic, long-suffering people of Nicaragua... **No, ever since the first Christmas it has been impossible to separate Christian faith and human history. We discover Christ in our own "here and now."** Christmas celebrates the very historical fact that is the basis on which Jesus can say, if you gave food to the poorest, "you gave it to me," and if you failed to do so, "you failed

to give it to me" (Mat. 25:31-46). The judgment of history will permit no equivocation...

Throughout Latin America, there is a movement of solidarity growing with the struggles of the poor for liberation: solidarity with the peoples of Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala; solidarity with exiles and with the families of the disappeared of Argentina, Uruguay, Chile...

Blood of the innocents

The Christmas liturgical cycle includes a commemoration that is in danger of being overlooked or misinterpreted: **the day of the Holy Innocents, Dec. 28...** The birth of a child on the outskirts of a small city worried the traitor Herod. The smell of the stable reached Herod's palace, and the fear the newborn child evoked led him to slaughter many innocent children. **Unjust and untimely death cruelly accompanied the life that had just begun.** Tragedy surrounded the joy of birth — a foretaste of the blood that would be spilled on the cross by those who would resist the announcement of the God of life by the child become-adult.

The searing cry of Rachel who wept for her children continues to be heard in our country — it is the cry of the mothers of the 100 out of every 1,000 infants who die in their first year of life...

The blood of the innocents continues to drench the history of Peru and of Latin America. It constitutes the price, unacceptable to the human and Christian conscience, that the people of this subcontinent are paying in order to sustain what Garcia Marquez calls "the illusion of having our own life within the division of the world's goods." That is the world to which God irrevocably committed himself on the day we commemorate as Christmas.

The God of Life

Life and death. Solidarity sealed with blood. Christmas is, nonetheless, the promise that life will overcome death and that hope is not a vain dream when it becomes flesh in a people. The "peace on earth" proclaimed to the shepherds of Bethlehem is what is demanded if we are to build a just world — a world, as the Bible stresses, that will never cease to link justice with peace.

There can be no light-hearted or superficial optimism. It is impossible to forget the heart-rending situation of the Peruvian poor as they prepare to celebrate another Christmas. But a profound faith in the power of the poor in history coupled with firm hope in the Lord stops us from turning our attention to the past or, as a last resort, seeking individual solutions. **The celebration of Epiphany, which closes the Christmas cycle .. expresses the universality of the message... It forces the celebration of Christmas out of the private, family sphere and places it squarely at the fork in the road of history, where it becomes a call and a challenge to men and women who journey along it.**

It is a message of solidarity that can lead to death. But it also holds out a hope for the poor: their apparent historical insignificance is like that of the child whose birth we celebrate — and through whom we receive "the Good News, the great joy for all people" (Luke 2:10).

—Gustavo Gutierrez

(Taken from: *El Diaria Marka*
Lima, Peru, Dec. 26, 1982)

—Latinamerica Press, 20.12.84.



Bishop Lakshman Commemoration Seminar

A Seminar on the theme of "For a Real Sri Lankan Church!" was organized by the C. W. F. on Thursday, 25th October 1984 at the Y. M. C. A. Forum Hall in Colombo. The Seminar marked the first death anniversary (23rd October) of a modern day prophet of the Church, the late Bishop Lakshman Wickremesinghe. A booklet entitled **For a Real Sri Lankan Church!** published by the C. W. F. on 20th September was officially released at this Seminar.

The Rt. Revd. Swithin Fernando, Bishop of Colombo presided at the Seminar and the speakers were The Rt. Revd. Andrew Kumaraige, Bishop of Kurunegala, The Revd. Soma Perera, President of the Methodist Church of Sri Lanka, The Revd. Fr. Aloysius Pieris, S. J. and Vijaya Vidyasagara and Jeffrey Abayasekera of the C. W. F. Bishop Kumaraige spoke on "A Spirituality for Today" and quoted extensively from the new booklet as well as referring to the life of the late Bishop Lakshman. The Revd. Soma Perera spoke on "A Church for

Today" with an emphasis of its prophetic role and the great contribution it can make towards finding a solution to the National Question. Fr. Aloysius Pieris gave a spirited address on "The Kingdom of God and other religions and ideologies", but had to cut short his talk due to limitations of time; expressing his warm appreciation of the new CWF booklet, he emphasised the concept of the Kingdom and raised the question of the nature of the true church in relation to the work of the Kingdom. Vijaya Vidyasagara spoke on "Worship, sacraments and the struggle for Justice" and Jeffrey Abayasekera on "Beyond the Institutional Church to new communities". A lively discussion followed but had to be terminated prematurely. It was felt that the dialogue should be continued on later occasions.

