

# TRIBUNE

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## After Kankesanturai

Katana and Kalawewa

THE STUNNING MAJORITY with which Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam won the Kankesanturai by-election on February 6 is a clear indication that the patronage-politics of the United Front, coupled with its intimidatory propaganda, has not taken the Government very far in the matter of wooing the Tamil masses in the North. If anything, they have lost ground to the Tamil United Front.

On February 6, Chelvanayakam (TUF-FP) polled 25,927 votes, Ponnambalam (UF-CP) 9,457, and Ambalavanar (Ind.) 185; the number spoilt was 168, and the total polled was 35,737 out of a total of 41,227 registered voters. Chelvanayakam's majority was therefore 16,470. At the General Election in 1970, there were only 38,004 registered voters, the increase

since then being 3,223. In the 1970 elections, Chelvanayakam (FP) had obtained 13,520 votes, Ponnambalam (UF-CP) 8,164, Suntharalingam (Ind.) 5,788, and Thirunavukarasu (TC) 2,062; and Chelvanayakam's majority was 5,356. In the 1965 General Election, Chelvanayakam had won by a majority of 8,124 in a five-cornered contest.

Since 1970, the Tamil United Front (TUF) had come into being bringing together the Federal Party, the Tamil Congress, the Ceylon Worker's Congress, the Eelam Party (Suntharalingam's) and a miscellaneous collection of Independents. Two TC members of Parliament, Arulampalam (Nallur) and Thiyagarajah (Vaddukkodai) had broken from the TUF and had teamed with the governmental UF in dispensing patronage, whilst Martin

(Jaffna) had quit the FP to become the only Independent from the North and was in the UF parliamentary group.

It will be recalled that Chelvanayakam had resigned his seat shortly after the new Constitution was introduced in May 1972 (after approval by the National Assembly turned Constituent Assembly), to provide the Tamil people with an opportunity to show that they did not approve of the Constitution as it stood. But, the Government, postponed the elections for nearly three years (or to be more exact for over two and half years) under the Emergency Regulations. The governmental excuse was that conditions were disturbed and unstable in the Jaffna area to hold a by-election, but history will record that the real reason was that this untenable postponement was persisted in only to enable UF adherents in the North to "win over" the Tamil masses sufficiently to secure the defeat of the TUF leader.

The efforts made by the UF and the Government to cajole, bamboozle, bribe and intimidate the voters of the Tamil North during the period the by-election was pending is a saga in itself. The full history, when written, will constitute one of the most revealing aspects of contemporary history. Only brief references can be made in a short interpretative piece of this nature. However, after the mighty effort made by the Government and all its constituent parties to undermine the influence of the TUF among the Tamils and especially after bringing all the organs of

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### KANKESANTURAI

Tribune's pre-by-election analysis of the developing situation in KKS had evoked a great of discussion and controversy. We must admit that we did not envisage a majority more than 8000 to 10,000 for Mr. Chelvanayakam, and we had even been tempted to think that the majority might be even as low as 3000 to 5000. We had expected Mr. Ponnambalam to improve on his 1970 vote by at least 4000 votes. Our expectations have been belied because people have used the secret ballot to give expression to the depth of their feelings and grievances in no uncertain manner. All the patronage cream that the UF has applied in KKS and the rest of Jaffna during the four years has been of little avail. And the intimidatory threats that the Tamils were asking for another 1958 if they did not vote a UF nominee to power has no doubt had a devastating impact on the electorate. Even a down-trodden minority does not like to be humiliated in this way. And if Mr. Ponnambalam could not get even thirty percent of the votes polled in KKS, any UF nominee in any other electorate will fare much worse. It is no use raising hysterical cries about the "reactionary" politics of the TUF and the FP. It would be more profitable to examine the policies of the UF and see why they have been so decisively rejected not only in Kankesanturai, but also in Katana and Kalawewa.

propaganda and mass media under direct or indirect governmental control (particularly through the vicious practice of denying government and corporation advertisements—the bulk of advertisements now available—to all papers and journals which do not pay adequate pooja to the appropriate governmental authority), it was decided after a Prime Ministerial visit to Jaffna that the Tamils were now in a settled condition to elect a representative for the vacant seat of Kankasanturai.

The results of the by-election provide a telling answer to the Government. On February 6, Chelvanayakam had polled 12,407 more votes than he did in 1970, whilst Ponnambalam increased his vote only by 1,293 votes in what was virtually a straight fight between the TUF and the UF, and the massive majority of 16,470 was not expected hoped for or even by the most enthusiastic supporter of the FP. It is clear that very nearly all the new voters and all those who had voted for Suntharalingam and Thirunavukarasu in 1970 voted for Chelvanayakam on February 6. The negligible increase of 1,293 votes obtained by Ponnambalam was probably only on a fraction of the young people who had secured jobs through the good offices of Ponnambalam in the co-operative and public sector employment bandwagon of the United Front.

**EVEN THE MOST COMMITTED UNITED FRONT ADHERENT** must, secretly at least, admit that the TUF—and its main constituent party, the FP—is today, without question, the main political force among the Tamil people not only in the North and the East but also in the Hill Country plantations where the CWC still wields the greatest influence. Additionally, it will be also clear to all discerning persons who are willing to accept realities as they are in an honest way that the prevailing sentiment among the Tamil masses is not what UF politicians, pundits and propagandists have made it out to be (or want it to be.)

On a rough arithmetical basis, over 70% of those who had cast their votes on February 6, that is well over two-thirds, voted for the TUF-FP candidate in spite of the unprecedented barrage of governmental propaganda, corruption, intimidation, obstruction and harass-

ment intended to deter the voters from supporting the TUF. It is also significant that less than 30% of the votes polled, that is less than one-third, voted for the UF-CP candidate, and this in spite of the heavyweight armageddon of Ministers, Parliamentarians and other patronage-peddlers of the UF who had invaded the KKS electorate in a bid to "make the Tamils see sense."

UF propagandists will now trot out the customary chorus of excuses why the TUF had triumphed: the refrain will be the usual cacophony about "communalists! reactionaries! communalists! reactionaries!" to explain the crushing defeat suffered by the UF candidate. But, like the little boy who had shouted once too often "wolf! wolf!" or "tiger! tiger!", UF propagandists will soon realise that not many people—even among the faithful—will pay any serious attention anymore to such invidious sloganised red-herrings to side-track fundamental realities. Such clichés and catchwords may boost the morale of the few who still believe in sticking their heads ostrich-like in the sand because they are unwilling to face up to the realities of the day. And, today only those who still believe that the United Front, (the hydra-headed, rumbustious, coalition of the Right, Centre and Left), is the chosen political saviour of the people of Sri Lanka, can continue to have illusions and delusions about the defeat suffered by the Government at Kankasanturai.

There are many lessons to be drawn from the results of the by-election.

**PATRONAGE — POLITICS**, even when indulged in by a leftwing coalition, will not take a Government very far in the kind of democracy that has developed in Sri Lanka in the post British and post-Independence period, and even in the era of the new Republican Constitution, which obviously needs reform, change and amendment if it is to survive for very long. It was the British who had brought the three kingdoms of Ceylon under one political administration, and in the period after the British the main under-current of national politics was the endeavour to secure national unity with the maximum of consensus from the different racial, religious, linguistic, caste

and cultural components that make up the population of Sri Lanka.

The British, on the basis of adult franchise and their system of parliamentary government based on a nation-state (now breaking at the seams even in Great Britain *alias* the United Kingdom with Scottish Nationalists, Irish Republicans and Welsh patriots tugging away in different separatist directions) had wishfully hoped that the majority community in Ceylon, the Sinhalese, through statesmanship, magnanimity and wisdom would bring about a united Ceylon in the image of Britain. Under British inspiration, D. S. Senanayake had formed the United National Party to re-create a little United Kingdom in the island of Ceylon. But this attempt had failed miserably because the Senanayakes could not resist the temptation to insist on Sinhala hegemony because Sinhala (cum Buddhist) chauvinism was the easiest platform (coupled with food subsidies and welfare benefits the country could not afford) to win elections and have a majority in Parliament. The Senanayakes evolved the technique of patronage-politics, doling out plums and crumbs from the High Table, to win over the minorities, especially the Tamil minority, to accept a Sinhala-dominated pattern of government, but they failed miserably to achieve this objective.

The successors of the Senanayakes—the Kotelawelas, Dahanayakes and the Bandaranaiques—followed this same strategy to achieve national unity with many variations and different scenarios, but they too have failed to get anywhere. At the time D. S. Senanayake had sought to bring the Tamils within one-nation-state concept, the LSSP and the CP, conscious of their Marxist obligation to the minorities had preached the "parity of languages" and "regional autonomy for the Tamils in their traditional homelands" respectively and on these slogans had built a small but sizable following for their parties in the North. But when orthodox Marxism was infused with the creed of parliamentarianism, the LSSP and CP dropped these straws to which the minorities had clung and thereafter the Left had also tailed behind the one-nation concept (proclaiming many reservations and safeguards which they were unable to implement).

S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike had tried to vary the one-nation-state concept with minor concessions to regional autonomy in the ill-fated Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact, but Sinhala chauvinism (triggered by the UNP and J. R. Jayewardena's "March to Kandy") had made this attempt a complete failure. Then followed 1958, the FP satyagraha campaigns and all the rest, and the SLFP fell back upon its version of patronage-politics to bring the Tamils to heel. After 1965, Dudley Senanayake had tried to improve matters with concessions, and though some advance was made on the language front, the decentralisation through District Councils did not even get off the ground.

After 1970, the United Front continued the same technique of patronage-politics, on a vastly extended scale, coupling newer methods of patronage peddling with radical leftwing slogans. The success or failure of this attempt to win over the Tamils was put to the test at the recent KKS by-election. There is not the slightest doubt that the UF patronage to the Tamils was on comprehensively larger scale than ever before. Special attention was paid to the previously under-privileged depressed classes and they have now been turned into an elitist pseudo-proletarian (co-operative toddytapping) privileged section. Tamil speaking Muslims have been elevated and are now the elitist of the elite—this, no doubt, in the doubtful attempt to break the backbone of the Tamil demand for a Constitution in which the Tamils and the other minorities would not be relegated to the position of de facto second class citizens (in spite of a *de jure* smokescreen of equality).

The United Front took patronage-politics among the Tamils many steps further than what the UNP or the SLFP had ever done. The LSSP and the CP, which had built up branches and a recognisable following in the North in the days when the LSSP had believed in the "parity of languages" and the CP had upheld the right of the Tamils to have "regional autonomy in their traditional homelands," turned these contacts (though greatly diminished in numbers and influence) into lobbies to dole out patronage in Jaffna. The SLFP, a late starter, was also able to make great

advances in building a similar Lobby because it was in a position to hand out much more than its two partners.

Many had believed that on the basis of patronage handed out in the KKS electorate and in other parts of Jaffna, the UF candidate would poll not less than 15,000 votes, and that "with luck" he might even top 17,500 giving him an outside chance of winning the seat. The fact that Ponnambalam was not able to get anything more than 9,457 votes (just 1,293 more votes than in 1970) is a clear indication that patronage and jobs cannot bribe an electorate, even among the Tamils, in the Sri Lanka of today. In 1970, with no patronage to flaunt or jobs to hand out, Ponnambalam had got as much as 8,164 votes—and that without Ministers, Parliamentarians and other VIP job-getters to campaign for him.

The SLFP, LSSP and CP must learn that patronage politics cannot and will not pay parliamentary dividends. Moreover, patronage-politics is a far cry from the Marxism of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels and Lenin. Some SLFP (Tamil) cheerleaders secretly nurse the view that a pure SLFP candidate would have done better than a CP candidate in a northern electorate. The truth is that an SLFP candidate in KKS, or in any Tamil electorate in the North, will poll far less than what an LSSP or CP could get. And, in this case, the CP candidate Ponnambalam has a merited reputation for incorruptibility and no-bribe taking unlike many other UF aspirants to parliamentary seats in the North.

