

Vol. 20. No. 7 | July 5, 1975 | Cents 75

TRIBUNE





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Founded In 1954

A Journal of Ceylon and
World Affairs

Editor. S. P. Amarasingam

Every Saturday

July 5, 1975

Vol. 20 No. 7

TRIBUNE.

43, DAWSON STREET,
COLOMBO - 2.

Telephone: 33172

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Letter From The Editor

THE PICTURE we have on the cover this week was taken fifty three years ago, in the year 1922, in a paddy field in Jaffna at harvest time. It was during a period when there were no tractors or mechanised trailers. The paddy was threshed with the help of a team of bulls and the straw, bundled into large heaps, and carried on the heads of men to be stacked either in a haystack or in a bullock cart to be transported elsewhere for stacking. In the age of mechanisation and semi-mechanisation, people no longer see straw being carried in such large bundles on the heads of men. Some will argue that it was degrading drudgery to make men carry so much straw on the head at one go, but it is a moot point whether such healthy work was not better than compelling a man within the enclosed space of a dingy factory and making him turn a screw five hundred times an hour in one monotonous operation. The wages an agricultural labourer was paid in 1922 was probably higher in terms of real goods and services than what a person who does an equivalent volume of manual work (under far more insanitary conditions) gets today. For the 50 cents a farm labourer was paid in 1922 he was able to buy much more than what a farm labourer or any other worker can buy for Rs. 8 today. There is, however, no doubt that manual production limited total production, but as long as the country's population was proportionately small, it was an idyllic situation. With the increase of population and the collapse of the imperialist-colonialist economic structure (with its division of production whereby, for instance, Burma produced cheap rice for Ceylon's tea plantation economy), there were new compulsions to increase production and productivity through modern technological devices including mechanisation. Today, in our countryside, we can still see a bullock cart hauling straw, but more often it is tractor with a trailer. The old order with the equilibrium maintained by a world wide imperialist economy, with all its exploitative inequalities and the paradoxical juxtaposition of immense wealth and unbelievable poverty, has changed into something different. The world is now going through an interim period where two economic systems are contending for supremacy, where egalitarian socialist economic structures (with all their limitations, restrictions, contradictions and inhibitions) are fighting a battle unto death with new forms of capitalist free enterprise systems mainly seeking to regain the former global glory of private profit through multinational corporations and satellite countries, economically dependent but politically sovereign countries. What this clash will produce is as yet uncertain for within the world of socialism there has grown a multitude of different forms and structures just as much as there is complete disharmony and conflict in the capitalist world. There are growing pleas for unity in the socialist world on the basis of a flexible, dialectical non-doctrinaire approach to Marxism. There are even more fervent pleas for unity in the world of capitalism: Secretary of State Kissinger, speaking in Atlanta, in Georgia on June 23 has declared "...if the weakness of free peoples tempts aggression, the lives of Americans will be in danger. If the disunity of free peoples invites economic chaos, the well-being of Americans will be in jeopardy. As the energy crisis has surely taught us, we live in an interdependent world—a world in which words such as 'isolation' and 'withdrawal' grow more anachronistic...." Many of Kissinger's recent speeches are entirely devoted to the urgent need for unity within the US as well as in the free capitalist world in an era when the world leadership undertaken by the US after World War Two has begun to falter as a result of events ranging from Watergate (with the prelude in the Pentagon Papers) to Vietnam. It is no doubt a far cry from carrying a load of straw on one's head in the year 1922 to the complex problems of today when millions upon millions of able-bodied persons throughout the World have been forced into compulsory unemployment and do not even have opportunities of carrying a load of straw in return for food, clothing and housing, no less and no worse than what an agricultural labourer in Jaffna had got in 1922. We live in a world of transistors, taperecorders and electronic gadgetry, but it is also a world of conflict, hunger, malnutrition and misery. It is still a world where the exploitation of man by man continues side by side with unceasing efforts to secure emancipation from every form and manifestation of exploitation, want and disability. Sri Lanka mirrors this global contradiction in more ways than many people imagine.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Indira Gandhi

WHAT WAS LONG EXPECTED IN INDIA has come at last; a confrontation between two contending forces for political power. It has been unexpectedly triggered by a rather sensational judgement of the Allahabad High Court in which Justice Jagmohan Lal Sinha had held that the election of Mrs. Indira Gandhi in 1971 was void. She was found guilty of having obtained the assistance of gazetted officers of the State Government of Uttar Pradesh posted in Rae Bareilly; she was also held guilty of having obtained the assistance of Yashpal Kapoor, a gazetted officer in the Indian Government, holding a post on special duty in the Prime Minister's Secretariat. Grave charges of bribery and corruption made against her were thrown out by the High Court, but on the two counts on which she was found guilty which jurists have declared are rather technical without any involvement of moral turpitude, she was disqualified from holding any elective post for a period of six years. It is conceded by the most inveterate of the Indian Prime Minister's enemies that they had not expected anything more than an *obiter dicta* suggesting that it was not proper for important persons to enjoy such privileges during an election. Nobody had thought she would be disqualified or unseated.

The Judge had given her time to file action and had also granted a stay order to enable her to file an appeal to the Supreme Court. But before the petition of appeal was even filed, over 500 Congress parliamentarians had given her a massive vote of confidence to stay in office pending the appeal. They had declared at a special meeting that they had the "fullest confidence" in her and that "her continued leadership as Prime Minister is indispensable to the nation."

As all stay orders of a High Court become inoperative once an appeal is lodged, Mrs. Gandhi had to obtain a stay order from the Supreme Court until her appeal was adjudicated upon. As the Supreme Court was in vacation, just as the Parliament had adjourned for the summer, she filed a substantive appeal be-

fore a Vacation Judge before whom she also made an application for an unconditional stay order. The appeal was admitted and an early date was fixed for the hearing, on the question of the stay order, the Vacation Judge only granted her a conditional stay where she could continue as Prime Minister until the appeal was decided but her parliamentary rights were curtailed, at least until this particular point was decided upon by a Divisional Bench of the Supreme Court as an interim matter. The Vacation Judge evidently did not want to take the responsibility for granting an unconditional stay order but left the door open for the parties to go before the Divisional Bench without a special appeal being made on this point.

The conditional stay order was interpreted by the Opposition parties as something much more than an *obiter dicta* by the Vacation Judge (even though it was a single judge) that there was validity in the High Court's finding that she should be disqualified from sitting in Parliament. This interpretation suited the Opposition Parties because they had already launched a nationwide extra-parliamentary and extra-legal campaign to compel Mrs. Gandhi to resign from the post of Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister and colleagues interpreted the refusal by the Vacation Judge to grant an unconditional stay order as nothing more than a reluctance of one Judge, to discharge a function normally exercised by a Divisional Bench. On this basis, they had decided to continue the legal fight to its ultimate conclusion before a decision was made whether Mrs. Gandhi should step down from her post as the Prime Minister.

Many had suggested that if the Court—even the Vacation Judge—did not grant an unconditional stay order, that she should step down and nominate an interim Prime Minister. This was only a tactical strategy to take the wind out of the storm which the Opposition was seeking to raise over this issue. With the current complexities of the internal politics of the Congress hierarchy, the selection of an interim Prime Minister would have created many problems that would have been worse than any propaganda buffeting by the Opposition against Mrs. Gandhi continu-

ing as PM until the Supreme Court made a final determination. It was probably not any fear that an interim Prime Minister would fail to make way for her if the appeal was concluded in her favour, but the difficulties of choosing an interim Prime Minister itself, that has compelled the strategy followed.

The Allahabad High Court decision had admittedly evoked a great deal of sympathy for the Indian Prime Minister. Sympathy for her was shown in extra-parliamentary mass demonstrations just as the Opposition adopted similar tactics to mobilise public opinion against her. Many of those who supported her normally seemed to feel that Mrs. Gandhi should have resigned in order to lodge her appeal and continue her legal battle. This, it was said, would refurbish her image that she respected the independence of the judiciary. She has often been charged with packing the Supreme Court with committed judges and that her present refusal to accept the verdict of the Allahabad High Court in the spirit of the rule of law was part of her dictatorial tendencies. The conditional stay order granted by the Vacation Judge added more edge to such criticisms against her.

It is also argued by the opposition that the results of the Gujarat elections had demonstrated fully that her popularity (and the popularity of the Congress) were no longer what they were in 1971. The Janata Front of Opposition parties had been able to secure a majority as a coalition by a short head (104 seats of the 184) in the Gujarat Assembly. This, it was said, completely robbed Mrs. Gandhi and the Congress of any right to continue as Prime Minister. The vast majority of the big national dailies, which have never been sympathetic to Mr. Gandhi, were unanimous in their insistence that she should step down while the appeal was pending. Of the major national newspapers only the Madras *Hindu* took a sympathetic view of what Mrs. Gandhi has done. The *Hindu* was correct when it pointed out that the judgement of the Allahabad High Court was weak and legally dubious. The *Hindu* also felt that the conditional stay order of the Vacation Judge did not make it necessary for her to resign. Of all the so called Right-wing capitalist papers, the *Hindu*

Indira Gandhi

alone has pursued this logic. The *Patriot* and the *National Herald*, dailies which have always been sympathetic to Mrs. Gandhi, have asserted that there was nothing wrong in her continuing as Prime Minister. These two papers argued with a great deal of force that she was entitled to continue in office as the due processes of law were still not exhausted for her to clear her conduct which had been questioned on technical grounds.

But, the daily *Motherland*, the mouthpiece of the Jan Sangh party, in a front-page editorial entitled **SHE MUST GO** had observed: "...with the stigma of corruption stamped on her forehead, she just cannot continue in office. Her insistence to the contrary may provoke threats to law and order—and destabilise the policy. We hope that, for once, she will think of the country first—and of herself second".

It was this Opposition threat to carry the campaign to compel her to resign to the streets that has brought an unprecedented confrontation in Indian politics into sharp focus. The overkill which the Opposition had declared they would launch in the form of mass satyagraha, strikes and nationwide disturbances to make her resign and thereby make her accept the interpretation which the Opposition placed on the verdict of the courts (whilst an appeal was pending) has evoked another overkill from the ruling Congress Party and the Government in New Delhi in the form of a nationwide State of Emergency coupled with the arrest of all Opposition leaders and dissident Congress elements. At the time of writing these notes the number had already mounted to very nearly 1000.

SUCH A CONFRONTATION had long been expected. The Prime Minister and the Congress had long believed that there was conspiracy in the country to destabilise the Government and thereafter destroy the forces of radicalism she was seeking to lead. The fact that leftwingers and communists were the most insistent and most vocal propounders of this theory led many to argue that Mrs. Gandhi had succumbed to the cold war sermonising of the Communists with whom she was in alliance. But what is strange that even those in her camp who were unfriendly to the Communists seem to believe in this conspiracy and they have joined her in pointing the accusing

finger at China and the USA as being the international culprits out to destroy the Indian polity the Congress had sought to fashion. Whether this is true or not is another matter but there is no doubt that the two main Opposition groups, the IPM and the Jan Sangh penly draw inspiration from China and America respectively. Indira Gandhi has been very nearly ten years in office and in that time she has no doubt been responsible for many sweeping social and economic reforms which her father had dreamt of but had not been able to translate into action. She has increased the state-owned public sector, especially in industry immensely, and it was only during her regime that millions of peasants have got land they could call their own. She had also set out to limit and curb the activities of the conservative socio-political forces which were opposed to the kind of reforms she had initiated and had sought to implement.

The battle against her had been fought from every angle and from every forum. And she had fought back. She had fought back on every front and in every forum. She was called a tool of Moscow and she hit back naming the CIA as being after her life. The Chinese were more circumspect in their attacks and she had dealt with them accordingly.

Both China and the USA have made it clear that they have no use for the domestic or foreign policies, but while Peking maintained a cold aloofness and reserve, Washington had tried everything in its bag of tricks to woo and win India to be drawn closer into the orbit of the free world and the ideology of free enterprise.