Audrey Rebera proposed a vote of thanks after Bishop Swithin Fernando gave a positive summing-up to the Seminar.

Over a hundred people were present at this Seminar. Christians from many denominations (including some clergy from the out stations) and some who did not belong to the Church in any official sense. Family members of the late Bishop Lakshman were also present. It was a truly significant memorial of a great and good Bishop, by his friends and disciples from different churches and organizations throughout the country.

Have you read ?

FOR A REAL SRI LANKAN CHURCH !

(The CWF Pamphlet discussed at the Seminar)

Price Rs. 3/- a copy

Available — CWF Office.

The Political Prisoner

Spend no tears
Say no prayers
for the man in
the concrete cage

True, no glimmer
of light beckons
at the end of
the long corridor
of his "future"

Even a whisper
of a trial never
reaches his ear

True, no visitor
calls at his moss-
lined cell to tell
him the time and
integer of year
Only the gaoler
bringing his meagre
ration of mildewed
biscuits and piss-
like tea that start
up painfully again
his festering ulcer

Still, say no prayer
Spend no tears
for this comrade in
the concrete cage
He has his honour

But for you and I
who daily stroll
under the sun with
fear-locked tongues

You and I who have
doubly pawned
our lives for lies

You and I
who bicker at
the government
yet pay our taxes
rant against
the censor yet

subscribe to the
national newspaper

For you and I, mister
who walk these
city's barren streets
in a midday stupor
save your prayers
and shed your tears
for you and I
walk without honour

— Cecil Rajendra
(Malaysia)

Human Rights Day Seminar

A Seminar was convened by the Movement for the Defence of Democratic Rights in collaboration with the Christian Workers Fellowship, the Manawa Hithawadi Bhikkhu Organisation (Humanitarian Bhikkhu Organisation), and the Devasarana Development Centre, on December 10th to commemorate the 36th anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. At a time when human rights were being violated in many countries, and human life itself was being systematically destroyed by both sides in a virtual civil war in the northern parts of this country, it was good to find people representative of both ethnic groups and many religions and ideologies meeting in this way to remind ourselves of our Charter obligation. The meeting was chaired by an one-time Supreme Court Judge Mr T.W. Rajaratnam while the two speakers were the Venerable Maduluwawe Sobitha Thero and Dr Colvin R. de Silva, the former a well-known religious leader and the latter a eminent lawyer and politician.

The Chairman made some very pertinent comments on the situation in the country. The Venerable Sobitha outlined the progressive decline in the standards of democratic behaviour in this land, pinpointing the decline in the respect we pay to the Judiciary. He recounted instances where persons found guilty of violation of the rights of the people were rewarded by the Government with promotions in the Police Service, and referred to the ugly incident where thugs demonstrated outside the residences of the Supreme Court judges who had held against the Police in a fundamental rights case. He also referred to the attack on the speakers including an eminent professor who spoke at a meeting of the Sinhala Bala Mandalaya. Dr Colvin R de Silva spoke on the plight caused by the denial of human rights through drastic legislation and arbitrary actions of the Government. He said that while people had recourse to the law as a last resort, there was the need for people to defend their rights by concerted action against the forces that were violating human rights. He said that as long as there is a government pledged to defend their class interests, there was danger to human rights. It was possible to guarantee the rights of the people only if the structures of injustice and oppression are transformed.

The Chairman, winding up the seminar, said that while there were raging fires in the country outside and conflict everywhere, the atmosphere in the hall created by the discussion was hopeful and highly satisfying. Listening to the two speakers, he said he felt proud to be a Sri Lankan.