THE SECOND IMPORTANT LESSON to be drawn from the KKS by-election is that intimidatory-politics will also not compel the Tamils to follow the United Front. It must be remembered that for a long time now there is an army of occupation in Jaffna. Whatever the excuse, the solid indisputable fact is that there is a large contingent of the Sri Lanka (Sinhala) Army virtually in permanent occupation in the North. Impartial history will adjudge as invalid the governmental excuse that it was the threat of secession, the threat of federalism and the threat of separatism (to be achieved through satyagraha) which had made them

to impose the military occupation in the North. Separatism and secession are not a possibility without direct intervention from across the Palk Straits, and with New Delhi playing ball with Colombo, such fears can be ruled out *ab initio*.

And as for federalism, is it not the constitutional right of any people to agitate for a federal form of government if they so desire? It is well to remember that S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike was a firm believer in a federal solution for



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Sri Lanka, but if he had changed his thinking later, or had not been able to implement his beliefs when he came to power, it was understandable; but any person who believes, preaches or demands a federal form of government is not per se a reactionary, or a communalist, or a saboteur, or even a fifth columnist. Furthermore, today, the army of occupation in the North cannot be justified on the ground of fighting illicit immigration, because there is today both a brain drain as well as a labour drain out of this island to greener pastures abroad. In the circumstances there is only one conclusion which can be drawn: the army of occupation is maintained in the North as part of the intimidatory-politics aimed at breaking the will and determination of the Tamils to have equality of status de facto and equality of opportunities in education, in employment and in trade, also de facto. (De jure assurances in the Statute Book or even in the Constitution can always be set at nought through administrative devices as they have been done).

In the last by-election at KKS, UF leaders indulged in various threats, open, disguised, covert and overt. One youthful SLFP stalwart had stated in no uncertain terms, on more than one occasion, that if the Tamils did not return a UF nominee, the Tamils were only asking for another 1958. This speech was not reported in the *Lake House* and *Times* newspapers, but the *Virakesari* and the *Eelanadu* carried reports of these speeches. And, persons who had been present at these meetings (UF adherents who had gone up to Jaffna to work for Ponnambalam) have told *Tribune* that such statements were made with great gusto. This threat alone had cost Ponnambalam (according to his supporters) anything from 2000 to 3000 votes, if not more. Even those who had obtained jobs through Ponnambalam had shuddered when they heard these statements and in spite of their open support for the UF-CP candidate they must surely (and understandably) have cast their votes secretly for the TUF-FP leader. Tamil (SLFP) leaders have also issued other kinds of threats from public platforms about the dire consequences that would follow if the Tamils were foolish enough not to support the UF. All this drove

many anti-FP elements in the KKS electorate to vote for Chelvanayakam. Nobody likes threats. Nobody likes to be intimidated. Intimidatory-politics hurts the self-respect and dignity of the people at whom it is directed and produces contrary reactions in secret balloting.

One variation of this kind of intimidatory-politics was tried out by Minister T. B. Illangaratne. He tried to sugar coat it with conciliatory assurances that all would be well if the Tamils abandoned the TUF-FP. The *Daily Mirror* of 27/1/75 reported Illangaratne's speech as follows:

*Laws providing facilities to the Tamils could have been enshrined in the Republic Constitution had not the Federal Party created an uneasy atmosphere in the country with its boycott and satyagraha campaigns. But those laws would be enshrined in the Constitution when a peaceful atmosphere prevailed in the country, Mr. T. B. Illangaratne, Minister of Foreign and Internal Trade, said at a meeting held at Palaly in support of Mr. V. Ponnambalam, the Communist Party candidate for Kankesan-turai. Mr. K. T. Rajadurai, former Chairman of the Myliddy Village Council presided.*

*Mr. Illangaratne said that while the draft constitution was under discussion the Federal Party sought an interview with the Prime Minister Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike. Since she was about to leave the country she directed him to grant an interview to the Federal Party on her behalf. The interview was arranged by the former Minister of Local Government, Mr. M. Thiruchelvam.*

*The Federal Party delegation led by Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam met him and expressed their satisfaction over the implementation of the various laws providing facilities for the Tamils and requested him to cause those laws be incorporated in the Constitution but he was unable to accede to their request since it came immediately after the Federal Party threatened the Government with its boycott and satyagraha campaigns.*

*He said that the United Front Government respected the Tamil people and the laws providing facilities for them would be incorpor-*

*ated in the Constitution if a peaceful atmosphere was created in the country. That atmosphere could only be created by progressive minded people like Mr. V. Ponnambalam. The people of Kankesan-turai should therefore elect him to the National State Assembly.*

Illangaratne admits that the laws to safeguard minority rights should and must be incorporated in the Constitution, but that this could be done only in a "peaceful atmosphere" which could only be created only by progressive-minded persons like Ponnambalam. Illangaratne also repeated the usual chorus that it was the intransigence and adventurist militancy of the FP which had prevented the Government from doing right by the Tamils. It is interesting to note that Illangaratne has the grace to admit that Tamil minority rights needed enshrinement in the Constitution, whereas even LSSP and CP stalwarts had maintained (one of them even in the columns of the *Tribune*) that the United Front had conceded all the legitimate rights of the Tamils and that nothing more need be done, and that whatever grievances which now existed were only in the imaginary and reactionary outpourings of the Federalists.

It is surprising why the Government and the majority community do not have the statesmanship to realise that if the legitimate rights of the Tamils are enshrined in the Constitution it would cut the ground from under the feet of the FP and that it would be only under such conditions that progressive-minded men like Ponnambalam could hope to win the confidence of any electorate in the North. Admittedly, the FP uses racial and chauvinist slogans to sustain its hold on the Tamil masses, but this is possible only because Sinhala chauvinism has made it impossible for any Government since Independence to do the right thing by the Tamils. The SLFP uses many Sinhala chauvinistic racial linguistic and religious cries to win elections in the South and nobody can therefore complain about FP's Tamil jingoism. Nearly all non-Tamil UF speakers who graced Ponnambalam's platform took the Illangaratne line to pressurise Tamil voters, but only one or two took the harder line that if the Tamils refused to toe the UF line, they were asking for

another 1958 (and the Tamils remember that it was during the regime of SWRD that the 1958 riots took place.)

It would be well for many in the South to know that it is this kind of intimidatory politics which arouses the deepest frustration among the Tamils, particularly the youth. From this frustration born of injured self respect and dignity has come the cry for a separate state among a section of the youth and unless serious note is taken of it and something is done to remove the frustration this separatist sentiment is bound to grow day by day. Chelvanayakam does not believe in separation. The call for a separate state had first come from Suntharalingam and it was later weakly echoed by TC's G. G. Ponnambalam. The FP had fought this separatism with its federalism. But now the TUF has an open mind on federalism as well as a separate state, but has concentrated on certain minimum demands to be incorporated in the Constitution. It is the total failure of the Government to respond to this that has created frustration verging on despair among the Tamils.

There is no doubt that it was to appeal to this frustrated youth harbouring illusions of separatism that Chelvanayakam made one speech during the last days of the election campaign stating that he will make a demand for a separate state for the Tamils in the National State Assembly as soon as he got there as the representative for the KKS seat. If a separatist cry does become a reality among the Tamils, impartial history will lay the blame for this at the feet of the United Front which had tried to streamline extend, and intensify the patronage-politics and the intimidatory tactics started by the UNP and later followed by the SLFP—without in any way resolving the grievances of the Tamils.

This sentiment among the Tamils was forcefully expressed by C. Rajadurai (First MP, Batticaloa) when he stated as follows according to a report in the Daily Mirror, 30/1/75:

*Mr. C. Rajadurai First MP for Batticaloa said that the Tamils wished to live peacefully with the Sinhala people and demanded a Federal System of administration. But that demand had been turned down by successive Sinhala governments. Apart from that, the Government continued to treat the Tamils as second class citizens of the country. Since the Government had failed to agree to a Federal System the Tamil people, united themselves under one flag, and have decided to separate from the Sinhala people.*

**THE THIRD IMPORTANT LESSON** to be drawn from the KKS by-election is that the Tamils suffer from a deep sense of grievance which the UF is not able to remedy. The Tamils obviously see no difference between the politics of the UNP or the SLFP—and now the LSSP and the CP. The Tamils feel that all these parties want to achieve the ultimate objective of one nation, one state, one language and perhaps one religion. The Tamils cannot be blamed for thinking thus when they see marxist atheistic Ministers of the UF government paying homage to the Sacred Tooth or indulging in all-night Piriths to initiate any work. If parliamentarianism can make obscurantists (or humbugs) of marxists, then the minorities cannot be blamed if they are compelled to think that they face slow genocide racially, linguistically and even in religion. The minorities also feel that all the administrative concessions now extended to them to put them at ease was only intended to help them through the transitional period before total assimilation becomes a reality.

Frustration and despair reign supreme among the Tamils. The LSSP has long ago abandoned its parity of languages and the Tamils believe that the LSSP is now one of the main pillars of the one-nation-state concept. The CP no longer talks about regional autonomy for the Tamils—whose traditional homelands have been encroached upon through the D. S. Senanayake's Land Development Ordinance and similar legislation. The CP now asserts that the rights of the Tamils could be safeguarded only under socialism, but the Tamils feel that the CP should proclaim that minorities will be

offered regional autonomy, self-determination and even the right to secession in order to induce them to accept socialism. Excuses that regional autonomy must be denied, that fundamental rights must be curtailed, that language rights should be withheld—until the Tamils of Sri Lanka adopt "progressive" leaders from the SLFP, LSSP or the CP—will not take the UF very far. In fact, such excuses cannot have any validity. The tribalists of black Africa are by no means progressive, but must the right of self-determination be denied to them until they have "progressive" leaders acceptable to some other tribe which considers itself "progressive"?

Whether UF pundits like it or not, the grievances if the Tamils are many and real. They feel they are second class citizens. The UF tells them "abandon your reactionary and communal-minded leaders" and we will then make you first class citizens. Is it right for the UF to insist that the Tamils should accept a "progressive" leadership of UF choice (under the hammer blows of patronage-politics and intimidatory onslaughts on Tamil self-respect), before Tamils are granted fundamental rights and regional autonomy (if they so desire)?

Many UF theoreticians argue that the "progressive" UF should not open a dialogue with the "reactionary" TUF; that the UF should have a dialogue only with the "progressive" UF-inspired lobbies among the Tamils—in the fond belief that if this tactic was persistently and vigorously prosecuted

### Hotel for Businessmen in a Hurry

An ultra-modern hotel for businessmen in a hurry has been opened in Brussels, according to the British "Weekend" magazine. It is fitted out with up-to-date office equipment. Every room has a telephone, a typewriter and a copying machine, and multi-lingual secretaries are part of the room services. The rooms, however, have no beds and are not even furnished as comfortable lounges. To sleep and rest businessmen must go to other hotels.

to the utmost, the Tamils in the fullness of time would overthrow the reactionary FP leadership. Do these theoreticians not realise that whilst this cold and hot war is waged, the country will suffer many setbacks, chiefly in aggravating national dis-unity and the failure to achieve purposeful economic development? If the logic of the UF theoreticians is correct, then it was wrong for Brezhnev to open a dialogue with Nixon; for Tito to have close ties with the Americans; and for Mao to have a detente with US imperialists. The quibble that state-to-state relations was something different from relations between communities within one state cannot be advanced by a serious marxist or even a pragmatic realist. At one time, in the period of Stalinist rigidities and inflexibilities, it was even thought wrong for a Marxist state to have a dialogue with a reactionary capitalist state, although Lenin had thought and acted otherwise. But even Stalin had to change in the face of dialectical realities and not only conduct a dialogue with Ribbentrop but also sign a pact with Hitler.