China however uses the IPM and other political groups to further its own version of Marxism and Mao Tse-Tung thought.

Indira Gandhi has fashioned her own strategy not only to keep China and the USA at bay but also to neutralise the threat posed by Pakistan. For this she entered into close co-operation with the Soviet Union in the political, economic and technological sectors. Primarily with Soviet assistance she has built a mighty armaments industry making India almost self-sufficient for all its armaments needs. But without direct Soviet assistance, India has become an

atomic power reaching out into space with satellite and rockets.

Indira's has been a memorable rule and there is no equal to her in India today in charismatic leadership of the masses. An election defeat in one state like Gujerat does not mean that the people of India had rejected her leadership on a national basis. It may be no more than a local protest against the kind of local leaders upon whom she had depended. But like every leader she has her opponents and her detractors. She has made mistakes in policies, in strategy, and in the choice of colleagues. Her ideological eclecticism has made her a puzzle to her friends as well as her enemies. But by far and large she has become one of the foremost leaders India has ever known.

It is probably unfortunate that she had to play a role in history when the rule of law has become a dead letter in most countries of the world. There has been a brief re-assertion of the rule of law in the USA after the dark epoch of McCarthyism and Nixonism when the rule of law had been made a mockery by White House and administrative "manipulations". There is no doubt that the rule of law has lost the pristine purity, which those who still believe in it, seek to invest in this now uncertain concept. The Constitution of India framed in 1947 was based on the rule of law but for long, following the British tradition, the rule of law had been "manipulated", administratively and through the judiciary, to sustain the right of the privileged classes in an age of private property, private profit and personal self-glory which had succeeded the age of feudal benevolence (and tyranny). Indira Gandhi has resisted the manipulative restraints under the smokescreen of the rule of law to combat the social and economic changes she sought to bring into effect and which she believed were necessary to emancipate the common masses of the Indian people. For this she had not hesitated to amend the Constitution and even change the complexion of the Supreme Court. Her methods were different from what had been done by others seeking changes in other countries. But her battle ground was India and she cannot be expected to follow US or UK precedents.

Whether what she did was right or wrong would depend on the way one looked at the matter. Many men of goodwill had believed that the changes she had wrought in the Constitution and the "manipulation" she had practised to change the composition of the highest judiciary paved for the destruction of the India conceived of by the framers of the Constitution. A historic article written by the redoubtable Frank Moraes on the question of the vanishing rule of law in India (we shall publish this in an early issue of *Tribune*). This piece was written immediately after the decision to change the Constitution when a majority in the Supreme Court had held that the provision in the Constitution about the right to private property and the right to compensation were inviolable. The article shows the depth of feeling that had been evoked in persons who had once been among her strongest admirers.

WHAT HAS BEGUN IN INDIA NOW with the declaration of the State of Emergency to fight the forces that have openly threatened to destabilise the Government of Indira Gandhi, is claimed to be only a preventive prelude to what may very well prove to be the opening stages of a civil war. If the forces of the Opposition had been permitted to launch satyagraha, strikes and violent demonstrations demanding the ouster of Indira Gandhi, the civil war might have already started. It was not that the Opposition was too impatient to await the verdict of the Supreme Court. They saw the weakness in the legal status in Parliament, which had stemmed from the verdict of the Allahabad High Court, and without giving her a chance to fight this legal battle, the Opposition had sought to make political capital of the court's ruling by insisting that she should resign without exhausting her legal remedies. It is also argued that a Prime Minister should tender her resignation with the first blemish somebody might point out in her conduct even without seeking to show that the legal verdict should have been otherwise.

The Opposition took the legal battle to the mass arena even before she had made up her mind as to what she should do. She had even asked her colleagues whether she should step down.

But when the Opposition had started their vociferous and near-violent campaign demanding her resignation, the Congress rallied around to fight the political threat from the Opposition.

The Opposition parties thereafter took the battle to the masses by declaring that they would start a nationwide campaign to destabilise the government of Indira Gandhi. Why the Jana Sangh should choose this term "destabilise" is not easily understandable but this has given Mrs. Gandhi and her colleagues a handle to talk about the CIA plot in Chile.

The Congress (and the Government) has started the battle by arresting and locking up all the Opposition leaders. Censorship and other restrictions have been imposed. On the surface, what the British did during the days of the Empire may seem no different but times seemed to have changed. Nevertheless, this battle has to be in the final analysis resolved on the political plane and not in the courts. The question is whether all the present preventive action against the Opposition will help Indira Gandhi and her Congress to win the next General Elections. Or, will what has been done make heroes and martyrs of those who are now held in custody today?

Only the future can tell. But for the present it is difficult to see why she should surrender to the Opposition demand that she should resign until the final determination of her appeal by the Supreme Court.

WHILE IT IS DIFFICULT to gauge reactions within India with the censorship and the rigours of the State of Emergency, the reactions internationally have begun to fill the columns of the newspapers and the radio wavelengths of the world. Comment in the USA has so far been restrained, but critical. The general tenor of the comment is that she must bow to the verdict of the Courts and tender her resignation until the Supreme Court made a final determination. The declaration of the State of Emergency and the arrests have naturally received a bad press in the USA which has also played down the call by the Opposition for a nationwide satyagraha, and has virtually ignored the Jan Sangh's demand that it was necessary to "de-stabilise" the government and

Raj Narain's war cry in which he had wanted the army, police and the armed services to mutiny. Comment in Britain was restrained but was sharply critical. China, as was to be expected, was bitterly critical. The first comment by *Hsinhua* was that an atmosphere of terror had appeared in many areas of India and had warned that the situation would become more turbulent. "...the Indira Gandhi government threw off its mask of democracy and law, and declared a state of emergency across the country and carried out massive arrests", it said, and referring to the judgement of the Allahabad High Court stated: "...The defendant, found guilty by the High Court, wielding the power in her hands has gone so far as to have the plaintiff arrested. This is not only a bitter mockery of bourgeois democracy but an exposure of the unstable and weak ruling position of Indira Gandhi..." China's comments would have carried conviction if she had also taken a similar attitude when Ayub Khan or Yahya Khan had taken measures against bourgeois democracy in Pakistan or when a reactionary and cruel junta had seized power in Chile after murdering President Allende and all the top leaders of the Centre and the Left in the Chilean political spectrum.

In Sri Lanka, the United Front is unanimous in its support for Indira Gandhi following Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike's message to the Indian PM that she was shocked with the verdict of the High Court and wished her success in the Supreme Court. While the reactions from Peking may evoke sympathetic responses only in the hard core of the Maoists in Sri Lanka, the general consensus of opinion will be in favour of the Indira Gandhi government even to the point of supporting the Declaration of the State of Emergency—because both UNP and the SLFP (including the UF) have traditionally resorted to Emergency Rule and preventive detention on the slightest suggestion of a threat to national security. The UNP has up to the time of the writing of these notes not made any comment, but there is no doubt that whilst an attempt will be made to show its western friends that it was opposed to such "anti-democratic" action (showing a reluctance to

Indira Gandhi

obey the rulings of a Court), it will not want to antagonise the ruling Congress because the UNP fears the Maoist-naxalite of the CPM, on the one hand, and the Hindu Raj espoused by the Jana Sangh and the aggressive ultra-nationalist outbursts of Raj Narain (which is regarded as danger to Sri Lanka), on the other.

The Soviet Union has been steadfast in its support for Indira Gandhi. Broadcasts from Radio Moscow have made it clear that the USSR regards the declaration of the State of Emergency and the arrest of Opposition leaders as measures to protect the country's progressive achievements. The *Pravda* pointed out the struggle between the forces of democracy and reaction in India had become increasingly sharp. "The measures taken by the President and the Government are aimed at defending the country's progressive achievements and foiling the plans of reaction." Whilst this is an over-simplification of the complex factors involved, it nevertheless fully endorsed the line adopted by Indira Gandhi and the ruling Congress. In a national broadcast shortly after Emergency was declared Indira Gandhi had stated:

"The President has proclaimed Emergency. This is nothing to panic about. I am sure you are conscious of a deep and widespread conspiracy which has been brewing over since I began to introduce certain progressive measures of benefit to the common men and women of India. In the name of democracy it has been sought to negate the very functioning of democracy. Duly elected Governments have not been allowed to function and in some cases force has been used to compel members to resign in order to dissolve lawfully elected assemblies. Agitations have surcharged the atmosphere leading to violent incidents. The whole country was shocked at the brutal murder of my cabinet colleague L. A. Mishra. We also deeply deplore the dastardly attack on the Chief Justice of India. Certain persons have gone to the length of inciting our armed forces to mutiny and our police to rebel. The fact that our defence forces and police are disciplined and deeply patriotic and therefore will not be taken in, does not mitigate the seriousness of the provocation.

The forces of disintegration are in full play and communal passions are being aroused, threatening our unity. All manner of false allegations have been hurled at me. The Indian people have known me since childhood. All my life has been in the service of our people. This is not a personal matter. It is not important whether I remain Prime Minister or not. However the institution of Prime Minister is important and deliberate political attempts to degenerate it is not in the interest of democracy of the nation.

"We have watched those developments with utmost patience for long. We learn of new programmes challenging law and order throughout the country with a view to disrupt normal functioning. How can any Government worth the name stand by and allow the country's stability to be imperilled? The actions of a few are endangering the rights of the vast majority. Any situation that weakens the capacity of a national Government to act decisively inside the country, is bound to encourage dangers from outside. The Nation's integrity demands firm action. The threat to internal stability also affects production and prospects of economic improvement. In the last few months the determined action we have taken has succeeded in largely checking the price rise. We have been actively considering further measures to strengthen the economy and to relieve the hardships of various sections, particularly the poor and the vulnerable, and those with fixed incomes. I shall announce these soon. I should like to assure you that now Emergency proclamation will not affect the rights of the law abiding citizens. I am sure that internal conditions will speedily improve to enable us to dispose with this proclamation as soon as possible. I have been overwhelmed by messages of goodwill from all parts of India and all sections of people. May I appeal for continued co-operation and trust in days ahead?"

It was a masterful speech in which Indira Gandhi mixed emotion (for Nehru nostalgia-ism) with political sentiment about the danger to the state from subversive action to stun a nation into virtual silence and thereafter mobilise support for herself and her Government. Fol-

lowing this, in subsequent speeches she has made it clear that her Government was not on the verge of a leftwing takeover—she had said that there were no plans to indulge in any further nationalisation of industries. With the threatened revolt by the Opposition, she will not only be able to mobilise support for her Centrism but also curb the demands from the Left for more and more nationalisation.

Whatever the verdict of the Supreme Court, there is no doubt that Indira Gandhi will play a leading role in Indian politics and that it will not be easy to "de-stabilise" her as it was in the case of Allende. As long as she lives, she will be a leader in her own right, and the more blows her opponents inflict upon her, the more will she be driven to rely on her leftwing allies. The ruling Congress and Indira Gandhi have as many "haves" as the Opposition groups, but whereas the former have adopted the policies and idiom of the newly-emerging third world seeking emancipation, the Opposition seeks to woo the masses with slogans of free enterprise, private property and profit. Indira Gandhi's slogans have greater appeal for the masses, and the masses are willing to listen to the war cries of the Opposition only because Indira Gandhi's policies have not brought the millennium promised. The Opposition may win temporary victories, but with their deadwood slogans they will not go far or for very long. But the campaigning of the Opposition may, however, bring a new synthesis in ideas and policies which may find wide consensus among the Indian people at this juncture.

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A Sample Copy of
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CHRONICLE

JUNE 21—27

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

CDN—Ceylon Daily News; CDM—Ceylon Daily Mirror; CO—Ceylon Observer; ST—Sunday Times; TOC—Times of Ceylon; DM—Dinamina; LD—Lankadipa; JD—Janadina; VK—Virakesari; ATH—Aththa; SM—Silumina; SLD—Sri Lankadipa; JS—Janasathiya.