Fellowship in Action

Katunayake

While the Christian Workers Fellowship in 1983 had to help in affording protection and relief to Tamils affected by the racist outbursts of July that year, we had in December 1984 to help Sinhala refugees evacuated from the North after attacks were made upon them.

Refugees from the fishing villages of Kokilai and Nayaru in the Mullaitivu districts on the North-east coast were housed in refugee camps at Duva and Pitipana in the Negombo area on the West coast. While several voluntary organizations are involved in relief work here, the first 50 families out of these refugees were entrusted to the C.W.F. and an additional number of families added to these subsequently. The CWF was also asked to help with the educational programmes which were to commence in these camps. This relief work undertaken by the CWF is being carried out by the CWF group and the Kamkaru Sevana (Workers'

Shelter) based at Katunayake. Our drama group at Katunayake also began work on playlets to be staged as part of this programme in the refugee camps.

The Lagoon Fishermen's Society sponsored by our Katunayake Centre met twice in December. Work here combined now with work at the relief camps has opened out an even wider field for service by us among fishermen.

The CWF group at Katunayake has planned to have its next full-day Bible Study session in January 1985. The group has also met with a few visitors interested in the on-going work of the Centre during December.

Gami Seva Sevana (Rural Service Centre) Galaha

Bed sheets spun at the **Gami Seva Sevana handlooms** at Galaha were **gifted** on behalf of the CWF to victims and refugees fleeing from the Northern areas after separatist armed attacks. Martin Wickremasinghe from the Anuradhapura

office of the Gami Seva Sevana visited the refugee camp at Alikimbulagala in the company of the Assistant Government Agent of Padaviya and spoke to these refugees. Gifts of dry rations too were being planned by our Rural Service Centre for these refugees.

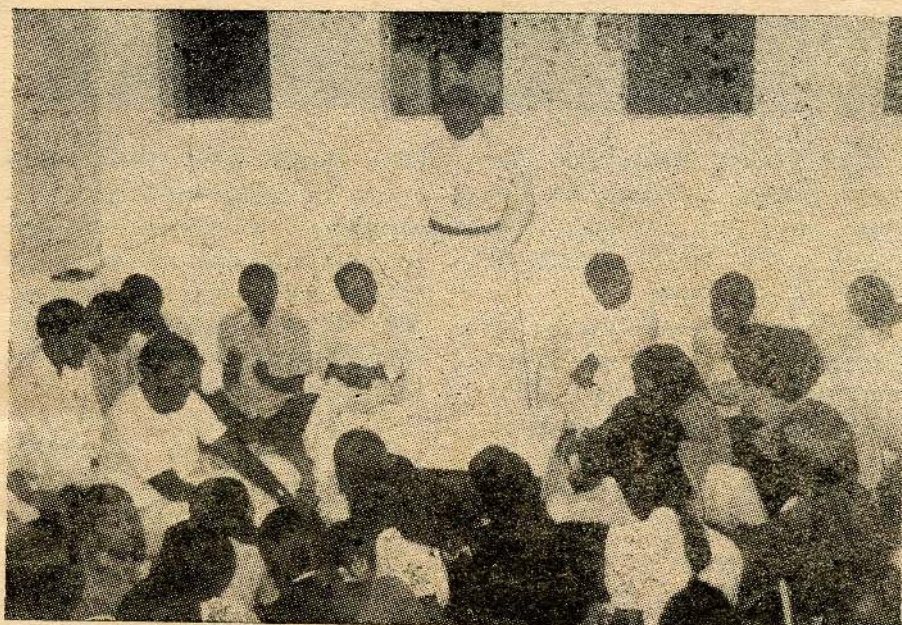
On November 10 last, Bishop Andrew Kumaraage of Kurunegala visited Gami Seva Sevana. He unveiled a photograph of the late Bishop Lakshman Wickremesinghe that evening at the Lecture Room of the Centre also named after the Bishop and presided and preached at the Workers' Mass that followed the unveiling of the photograph. Bishop Andrew had a discussion earlier with the staff and members of the CWF at the farm house. Several clergy joined the Bishop in the celebration of the Mass.