It is time that the Left and the UF in Sri Lanka realised that a dialogue even with the "reactionary" TUF (many will not accept that the TUF should be branded "reactionary") will bring qualitative changes for the better in the dialectical process of the developing political situation in this country. Without such dialogue this country will continue to stagnate, politically, economically, and in every other way. Without real and comprehensive national unity there can be no progress in Sri Lanka.

Even if the demand for self-determination, or regional autonomy, or language rights, or federalism is termed emotional and secondary to the more important bread-and-butter economic needs of the Tamil community, there are many grievances of the latter kind which are immediate and real and which go to the roots of the economic, social and cultural well-being of the Tamil people. Minister Peter Keuneman threw the Tamils a bone when he said in a by-election speech in KKS that standardisation had adversely affected Sinhala students "most". But, even Keuneman must know that standardisation was covertly first introduced in

1970/71 in order to cut down the large number of Tamil students who had been able, up to that time, to obtain admission in open competition to the University on their merits (and marks). Thereafter, standardisation was extended in scope and purpose to contain Tamil talent still further and keep it contained within prescribed communal proportions (is this not UF communalism under the most transparent disguise?). And today, standardisation, coupled with districtwise selection, has become a Frankenstein monster which has hit the Gollama Sinhala (Low Country) Buddhist community in the developed parts of the Western Province the hardest, right in the solar plexus.

But the fact that the erstwhile elite of the Sinhala community has also begun to suffer as a result of standardisation will bring no consolation to the Tamils. Among the Tamils, the poor and the underprivileged have always climbed the ladder through hard work, talent and perseverance. And Keuneman will do well to remember the fact that though standardisation has now boomeranged on elite Sinhalese, it does not mitigate the heinous nature of the original motivation from which standardisation had sprung, namely the desire to restrict the number of Tamil admissions to the Faculties of Engineering and Medicine in the University. Today standardisation has been universalised and mediocrity enthroned in the seats of Higher Learning. And mediocrity cannot be transformed into talent by a short spell at a University, manned also by mediocrities.

When the fundamental rights and freedom of one group or community are restricted, curtailed, or eliminated, then sooner or later, other groups and communities will also begin to feel the impact of such infringement of civil rights. The curtailment of the freedoms of one community, even a minority—especially if such curtailment stems from base communal racial, linguistic or religious motivations—will soon become a contagious malady, and this is what we witness in Sri Lanka today. And this is reflected in the current brain drain out of the country. In the first phase, the Tamils were largest number who went out. Then, the malady spread to

the Christian minority among the Sinhalese. But today the greatest bulk of the outflow comes from the Gollama Sinhala Buddhist community many of whom are now assiduously teaching English (most vigorously) to their offspring brought up on Sinhala Only in order to seek their fortunes elsewhere. (Incidentally, the talented Burgher community were the first to be driven out, and among them went some of the most patriotic, enlightened, and talented sons of Sri Lanka.)

Today, it is not the capitalist or the rich who want to get out, but the ordinary average folk who see no future for their children, however, talented in the horrible mess that education is in Sri Lanka. Talent hard work and grit have been subordinated to senseless mediocrity under the bogus plea of egalitarian equalisation. It is one thing to uplift the backward, but it is another to drive talented children to the dustheap to become psychopathic delinquents—if their parents cannot take them abroad to find their bearings. It is time UF Ministers know that many brilliant children, victims of standardisation and districtwise selection, are under psychiatric treatment. Maverick experimenters have made plaything guinea-pigs of several generations of our young people through speculative reforms they have introduced in education (under the colourable excuse of introducing socialist equality). The result is that we today have a system that will spell disaster to many generations of the young. (One has only to contrast the manner in which education was developed stage by stage in the USSR and other socialist countries to realise the terrible situation in which education has been placed in Sri Lanka.)

The Tamils were the first victims of this experimentation devised by a few politicalised bureaucrats. They know what it is to be at the receiving end of discrimination. The fact that many other sections of the population have now been also affected by this malaise will not make the Tamils accept the Keuneman apologia that standardisation has now adversely affected the Sinhalese "most". Standardisation and districtwise selection have also furtively (administratively) been made the rule in the matter

of recruitment for jobs with the result that merit, talent, experience and competence are no longer factors of any consequence for the new order of things. Moreover, standardisation and districtwise selection has become a smokescreen for nepotism, favouritism and corruption.

THE LEADERS OF THE UNITED FRONT may not realise it now, but they will do it soon, that the defeat of the UF candidate in KKS will have a profound impact in the Sinhala areas also. Reports indicate that the news was received with satisfaction in many Sinhala areas, not merely in the drawing rooms of the fast disappearing gentry of the Goigama Sinhala Buddhists (and the opulent homes of the CRA and gem *noveau riche*), but also among ordinary rural folk in many parts of the island. They feel that this defeat will help the UF to get out of its blind arrogance (based on its overwhelming parliamentary majority) and compel the UF to climb down from the Olympian heights of self-righteous complacency and discard some of the doctrinaire slogans that have brought only suffering and hardship to the vast majority of the people.

The UNP, unfortunately, has nothing to offer the country. It neither has doctrinaire slogans to cling to nor pragmatic remedies which may have temporary validity. The UNP seems content to wallow in the politics of protest and seems to think that exposures of corruption, nepotism, maladministration and inefficiency will bring it to power. The danger is that it might come to power without being in a position to do anything because, in the disillusionment which is growing, the UNP might be the only alternative to which people may be compelled to turn at the next General Election. The TUF and FP have no solution to the problems of the Tamil people, but yet the people voted for Chelvanayakam because they are so completely dissatisfied with the United Front.

The KKS by-election has one big lesson for the United Front. Unless it reviews many of its policies, unless it rethinks many of its programmes, and unless it is able to effect proper implementation of its policies, the United Front will be left holding solely to the coat-tails

of the unionised sections of the population before very long. The JCTUO can certainly paralyse the nation for a few days through a general strike, but the JCTUO cannot ensure victory to any party in a general election.

The KKS election is a writing on the wall. Patronage politics has failed in KKS. The UF has also failed to keep their seats in Kalawewa and Katana. And, these three by-elections came after the radical programme of the Government have been introduced and implemented. The defeat in these three by-elections cannot be hidden under the usual formula about "the conspiratorial activities of the reactionaries". When 25,000 out of 35,000 who voted at KKS have expressed their options so clearly, (as the voters in Kalawewa and Katana have also done), it is time for the pundits of the UF to sit back and think where they have gone wrong.

It is well to remember that these three by-elections came after the much publicised radical measures of the UF have been implemented in great measure: land reform, a fair measure of nationalisation, new taxation laws to cripple the capitalists and the rich, the capping on incomes, control of housing and the like. In Katana, land reform had been implemented to the full. Kalawewa was a rural Sinhala goigama buddhist electorate if there is one. Katana was a suburban Sinhala mixed religio-caste electorate. Kankeasanturai was a Tamil rural peasant electorate with a touch of affluence brought in by remittances from wage-earners outside—from the rest of Ceylon and abroad.

The United Front has to do a great deal of thinking and rethinking if it wants to win the next General Elections. It is not enough to shout the word "socialism! socialism!" over and over again. People want food, they want work and they want an atmosphere in which it would be possible to do constructive work. They want a system of education where there would be equality of opportunity and where talent and hard work would be recognised without their being subordinated to mediocrity,

nepotism and political favouritism. People do not want their children to be guinea pigs anymore.

Where do we go after Kankeasanturai, Katana and Kalawewa?

#### FOR THE RECORD

## JCTUO Statement

### TEXT OF JCTUO STATEMENT CALLING OFF THE TOKEN GENERAL STRIKE OF JANUARY 31, 1975.

The JCTUO met the Prime Minister and the members of the Cabinet on the 28th Wednesday on the 3 urgent demands presented by the JCTUO. At this meeting the Government stated to the JCTUO its programme with regard to the nationalisation of the Banks and the Company estates. The JCTUO can with confidence accept this programme of the Government and the positions based on it. The JCTUO thanks its members as well as the rest of the trade union movement for the co-operation extended to it for our success on these demands. Our thanks go also to the rest of the progressive forces of the country.

On our demand for the nationalisation of the textile industry the Government assured the JCTUO that the question of nationalising essential industries has engaged the mind of the United Front and that an expeditious decision on this will be communicated to the JCTUO. From its discussions the JCTUO entertains no doubt that a fruitful decision will ensue.

The Government has decided to make an additional payment of Rs. 25 per month to all employees drawing a salary less than Rs. 800 per month in the Government, Corporation, local Government and co-operative sectors and of pensioners. On the question of implementing this decision in respect of private sector employees enjoying NRG, and plantation employees the Government will summon a conference of the Employers Federations and the unions for further discussions.

The Government has also decided to appoint a committee to determine a realistic cost of living index. The JCTUO will be given

an opportunity to participate in this Committee. This relates to the demand that a realistic cost of living index be established and a payment of Rs. 2.50 be made per unit in excess of the given index.

Having considered all these positions the JCTUO has decided to suspend the token strike scheduled for the 31st January. The JCTUO however is strongly of the view that the solidarity of the trade union movement built on the basis of the token strike of January 31st should be preserved and further strengthened in pursuance of the rest

of the 28 demands on which the JCTUO campaign should vigorously continue.

The Government has agreed to expeditiously commence negotiations with the JCTUO on the balance 28 demands and we thank the Government for this decision.

Sri Lanka Independent Trade Union Federation (Alavi Moulana)

Ceylon Federation of Labour (Batty Weerakone)

Ceylon Federation of Trade Unions (L. W. Panditha)

Government Workers Trade Union Federation (G. E. H. Perera)

Sri Lanka Nidahas Rajaya Vurthiya Samithi Sammelanaya (Ananda Dassanayake)

Government Clerical Service Union (P. K. Wanasinghe)

Karmika Seva Vurthiya Samithi Sammelanaya (M. M. Nandisena)  
Sri Lanka Jathika Guru Sangamaya (D. L. Pathirage)

Public Service Trade Union Federation (J. A. K. Perera)

Samastha Lanka Lipikaru Sangamaya (M. Jayasena)

CHRONICLE

JAN. 21—FEB. 1

A DIARY OF EVENTS IN SRI LANKA AND THE WORLD  
COMPILED FROM ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILIES  
PUBLISHED IN COLOMBO.

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 21:** The JCTUO's four-member Secretariat meets this morning to study details of the token general strike planned for January—CDN. The Government has approved the setting up of the Sri Lanka Railway Board (SLRB) in place of the present 110-year-old Ceylon Government Railway (CGR); according to the draft Bill which has been approved by the Government, all employees of the new Railway Board will be deemed to be State officers within the meaning of the Constitution of Sri Lanka—CDM. The Development Finance Corporation (DFC) of Ceylon is now negotiating for a line of credit of 4 million dollars from the International Development Association (IDA): a part of this loan will be made available for financing tourist projects for which the DFC has not channelled funds before—CDM. An additional wing at the Oberoi Hotel in Kollupitiya will house the main delegates to the Non Aligned Summit Conference in Colombo next Year: it will not be necessary to house them in a hired luxury liner in the Colombo harbour as was at one time proposed—CDN. Traders in the Pettah have agreed to fix the retail price of dried chillies at Rs. 15 per pound—CDM. The Colombo Municipal Council will set up a chain of hotels with the collaboration of the Marketing Department in each ward in the city: these hotels will cater to the needs of the lower and middle income groups—CDN.

China has abolished the post of Head of State and the new policy will be one of stability, moderation and pragmatism. The Shah of Iran has said that it would be futile for the Arab states to embargo oil supplies to the West in case of another Middle East war. The UK Government has sought to defend itself from the charge by runaway MP John Stonehouse that it did not publish the full text of the letter Mr. Stonehouse had sent. Several people have been injured by an earthquake in Northern India.