SATURDAY JUNE 21: Mr. B. Y. Tudawe, Deputy Minister of Education, appealed to the University students to return to lectures and said that students with the minimum attendance at lectures would be disqualified to sit the examination: Mr. Tudawe further said that the Government was firmly of view that the Peradeniya Campus should not be out of bounds for police inquiries into any alleged offences against the criminal law of the country or the maintenance of peace: he also said that police would continue their presence in Peradeniya for the protection of the students, university property and staff—CDN. The Ministry of Education has issued an ultimatum to Peradeniya undergraduates to return by June 24: the Ministry further said that students at other institutions that were boycotting classes in support of the university student's demands face the possibility of these institutions remaining closed indefinitely: in the Colombo Campus except for the medical students all other students continued their boycott of lectures—CDM. Mr. Athauda Seneviratne, MP for Ruwanwella and the Secretary of the All Ceylon Samasamaja Youth Leagues Association, in a statement said that the teaching staff, administration and the Ministry of Education are answerable for the present situation in the Peradeniya Campus—JD. The Aththa editorially requested the Government to remove the Police from the Peradeniya Campus and commended the students decision to vacate the Campus failing which the paper said a clash between the police and the students will be unavoidable and thus will ultimately be viewed as a clash between the Government and the students. Mr. Maithripala Senanayake, Minister of Irrigation, Power and Highways, and the Acting Prime Minister, told the *Dinamina* that by November this year arrangements will be made to divert the Mahaweli river to the North Central province enabling nearly 250,000 acres of land to come under irrigation. According to the State Ayurvedic Corporation the prices of ayurvedic medicine has shot up nearly 100 per cent owing to FEECs—LD. Several people were injured and eight coaches were badly damaged when a goods train crashed into the rear of the Badulla night mail train on Thursday at Ohiya—VK. Prominent members of the UNP are desperately attempting to bring about a settlement before the Colombo South by-election to the Srikotha—Woodlands rift in the party—JD. A Polish ship went to the aid of a Thai ship which exploded 500 miles off the coast of Colombo: Colombo Radio picked up the signal of the distress ship which was carrying acetylene gas at the time of the explosion—CDN. Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, attended the inauguration of the United Nations International Women's Year Conference in Mexico City yesterday and she

will return to the island on next Wednesday—CDN. Talks are continuing between the EEC and China and the latter had agreed to send a representative to the EEC at Brussels. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, speaking at a rally said that there was a strong conspiracy to remove her from the political scene: she said the forces against her would even go to the extent of assassinating her.

SUNDAY, JUNE 22: The Students' Council of the Peradeniya Campus in a statement issued yesterday protested against the failure of the authorities for not relaxing the restrictions about demands other than shifting the Police post within the Campus, such as the curfew after 10 p.m. and what not: the authorities have decided to shift the Police post to the edge of the Campus—ST. Arrangements are being made now to involve all students entering the university from next year in a national development program: accordingly, all students will have to participate at least for six months in national development programs—SM. UNPers are disturbed at the failure of the organisers to invite the MP for Dedigama, Mr. Rukman Senanayake, and the Organiser of the party youth leagues, Mr. Jinadasa Niyathapala, for the inaugural propaganda meeting held on June 19 in support of Mr. J. R. Jayewardene's candidature for the Colombo South seat—SLD. By appointing Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe as the organiser for the Kelaniya electorate the executive committee of the UNP has endorsed the wishes of the leader of the party, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, whereas the UNP supporters in the electorate hold a different view to this appointment: according to the amended Constitution of the party the President of the party, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, will elect the executive committee—JS. The Hindu Youth Council has made arrangements to establish three model farms in Tamil speaking areas to provide employment to unemployed Hindu youths: Canadian and Indian embassies in Sri Lanka have pledged their support for the establishment of these farms and the Council will discuss the proposal at its annual meeting being held today and tomorrow in Colombo—VK. Thousands of pilgrims thronged Anuradhapura and Mihintale today for the Posa Poya celebrations: the Poya dawn at 10.42 p.m. today marking the 2283rd year since Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka—ST & CO. According to the Department of Inland Revenue the country had 5 millionaires in the financial year 1971-72—CO. With the assistance of the UNDP plans are afoot to develop the city of Colombo—ST. Compensation payable to the owners of estates taken over by the Government will have to be deposited in local banks and the Government will give necessary assistance to the owners of these funds to start new ventures in Sri Lanka—SLD. Portugal's Supreme Revolutionary Council limited the powers of the Constituent Assembly and threatened to crack down on extreme left wing groups: the Council in a statement said that armed action be taken against persons disturbing public order.

MONDAY, JUNE 23: The Student's Council of the Peradeniya Campus of the University held an emergency meeting yesterday to discuss the appeal made by the Deputy Minister of Education, Mr. B. Y. Tudawe, and decided not to attend lectures until the Police force is moved out of the Campus: they also decided to represent matters to the Prime Minister when she returns to the island—CDN. The Ministry of Education decided

to strictly enforce the rule that students who did not attend 75 per cent of lectures would not be allowed to sit their examinations—CDM. Mr. D. A. Robert a constituent of the Colombo South seat and the proposer of Mr. Suriyapperuma as a candidate for the forthcoming by-election has reported an alleged corrupt practice in the election campaign of the UNP: Mr. Robert in his complaint to the Attorney General has stated that the Secretary of the UNP, Mr. Ananda Tissa de Alwis, had offered to re-admit Mr. Suriyapperuma to the Executive Committee of the UNP after Mr. Suriyapperuma had become a candidate in the Colombo South by election, and that this was contrary to election law 57 (C)—ATH. The Non-Aligned Summit Conference will be held in Colombo from August 9 to 20 in 1976—DM. At a seminar summoned by medical practitioners of the Sri Lanka Medical Association to discuss problems regarding drugs several speakers severely criticised the State Pharmaceutical Corporation especially for creating shortages and pushing up prices of essential drugs—CDM. Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, arrived in Tokyo yesterday from Mexico after attending the International Women's Conference; she will arrive in the island tomorrow—CDM (Reuter). The Land Reform Commission was making arrangements to establish agricultural training centres in all electorates—JD. At a press conference Mr. Dharmasiri Senanayake, Chairman Tourist Board, said that in August next year—the month of the Non-Aligned Summit Conference—tourists will not be permitted and this temporary measure has been decided upon to find accommodation for the delegates participating in the conference—JD. The Polish ship that went to the rescue of a Thai ship which exploded in mid sea arrived yesterday in Colombo with 36 survivors: two Thai sailors died in the explosion—CDN. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said that a sharp transition from war to peace was not possible in the present context of Israeli-Arab relations. Indian Premier Mrs. Indira Gandhi will today file a Supreme Court appeal against the judgement of the Allahabad High Court of June 12 declaring her election void: the Prime Minister will seek an absolute and unconditional stay order against the consequences of the Allahabad High Court verdict until the Supreme Court decides the appeal.

TUESDAY, JUNE 24: Dr. N. M. Perera, Minister of Finance, who returned to the island yesterday after attending a series of conferences of the IMF held in Paris said that "Group of 24" of which he was chairman has made a useful contribution towards Sri Lanka by which the country will get £ 50 million as "soft loan" to meet the country's oil bill this year—CDN. Police occupying the Peradeniya Campus of the university is expected to move into a building in the periphery of the Campus by midnight today—CDM. The Student's Council of the Peradeniya Campus has written to the Minister of Education to take appropriate action to solve the problems facing the students instead of issuing statements threatening students: the Council further said no student will return to the Campus until instructed by the Council to do so—ATH. *Aththa* editorially criticised the attitude among a majority of students in universities who think that they belonged to a super class of people and requested the students to refrain from any type of ragging: the paper warned the students that such an attitude will make things easy for the reactionaries to separate the students from

the ordinary masses and make use of the former against the latter. LSSP-controlled Ceylon Federation of Labour has renewed its campaign for the 28 demands in view of the failure of the Government to grant three demands on which there was official commitment when the CFL called off its token general strike in January—CDN. Mr. J. R. Jayewardene and Mr. J. R. P. Suriyapperuma have started house-to-house campaign in support of their candidatures to the forthcoming Colombo South-by election—VK. It is reported that the UNP's rank and file throughout the country is deeply divided owing to the Srikotha-Woodland rift in the party: when questioned by *Lankadipa* as to how the UF supporters of the electorate should use their votes Mr. Bernard Soysa, Second MP for Colombo South, said that the voters must understand how they should vote at the by-election: meanwhile organisers of Mr. Suriyapperuma have approached the UF organisations in the electorate on a personal level to seek support for their candidate to defeat Mr. Jayewardene at any cost—LD Lack of funds caused the postponement of consideration of a proposal by the Minister of Social Services that people of Indian origin who are named for repatriation must be rounded up and camped—CDN. Indian Opposition party leaders have vowed to oust Mrs. Indira Gandhi from Office: meanwhile the 'stay order appeal verdict is expected to be delivered today: the Supreme Court appeal inquiry will begin on July 14.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25: Undergraduates of the Peradeniya Campus of the university continued the boycott of lectures inspite of the shifting of Police post to the edge of the Campus: students of other campuses—Colombo, Vidyodaya, Katubedda, Jaffna and the Maradana Technical College—continued their boycott of lectures in sympathy with Peradeniya students. Professor Vithanage, President of the Peradeniya Campus said he was waiting for further instructions from the Ministry of Education: meanwhile the Peradeniya Students Council in a statement said the students will not return until their basic demands are met; the 800 strong medical students union said that they will launch a token strike today in sympathy of the Peradeniya students; the Science Teachers' Association of the Colombo Campus has asked campus President, Professor P. P. G. L. Siriwardene, for protection if they were to continue lectures: four female undergraduates who were taken into custody by the Kandy Police in connection with incidents of ragging were later released on Police bail: the Peradeniya Campus authorities will decide today whether to close down the hostels as it costs them Rs. 10,000 a day to keep them opened—CDN. The 600 freshers of the Vidyalkankara Campus in a surprise move decided to boycott lectures in support of five demands, one of which is that lectures must begin immediately for seniors—CDM. Mr. D. W. Wanigasekera, a former Director of the Bank of Ceylon, and Mr. Lancelot Fernando, a former Vice Chairman of the Insurance Corporation, were yesterday released on Rs. 100,000 bail each by the Supreme Court: these two were convicted and sentenced to jail by the Bribery Court last week which had refused them bail pending appeal—CDM. Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike arrived in the island early this morning and at a press conference at the airport soon after her arrival said her trip to Switzerland and Mexico were successful and that these two countries had increased their trade with Sri Lanka—CDN. The Ministry of Industries has

set apart a further Rs. 100 million for the private sector to import vital raw materials and machinery spares bringing the total amount set apart for the private sector for this year to Rs. 225 million—CO. A former Senator, Edmund Samarawickrema is making efforts to effect a settlement in the dispute in regard to two Colombo South candidates, between Mr. J. R. Jayewardene and Mr. J. R. P. Suriyapperuma—TOC. The Ministry of Industries decided to handover the distribution of synthetic textiles to the co-operatives from July—CDN. Mr. S. Thondaman, President of the Ceylon Workers' Congress, met the British Minister of Trade in London yesterday and appealed for British assistance to improve the conditions of workers in tea plantations in the island—VK. The *Janadina* editorially appealed to the Government to nationalise textile industries in keeping with the 28 demands of the Ceylon Federation of Labour. A school building collapsed in the Kottawa electorate causing the death of two students—LD. The Indian Supreme Court allowed a conditional stay against legal penalties imposed on Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, by the Allahabad High Court: under the conditional stay the Prime Minister will not be able to vote in Parliament but will remain as Prime Minister and address both houses of Parliament. Indian Opposition parties threatened a nationwide campaign of passive resistance to drive the Prime Minister from office. US Senate investigating committee will meet John Roselli, a reputed Mafia leader to probe Mafia's role in alleged assassination plots originated by the CIA.