Due to the unsettled conditions prevailing in the country, the **Christmas programme** arranged by Gami Seva Sevana had to be curtailed. However a 15 minute Christmas programme was broadcast over the Mahanuwara (Kandy) Service of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation and a programme of Christmas Bhakthi Geetha held at the Mahalpe Convent on December 23rd.

At the request of several farmers in the area, consequent on their present inability to obtain loans and other benefits from the Banks, the Gami Seva Sevana initiated its first **Credit Council** under the Co-operative Credit Councils Scheme on December 7th. By Christmas, 34 persons had obtained membership and the savings amounted to Rs.2,800/- which seems to be an encouraging start. Numerous requests have now been received from other places too for such type of action.



Refugees at Duva — Negombo



Bishop Andrew at Galaha

Rehabilitation work at the Vanni-Palugollewa village (reported in our last issue) is continuing and progress is recorded in the building of more houses in that village. We thank those who sent in contributions for this work in response to our appeal in the last issue of *Christian Worker*.

Hatton

A get-together ("**Jana Hamuva**") organized by the Hatton Joint Committee of Trade Unions and Voluntary organizations was held on 28th October at Kamkaru Sevana, Hatton. About 50 persons from Trade Unions and Voluntary Organizations gathered to welcome back Jeffrey and Annathale Abayasekera after their detention (reported in our last issue) and to encourage them to continue their work. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Antony Payoe, the Chairman of the Hatton-Dickoya Urban Council.

The Annual General Meeting of the **Co-ordinating Secretariat for Plantation Areas** was held on 29th October in Kandy. The organizer for C. W. F. Plantations Work was elected as the Secretary of the CSPA for 1984/85.

In connection with Nutrition Week activities sponsored by the Nutrition and Policy Planning Unit of the Ministry of Plan Implementation, a **seminar** on "Food and Nutrition" was held on 2nd November at the Urban Council Hall, Hatton. Mrs. Sriya Maddumabandara, Asst. Director Planning of the Kandy Kachcheri and Mr. Sirimal Peiris, Health Educator were the main speakers at this seminar. "Kola Kenda" was prepared and served by a team of Sarvodaya Volunteers. The seminar ended with a T. V. video film entitled "Du Daruwo" produced by the Ministry of Plan Implementation.

The second in a series of **Health Workshops** for volunteer health workers was held on 3rd November.

The organizer for Plantations work spoke at three **Memorial Meetings** for the late Mrs. Indira Gandhi at Hatton, Upcot and Kotagala on 3rd November. These meetings were very well attended by a cross-section of people of all races and religions and included hundreds of tea plantation workers.

He also took part in a "Dane" in memory of Mrs. Indira Gandhi held at the Hindu Kovil in Kotagala. Over a thousand poor people in the area received lunch packets on this occasion.

Prayers for the success of the All Party Conference were held on 13th November at the Kovil, Mosque, Roman Catholic Church and Buddhist Temple in Hatton. An inter-religious group of about 50 persons participated in these events. It was a good demonstration of religious and racial amity.

Ratmalana

The one year's course in technical training combined with social studies, English etc. begun in 1984 at the **Workers' School** of Kamkaru Sevana, is due to end in March 1985. An evaluation of the present course is being undertaken so as to have an improved study course for the coming session in the light of the experience already gained.

The course of study in traditional medicine at the **Veda Gedera** planned to begin in Epiphany has had to be postponed as certain arrangements have yet to be finalised although the preliminary work on this undertaking has now been completed. The course is expected to commence as soon as conditions permit.

The **other activities** of Kamkaru Sevana including the pre-school and weekly worship have continued satisfactorily. The CWF study session planned for early December 1984 was however put off due to unsettled conditions in the country.

The organizer of Kamkaru Sevana gave daily morning **broadcasts** in Sinhala for a week before Christmas over the National Service of the SLBC as a part of the (Christian) 'Thoughts for the Day' programme.

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