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22:** The Government will discuss the two economic demands put forward by the JCTUO today or tomorrow: the two demands

are the payment of an allowance of Rs. 75 for those who draw a salary less than Rs. 800 a month and a payment of Rs. 2.50 for every point of increase in the cost of living index: this was announced by Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike at a Press Conference yesterday—CDM. The Bank of Ceylon and the People's Bank have decided to co-ordinate some of their operations to bring more order into the state-owned banking sector: a joint committee has already been set up by the two banks to co-ordinate their activities—CDN. The Minister Mr. Maithripala Senanayake will leave for the Soviet Union tomorrow with a team of officials to finalise an agreement with the Soviet Government on the Samanalawewa Project—CDN. The Ministry of Education yesterday announced that it would soon open 50 school farms to provide profitable full time participation for school leavers: the project which has been estimated at Rs. one and a half million is also aimed at training this category of young people for self-employment—CDN. The Commissioner of Labour has said that the opening of shops for business on Saturday is optional, the management of the shop can decide whether to operate on a six-day week or a five-day one—CDM.

US Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger, has warned the Cyprus Government that the United States would withdraw its mission and no further part in discussions on the future of the island if damage is done to US property in the demonstrations going on there. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia has contributed 100 million dollars to help ensure Egypt's supplies of essential goods. Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam has agreed to sell Bangladesh 300,000 tonnes of grain this year.

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 23:** An immediate allocation of Rs. 20 million to provide extra relief to over 100,000 persons in drought stricken areas has been recommended by the Ministerial Committee headed by the Minister Mr. T. B. Tennakoon which met at the National State Assembly yesterday, to discuss the priority program of the government to help these persons: the committee has suggested that this allocation be collected through a five per cent cut from the capital, votes of each Ministry—CDN. The ministers yesterday discussed the implications of the proposed JCTUO token strike for several hours: a report on the financial implications has been called from the Ministry of Finance: the Ceylon Worker's Congress and five other unions outside the JCTUO yesterday said that they would participate in the token strike in support of their own demands. The first



amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka will be presented by the Minister Felix Dias Bandaranaike in the National State Assembly (NSA) today. Government Doctors, mainly the members of the Government Medical Officers' Association (GMOA) are up in arms against certain happening in the Health Department which they claim are deliberately aimed at both frustrating medical officers and preventing and delaying their just dues—CDM. Mysore Dhal and canned fish would once again be available, probably starting off with Sinhala and Hindu New Year in April; the CWE has placed an order for large stocks of both these commodities to be issued on ration cards but at a higher price—CDM.

India reiterated its support for the Arab cause at the recent talk Foreign Minister Chavan had with his Yugoslav counterpart Milos Minic. India and Iraq stressed at the recent talks Premier Indira Gandhi held in Baghdad, that the Indian Ocean must be a peace zone free of international competition and tension. According to Reuters, President Ford appears to be heading for a showdown in Congress on the issue of petrol rationing. Britain is considering a scheme of petrol rationing.

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 24:** The proposal for a development fund for the non-aligned nations which Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike actively supported at the Algiers Conference will be one of the key subjects that will be discussed at the Havana meeting of the non-aligned Bureau next month; sixteen nations will participate at this meeting which will be the first step in preparation for the fifth non-aligned nations summit to be held in Colombo in September next year—CDN. Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike yesterday presented before the National State Assembly the first amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka; the Minister said that the debate would be held on February 11 and 12. The Declarations of Assets and Liabilities Bill which compels Ministers, Members of Parliament and staff officers in Government Department and Corporations and other public servants to declare their assets periodically was unanimously passed by the NSA. The "Economic Review on Sri Lanka", published by the London *Economists' Intelligence Unit* states that in Sri Lanka starvation was kept at bay in 1974 but the escape was a narrow one and the food situation is far from secure in 1975. A red carpet welcome will be accorded to the President of Zambia, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, when he arrives in the island on next Monday—CDM.

Indian President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed told a writers seminar in New Delhi that the growing gap between the rich and the poor could upset the whole international structure. President Ford has signed two international agreements barring chemical and biological warfare. Zambian President Dr. Kenneth Kaunda arrived in New Delhi yesterday on a five-day state visit.

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 25:** Nearly 300,000 pounds of hoarded essential foodstuffs were seized by the City Vice Squad in a series of raids on Pettah traders—CDM. Tetron and cotton shirts will soon be distributed only through the CWE: the Ministry believes that the unsatisfactory situation with regard to synthetic textiles can be rectified only by either nationalising the industry or by a total control of the distribution—CDN. The Prime Minister addressing the Political Authorities of the 22 districts yesterday said that the Government

would provide the necessary funds, machinery and equipment for the implementation of the crash food production program—CDN. The tea industry provided over 25 per cent of the estimated national revenue in 1974: through direct taxation the industry paid Rs. 871.5 million into the national exchequer and the balance was paid through indirect taxes—CDN. At the Executive Committee meeting of the Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya—the UNP Trade Union Federation—held yesterday, an action committee of 10 members was formed to advise the UNP President in connection with the January 31 token general strike.

Pakistani Premier has accused Afghanistan of being involved in subversion and terrorism inside Pakistan. President Sadat has declared in Paris that the Middle East was like a bomb and might explode at any moment because the peace-making moves in the areas had come to a halt. Britain will hold a referendum before the end of June on whether the country should or should not remain in the European Common Market. French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing has told the nation that the country's economic picture was brightening and they can look forward to higher consumption, exports and production in 1975.

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 26:** The Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, yesterday announced the launching of a special Sri Lanka's Prime Minister's Food Production Fund to meet the requirements of the emergency food production program: a donation of 50,000 Australian dollars made by the President of Nauru, Mr. Hammer de Roburt, in appreciation of Sri Lanka's food production efforts was credited to this Fund—CO. The Prime Minister is exploring all avenues for an amicable settlement of the proposed token general strike scheduled for January 31: some of the senior members of the SLFP are of opinion that the token strike will not take place once the Prime Minister meets the leaders of the UF parties and the leading members of the JCTUO at a conference to be held shortly to discuss the demands of the JCTUO—ST. In a series of raids conducted by the Inland Revenue Department on private houses and business establishments throughout the island a sum of Rs 1,272.4 million had been collected in the year 1974: at a recent raid on a house in Kandy the officials of the Department netted a sum of Rs 750,000 hidden in a pillow case. Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, President of Zambia, will arrive in the island tomorrow on a three-day official visit. There was a sharp drop in the number of Ceylonese coming home from abroad to spend the holidays in Sri Lanka during the Christmas season.

Dr. Donald Coggan who was enthroned on Friday as the 101st Archbishop of Canterbury called in his sermon for realism and confidence in modern Christianity. The Indian President, Mr. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, has expressed his dismay over the "growing temper of violence" in the country and called upon the leaders of all the political parties to take concrete steps to check the "drift towards disruption and chaos" which was posing a grave threat to the integrity and survival of the nation.

**MONDAY, JANUARY 27:** A team of officials, economists and tax experts has recommended in a report to the Government that it grants exemption on dividends up to 20 per cent in tax-holiday companies: the

report also recommends that Sri Lanka introduces the same rate as in India on wealth tax: this study covers private foreign investment, tax-holidays and the abolition of development rebate and lump-sum depreciation—CDN. All members of the National State Assembly, Judges, Chairman, and Directors of State Corporations, public servants and others who are required to declare their assets and liabilities under the Declaration of Assets and Liabilities Act must do so within three months commencing March 1, 1975—CDN. The Government is now studying the financial implications of the JCTUO's two principal economic demands—Rs. 75 per month for all categories of workers drawing less than Rs. 800 a month and Rs. 2.50 for every point up in the cost of living index—CDN. Immigration authorities mounted a frantic search on Friday night for three men described as professional hijackers who had been discharged from a ship in Colombo harbour earlier in the day: two of the wanted men were arrested and the third man was discharged after questioning—CDN. A new scheme self-employment project has been launched by the Colombo Municipal Council to help poor unemployed girls in the city—CDN.

Bangladesh has become a Presidential one-party republic and Prime Minister Mujibur Rahman the President for the next five years. There is evidence that the CIA of America murdered some of its own agents according to Democratic Senator Alan Cranston: he wants a Special Senate Committee to investigate the organisation. Israeli Defence Minister Shimon Peres has proposed a ten year provisional peace treaty with Egypt in an interview with a Western newspaper.

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 28:** The Zambian President, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and Mrs. Betty Kaunda, who are on a three-day state visit to Sri Lanka were given a rousing welcome at the Bandaranaike International Airport yesterday: the President and Mrs. Gopallawa, the Prime Minister, Ministers and other VIPs received Dr. Kaunda and his entourage who were later brought to Colombo in a motorcade. The Prime Minister, is sending goodwill missions to Algeria and Libya next month to discuss the Non-Aligned movement, the Havana meeting of the Non-Aligned bureau and the preparations for the 'summit' conference which will be held in Colombo in September next year: the first goodwill mission will be to Algeria which was the host nation at the last Non-Aligned conference: both missions will be led by the Minister Felix Dias Bandaranaike—CDN. The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands has revealed that between July and November 1974 fertiliser sales were 77 per cent below levels of the same period in 1973: the high price of fertiliser and poor demand owing to drought are shown as the main reasons for the drop in the use of fertiliser—CDN. The LSSP Youth League in Jaffna have urged the Minister of Foreign and Internal Trades, Mr. T. B. Ilangaratne, to dissolve the directorate of the Jaffna Municipal MPCs Ltd.

An oil plan has been proposed by Egypt's Parliament to channel 30,000 millions dollars in oil revenue to developing nations according to *Newsweek* magazine. Mr. Mansoor Ali has been named as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as President in the revised constitution of the country. President Anwar Sadat of Egypt will soon be visiting France armed

with a long shopping list which includes air-craft helicopters and the latest sophisticated missiles.

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29:** The Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, in a message to the Kankesanatural voters has said that the Government's aim was communal amity and socialism. The JCTUO meets this morning to review the outcome of the talks its leaders had with the leaders of the united Front. The visiting Zambian President and the Sri Lanka PM has talks yesterday and the talks will continue today. Sri Lanka was losing 7,000 US dollars a day in foreign exchange as demurrage because fertiliser on board four vessels in Colombo harbour has run into unloading problems because of a work-to-rule system now being followed by the employees of the Fertiliser Corporation: demurrage is likely to go up to 12,000 dollars a day if the fifth vessel also in harbour is not completely unloaded by early February—CDN. The affidavit filed by Mr. Razeen Sally, the first suspect, who is charged before the Criminal Justice Commission (Foreign Exchange Frauds) and who has been absent throughout the proceedings was admitted when the Commission resumed proceedings yesterday. The average cost of living index for the first 11 months of 1974 shot up by 12.5 per cent over the average index for the same period during 1973. On authorization of their governments, Mr. Seymour Skachkov, Chairman of the State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations of the USSR, and Minister Maithripala Senanayake of Sri Lanka, signed an agreement on economic and technical co-operation between the Soviet Union and Sri Lanka yesterday in respect of the Samanlawewa Project.

Premier Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan has attacked the single party presidential form of Government introduced in Bangladesh: he said the entire country had been transformed in an hour without public debate or discussion. The US Senate has appointed a Watergate style committee to conduct a probe of the CIA, FBI and other US Intelligence gathering groups. Socialist leader Soares has warned of the danger of civil war in Portugal. President Sadat of Egypt arrived in France yesterday on a three-day visit.