THURSDAY, JUNE 26: Government yesterday commenced talks with a IMF delegation on the Rs. 50 million "soft loan" to meet the country's oil bill this year: at the outset the IMF sought answers to a 25 point questionnaire on the economic conditions of the country—CDN. A team of Sri Lanka officials will shortly leave for Iraq to discuss the Iraqi offer of 500,000 tons of crude oil: officials of the Petroleum Corporation said that the refinery in the country is not equipped to process the type of crude oil Iraq had offered and the team expected to leave for Iraq will request the latter to change the kind of oil that is offered or to phase out supplies for a period of three years enabling Sri Lanka to process the oil in small quantities—CDN. The Sri Lanka Jathika Guru Sangamaya (membership 40,000) appealed to the Government to bring about an early settlement to the problem of the undergraduates—CDN. After analysing the report of the Commissions that probed into incidents of ragging in the Vidyalankara Campus of the university, the Ministry of Education is expected to come to a final decision to solve the problems in the university: meanwhile freshers of the Vidyalankara Campus returned to their lectures while the senior students were seen outside the campus premises—LD. Dr. Badiuddin Mahmud, Minister of Education, will today present before the Cabinet the situation in various campuses of the university and the Cabinet is expected to arrive at a firm decision—DM. Student leaders of the Peradeniya Campus met the Minister of Education, Dr. Mahmud, yesterday and explained to him the difficulties faced by the students: they thanked the Minister for shifting the Police post: the delegation met Ministers Dr. N. M. Perera, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, Mr. T. B. Subasinghe and requested them to help solve their problems—VK. About 355,000 public servants in 150 government departments

will cast their votes by secret ballot early next month to form the first Credit Councils to be set up in every department—CDM. The Agricultural Insurance Board has decided to allow farmers to pay their premiums and acreage tax in paddy instead of in money: this decision had been taken to enable the village farmers to make payments promptly without waiting for the sale of their produce—DM. Indian President Fakruddin Ali Ahmed early this morning declared a state of emergency throughout India because of internal disturbances threatening the security of India: most of the country's main opposition leaders and even dissident members of the ruling Congress party were arrested: a total press censorship was imposed in the wake of the emergency: a BBC broadcast named Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan, leader of the Peoples' Front, Mr. Morarji Desai and Mr. Raj Narain as being among those arrested: Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, in a broadcast to the nation said that there was a conspiracy to destroy the integrity of India and this had necessitated this action.

FRIDAY, JUNE 27: Addressing the Sinhala Stenographer's Union meeting, Dr. N. M. Perera, Minister of Finance, said that it was "fantastic to say that there are no CIA activities in Sri Lanka": the Minister further said that the country might hear about CIA activities only after its destruction—CDM. Authorities of the Peradeniya Campus declared holidays for senior students starting from today—LD. The *Aththa* editorially requested the Cabinet to solve the problem of the university students by dialogue. A meeting of the UNP youths held yesterday to explain the current political situation in the country ended abruptly when several members shouted slogans opposing J. R. Jayewardene's actions within the party: Mr. Vincent Perera MP for Colombo North, presided—ATH. The Minister of Irrigation, Power and Highways, Mr. Maithripala Senanayake, left early this morning on an official visit to the People's Republic of China—CDN. Mr. T. N. de S. Wickremasinghe, a planter, was yesterday sentenced to 4 years rigorous imprisonment and ordered to pay a fine of Rs. 25,000 on two charges of foreign exchange violations—CDN. The City Vice Squad was scrapped and the Officer-in-Charge was transferred—ATH. From the beginning of next year private film distributor-importer organisations will cease to function and the State Film Corporation will take over the activities of these distributors—CDN. When the annual sessions of the Northern province LSSP was held under the chairmanship of Mr. Leslie Goonewardene, Minister of Transport, the consensus of opinion among the majority of members was that the Government must hold discussions with the representatives of the Tamil United Front to solve the problems of the Tamils and not with pro-government personalities in the North—VK. Following the declaration of emergency in India, telecommunication services between Britain and India were abruptly cut off and the London Post office was unable to tell the reason: the top political Affairs Committee of Mrs. Indira Gandhi met in an emergency session yesterday and is believed to have approved the strong action taken by declaring a state of emergency and detaining certain leaders of the Opposition.

THE SRI LANKA RUPEE

Going Down And Down

by A. Layman

What is the real value of the Ceylon Rupee today?

Nobody has worked this out, as yet. It is argued that the black market rate is no longer an accurate yardstick because the local exchange control and anti-smuggling regulations have been enforced with near-barbaric severity. This, it is said, has rendered the black market in foreign exchange ineffective. Furthermore, it is also asserted that the blackmarket in Indian currency has come to a standstill after India had taken stern measures to liquidate its own currency and smuggling underworld.

Whatever official quarters like to believe, it is known that the blackmarket in foreign currency in Colombo is still very active although the operators have burrowed deeper into the underground and are more discreet in their transactions. There is not the slightest doubt that blackmarket rate is still a very realistic indicator of the international worth of currency.

However, it is more difficult to work out the internal (or domestic) worth of our currency except in the most indirect of terms evaluated in the prices of essential goods and services. Neither the Research Department of the Central Bank nor the embryonic Research Division of the Peoples Bank have so far attempted to do this perhaps because the findings may prove more unpalatable than what the Government has attempted to make people believe. In this article an attempt will be made to probe cursorily the question of the domestic worth of the Sri Lanka rupee today from a layman's point of view, and there is no better backdrop for such a study than an examination of the worth of our Rupee in the international money market.

The Newsweek publishes in every issue a regular feature on *Foreign Exchange*, where the official "central rate" for US \$ 1 in 34 different countries of the "free" capitalist world is set out alongside the

amount the dollar is "worth" in actual practice. For three countries, Egypt, Eire and Britain, the rates are quoted in terms of the pound. In the May 26, issue of Newsweek, in Sri Lanka, the central rate for \$ 1.00 was listed as Rs. 10.15 (which includes the FEECs of 65%), but the "worth" of \$ 1 was said to be Rs. 16. This is a rough indication of the blackmarket rate for the US dollar. The Newsweek of June 16 mentions Rs. 16.40 as the blackmarket rate. It will be noticed that the term "blackmarket" is very carefully avoided by means of the euphemism "worth".

But those who know their way around the underworld in the Fort in Colombo, where the bulk of the local unofficial foreign currency transaction take place—almost under the nose of the Central Bank—it is said that a high denomination note, like a \$ 100 bill, fetches as much as Rs. 20 to the dollar and that the rate goes down step by step until the rate for a one dollar bill is around Rs. 16 to Rs. 17. The West Germany mark fetches the highest premium today followed closely by the Japanese yen, the French mark and other hard currencies. The Singapore and Malaysian dollars also command a great deal of respect.

There is, moreover, an over-rated local demand for the Indian and the Maldivian rupee. One hundred Indian rupees cost anything from 165 to 200 Sri Lanka rupees depending on the daily or weekly fluctuations on the unofficial currency stock exchange in Colombo. But the Maldivian rupee fetches a much higher premium. One hundred Maldivian rupees—if you can get them—cost as much as 350 to 400 Sri Lanka rupees. To the person who is able to go to the virtually duty free Maldives on a shopping spree, the Maldivian rupee is gold. There are no transactions in Male, even on the unofficial market, for the Sri Lanka rupee. A pound sterling is officially rated between 9 and 11 Maldivian rupees and one US dollar is rated around four Maldivian rupees. At the FEECs rate, a pound sterling is about Rs. 26.00 (Rs. 25.99, being the last rate quoted by a commercial bank), and on this the Maldivian Rupee is worth two and a half times the FEECs Sri Lanka rupee. But in the real (though called unofficial) market the rate is three

and a half to four times higher. This is a measure of the value of the Sri Lanka rupee. At one time, the Ceylon rupee was a very highly valued currency in the Maldives. Until very recently, really until the British set up their base in Gan Islands and the Maldivian shipping company got into its stride, the Ceylon Rupee was the only foreign currency known in the Maldives. Today, no Maldivian, however humble or poor, will touch a Sri Lanka rupee—except for local purchases in Colombo. In regard to India, the official rate is about 90 Sri Lanka cents to one Indian Rupee of one hundred Indian cents, but the unofficial rate is 1.65 to 2 times more than the Sri Lanka rupee. The unofficial rating for the US dollar and the pound sterling is also about 1½ to 2 times the official parity.

What this means is that the Sri Lanka Rupee has to be devalued another 60% to 100%, over the present FEECs rate, if its worth is to get anywhere near its real worth in terms of any hard currency which is in demand. A slightly lower devaluation will bring it somewhere near the worth of the Indian rupee, but the latter is not a currency which is regarded as a yardstick of a stable economy. When the last devaluation took place and when the FEECs rate was imposed to constitute a two-tier exchange system, it was asserted that the FEECs rate had brought the Ceylon Rupee very close to its international worth. But even at that time it was pointed out that there was still a sizable gap between the FEECs rate and the actual worth of the Ceylon rupee in the international money market. Since that time the gap has widened, and the United Front—in spite of pious declarations that it will not resort to the capitalist device of devaluation—has adopted various transparent devices to devalue the Sri Lanka rupee primarily in the domestic market. *Tribune* has consistently pointed out these acts of disguised devaluation from time to time and there is no need to recount them now, because what we are examining today is not the history of the declining value of the Sri Lanka rupee but its actual worth today.

LEARNED NOTES have been written in the Report of the Central Bank for 1974 and the two numbers

of the People's Bank *Economic Review* which have appeared, about the world-wide recession, about the global inflation, and a number of other matters which have brought economic difficulties to Sri Lanka. We have been assured that other countries in the free and capitalist world also suffer from similar maladies. It has been stressed that owing to the pressures we are subject to have a huge foreign debt, but Mr. Dennis Healey has revealed that £ 5 in every £ 100 people spend in Britain was financed by overseas borrowing.

The causes of Britain's economic distress are certainly different from ours. Britain's current deficit for 1975 is estimated by the OECD to be in the region of \$ 7 billions or £ 3 million. It is the largest deficit among the member nations of the OECD. Economic pundits in Britain have suggested that excessive consumption at home had interfered with the export effort and had also increased the imports. Britain's export effort had also suffered because of labour shortages (including semi-skilled and unskilled workers) and other bottlenecks in production. The paradox of the situation is that there were over 700,000 unemployed at the end of 1974.

Even more significant is the fact that the British rate of inflation in 1975 was running at twice the international average. The April Price index had shown that the rate of increase was over 21.7 percent more than that a year ago. There are no comparable figures in Sri Lanka about the rate of inflation here. We have no retail price index and the Colombo consumer cost of living index is inadequate and misleading. But one thing we must remember is that Britain's economic health has a very big impact on the economic life of Sri Lanka. Our trade and our financial structure is still very much tied up with that of Britain. And if Britain has suffered severe reverses in the economic field, more than other countries in the capitalist world, Sri Lanka will likewise reflect this in no uncertain way.

While those who seek to explain why the inflation in Sri Lanka has taken such a heavy toll of living standards seek to oversimplify the problem by asserting that global inflation has affected the inflation

here, there has been inadequate attention paid to the fact that the disequilibrium in Britain's economy has done more damage than any other single factor to disturb the economy of this island.

It is also necessary to remember that any exercise to evaluate the worth of the Sri Lanka rupee in terms of the official rates of hard foreign currencies will not lead to any fruitful conclusions. Such an analysis will only be an academic exercise. And, an attempt to explore the intricacies of the international currency blackmarket, so far as the Sri Lanka rupee is concerned, will only lead us into a labyrinthian maze of speculative permutations and combinations in currency complications.