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 30:** The leaders of the JCTUO yesterday decided to call off the token general strike scheduled for January 31 after reviewing the outcome of the talks its representatives had with the Prime Minister and other leaders of the United Front on Tuesday: the Government, it is related has agreed to grant an increase of Rs. 25, to all employees drawing a salary less than Rs. 800 per month in the Government, in Corporations, Local Government Services and Co-operative sectors: pensioners too will be entitled for this additional increase: in respect of private sector employees the Government has agreed to summon a conference of the Employer's Federation and Unions for further discussions on the question of implementing this decision for a salary increase: the Government has agreed to communicate its decision on the question of nationalisation of certain industries and also has agreed to appoint a committee to study the JCTUO's demand for a grant of Rs. 2.50 on every point of increase in the cost of living index and establish a realistic index. The Ceylon Mercantile Union (CMU) decided last night to go it alone and have the token strike tomorrow. Zambian President, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, left

the island for Zambia yesterday: the joint communique issued by the President of Zambia and the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka stressed that special emphasis should be laid that the 1976 summit meeting on economic matters in view of the gravity of situation facing developing countries. Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, speaking at a by-election meeting at Kankasantural had stated that as soon as he was re-elected to the National State Assembly he will ask the Government for a separate Tamil State—CDM.

President Ford has asked Congress for 300 million dollars military aid for South Vietnam and 222 million dollars in similar assistance for Cambodia. China has accused South Vietnam's President Van Thieu and his US supporters of sabotaging the Paris peace treaty signed two years ago ending the Vietnam war. British Premier Harold Wilson has left for his summit talks with US President Ford in Washington. Former Czechoslovak President and party chief Antonin Novotny died in Prague.

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 31:** Establishing of a 12 billion dollar buffer stock of various commodities including rice, tea and rubber and closer collaboration among commodity producers are two of the key topics before the Senegal conference which opens in Dakar next week: Sri Lanka with an economy open at both ends to international price vagaries considers this conference very important because concerted action could lead to better prices for her primary products—CDN. Sri Lanka has asked for more rice supplies from China this year to meet an unexpected shortage due to crop failure arising out of severe drought in producing areas—CDN. The Minister of Justice Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike's successful aid missions to the Arab world appear to have hurt some sections in this country: an advertisement in a Lebanon paper accuses the United Front Government of having repressed the Muslims of this country—CDM. Two major estate unions—the Ceylon Workers' Union and the National Union of Workers—will call out their members in the plantation sector on a 24-hour token strike today: the Ceylon Mercantile Union too is going on strike today—CDM. Police investigations into food hoarding in Colombo have indicated that one big time "commission agent" is behind most of the operations—CDN. Gold for the manufacture of jewellery will be included in the permissible list of imports under the Convertible Rupee Account scheme—CDM. The failure of the Sri Lanka High Commissioner's Office in New Delhi to cancel a sugar deal signed with the Indian Government even though orders have been issued by the Sri Lanka Food Purchasing Board to do so is likely to result in a loss of nearly Rs. 18 million—CDM.

Expansion of military facilities on the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean was the subject of a discussion in the House of Commons: the Deputy Foreign Secretary rejected suggestions of a massive build-up and said there would only be a modest improvement of facilities on the island costing about 35 million sterling. The Soviet Union has cancelled orders for the purchase of foreign wheat.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1:** Competent authorities are to be given wider powers under the Business Undertakings (Acquisition) Act to run these undertakings more efficiently, to raise monies to run the business

and to transfer part of its functions to other bodies where necessary—CDN. The steps taken by the Government since 1972 have enabled the country to record a dramatic improvement in export earnings from gems but the private sector has been far more successful than the State Gem Corporation in exporting gems—CDN. The National Certificate of General Education (NCGE) and G.C.E 'O' level examinations, both of which will be held simultaneously this December, will cost the Government Rs. 16 million—CDM. The National Savings Bank in 1974, exceeded its savings deposits target by Rs. 121 million—CDM. Mrs. Sunethra Rupasinghe, Co-ordinating Officer to the Prime Minister, addressing a meeting in Kalutara said that the late Premier Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, never formed the Sri Lanka Freedom Party to save his estates or to glorify his kith and kin, but it was established to give the common man a place under the sun and bring a socialist pattern of life in the country—CDM. Food authorities yesterday asked for public co-operation to ferret out chillies—CDN. An agreement on economic and technical co-operation between the USSR and Sri Lanka was signed in Moscow—CDN. The Soviet Deputy Minister of Geological Survey, Mr. V. A. Yurmaluk, and Professor Kallnin, the oil expert, are expected in Sri Lanka on February 6, in connection with the next stage of oil exploration in Pesalai—CDN. The failure of the United National Party to nominate a candidate for the Kankasantural by-election is being widely discussed in local political circles and the silence of the UNP over a statement made by the Federal Party leader, Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, that as soon as he returns to the National State Assembly after the by-election he will ask for a separate Tamil state, might be misconstrued as a tacit acquiescence of the Federal Party's demand for a separate Tamil—CDM.

Britain has signed a 500 million sterling co-operation agreement with Iran: a further trade deal between the two countries is expected to be signed shortly. French nuclear tests in the Pacific were blamed for Australia's record rainfall and floods in the past 18 months. Portugal handed over power to an African dominated transitional government which will lead Angola to full independence in November. In India, two West Bengal Ministers have resigned after a commission of inquiry reported that they have used their official position to benefit members of their families

For News Behind The News

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## Still In The Blues

by ANATORY BUKOBA

December 19.

Feeling under the weather have we both been today. Major drove a tunnel or passage in through our forest wall; he worked round to the left and joined up with the end of another, but shorter passage he had made on a previous day. The work today was easy. It was more like real forest, straight saplings, and not that thorny growth you see on the sides of main road and near old habited places. The segment of forest he cut off is like a Black Hole of Calcutta, so dark that Major wanted to set fire to it straight the other night without even cutting it down, so full of dead vegetation did it look, too. I am falling very much behind with my piling. I woke feeling not quite well. While I was at the junction a mile away, the D.D.T. men sprayed the house. There has, we hear, been a case of cerebral malaria near us. What with rabies and cerebral malaria, for I was bitten well by mosquitoes two nights ago, I was not feeling at all good. At one moment I thought I really had something. There was nothing to be gained, or lost, by panicking; so I said three *Hail Marys* more fervently, I think than I had done for a long while, and, almost at once the feeling of panic, or desperation passed, and I believe, or I may be wrong, a feeling of resignation came over me, and it was not long after that I began to feel better. An incident outside forced me out of bed, and, I started working, even though I found I was not feeling well yet. By the time I finished my bath, I was right, and, thank God, I feel that way still. However, I took it easy; I wrote some letters abroad, long overdue, especially in view of Christmas. Major was tired with his work of the last few days. He complained also of a stomach pain, but he mentioned this only after the first afternoon's sleep. I have known him have since he came here, and a long sleep it was; that was when I wrote my letters. We have not a cent between us, and we have been like that all day. I was imprudent enough to part with the last

Rs. 5/- I had to a man who was unfortunate and really looked as if he needed it. He is a hard worker and is a carpenter. He promised, to return it last evening but, of course, this never happens. So I asked Major to go slow with the lamp oil when lighting the fire, in case we are without it tonight.

My colleague refused to be bullied into going to work today by his erstwhile, I think the word is employer. He stayed at home and looked after the baby and busied himself about the house. He also made a good door for his house. Major and he were after a *thalagoya* this afternoon about lunch-time. That was when I was feeling ill, my worst, and had retired to bed. It had gone down a hole in an anthill, and Major was optimistically, I thought, trying to dig it out. My watch has gone haywire; it does race sometimes. I hope the *angelus*, at 6.30 p.m., rings on time. It is nearly too dark to write now. Our dinner is a cooking. The housewife has not come back from her work yet. Well, she has now, and I write this after dinner. She sent us a small plate of very nicely cooked manioc at lunch time, before our own meal was ready. We ate out of the same plate. That dish, and it constituted a meal, and my illness, made me feel that I could well do without ours, but I forced myself to eat. As I wrote that last sentence, the housewife came over in the dark, with her child, to give me some tea. Major is over at her house. She carried the drink in a coconut shell and poured it into my earthenware mug, which is the colour of a chatty pot. They have no tumbler any more, the child broke it. My colleague said one will be there in January. With the tea, the housewife brought me a piece of jaggery.

We have just had a visitor, our nearest neighbour at the moment, his first visit, I think in two years. He told us we should tie our *cadjans* on the other way round, the convex side of the leaf on top; so it proves there are two sides to every question. It was a friendly visit and I am glad. I was alone at the time, and I called Major over to hear the bit about the *cadjans*.

A great life this, I have not seen a newspaper for nearly a week, and I never hear a news broadcast,

and yet I consider I lead a very full life.

December 20,

This is just what I heard today, unsolicited, that Rohan Wijeweera has been sent to prison with hard labour for the rest of his life. I asked about the others, but I could glean no other information just then. I just mention this because I have had no access to newspaper or radio.

Major made a difference again to the scenery. He changed it, and I did my bit making what he had done more conspicuous by gathering up what he had cut. He has learned to make my task easier without holding back his own, but I felt quite worked off my feet. Then he gave me a rest by asking for the big knife which I always use when gathering up as there is a certain amount of trimming of branches and shortening them, before they are put on the pile. I also use the knife when carrying a bundle, or even one or two branches together, for the knife is better than a stick, and indispensable, I would say, when there are thorns. My free hand goes on top of the bundle, gingerly, because of the thorns. Major cut down the stumps he had left and I used the smaller knife. My stacks were large as where they were built was more open.

This evening I cleared what will be our playing field of all that I had dragged there a few days ago. That stack is ready for burning as the matter is quite dry. I had, and have, no time to set it alight tonight.

All in the other house were away. They are back now, and Major is there talking with them. He shuts the back doorway when dusk falls. I can hear what sounds like a dog snuffling there but I dare not take down the door as I shall not be able to put it back again either so tidily or securely.

The meals have been getting me a little an edge. They are cooked well, but it is the unvarying diet.

The big knife has broken. The bit of tempered iron which holds the wooden handle on has broken off, and so the knife flies off the handle. I had to use the lighter knife for most of the evening. The mammoth handle had worked loose too, after yesterday's work. We fixed it up with a new wedge.

For all the anti-malarial spraying we had yesterday, there are mosquitoes buzzing around, and even the bugs have sprung to life as Major said they would. He says that the D.D.T. hatches the eggs quicker than they would without it. I did not know bugs had eggs. It threatened to rain this morning, but tonight there is no sign of a break in the dry spell we are having. The person who gave me some chilli plants told me that all his chillies have died. Our plants are still alive.

There is something I read today which I liked very much. It was from the twenty-third psalm.

It begins the part I am quoting; *who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?*

Then follows what I like; *He Who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false, and does not swear deceitfully.*

Hands, heart, soul and tongue, they are all there. It is these that can ruin a man, and others.

Major and I realise the importance of supporting ourselves in two months. If we cannot, we may as well pack up. He has already been here a month. That makes three months. We shall really need a third man if we are to succeed. St. Augustine considers six the perfect number, but he said this is relation to the creation of the world.

Minor should have finished his examination today. I wonder if he will turn up tomorrow. He left saying he would come back. As Major is going to be alone for a few days, except for the family, I hope he does. The family will not be here during the day, and that is when being alone can be particularly irksome.