WITH THIS AS BACKGROUND, the question is whether we can make a satisfactory evaluation of the Sri Lanka rupee in the internal market. What is important, so far as ordinary people are concerned, is what the local rupee can buy. Every one is certain, (and there is no doubt that this truth), that the value of our rupee has been dropping steadily over the years. And, it is continuing to drop at a very fast rate. It has dropped and is dropping much faster than the increase in the quantum of wages of ordinary people.

It is necessary to stress that the decline in the value of the Sri Lanka rupee is only a measure of the island's economic problems and is certainly not the cause. Neither the Report of the Central Bank, with its conventional economic orthodoxies, nor the highly professorial articles in the new *Economic Review* of the People's Bank can help a layman to understand why the value of his earnings is daily going down and down in the internal market. In terms of vegetables, fish, meat and other essentials our Rupee does not carry a householder very far today. One year ago a pound of beans had cost around sixty cents: today the price shoots up to very near two rupees very often. One egg today costs between sixty and seventy cents. A pound of 'seer' fish is now nearly always closer to Rs. 8 a lb than Rs. 7. The cheapest dried fish, which two years ago cost about a rupee a pound, today costs around Rs. 4.

It will be only an exercise in fantasy to compare prices today

and the prices of few years ago. Men at the top of the political and administrative machine today were students in the higher educational institutions in the early thirties. Prices then were "depressed" owing to the great depression, but they were not much lower than during the boom years of the mid twenties. An egg in the early thirties had cost only two cents each. A pound of chicken meat had cost around 35 cents a pound whilst mutton was under 50 cents. Beef was far cheaper. The best seer was 50 cents a pound. This was in Colombo town. Outstations everything was cheaper.

The level of salaries have increased from five to ten times since the 1930s, but the prices of essential food items and textiles have increased anything from twenty to forty times. A comparison with the prices today with the prices in the early forties, fifties and sixties respectively will reveal a gradual decline in the value of the rupee. But the drop has been sharpest in the last two years. And this is perhaps no doubt due

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Prices Keep Increasing

mainly to the deteriorating economic and monetary conditions in the world today.

It is unfortunate that there has been no attempt to examine the value of the Sri Lanka rupee over the last four decades, ever since the introduction of the Donoughmore Constitution with adult franchise. The Central Bank has published Reports annually which give a wealth of statistical data, but no economic pundit has yet thought it worthwhile to work out the declining value of our rupee over the years. Governments have not been inclined to encourage this kind of study because they think that it will tend to undermine their popularity—because every government is anxious to show that common people were doing much better than they ever were.

Government expenditure on education and welfare has increased so greatly that the outside trimmings of an affluent society, with high literacy rates and the like, have given a false picture of the true state of Sri Lanka. How far does Rs. 500 go today compared to what Rs. 100 was able to buy in 1970? Or in 1960? or in 1940? or in 1930? How much did a man who earns Rs. 500 today earn in 1930, in 1940, 1950, 1960 and 1970? There was and there is undoubted unevenness in wage-earning in the different sectors of the economy, at all times, but an inquiry confined to a lower income group wage-earner in the public sector (in an urban area) will be most revealing.

Furthermore, there is no indicator more fallible than what is called the local cost of living index. One can cite passages from the different reports of the Central Bank over the years to show that our cost of living index is an eye-wash—intended to help Government to peg and freeze the allowances payable to wage-earners. The Daily News, on 13/5/75, published a report from some World Bank document to show what a poor guide the Colombo Consumer Index really was.

The Colombo Consumer Price Index is seriously inadequate as an "indicator of aggregate price and cost of living changes" according to the World Bank. The standards used have not been revised since 1952 despite substantial changes in consumption patterns and in-

sufficient attention has been paid to the relative importance of prices in the open and controlled markets, the Bank states in its latest report on Sri Lanka's economy. It is difficult in Sri Lanka to measure price inflation because of the lack of comprehensive statistics but despite the problems of measurement, the report states it is obvious that the country in 1973 and 1974 has experienced a sharp increase in prices: it was particularly sensitive to world wide inflation because of the openness of its economy. The magnitude of these price rises suggests that the cost of living for most workers increased much more than shown by the Colombo CPI, the report states. On balance, the farm population suffered less than the urban wage earners for a variety of reasons. They profited from higher prices for their output, while still obtaining food rations and social service benefits. There was also a high rate of default on loans made by the government to farmers which meant in effect an additional source of income.

While people keep demanding higher and higher wages in terms of the Rupee, there is as yet no concerted attempt to effectively stabilise prices. Plans are proclaimed on paper. The desire to fulfil good intentions about controlling prices manifest themselves in various draconian regulations and a superabundance of Flying Squads, but prices keeping mounting and the real value of the Rupee keeps dropping.

Only a fortnight or so ago, the Sunday edition of the Ceylon Observer had a report under the heading **FOODSTUFFS UP 100%**.

There has been a hundred per cent increase in most consumer foodstuffs in the open market. Prices of vegetables and dried fish have shot up since last week. The prices of vegetables like beans, potatoes, and ash plantains have almost doubled. A pound of beans costs Rs. 1.80 potato fetches Rs. 1.80 and ash plantain 90 cts. The prices of red onions too have sky-rocketed. A pound costs as much as Rs. 2. Private traders are enjoying a boom with the sudden change in prices. Consumers have been badly hit by the sudden price increase of these day-to-day household items.

Dried fish prices too have gone up. A CWE spokesman said that there had been a price increase of all varieties since last week. The prices are as follows:—

	Old Price	New Price
Seer	Rs. 2.00	3.50
Balaya	Rs. 1.60	2.50
Anguluwa	Rs. 1.20	2.25
Halmessa	Rs. 1.20	2.25
Bombili	Rs. 2.00	3.50
Katta	Rs. 2.00	3.50
Salaya	Cts. 0.90	1.75
Kumbala	Cts. 0.90	1.75
Karalla	Cts. 0.90	1.75

But only a small fraction of the population can get dried fish at the CWE prices. Most people have to buy it—if they want it—from private traders at 50% to 100% over the CWE prices. The majority of the ordinary households can no longer afford dried fish.

Furthermore, newspaper reports and articles cannot prevent prices soaring or the value of money going down. The Sunday edition of the Observer last weekend, June 22, had another interesting piece with the heading: **VEGETABLE PRICES ON A STEADY CLIMB**. The report reflected the cry of distress in thousands of ordinary homes about the falling value of our rupee. With Rs. 10 we can this week just buy what we had purchased with Rs. 3 to Rs. 5 just a few weeks ago.

Up! Up! Up! Vegetable prices as well as the prices of several other essential consumer commodities have sky-rocketed well beyond the means of the average middle class consumer in the past two months or so. The prices of Up-country vegetables in particular have doubled and trebled. Not a single up-country vegetable can now be bought for less than a rupee per pound. Following are the prices at which some of these up-country vegetables are now sold in the Pettah market:

Beans—Rs. 2.00 a lb, Carrots—Rs. 1.50—1.75, a lb, Tomatoes—Rs. 3.50—4, Beetroot—Rs. 1.20, Leeks—Rs. 1, Cabbage—Rs. 1.25, Potatoes—Rs. 1.60—1.75 a lb.

Traders attribute these high prices to the heavy rains now being experienced in most of the vegetable growing areas in the hill country. Low country vegetable prices have also shot to unprecedented levels in the past two months. Popular low-country vegetables such as

brinjals which were earlier sold for around 35-40 cts. a lb, are now going for 80 cts—one rupee a lb, Ladies fingers also sold for around 40 cts previously, are now sold at Rs. 1, Rs. 1.20 a lb. A pound of pathola costs Rs. 1 and even kohila, which cost a mere 30 cts for a pound some time ago, is now selling for as much as Rs. 1 a pound. Drumsticks cost as much as 1.50 a lb. The cheapest vegetables in the market are probably Vattakka (30 cts a lb) and Puhul (about 35 to 40 ctsf)

Dried fish once a convenient substitute is also far beyond the reach of the middle class housewife. A lb of thora dried fish costs Rs. 8, 'Cutta' 6-7 rupees a lb and sprats Rs. 6 a lb. The prices of garlic and spices are equally formidable. Garlic, now freely available in the blackmarket, can be bought for Rs. 20 a lb, while Suduru fetches as much as Rs. 20-24 a lb. The only consolation housewives have now is that flour is freely available "No more standing in queues for bread, thank heavens!" one housewife commented.

Where will this end?

PERADENIYA — 2

To End Ragging Dons and Seniors Must Act.

By DR. MICHAEL ROBERTS

Senior Lecturer, Department of
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I can provide no personal eyewitness evidence of ragging. It will not be possible for me to substantiate some of the statement I make below and they will be deliberately couched in such phrases as "it appears that" or "rumour has it." The difficulty of getting definitive evidence is such that one is forced to adopt this manner of statement. Until freshers are ready to give evidence, one has to convey much second-hand evidence. In a few cases, however where hospitalisation has occurred or the culprits have been identified and punished, more firm statements are possible. Those who may be tempted to use the des-

criptions in this letter as evidence must therefore be advised to take note of these qualifications and the unsubstantiated nature of some of the evidence available.

Let us take cases. In general, a "course" or "session" of ragging in the rooms of the residential halls is a gruelling business. It might include relatively harmless actions such as that of simulated swimming motions or singing a song (though even the latter is a strain for those who cannot sing, especially when it draws humiliating guffaws and cracks from the seniors present). It will include verbal onslaughts and continuous oral denigration—often in foul language. It will also involve exhaustive physical acts: hanging from slats or bars, dips and other exercises. In some instances freshers appear to have even been asked to do 200 dips or to raise their body on the support of their palms alone; and this is supported by medical evidence of pains due to grossly excessive exercises in a few cases which reached hospital. Thus, even where no perverted actions occur, even where no physical damage is caused, it is an irksome, humiliating, and exhausting business. It is not insignificant that of several freshers who were temporarily housed in a guest house and ate in a neighbouring hall, several did not return to the guest house after their evening meal till 5.00 or 6.00 a.m. the next morning; in brief, they were ragged for hours. It should also be noted that in the men's halls such "courses" of ragging are often gone through entirely in the nude. All in all, the obvious analogy is that of police third degree treatment. But the damage goes beyond that of exhaustion and humiliation. Several male students have had their arms twisted and bruised. A few have been assaulted; one or two freshers ended up in hospital with headaches due to blows on the head. One student is said to have broken his shoulder because he had to carry a table with several students on it. Some would seem to have been forced to lie on the floor while several seniors walked over them; and a few have developed chest pains as a result (confirmed medical evidence). One student was taken blindfolded to another hall and forced to masturbate four times. He collapsed.

It also appears that in several cases the pubic hair had been burnt. The placing of lighted bulbs and live wires against male genitals also seems to have been not uncommon in its incidence. A doctor who treated several freshers reported cases of mental anxiety arising from the fact that they were forced to masturbate in public or had their scrotum and testicles handled and subject to blows.

While there are some horror stories relating to ragging in the women's halls of evidence and reports of stripping etcetera, I have less information from this arena and no confirmatory medical evidence pertaining to any case, so I will not convey descriptions of what went on in these halls. However, it might be worth noting that, in 1974 and 1973, when ragging outside the halls was more widespread, there were several reports that male students had molested fresher women when they were cornered in, or led to, relatively isolated spots.

NEED ONE RELATE MORE? These may appear to be a few extreme cases. In my intuitive opinion, one that cannot be substantiated, this is not so. I believe there are many more cases of minor physical damage which never come to light.

There must be several cases of mental strain and psychiatric damage. Indeed, the few cases of hospitalisation are no index to the magnitude and severity of the ragging; the hours of servile obedience which are enforced on hundreds of freshers, the hours of abject degradation to which they are subject (without necessarily having physical scars). If this is an individual intuitive opinion, I am confident that numerous lecturers and other residents on the campus will share this opinion.

Ragging is an atrocity. Ragging is a social crime. Its true nature was aptly encapsulated by the remarks directed at the seniors by an ordinary man, a worker repairing chairs in one of the halls, the epitome of Citizen Bandara, who boldly told the seniors that what they were indulging in was @C. @T@. No line can be drawn. All forms of ragging, as practised in Sri Lanka, are indefensible in principle and atrocious in their implications.

In summary, the rationale against ragging can be presented in three contentions. Firstly, ragging violates the principles of individual liberty and humane behaviour. In the second place, it is in total opposition to the egalitarian principle.

Ragging proceeds on the footing that the seniors are superior to the freshers. Not merely that: the freshers are converted into the chattels and slaves of the seniors; they become so many little possessions; toys for the use, pleasure and laughter of the seniors; little performing puppets, whose penises and other organs, and forced into performances which delight the attendant audience of seniors.

Ragging, I repeat, is an atrocity. In many instances it is *atrocitas*. It is also a form of imperialism. Thirdly, too, ragging leads to physical excesses which may leave permanent scars on a few freshers. At least one student was in danger of impotency in 1973. In a few instances, the enormity of the damage is aggravated by the fact that ragging has destroyed, or contributed to the destruction of, the hopes of a whole, poor family—whose future prospects rested, in part or in whole, on their bright child's career.

Ragging, I repeat, is a social crime. It says much for the resilience of the human being that so many survive the ragging. Yet there surely must be sensitive souls who are permanently affected. There certainly are a few instances in which some parents have removed their children from the campus as a result of ragging; and other instances where students themselves have given up their university career.

There must surely be several other instances of parents who have decided for this reason against sending their children to the University though they have qualified to enter. This, too, surely rates as a social crime. For a country desperately short of manpower resources it is imperative that the best skills should be located and trained. Ragging hinders this goal.

RAGGING is also a dehumanising process. Those who rag become even less humane and less sensitive to the feelings of other human beings. Those who are ragged in

one year apparently wait for the chance to rag others the next year. This surely is the most conclusive evidence of the dehumanising influence of the ragging practice, the vicious circle of ragging it creates, the self-reinforcing and ever expanding pools of atrocious behaviour it spawns. The angry public and the angry parents of freshers should remember this.

The second years (who do most of the ragging) and the other seniors also have parents. The loved sons and daughters of many parents are responsible for the atrocious and inhumane practices I have been talking about. What have parents of seniors done about it? Does every parent believe his child's earnest denial? If so we have no seniors who rag! And what will the parents of this year's freshers do to prevent their children from ragging others next year?

The responsibility for ragging surely goes beyond the Campus—though the greatest portion of responsibility obviously devolves on the senior students themselves and those lecturers and officers in responsible posts, and, in lesser measure, the rest of the Campus community.

It is possible that the present hue and cry will lead to a Commission of Inquiry. The students may themselves ask for one. This is a favourite trick to postpone matters, to complicate matters and delay the day of reckoning. (They have, in fact, fixed on the abrupt dismissal of Dr. George Kodituwakku and the presence of policemen on the Campus as the principal issues of the day—to the relative neglect of the social implications of ragging).

As far as I am concerned, a Commission of Inquiry can only substantiate my own conviction of the main issue; viz., that there has been severe ragging this year. A Commission can only dot some (not all) of the i's and cross some t's. It can only provide more gory details and good newscopy.

For my part, what is more essential is that a small group of persons familiar with the specific and complex problems of ragging in Peradeniya Campus should sit down and evolve some scheme to prevent ragging in the year 1976 and in the future.

Ragging is so atrocious in its incidence and nature, and a social crime of such a magnitude, that drastic measures are called for. Dreadful practice calls for drastic remedy. However, police patrols along the campus roads, police dogs, and a massive police presence will not prevent ragging within the halls.

A number of measures and procedures will have to be carefully fashioned out over the next year to prevent ragging in any form whatsoever.

In this process efforts should be made to consult those students who are opposed to the practice. Among dons there is a sharp division of opinion as to the number of students who favour the ragging practice; but it can be agreed that a few students are opposed to it and that several more are unhappy about its excesses and abuses.

Huge Land Rising in Bay of Bengal 17/3/75

A huge mass of land is slowly rising up in the Bay of Bengal adjoining the Bangladesh coastal belt. The land covering about 10,000 square miles is visible from the air along the southern coast of the country.

The massive formation is the result of heavy silting of river mouths over a decade, reports said. It is in the form of uneven emergence of innumerable islands. The Government has appointed a 24-member committee to study the problem of coastal accretion.

Formation of the new land was first detected by an American satellite. The Earth Resources Technology Satellite (ERTS), one of the wings of the National Aeronautic and Space Agency (NASA) of the U.S. had relayed the pictures of the formation to Bangladesh. ERTS analysis, who studied the formation along Barisal Patuakhali and Noakhali coast reported that natural afforestation was continuing on the emerging islands despite submersion during high tides.

Meanwhile administrative measures are being taken locally to prevent incursion into the new land.

Intimidation, fear, lack of courage and the tremendous pressures towards conformism have (in the past few years) prevented these students from making their opposition effective, or even noticeable. Given the social pressures they are subject to, it would require moral courage of the highest order for them to speak out against ragging and or give evidence against fellow students.

Since few lecturers, wardens, and campus doctors have displayed moral courage of this order, one can hardly expect students to give the lead. Yet, more than anyone else, senior students are in a position to stop these atrocities. A determined group of seniors could do a great deal to convert others against the practice (this has happened before in some halls in the 1960's). It is about time that senior students began to act like responsible citizens.

A critical self-analysis is called for. More than anything else, this open letter is an appeal to all University students to subject their past behaviour and the practice of ragging to a searching re-examination. It is a practice, I submit, which dehumanises all those involved and which is totally opposed to all those ideals they voice in tutorial papers or public platforms.

It is a practice which should be totally obliterated. Rather than the method of deterrents from above, it will be a far, far better road if the University students themselves assist us in this objective. For this we need genuine co-operation, not the pious postures for public consumption which they have learnt from political practitioners.

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FOR NEWS

BEHIND THE NEWS

read

TRIBUNE

regularly

BUILDING A VILLAGE HOUSE—39

Death of a Dancing Master—1

By Herbert Keuneman

I HAVE LOST a very dear and respected friend of our earliest Ehetuwewa days: Dingiriya Gurunanse of Ratnadivulleva. Dinga, I used to call him.

Maybe it was from this long habituation I persist in the masculine form for the Dinga of my house, though Dingi should be the feminine diminutive.

I have been for long spells out of touch with Dinga—on my present return to Ehetuwewa I found that he had moved far away, to Soliwewa, one of the new Rajangan colonies, yet it took only our rare re-encounters to rekindle the old affection—and now the loss is final.

The village, too, has lost. (and by that I mean the whole 'Ehetuwewa' community; not his own ancillary village) one of its few men of ideal and integrity and patient courage, though I don't know how many of the village are aware it has been diminished or greatly care that it has. These are not today's useful virtues.

I have, I think, spoken of the village of Divulleva as a rare enclave—there is another nearby; but none else that I know of—of the *oli* caste within Kandy territory. Yet there must be others; for it was formerly the *oli*-dancers by-caste profession—that wore the gigantic effigies of the *asuras* (a feature now disused) in the Kandy *peraharas*. Dinga's village was originally known as *Oli-divulleva* and has only recently, by village petition, been granted in the current fashion the high-sounding prefix of *Ratna*-instead.

As you might suspect from this, the *oli* are accounted a 'low' caste it is their own contention that they rival—and outrival—the *bera* caste, of Drummers; but there is not the least doubt amongst the Drummers as to their comparative status and as far as I am aware no *Nekati* community (a term signifying Astrologism, the other *bera* caste-activity, and one generally prefixing the names of *bera* villages) has ever asked to have

its prefix changed: a fact that, maybe, speaks for itself. The largest numbers of *oli* are to be found near Ambalangoda: a circumstance interesting on its own; for the *Divulleva oli* too serve *Kadavara Deviyo*, an aspect of *Gara Yaka* who is the object of some of the most impressive *Ambalangoda* exorcistic ceremonies. Nevertheless the *Divulleva* enclave could be several centuries old—as old as the *Vanni Chieftans*—if Dinga's claim that his ancestors served all eighteen chiefdoms—could be substantiated. I don't know that it can be—here is something for real ethnologists to examine—but I seem to remember that each is celebrated in the long epic *Dinga's* mother used to know largely by heart, in which her family's ancestry was traced back—this I remember clearly—by name for 73 generations..and certainly nobody recently wrote that.

MY WIFE AND I first got to know Dinga through *Lansina*, his little daughter. We found her leading a school *perahara*, supported by a troupe of other dancers but the only girl and the outstanding performer amongst them. She was only a baby then—9 or 10—but she danced like a little angel. One of the boys, much older, was good, also (*Wilbert*, *Lansina's* brother) and a few others showed promise; and we naturally enquired as to who taught them. A few days later we called at the dancing-school, where we became frequent and evidently welcome visitors, and gradually we got to know how the school had come to be founded. It was a thing of sacrifice and vision and I am happy to think that we were later—with generous help from friends and from the Department of Cultural Affairs—to play a part in enlarging it. Dinga himself gave everything—all he had and was—to the School.

The School no longer exists. And that—epitomizing the village tragedy, in which no one plays an abject part—is the story.

Dingiriya Gurunanse came of a long heredity of exorcists (the 73 generations in the family epic, of which I have spoken, would carry the line back well into *Anuradhapura* times). But the succession stretched on his mother's side. His father *Battiya* was *oli* too, of course, but made no claim to continue any such tradition in his own descent. He would have been

content to be a simple small-farmer, a liberty always available—though not always unembarrassed—to any member of a Sinhalese caste so long as a community duly rendered the caste labour or practised the caste skill. But he was infinitely proud, as her whole family was proud, of the ancient caste office his wife Guni represented.

Though none so proud—and ambitious—as Guni herself. Only child, as she was, of her once celebrated house—but alas! a daughter, to whom the village grants only proprietary rights of succession—she nevertheless struggled for nearly sixty years to restore her ancestral privilege; and had she died ten years earlier she might have died believing it re-established. But fate decreed she must see what she built with the help of her sons begin to crumble. It could not have been easy for her to go. (For Dinga, on the other hand, I think his own end was welcome.)

Guni tried, at first, to practise, herself, as 'the only woman *kattadiya* in Lanka'. She rejoiced to call herself so until a host of imitators backed by a kind of cynically increasing gullibility on the public part throughout the Island contradicted the claim, and when I knew her she was reduced, by her own term, to 'the first woman *kattadiya* in Lanka'; but she still took pride in it. While yet a young woman she celebrated some of the most august and terrifying (if you believed in the powers she fought) of the ceremonies she had forced her father to teach her: such rituals—unthinkable, one would imagine, in anybody of her sex and beliefs and time—as suffering herself to be laid and left alone at midnight in a mock-grave in the demon-haunted wild of a village burial-ground. But her time defeated her. Willing as the people are to flock to the seances of some *soi-disant* 'woman medium' in our sophisticated day, the villagers of Guni's day were more rigorous and unbending in the conventions, and hence perhaps the assay? of their faith. Guni had to await the growth of her sons before the occult authority of her fathers could be securely founded again.

It was her elder son, naturally, whom she first initiated (though both boys had studied dancing, an essential element of the full ceremonies, with a master in Kuru-

negala). Slowly the number of suppliants for Kadavara's favour began to swell. So did clients for smaller rituals: the undoing of spells, the tying of protective threads, ridding homes of the little hungry ghosts called *peretayo*.

Then Guni overreached herself. THERE LIVES in Ehetuwewa to this day a woman named Adi the Crooked One. She must have been something of a beauty in her time: fifteen years ago, when I first saw her, she still had the figure of a girl, a lovely girl; it was when she turned her face upon me that I saw the reason for her name. 'Flesh', as Kipling has it, 'like slag in a furnace.....'