We reckon on Rs. 7.50 a day between us. I am hoping he will manage on Rs. 5 a day when he is alone. If a third man joins us we shall need Rs. 10 each day we are all here. Life is an adventure and there are lots of uncertain factors in it. I think the most important thing in life is the way we live; it is an inner quality which shows in your actions. Learning is neither here nor there; nor are the external factors in your life; it is the kind of person you are, what you do, what you think, that is of any real importance. I suppose one has

to learn this many times in one's life. And each time one lives up to it is a kind of rebirth. Not to do so is a sort of death. I must say I enjoy philosophizing, but working hard, as I was this morning, and trying to keep up nature and thinking furiously all the while, nearly, drove me round the bend. It certainly gave me a headache. Should I advise people not to think when they work hard? Or should they not work hard? Perhaps the answer should be, think about what you are doing, and keep alert; then your philosophizing will be to the point. December 21,

To bed at 9 p.m., up at 2 a.m. to the river, the road at 3 a.m. and the bus halt an hour later. Major had turned over for another 15 minutes nap, he asked me to wake him so that he could give me a cup of tea, and he was upset I did not. With ten minutes to go before 3 a.m., the housewife made me one and handed it to me through the door; I asked her not to take the door down. For all the five hours sleep I had had, I slept most of the way to Colombo. Enroute I saw cattle; the new crop of calves I found confusing but I think I shall know them again. In the house here, I had enough time to get to the Messiah, at the Colpetty Church, a long hope from life on the Shamba. Then it was carols there and at another place. Pondering the long hop or jump, I thought, have Christ as your centre, and the whole world is yours, Shamba or Messiah.

Reading Tribune, I saw the misprints in the current Shamba article. Either my handwriting was really bad those two days, or the galley proof was not read. The last thing at night, before this a letter from Australia about Shamba.

Those cattle; I saw a heifer with an udder on her like a champion from the Royal Show. She calved between my arrival and departure.

### Records

A new record was set at the recent world pipe smoking championship in Toulouse (France). The new holder smoked non-stop for 16 hours, 38 minutes and 49 seconds, beating the old record by two hours and 10 minutes, and used up 50 grammes of tobacco.

## Inania of this, that and the other Getting Away With It?

BY INNA

It was a long way from nowhere. Rain was persistent, intermittent. I strayed in. A gentleman was speaking on Family Planning to a crowd of people. He even went into details on how he got it done, etc. and how happy he was with his new transistor and his wife and how the world generally went well. In fact he had heard many who had had 'the' operation at 5 and gone for his estate work at 5.30. "I don't know what all this pother is about"—could well have been the main theme of his long-drawn out *plaidoyer* for his brand of sterilized family planning.

How gently he pulled the wool over the eyes of the young people present. How quietly and with consummate art and ease they were about to sink into the quagmire of half-baked truths. He never once mentioned the Bucharest Conference; never once the Pearson report; never once the FAO studies and reports of 1973-1974. It was like a commercial raised from singular tragedy to universal need". It was obvious that he had lost his freedom and had sold it to some nebulous "state."

He even mentioned how in India they caught and sterilized people. *O Freedom, what crimes in your name; O Welfare state, for whose welfare if I have lost my freedom.* He ended his Outburst and mopped his brow.

A young man got up and rightly asked him: "What about the Bucharest conference?" He hedged and hedged and sat down tired after his labours which his better half had been sorely denied. It seemed a long way from nowhere.

The one who challenged him and got no answer said something like this. He quoted *Avvenire*: "the World Conference at Bucharest is an important fact and its results have been positive and unexpected. The great 'developed' countries of the West had organized an alarmist

campaign to the effect that there are too many of us in the world. The poor countries should limit their population growth; contraceptives, sterilization, abortion, every thing would serve the purpose. Only thus would it be possible: fewer mouths to feed would mean greater prosperity".

Foul lie.

The fact that Third World countries are producing more than they should, of children, is clearly because (Baum) they are economically poor and psychologically make children while others produce other things from raped raw materials of Third World countries, and that in the hope that even one child more would step in to save him when others failed.

Today, a great and thickly populated country has been offered 40,000,000 US dollar(\$)'s to sterilize 13,000,000 citizens in five years and in other places there is talk of accepting only the first two or three children in state schools and hospitals.

These inhuman proposals are to be carried out by a bastard nation (prostituting their Christianity) at the expense of the Third World. These proposals come from some 'developed' nations which have long since ceased to be 'Christian'. In them, immorality and violence, beginning with abortion, are widespread.

"This same minority of people consumes food, pollutes the environment and wastes rural resources. Bucharest asserted that poverty and underdevelopment are caused not so much by over population as by exploitation and injustice on a world scale." *Oss/Rom*, Sept. 19, 1974).

My withering and wilting friend sat down and kept mopping his brow. The rain had ceased and I walked off amazed at the utter irresponsibility of the speaker, one among hundreds now in Sri Lanka, quite against the rural and peasant population so he could keep his 6 or 7 SRI undisturbed, while his compatriots died, unwept, unsung, for he feels 'only the few city people have the right to live.

A sick mind if I ever saw one.

## BUILDING A VILLAGE HOUSE—20

# INTERMEZZO

By Herbert Keuneman

I WAS INSTALLED. . . and ah! what a joy to be so! To be sure, it was a relative kind of joy—physically I was even more cramped than I had been in the little *pala* Mr. Basnayake so kindly for so long had lent me—but the fact that I had actually moved in, and despite every difficulty had done so by approximately the date I had set myself, did wonders for my morale.

The scenic situation of the house did hardly less. For the moment, it was necessary to employ mild gymnastics to enjoy this—one had, as I explained last week, to climb a small unguarded platform (it would form the 'L' of my Living Room, sometime) to command the view—but achieving the perch was worth it.

The house looks out upon a typical Vanni landscape. As landscapes go, it is un-spectacular and unassuming; but that is its particular charm. It is wearying to be constantly confronted by the dramatic; I look out from my gazebo on the antithesis of drama, here is a place of only calm-breathing quietude where peace must fold her wings. The site is on the verge of a village tank; and when the tank is full (as it became after three days of torrential rain when I had been less than a week in sanctuary) the water laps not fifty feet from me. On my left the tank bund bears its gentle day-long traffic: farmers plodding to their fields below; firewood-gatherers returning laden, in chattering groups; later, home-going cattle herded by small boys shouting 'gala! gala! gala!' in a cry that evokes like no other I recall the sense of being guided into a safe place; and at night, the solitary figure bearing a *chulu* that curiously gives no impression of dispersing the dark save where it is reflected from the invisible water or casts a golden underglow on an overhanging tree. At the near end of the bund is the *mankada*, where through all the sunlight hours the bathers splash and seem to scatter showers of silver coins about their shoulders. Halfway along the bund's length is the great *mi-tree*

where the bats hang and creep and shriek in sudden quarrel until it is dusk and time to flap off on their devils' wings. Further yet along is *Usgala* which holds, they say, buried treasure (though none has found any and none I know has so much as looked for it). And then, at the far end, the bund seems to plunge into a belt of forest; but it is really rank upon rank of distant friendly trees, and hidden amongst them are homesteads and fields and farther villages.

I HAVE COMPLAINED earlier of the western outlook the building-site forced upon my house, and indeed the dazzling flood of afternoon light that pours in is something of a trial. But sunset triumphantly vindicates the discomfort every evening, at any season of the year. It is, however, the Northeast season (the season when I was still discovering for the first time the beauty that had become mine to enjoy; and the season too at which I now write of it) that brings the most magnificent sunsets of all. It is not only the reds and purples boiling out of the damp sky that achieves this but the quite accidental placing—though one would like to think it was not; that Somebody arranged it for one's benefit—of the dark masses that overtop the bund: the *pal-mandiyas* of the village, the bats' huge tree, and somehow dominating it all though diminished by distance, halfway to *Ambanpola*, the pointed crag called *Andiyagala*, which seem to trap the sunset colours between them. Purple, cerise, flame, orange and yellow.. we even have a green. The day-time sky is seldom simply blue, to the west, but blue-and-white paned or banded. Yet, I noticed last night that by moonlight it was distinctly, vividly sapphire and no spot of any haze. A bad portent for the farmer.

You think these tranquil details are paltry to rhapsodize over? paltry even to contemplate, without rhapsodizing? Is there, then, something scampish in the anchorite's 'om mane padme om' who, after all, opens himself to only a higher scale of tranquility? I confess, that though I spent hours in those early days looking out in beatitude on the green languor, the sheer repose, of the scene before me and letting the health of mere

being, without doing, flood into my soul my crotchety humanism would suddenly shock me into awareness that I was idle. How we cling to the Victorian moralities inculcated upon us! Oh! our faith that monkey-like busyness justifies itself! STILL, I MUST BE FAIR. Sreenuousness had produced my house, and goodness knows there was still more than enough undone to justify busyness about that.

There was a music-hall, comic-song, of around the 20s (when I was a boy) that boasted:

*Our house will be all right  
When they pull it down and put  
it up again!  
No roof to our house  
To keep off the rain;  
Got no windows, got no doors,  
Got no stairs and got no floors;  
But we're satisfied...because  
Our house will be all right  
When they pull it down and  
put it up again!*

Much like my house. Except I didn't have to pull it down; since, when I moved into it, it hadn't gone all that far up in the first place.

I had, it is true, a roof. And the walls were stout. The Kitchen, Dining Room and Hallway had doors—the Kitchen even had windows—and the downstairs Lavatory was installed. But the rest of the song applied!

This brings me to some interesting speculation concerning the occult! I had cursed Jayawardana (as I have told you) and it had brought about results: not, perhaps on Jayawardana; but on progress with my house, which was all I, had surely intended. Curses must have blown around, as work on the house flouted up, like leaves in Vallembrosa and I too had been cursed in my turn. What is more, this looked—and looks still—like one of those curses whose every clause is literally interpreted by the powers responsible instead of being broadly viewed, in a liberal spirit, as my curse had been! This curse (which said that my house should never be finished) was uttered by an old peripatetic *baas*—white-haired and venerable and bearded down to his waist but a terror, so it was said, amongst young ladies—who appeared one day when it seemed no part of the building project was ever going to get actually put in hand, and offered

to make my door—and window—frames. His work was recommended by both Pinhamy and Jayawardana, and I employed him until in a few days his work suddenly went off in quality when he formed an alliance in the next village and after spending all night in amorousness, proved quite incapable of cutting a mortise or fitting a tenon. There was nothing for it but to lay him off; and I am told he cursed me, in my absence—chiefly, I suppose, for interrupting his affair—and my house is, undeniably, incomplete! But what 'live' house ever was not.

MY DISMISSAL of Jayawardana while a very considerable part of the construction still remained to be done made it necessary to find a successor. I thought it wiser to split the work and appoint two: a mason and a carpenter. These I took on on a daily-paid basis, paying each Rs. 10 a working day—higher, even, than the current Colombo rates; and much higher than the Government ones—besides providing the mason with an assistant for whom I paid separately. As assistant to the carpenter I generally worked myself; for there was no need to fetch and carry, nor were there tools for more than one worker at the bench at a time. Most of the aid he needed was in setting-out, as I found that he could not so much as build two brace-and-batten doors of the same size that would exactly match each other.

Alpin, the mason, was a find indeed. He was a little slow—and

a love-affair that sprang up between him and Kirimallu, alias Chutta, the girl that came to help him made him if anything a trifle slower—but he was a thoroughly painstaking and meticulously accurate young man who turned out to be one of the few Ceylonese workmen I know who put a full eight hours into an eight-hour day. He remains one of the people I like best and most respect in Ehetuwewa, and I was happy at the end of his stint with me to be able help him secure a more permanent employment. Chutta, who became his *inamorata*, was no less admirable: a remarkably pretty girl, with a never unsmiling face, who worked as hard as Alpin did (though, after village custom, for less than half his money) and whose labour was lightened only by the obvious devotion to Alpin which she returned. When, one day, the scaffolding upon which Alpin stood began to collapse and Chutta, like a Kate Barlass, thrust her own arm where a prop had worked loose, until Alpin could leap to safety, it became clear that theirs was no passing fancy; and today they are married and have a daughter.