While yet in adolescence Adi began to show signs of insanity, the classic *dementia praecox*: schizophrenia today. She has remained a harmless soul, unexceptionable apart from a penchant for bathing at dawn in the nude or near-nude and exercising an unrivalled gift for unprovoked and obscene vituperation. At one time she even served her village, in a bizarre sort of way: every morning un-failingly, a little before cockcrow, Adi would awaken and begin to howl. Villagers would rise when they heard her and begin preparations for catching the 5 o' clock bus.

Guni let it be known that her son could identify the demon that plagued poor Adi and cast him out.

The exorcism took place, as usual, at night, by flickering torchlight since this was before lamps were common furniture in the Vanni. All night the drums rang and thundered, the dance grew more vigorous, the exhortations wilder. At least the moment came when the exorcist commands the demon within the patient join him in the dance.

'Dance!' Adi sat, her pretty face turned calmly upon the eerie scene, and did not move a muscle.

'Dance!' Adi sat on, and the demon gazed out of her untroubled eyes as though he had not heard.

'DANCE!' There was hysteria now, and a beginning of fear, in the shrill voice. Who could tell what might follow this defiance?

'DANCE!' A new, cold sweat had started beneath the lather of the exorcist's physical frenzy and his own eyes were rolling as he snatched a torch from its stand and

held it inches from the girl's unflinching ones. Then, with a shriek, he thrust the blaze into Adi's face until he had ground the flames to embers.

THE CEREMONY broke up in panic. The outraged parents demanded police prosecution. In the ensuing case it was the *kattadiya* that was found of dangerously un-sound mind and committed. At the Asylum (as it was still called) he developed what was then known as 'galloping consumption'; and within three months he was brought home to die. This he did, vomiting black vomit, so that all his family were—and remain—convinced that his failure with Adi, no less than his death, were due to witchcraft and/or poison. For, despite the comparative smallness of the reputation Guni had struggled and rebuilt and despite the great wave of calamity that had washed over it, there were (they believed) those amongst their own kin, those of their village, who would grudge it while it survived however small, however shaken. They did not, it would seem, at all suspect Adi's folks.

This is the village: no man is an island, and every man's advantage diminishes me! This (also) is the context in which you must read what follows when only now, and reluctantly, Dinga steps into the scene.

Who would not be reluctant? It is one thing to be singled out in a village by a circumstance outside you or an authority above you; although even then what pleasure you may take in your singularization may well be more than somewhat offset by the social disapproval you arouse. (This I learned, for instance, from the villagers' attitude towards my friend Banders—and especially towards his father Pinhamy, who remains in the village, while Banders is employed elsewhere, and is therefore the direct irritant—because I have built this house which is now technically Banders' and the villagers judge it unsuitable to the family status.) I have called this 'social disapproval', rather than envy, though envy enters more and more largely into it, for the village was once close-knit enough, an entity to prefer to rise together or to not rise. At the time of which I am writing this integrality was not yet wholly

eroded. In such a society, as I was arguing, it is one thing to be elevated; it is quite another to set out to elevate oneself. Especially against such a recent catastrophic background. To a man such as Dinga, poetic, retiring, unambitious in the sense his mother was ambitious, to begin to do so must have been agony.

Yet, as I think Dinga saw it, it was duty. It required courage. But I never knew him flinch from threat of man or wrath of god.

A SYLVAN SHRINE

The Miracle of Madhu

By R. C. Thavarajah
Superintendent of Police

"There is some magic in that place". these were uttered by a former Professor of Philosophy of a leading University in Germany. By using the word "magic", he did not refer to the "pretended art of influencing course of events by occult control or witchcraft". He meant that something—the work, according to great writer South, "exceeding the power of any 'created agent', consequently being an effect of the divine omnipotence".

I do not wish to reveal his identity because I am certain that he would not wish any form of publicity. When I was serving in Tangalle, I happened to be supervising the Police personnel on duty on the last day of the Kataragama festival which concludes with the "Fire Walking". I asked him, "Sir, may I know who you are?" His pithy reply was "That is what I am trying to find out". An erudite man, now aged about 75 years who is sometimes referred to as 'the German Swamy'.

Despite his age, one can see the strength of his mind and physique—strength which is "born in the deep Silence of long suffering hearts not Joy." He has decided to spend the winter of his years in Sri Lanka visiting holy places in search of truth. He leads a spartan life, wears like the great Mahatma Gandhi, a loin cloth during the time he spends in Kataragama, and at

Sella Sannathy, near Thondamannar, on the Northern Coast. He believes that man can find inner peace through non-attachment and self renunciation. On his right forearm two Tamil words "*summa iru*" meaning 'be still'—are tattooed. The Holy Bible also says the same thing "Be Still" and "know that I am God." The great Lord Buddha also preached this doctrine of mental peace "*nosali sitimi*".

THE STATUE OF OUR LADY OF MADHU was brought from Mantaithe turn off to the ancient Hindu temple of Thiruketheeswaram. History records that there was an old Catholic church during the time of the Portuguese invasion. There are several versions but one that appears to be fairly authentic is, that, when the invaders were engaged in an insane 'spree' of ravage and destruction, a fervently pious devotee carried the Statue of Our Lady of Madhu and made his escape through thick jungle hotly pursued by the enemy. He succeeded in escaping from the merciless marauders and sought shelter in an isolated spot in the jungle and remained there right through the night. Although he realised the danger of spending the night alone in the jungle infested with wild animals and poisonous reptiles, he protected the Statue with tender and loving care. Today the small Chapel, which was the original place of worship, stands as an imposing edifice visited by not only Catholics and Christians but also by devotees of other faiths, from all parts of Sri Lanka and also from other parts of the world.

The devotion, courage and undying faith of this valiant man prevented profanation of something sacred, consecrated and hallowed. He did not make an ostentation of his faith in his religion, he did not wrangle for it, write about it, do other things. He was prepared to die for it.

AS YEARS PASSED, with the passage of time and progress, this Sylvan Shrine has now become a famous place of pilgrimage. It is about eight miles off the Vavuniya-Mannar Road. The affluent who have the wherewithal to travel by the best airline services to Lourdes, The Vatican, Westminster Abbey, Mecca and other holy places do so as a part of the 'status symbol'. The poor, and the middleclass,—

'mostly fisherfolk—"Those men who go out to the sea in boats" exposing themselves to the inclemencies of the weather risking their lives to bring in the fish to fatten the purse of the avaricious Mudalali, put by some coins in their tills—money earned by the sweat of honest labour—only to go on pilgrimage to Madhu and pay homage and thanks to the Lady Madhu.

During the main festival times, we see a mixed crowd—the rich with their 6 Sri cars, the less fortunate camping out under a canopy of bedsheets or some sheets of canvas. The sick, the maimed and the aged—all seeking SOLACE and the BLESSINGS of the LADY. I had, on several occasions visited this place both in my official and private capacity. I have yet to meet a more capable, amiable, and devoted administrator than Rev. Fr. Prince Bastiampillai who is doing yeoman service in the name of God. He is the epitome of the genial, hospitable 'friend, philosopher and guide'. He solves all the problems of the multitude that gathers there during the festival periods. I had the good fortune of knowing him when he was a young seven-year-old student at St. Aloysius College, Ratnapura, where I was serving there in 1942.

The crowds—several lakhs of people from all parts of Sri Lanka are orderly. If and when necessary, the Rev. Fr. Administrator maintains discipline which, according to Blair corrects the baseness of worldly passions, fortifies the heart with virtuous principles, enlightens the mind with useful knowledge and furnishes with enjoyment from within itself.' After the daily mass is completed, "Light Out" order is given at 10 p.m. and the Rev. Fr. Administrator personally sees to it that the rule is observed so that the pilgrims receive their repose after performing the religious observances. The Police on duty have very little to do because, in the precincts, there seems to prevail a mystic sense of Law and Order.

When I was young, my mother told me a story which even now I remember. After marriage, both my father and mother went to The Lady of Madhu. They wanted a child as they were childless for some years. They got what they

asked for—my sister who was named Christina. They fulfilled their vow. She also related to me the story of a young man who had also come to Madhu, whose lust was a "captivity of reason", and demented by the passions of the flesh. He followed a young damsel who had gone into the jungle to answer a call of nature. There were no proper sanitary facilities then—about fifty three years ago. When he tried to commit the heinous crime of sexual assault on her, her plaintive cries of protest suddenly brought a wild elephant on the scene which dashed the unmitigated miscreant and trampled him to death. Here was justice—not delayed, not denied, not requiring the loquacity, logic and the oratorical eloquence of eminent lawyers or even the veracity of witnesses. Truth, according to a great writer "seems directly opposed to each other—we must not question either—but remember that there is a third-god-who reserves to himself the right to harmonise them."

At the concluding stages of the festivals, the Last Vespers are conducted. This awe-inspiring scene—the final Vespers is attended by the Bishops of other parts of Sri Lanka. Even the representative of the Vatican, the Apostolic Delegate, comes all the way from Rome to give his blessings to the multitude. The clearly enunciated, thought-provoking sermon of the erudite. His Lordship the Right Rev. Fr. Diogupillai who is scholar both in English and Tamil serves as soothing balm to those who have various problems. After the Vespers, the Corpus Christi Procession of the Statue of the Lady of Madhu begins with the Festive Mass concelebrated by His Lordship the Bishop of the Shrine. The devotees kneel down in ardent devotion as Ave Maria and other soul-stirring hymns are sung by the choir in all three languages. The Police have very little to do because as the Procession begins, as if in response to a sacerdotal plea, the entire crowd of pilgrims kneel down in true piety acknowledging that "if they make religion their business, God will make it their blessedness. As the Statue passes them, tears drop down from their helpless eyes. As Washington Irving put it "There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness but of power. They speak more

eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, deep content and unspeakable love. The poor, the sick, the maimed, kneel in sincere Prayer about which Tennyson and others have propounded—"the simple heart that freely asks in love, obtains."

YES—there is some Magic in Madhu—not witchcraft, black, white or natural magic but a tremendous power—the Power of love, piety and faith which can move mountains that Faith which does nothing alone by itself but everything unto God, by God and through God".

Those who believe will know this and, may be, as Goldsmith put it, "Fools who come to scoff may remain to pray."

EXPLORATION AND EXPLOITATION

Ground Water In Sri Lanka

By A. Denis N. Fernando
Senior Deputy Director Planning,
Ministry of Irrigation, Power & Highways

Invitation Address to the Symposium on "Water Resources" by the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science at the University of Sri Lanka, Colombo 14.6.75.

I have divided my address into three major areas. (1) The Ground Water Potential of our country; (2) Its Present Exploitation and (3) A new strategy for its exploitation.

It is not my intention in the short-time allowed to me to elaborate on what is already known but to bring out what is relevant to the topic of my address.

I. GROUND WATER POTENTIAL The first scientific investigations on ground water were conducted by Mr. D. N. Wadia in the early thirties. The late C. H. L. Sirimanne continued the work of Mr. Wadia up to his death in

1969. Mr. Sirimanne has made a considerable contribution to the understanding of the Hydrogeology of the Island while working both in the Department of Geological Survey and the Irrigation Department. The first Agricultural Production tube wells were constructed by a private firm Messrs Ceylon Tube Wells Ltd. who constructed tube wells in Mannar and other areas in the early sixties.

A team of Israel experts visited the island in 1965 and they confirmed the existence of considerable amounts of ground water in the Vanathavilu area.