MENIK RALA, the carpenter, was no such paragon as either of these, but he was a lovable old rogue and always willing to learn. Anyway, he expressed himself as willing. Left to his own devices he was a horror for crude work and lazy shifts, and thanks to him I can still not place a table or chair on my upper floor without first

## A 'SNAIL' TO INCREASE FOOD PRODUCTION

London,

A new low-cost ploughing system based on a self-propelled powered winch, which is to have further tests in India, could help to increase food production in developing countries. Called the Snail, the new system has attracted a grant of £ 62,000 from Britain's Ministry of Overseas Development. The money will be used by the National College of Agricultural Engineering of Silsoe, Bedford, English, East Midlands over the next two and a half years to test the Snail over-seas as an alternative to contemporary methods of cultivation which use tractors or animals to provide motive power. Two men are required to operate the Snail, one to control the winch and the other to guide the implement being used for cultivation. This implement is placed at the point where cultivation is to start. The end of the cable is attached and the winch is driven to the point which will mark the end of the furrow. The cable unwinds from the winch as it moves forward until the required length is extended. This could be up to 120 yards. When the winch drive is started the winch is anchored to the ground and draws the implement towards it. After the cable is fully wound the operation is repeated with another furrow. —B/S

finding a place where it will fit the irregular levels. But one thing attracted me to him (and we got used to each other and he stayed on). I wanted the joists that bore my floorboards chamfered along their length, to take some of the angularity out of their plain un-comeliness; and Menik Rala, true to habit, seeking to save himself at least some little work on the intractable *palu*, left about two feet from either end of each 16' beam un-chamfered. I protested, asking that the chamfer run full length, and stipulating that when it came to the matter the wall-plates too must be accurately cut to take the bevel. Menik Rala considered for a moment, then seized a newly-sharpened chisel and in a single freehand motion cut into the iron-hard *palu* a lovely ogee curve that made the ugly balk of timber a minor sculpture (if a very minor sculpture) in its own right. After that I left all freehand setting-out to him; and he always came up, apparently from some innate fund of inspiration, with a shape that was exactly satisfying. But he could never apply a try-square or a spirit level or a plumb-line with any success!

The Menik Rala's life was his betel-bag and his arecanut-slicer and his pyx-like lime-box and the tobacco and condiments he carried rolled in his waist-cloth and the wooden mortar as large as a pint-

pot and iron pestle with which to pound the carefully balanced ingredients of his chew. Their were four such chews in his working day—after the mid-morning tea; after lunch; after tea in the afternoon; and when the day's work should end—and they all, including the last one, came off my time. So, since each took about twenty minutes to assemble and to pound and to masticate and to savour, write off an hour and a half from Menik Rala's working day though this cost me the same as Alpin's. I could make this up to Alpin by a bonus; and so did. But most of the local folk characterized this as either—extravagance (in paying it to Alpin) or as meanness (in not paying it to Menik Rala) depending on which side they judged from. From the side I judge from—which, I imagine, would today be called a hopelessly reactionary standpoint—it seems shocking that labour must be extravagantly rewarded but there is no strong feeling that rewards should be proportionate. A bonus is a bonus is a bonus, says 'labour solidarity'!

On occasion, when there was heavy work such as manhandling timber to be accomplished, Menik Rala would bring one or other of his sons to help him. And precious help they generally were. Again and again I saw the boys sit idly by while their father struggled alone with a heavy load; not stirring a stump to assist, but doing nothing else, either, in the alternative; no, not so much as carrying on a conversation. Only a direct appeal from Menik Rala would bring a grudging—and strictly *ad hoc*—response; and never was appeal more timorously made. These *nava-lanka* young men must not be told what to do, they must be asked to do it.

But, slow though it still seemed, work now progressed. It made a tremendous difference that now I could be on the spot, if only to co-ordinate things. Within a fortnight of my own taking up my abode I had my first visitors to stay. They had to sleep in the future dining room with cadjan screens for the windows, and we ate in the kitchen. We scrambled to the gazebo to sit and talk.

But what a long way from the desperation of barely three months earlier!

## LETTERS

- **Water! Water!**
- **Privileged & Under-Privileged?**
- **Education?**

Sir,

"Water! Water! everywhere but not a drop to drink" might become the refrain on every one's lips in the not too distant future. In recent years, the monsoon rains have proved to be erratic where they have not failed entirely, a number of African states and certain areas in South Eastern Asia, in particular, including Sri Lanka, are confronted with famine conditions due to prolonged or repeated droughts in the recent past and also currently.

Here in Sri Lanka the crash programme for the immediate cultivation of cash crops in the wet and intermediate zones to avert possible and imminent famine has received ample publicity; but recurring water crisis in the metropolis and suburbs do not appear to receive sufficient consideration by the authorities and city and suburban dwellers. True whenever the water level in the Labugama and Kalatuwawa reservoirs recedes drastic cuts in the issue of pipe borne water are imposed, but after one or two heavy showers in the catchment areas have raised the water level in the reservoirs the need for conservation and augmentation of water supplies is forgotten for the time being. As a matter of fact the existing reservoirs can no longer supply adequate water for an expanding city like Colombo and its explosive population however much rain falls in the catchment areas of the reservoirs; but when there is scarcity or no rainfall in the catchment areas water supply becomes a very acute and distressing problem.

In 1974 for a period of over six months the supply of pipe borne water had to be drastically curtailed for a greater part of each day and the matter of sinking of wells for at least washing and bathing purposes in every ward of the city

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Colombo-2,  
Sri Lanka.



and suburbs was seriously contemplated. Again in 1975 water cut has been imposed for what duration no one can forecast, and the question of sinking wells in every ward of the city and suburbs is bound recur. In these circumstances it goes without saying that the very few existing wells in the city and suburbs should not be permitted to be closed or fall into disuse. It would be an anti-social act to do so.

A leading school in Sri Lanka was moved to its present site more than half a century ago. At its opening at the present site in 1918 a stately block of class rooms and a spacious science laboratory greeted the eyes of parents, old boys and well wishers who were present but it was not there which evoked their admiration. One and all complimented the school head on the siting of the large well fed by a perennial spring of wholesome and unbrackish water despite its close proximity to the sea. At that time the boarders were accommodated in near by bungalows each of which had a well in the premises with water within easy reach. All that was required was a bucket and a small piece of rope to draw water for bathing and washing which was as easy as turning on the tap.

Even after the installation of pipe borne water to the suburbs in and about 1960 this well intended, for the supply of drinking water survived until the latter part of December 1974 when garbage began to be thrown into this well. Certain old boys, who attended this school during its vintage years at its present site, are convinced that this well is one of the greatest assets of the school and believe that it may at some future date be of greater service than before the pipe borne water supply to the suburbs was installed in supplying the need for drinking water not only of the entire school but also of the entire ward in which the school is situated, and they disapprove of the closure of this well and hope to register their protest at their annual meeting to be held shortly. But it is probable that by this date the old boys will be presented with a *fait accompli*.

Even so the garbage can still be removed and the well flushed out. This is the consummation devoutly hoped for in the public interest.

Colombo  
25.1.75

**CYCLOPS**

Sir,

*"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or tinkling cymbal".*

The S.L.B.C. on the night of 16.11.74 announced that during the first of months of this year the Kandyan Peasantry Commission had spent Rs.2,000,000 odd on science laboratories, hospitals and school buildings etc in the Kandy district alone. And this not for the first time either. This has gone on for 27 long years, that is to say about Rs. 200,000,000 has been expended from public funds on the hill country alone and not one cent on the rest of the Island which along with the hill country have been wont to receive crumbs from the education and social services block votes in the annual estimates.

The elected representatives of the beneficiaries instead of reciprocating are clamouring for the continuance of their special privileges for the hill country alone and like other Twist are asking for more.

Thus what would have been the hall mark of statesmanship if it were carried out to its logical conclusion has become an act of tyranny and injustice to the preponderant majority for which the elected representatives of areas outside the hill country would appear to be primarily responsible for, like ostriches, having hid their heads in the sand to enable a political *gundu* called the U.P.C. like the running brook to go on for ever.

The poverty, misery and absence of amenities in the Wann, the Southern dry zone and coast have to be seen to be believed. Not all the peasantry are paddy cultivators. These regions which were the seat of advanced ancient civilization have undergone more vicissitudes than the hill country of which the last but not least was engulfment by the jungle tide which not only pushed out to the coast to vegetate large numbers of peasants but also as most vividly described in Leonard Wolf's "Village in the Jungle" extinguished entire villages with their peasantry. Since Independence, due to utter neglect, conditions in these villages outside the hill country have so deteriorated as to drive out their

human flotsam and jetsam to the metropolis of which today they are the steadily increasing shanty folk. Nothing has been done for them. The land reform laws have not benefited them.

For example why should peasants in areas outside the hill country be condemned in case of serious illness to seek treatment in infirmaries like the condemned base civil hospital in Galle with its forlorn facade warning "Abandon hope all ye who enter here? Why should their children receive only an elementary education in the three R's? Why should their wives, children and themselves have to cross streams on dilapidated *edandas* or have to transact public business in offices which were once Dutch warehouses, dungeons and other buildings which have long outlived their period of usefulness? In short why should they be denied the amenities and social services showered on their blue-eyed counterparts in the hill country?

R. W. W.

Mt. Lavinia.

Sir,

Cries against standardisation now come from all over Sri Lanka.

Jawaharlal Nehru, when he addressed the students of the Ceylon University College way back in 1939, called them "the cream of the country's intellect, the flower of Lanka's youth". It is unfortunate that the present generation of our University students are not entitled to these appellations.

One is struck by the strange coincidence that the present holder of the portfolio of Education is rarely in the House when important matters relating to his Ministry are discussed. One remembers that during the last three or four year's when the House in Committee discussed the estimates of the ministry of Education it was the Deputy Minister who was left holding the baby.

This state of affairs cries aloud for remedy.

S. Ratnasingham

6/5, Layards Road,  
Colombo 5.  
28.1.1975

## AGRICULTURE

## High Protein Sorghum

West Lafayette, Indiana,

The annual meeting of the American Society of Agronomy in Chicago in mid-November learned of the development of a new variety of sorghum, the world's fourth largest cereal grain crop, which may benefit the diets of millions of Asians and Africans. The disclosure was made by the man who played the major role in this achievement. Daya P. Mohan of India, Research Assistant and Doctoral Candidate in Agronomy at Purdue University here.

Mr. Mohan developed the strain of Sorghum now known as "P-721" in Purdue's laboratories by chemically treating strains of the Sorghum with chemicals that induce mutations. It promises to nearly triple the protein quality of normal Sorghum and offer farmers a plumper and heavier yielding grain. "P-721" is described as a chemically induced high Lysine mutant whose content is inheritable and therefore transferable to other varieties of the cereal by cross-breeding. Ordinary Sorghum is deficient in Lysine, one of Amino acids popularly termed—"the building blocks of protein," which is critically necessary in human nutrition.

"Grain Sorghum is an important food in many parts of the world, particularly Africa and Asia," said Mr. Mohan, a Graduate of Punjab and Delhi Universities. "Unfortunately, the nutritional quality of most of the grain Sorghum varieties being used today is poor relative to that of the other major cereals" (Wheat, Rice, Maise).

Mr. Mohan said that more information is needed to completely document the agronomic value of P-721, but he and his colleagues feel that it provides a source of high Lysine Sorghum Germplasm which should be especially valuable in the world's temperate regions.

P-721 also has great possibilities for tropical and sub-tropical regions, too, according to Dr. John Axtell, Purdue geneticist with whom Mr. Mohan worked. He is Director of the University's Sorghum project under a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development (A.I.D.)—

"This gives us another tool to work with in our research," Dr. Axtell said. "We have crossed it with tropical types, including several Ethiopian strains, and are continuing to work with it for use in tropical as well as in temperate climates."

Seeds of the new mutant have been sent to Research Stations elsewhere for testing and cross-breeding under varied conditions. Dr. Axtell believes the new variety would be planted extensively in the United States within a year and thus be available for overseas shipment.

Mr. Mohan, who worked several years for the Indian Government's National Seed Corporation, has been part of the Purdue Sorghum Project since he arrived in West Lafayette in 1969 as a graduate Research Assistant.

Anyone who thinks that an Agronomist such as Mr. Mohan "just happens upon" a creation like A-721—miraculous discovery accidentally foaming out of a test tube, for example—will have this romantic notion dispelled on learning of Mr. Mohan's successful experiment. It was exacting and sometimes tedious work.

The Indian scientist examined 23,000 Sorghum heads or tops before selecting 500 of them for chemical treatment. And eventually, in this group, he singled out P-721 to be superior.

The first Sorghum test plants, labelled "M-1," were grown in midwestern Indiana in 1972. Each plant was bagged to insure self-fertilization. From these plants, "M-2" seeds were produced. They were shipped to Puerto Rico for planting in the winter of 1972-73, and again each head was bagged. About 23,000 of these heads bearing "maaez seeds" were harvested and sent to Purdue for screening.

In the screening process by Mr. Mohan, 500 possible mutants were identified and the seed from each segregated head was separated into two classes. Each was analyzed for its protein and Lysine content.

Additional evaluation led to P-721. Tests in 1974 verified that the increase in Lysine content shown from chemical analyses also was reflected in biological value. A standard procedure for evaluating cereal grains is known as the weanling rat trial.

"In a 28-day feeding trial," Mr. Mohan reported, "Weanling rats fed the P-721 opaque Sorghum grain gained three times as much (weight) as those fed normal Sorghum."

Research with the improved Sorghum is continuing at Purdue and abroad, for a number of questions need to be answered—e.g. I yield per hectare, market appeal, disease resistance—before P-721, would become available for commercial production.

Nevertheless, the results Mr. Mohan disclosed at the meeting of American Agronomists in Chicago—10 days before his 41st birthday—represented a triumph for him, for the Purdue Research Project and for A.I.D. which since 1966 has provided the project 1.7 million dollars in grants.

Mr. Mohan was modest about his achievement.

"I feel I'm still catching up with dad," he said. His late father, N. P. Mohan was, chief conservator of forests in the Punjab region where Daya Mohan was born. In Multan, in 1933. The father's exemplary career strongly influenced his son. Young Mohan graduated with honors in Botany at Punjab University in 1955 and then earned a Master's Degree in Botany in Delhi University in 1960.

For five years he was a Research Assistant for the Rockefeller Fund-dating breeding, Testing and Evaluation Hybrid Sorghums. In 1965 he joined India's National Seed Corporation as an assistant seed production officer, working in Andhra Pradesh and Madras. Later he was regional manager for Corn, Sorghum and vegetables in the Madras and Mysore areas. In 1968-69 in Delhi, he was engaged in Training of Seed Certification Inspectors, marketing of hybrid seeds and quality control.

He decided to become a student again in 1969, pursuing a Doctorate at Purdue University. He expects to attain this goal soon, to the delight of his wife, ILA, and their four-year old son, Vivek.

## Mutation through Solar Energy

SOLAR IRRADIATION of plants and seed in brief bursts has been reported to accelerate the growth of plants and improve the germination of seeds. These short but intense showers of sunlight, reflected and intensified by a device, are said to stimulate the formation of a membranous system in those parts of the cell where the energy processes take place and increase the enzymatic activity therein. Care is taken in these processes not to burn the plant by long exposure to the warm sunlight. Irradiation is done in short pulses of about 0.01 seconds at intervals of a fraction of a second. The plant receives during this treatment thousands of pulses of "light quanta."

These experiments have indicated possibilities of increasing the yields from the early crop of cucumber and tomatoes in Kazakhstan, USSR, by 20 to 30 per cent. The overall increase in yield in these experimental fields ranging in area between 25 and 50 acres was found to be nearly 16 per cent. A qualitative improvement in crops also results from the pulsed light radiation as in the case of beet seeds where the heavier yield was accompanied by an enrichment in sugar content by one per cent more. In contrast, a similar improvement through selective breeding over 25 years was just 0.2 per cent. Enhanced yields by 5 to 10 per cent in cotton in Uzbekistan and 15 to 20 per cent in potatoes, melon, watermelon and soybean seeds are the results of subjecting the seeds of these crops to 45 minutes irradiation in Kazakhstan. BUT A MORE SIGNIFICANT and recent finding in this field is the pronounced effect of such pulsed irradiation in altering the hereditary characteristics, of the plant. This, however, requires longer irradiation according to a scientific bulletin of "Soviet Features". Springsown wheat submitted to a daily dose of 30 minutes for 10 to 20 days produced progenies yielding bigger ears with larger number of grains, ripening a week earlier. The more important and valuable feature in this case is the increase in output, by 50 per cent, of the

new strains which are claimed to be genetically stable over several generations. "Photomutants" obtained in this manner amounted to five to six per cent of the irradiated winter wheat at different stages of development, some of them were strains with shorter and stronger stalks and grains richer in protein. Such mutants evolved in Moldavia produced genetically identical progenies for five to six generations. Soybeans treated to pulse-light radiation for half an hour a day throughout their vegetative stage gave rise to photomutants maturing three to four weeks earlier than their parents. These also remained genetically stable for six generations. The new science of "photo-energetics", offers a new field for transforming plants and obtaining superior types, but the data available is not much. Interest has been evinced in this technique of mutation by some of the Agricultural Universities in our country and with more detailed information from the Soviet scientists, research on these lines may prove interesting and profitable.

Hindu

## Britain's Open University Offers Teaching Skills Worldwide

London.

Britain's Open University is to offer its teaching at-a-distance facilities worldwide and has set up a consultancy service to help interested bodies mount similar projects in their own countries. Announcing the scheme in London Sir Walter Perry, vice-Chancellor of the university, said: "We can supply books, tapes, films and strips and all multi-media facilities for an entire course and arrange for special translations of materials. "The university can also tailor courses to the requirements of a specific country—necessary, for example, where sophisticated library facilities, taken for granted in Britain may not exist."

This know how and hardware of the Open University is to be made available on a fee-paying basis,

but Sir Walter stressed: "We don't intend to make a profit—merely to cover the cost of the service". Demand for the consultancy service has led the university to set up a new office in Washington, which will open in January. It will be staffed by academics from the university able to advise throughout North America on how the material should be used. Latin American countries have already purchased science and mathematics course facilities complete with Spanish translations. The Open University is likely to expand its facilities service to the Free University of Iran, Everyman's University in Israel, the People's University in Pakistan and the Open University of Spain. Close interest has also been shown by the Americas, Canada, Australia, Federal Germany, Indonesia, Romania and the Soviet Union.

The university, which opened in 1971 in partnership with the BBC, produces television and radio broadcasts linked to correspondence texts. Sir Walter Perry said: "We believe the consultancy service can lead to massive international cooperation on further education—not for a learning elite but for everyone."

—BIS

### For Money

Time magazine has discovered the second reason for the Saigon army's systematic violation of the agreement on the ceasefire in South Vietnam (the first is the Thieu administration's provocative policy). It is being done for money, the weekly writes and cites concrete facts concerning corruption in the Saigon armed forces. Artillery officers, for instance, sell fire support to infantry officers—\$ 1-2 per shot—while artillerymen sell spent shells. Helicopter pilots charge for the evacuation of the wounded: \$ 8 for a private \$ 16 for a sergeant, and \$ 25 for an officer. Plane pilots take passengers and cargo—for a fee, of course. Officers and other ranks extort money from people wishing to cross from one zone into another. And so on and so forth.

# IS IT TRUE?

## Sherlock Holmes

### THE NATION & THE DAILY NEWS

IS IT NOT STRANGE that *The Nation*, in its issue of 31/1/75, had gone to town with two pieces making the *Ceylon Daily News* a bigtime villain "involved in this current conspiracy" to scuttle the taxation programme of the United Front especially the proposals outlined in the last Budget? That the first article—an unsigned feature—was an *Economic Review* on TAXES AND OUR INDUSTRIALISTS (they take no risks! they have a sheltered market! no wonder they make such profits!)? That this article was a pseudo-learned sermon on the futility of encouraging the industrialists of Sri Lanka with tax concessions? That the first paragraph sets out the purpose and scope of the article?

The "*Ceylon Daily News*" of 27th January, in banner headlines, gave prominence to a report purported to have been made by a "team of officials, economists and tax experts" which recommends the withdrawal of the tax measures introduced by the Finance Minister in his Budget Speech for 1975 and a return to the status quo. It is not our intention to examine the arguments put forward by this team and offer counter-arguments. Rather, we shall deal with the principle of granting tax concessions to the private "entrepreneurs" in the particular socio-economic context of this country.

That the rest of the article sets out arguments why tax concessions to local capitalists was against the public interest? That some of the arguments adduced had been repeatedly spotlighted by *Tribune* over the last three years (and it is also well to remember that *The Nation* has been viciously hostile to the *Tribune*)? That it is interesting to note that *The Nation* has now discovered that tourism is "highly foreign exchange intensive" and that "the import content in tourist earnings" as much as 40-45%? That *The Nation* has suddenly discovered

"the plain truth is that Sri Lanka has no private entrepreneurs in the real sense of that term" ("we lack the sort of entrepreneurial class which spearheaded the development process in many countries")? That it had also discovered that "our industrialists are a trading community who thrive on tax concessions and sheltered markets whose outlooks are clearly short-term and lack any sort of long term perspective or vision"? That all this long harangue about the evils of domestic capitalists was only to show the State must take over everything in Sri Lanka immediately? That it has taken *The Nation* long to discover that "tax concessions have had only one result, namely the growth of a new capitalist class without the commensurate economic growth to justify its existence"? That it is better to be wise late than never? That *The Nation* may soon discover that "working class" in Sri Lanka is not a "proletariat" in terms of Marx's definition.

That the second piece in *The Nation* (vide Notes and Comment Column) was a polemical and vicious attack on the *Daily News* for publishing a "document" which "a team of officials, economists and tax experts" are believed to have written for submission to the Government? That what seemed to be eating into *The Nation* was that this document had found its way into the columns of the *Daily News* even before some Cabinet Ministers had received copies of the document? That in the general disequilibria which prevails in all matters in Sri Lanka today it is difficult to ensure that priorities are maintained? That *The Nation* seems to suggest that this document (published in the *CDN* of 27/1/75) was some kind of subversive bombshell intended to torpedo the last budget proposals and also undermine the socialist programme of the United Front Government? That it would be surprising *The*

*Nation* did not know the sources from which this document (published in the *Daily News* of January 27th) had emanated? That all knowledgeable political circles are unanimous that that this particular document had the stamp of the thinking of many topnotchers in the Ministry of Planning? That according to these knowledgeable circles there are four or five such documents now floating around Colombo in regard to some of the tax proposals contained in the last Budget? That there was first a document prepared by the tourist interests wanting changes in the tax proposals? That there was another document prepared by the Ministry of Finance repudiating these arguments? That the one published by the *Daily News* could be regarded as the third of such documents and a fourth allegedly under the auspices of another high government source, (anxious bring petrodollars and Arab capital for investment in Sri Lanka to give capitalism a new lease of life under state control), is now available for governmental consideration? That all in all, *The Nation* reflects, in no uncertain way, the growing cold war inside the United Front? That it is public knowledge that the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning do not see eye-to-eye on a large number of matters of fiscal significance? That there is no doubt that *The Nation* reflects the views of the Ministry? That *The Nation* further takes up cudgels with all newspapers and journals (including publications of the Lake House) which seek to put forward a point of view different from that of *The Nation*? That the *Observer* and the *Daily News* have come in for even greater criticism than the *Tribune* at the hands of the censorious demi-gods of *The Nation* who seem unable to tolerate any other point of view except what they currently believe to be "true"? That neither democracy nor socialism can develop, grow or thrive in an atmosphere of intolerance? That a hundred flowers must bloom for a happy synthesis? That polemics based on innuendos, and insinuations, attributing personal motives of a base nature, will not take this country forward?