1. (1) NATURAL GROUND WATER RECHARGE

A Hydrogeological division was set up in the Irrigation Department in the mid-sixties and the late Mr. C. H. L. Sirimanne was the head of this division until his death. This division is continuing under Mr. W. W. P. Wijesinghe and is doing useful work. It has concentrated its investigations (mainly to the miscene belt of Sri Lanka and today it has a comprehensive idea about the ground water potential in that Hydrogeological unit. Considerable work has also been done by Dr. L. Herath of the Ministry of Agriculture and Dr. Madduma Bandara of the Peradeniya Campus and Mr. S. Arumugam of the Water Resources Board who have made valuable contributions in this field. From the early sixties, I was associated with various aspects of ground water exploration. In 1968 I presented the first Hydrogeology Map of Sri Lanka to the C. A. A. S., the absence of a macro survey of the ground water resources on a national scale resulted in my conducting this survey. I estimated the ground water resources through natural recharge and presented my estimate in 1973 in a booklet published by the Ministry of Irrigation, Power & Highways. Here I indicated that the ground water recharge available through natural recharge is of the order of 5.8 million acre feet per annum. This total has been denied from individual catchments, on the basis the Hydrogeology and rainfall. The ground water map of Sri Lanka prepared by me indicates on the macro scale the mean annual ground water recharge. On this basis I was able

to divide the island into 7 major categories of varying ground water potentials from 1100 acre feet per square mile to 75 acre feet per square mile per annum. I must say that in the absence of available data in the country I used the Indian parameter for this computation.* adapted to the local conditions.

1. (2) GROUND WATER RECHARGE THROUGH SURFACE IRRIGATION ISSUES.

In addition to the natural process of ground water recharge, which I computed there is also the source of ground water recharge through surface irrigation issues. India has used a high figure of 15 to 20% of surface water irrigation issues as ground water recharge available for recycling, but I have used a more conservative figure of 10%. I have made a computation for nearly 165 major irrigation schemes spread all over the island. On this basis nearly 4 million acre feet of surface water is issued to these major irrigation schemes for an area of nearly 575,000 acres, thereby, making nearly .4 million Acre feet. per annum* available for recycling from this source. This is available for extraction in the valley fills and the topographic lows and fractured zones in the paddy tracts under major irrigation schemes.

What is significant here is that we have land in major irrigation schemes with all the infra-structural requirement already existing in the form of already developed land—cleared, levelled and provided with houses and other facilities. The extra investment necessary for the utilisation of ground water is in the digging of wells and the supply of pumps. Taken as a whole the cost of investment per acre there is very much less than an undeveloped area where a tremendous amount of money has to be spent on infrastructural requirements and providing other amenities.

It is my firm belief that the breakthrough to stabilised agriculture in the already developed major irrigation schemes in Sri Lanka would be in harnessing this ground water at critical periods as the farmer is able to command the water when he wants. The regular droughts

that we are facing today would thus be faced and overcome to a great extent. This would also reduce the frequency of irrigation issues which is today being made to satisfy domestic needs in most of these irrigation schemes.

2. PRESENT EXPLOITATION OF GROUND WATER

The exploitation of ground water in Jaffna by using open dug wells is well known to us and has been one of the earlier forms of ground water exploitation for agriculture. In the other parts of the country the exploitation of ground water from open dug wells has been for the purpose of domestic consumption.

There are in the region of 85,000 wells in the Jaffna peninsula which vary in depth up to about 30 ft. These wells are about 10 to 15 ft. in diameter of which about 25% serve completely for agricultural activity with an average extraction annually of about 1 1/2 acre ft. of water. While about 1/2 acre ft.

is drawn from the domestic wells annually. A great majority of these domestic wells are also used to cultivate small agricultural plots.

2. (1) TUBE WELLS FOR AGRICULTURE

The first tube well for Agricultural production was constructed by a private firm called Ceylon Tube Wells which commenced work in the early sixties. They were responsible for the construction of the first tube well in the Mannar area which is yet functioning. There were a few other wells constructed both for the private and public sector. Since the use of ground water from tube wells for agricultural purposes did not catch on for various reasons, mainly a lack of public awareness this firm had to close up its business. The construction of tube wells done at Vanathavillu with the assistance of Israel expert and the Irrigation Department in the mid sixties dramatised the use of tube wells for agriculture. One of the tube wells at Vanathavillu was artesian where the water kept gushing out to the surface and a great deal of

FACTORY TO MAKE 'MURUKU' FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN

24.4.75

High protein "sev" or "muruku" will be manufactured at the ready-to-eat food processing factory here by the Andhra Pradesh Child Nutrition Council, a State organisation in charge of the school mid-day meals and other nutritional programmes. The Centre has issued a letter of intent to the Council for undertaking at its Nacharam Industrial Estate factory annual production of 7,000 tonnes of "sev" or "muruku". The Rs. 1.75-crore project is nearing completion.

A Council spokesman said that the "muruku" and other high-protein foods proposed to be manufactured at the factory were intended to replace the commodities hitherto supplied by the CARE organisation which was gradually phasing out its assistance to the school mid-day meals programme due to the global food situation. Under the existing mid-day meals scheme "upma" or porridge is served to children from the materials supplied by CARE. Initially the high protein "muruku" is to be distributed among school children covered by the mid-day meals scheme in the districts of Mahbubnagar, Nalgonda, Medak and Hyderabad including the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. Each child will be served with 80 grams of "muruku" per meal. The existing pattern of the mid-day meals scheme will continue in the rest of the State, till it is replaced in a phased manner.

The National Institute of Nutrition and the Home Science College here are collaborating with the Child Nutrition Council in preparing recipes for diversifying the products of the ready-to-eat food factory. The Council spokesman said the Nacharam factory's production might be doubled with the receipt of a cooker-extruder to be given by the UNICEF. The Council might set up ready-to-eat food factory at a number of important towns in the State, if the Nacharam project proved successful.

—Hindu

Tube Wells

publicity was given to this phenomena. As a result tube wells began to be associated in the public mind with Artesian conditions. There are about 17 tube wells constructed in Vanathavillu however the water from most of these wells have not been developed for many reasons. Here the water is pumped from great depths and hence it was expensive to exploit. The water from each well had to be shared by a number of users and this created its own problems.

The irrigation department has started a combined programme of exploration and exploitation in the Vanathavillu, Mannar, Mulativu areas restricting its activities to the miocene formation. The Department has also done some work in the Hard rock areas around Hambantota and Trincomalee.

Under the food drive a crash programme for the construction of 200 tube wells is under way. The cost of each of these tube wells is of the order of Rs. 14,000 while the cost of the pump vary from Rs. 3000 to Rs. 25,000 depending on the depth from which the water is lifted. These tube wells are designed to serve about 25 acres of land.

2. (2) LOW COST TUBE WELLS

The presentation of my book on the "ground water Resources of Sri Lanka" in 1973 brought with it a great controversy from conservative quarters who still believe that there is water for agricultural use only in the soft rock formation and that too in the narrow miocene band from Puttalam to Mullativu.

I realised that the proof of the pudding was in the eating. This has led me to develop, a low cost tube well in the late 1973 that could be constructed easily without the sophisticated drilling rigs. I started with the use of Arecanut trunks, bamboo, P.V.C. and Terra Cotta (Clay Pipes) but it was finally the clay pipe tube well that showed most promise due to its permanency and easy fabrication by any potter (with locally available raw materials).

Over thirty of these low cost tube wells have been constructed mainly for the purpose of demon-

stration at exhibitions, farmers plots, Agricultural productivity centres, Agricultural Department nurseries both in soft rock and hard rock formation in areas where there is Colluvium, Alluvium valley fills and in weathered rocks.

I have constructed these lowcost tube wells all around the country. In the North in Mullativu, Alampil on the West in Colombo, Negombo Ratmalana, Moratuwa, in the East in Panama and in the Central hills in Kandy. Their great advantage is their cheapness and that they, could be constructed by a couple of able bodied youth and serviced by the village smithy and potter.

These low cost tube wells are aimed at the small farmer who has at his command at the most 2 acres to cultivate. The cost is around Rs. 650/- installed with a hand pump. A low capacity pump to deliver upto 1000 gals. per hour could be used in these tube wells.

2. (3) OPEN DUG WELLS

In recent times a large number of open dug wells have been constructed in the Vavuniya area for agricultural purposes. One has only

to along the Puliyankulam-Mullativu road and other areas in the Vavuniya District to see the new wells being dug daily by encroachers for cultivation. It is no doubt the pioneer and the enterprenur who sets the pace in most developing societies who are prepared to take the risks and pave the way.

So whatever we scientists may say the practical reality of the availability of ground water in hard rock areas for agricultural purposes is reflected in the spectacle of farmers digging their own wells in the hard rock areas for the cultivation of their crops. The farmer in the Vavuniya area who is taking this entrepreneurial risk not as a wild adventure but in the framework of a tradition which exists in the area to resort to the use of ground water.

The fact that these farmers are from Jaffna or of Indian origin may be an explanation. The Government is contemplating on a programme of constructing open dug wells in fields below major irrigation schemes to recycle ground water accumulated through surface irrigation issues.

(To be Concluded)

CANADIAN EGGS RETAIN FRESHNESS FAR FROM HOME

Fresh Canadian eggs, easy to find in Edmonton, Winnipeg or Toronto stores, can also be obtained half way round the world. "Since last summer, more than 34,000 boxes of Canadian eggs went to Hong Kong from British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec," says Jim Thorsteinson, chief of Agriculture Canada's poultry markets and merchandising section, "and with careful shipping, they can be as fresh and undamaged when they arrive as the ones Canadian shoppers pick up at the supermarket."

When an export sale is made, the eggs are assembled for shipping and checked by Agriculture Canada inspectors. The age of an egg is shown by the size of an air cell located at its large end. The older the egg, the larger the air space. Based on the inspection, Agriculture Canada issues a certificate stating the grade of the eggs—Canada A 1, Canada A, Canada B or Canada C. The eggs are set on corrugated trays and stacked in fibreboard boxes which are then palletized and stacked in a reinforced metal container. The containers, shipped by rail to the nearest port, make the last leg of their journey to Hong Kong by boat.

"The eggs could reach Hong Kong before they are two weeks old," says Mr. Thorsteinson, "With proper refrigeration in transit, they should last about 28 days from the time they are laid." The 34,468 boxes contained more than six million Canadian eggs shipped to Hong Kong in the past nine months.

Confidentially

On the Narahenpitiya Plant?

IS IT NOT TRUE that there is a great deal of heart-burning among producers of passion fruit that the bottom has dropped out of market after the Marketing Department cut back on its production of passion fruit cordial? That with the fantastic over-stocks of this cordial in the MD's stores, production has been cut down? That this column has dealt with this problem of the excess of passion fruit cordial in two of its recent issues (*vide Tribune*, Vol. 19 No 52 of 17/5/75 & Vol. 20. No. 6 of 21/6/75)? That in the first piece Sherlock Holmes had dealt with relaxation of the guest-ceiling of 150 at receptions if MD passion fruit cordial was used? That the second article, last week, had dealt with the reason why the MD had been suddenly burdened with such excessive stocks? That it was suggested that the MD had blundered on a foreign order and that was why these stocks of the cordial had accumulated? That when the order was for frozen passion fruits as such, the MD had manufactured liquid cordial from the juice squeezed out of the fruits? That even before the last issue of *Tribune* had been posted or sent to the newstands, an old reader had sent us an interesting query? That this is what he wanted *Tribune* to investigate?

Reading your comment on the cultivation of manioc rings a bell regarding the crash programme for growing passion fruit for the export of syrup. The latest story I have heard is that the foreign buyers have cancelled the order due to the insanitary conditions at the canning plant at Narahenpitiya. Not surprising at all! Growers are being paid a nominal sum and the entire crop is being buried, I am told. You might check this before giving it any publicity.

That *Tribune* will not be surprised if foreign orders have been cancelled because of the insanitary conditions which obtain at the Narahenpitiya plant? That several of our investigators have com-

mented about this on several occasions? That because of the large number of defaults to spotlight, *Tribune* had not paid any attention to the insanitary conditions at the canning plant? That one has only to pay a visit to the place to know how bad everything really is? That our investigators say that on the occasions they have been to the place there were always two or three heaps of rotten and rotting pine apples, passion fruit and mangoes? That these heaps were just in front of the plant almost at the entrance? That they had evidently been lying there for days waiting to be removed to the rubbish dumps of such rotten fruits in the low lying ground not far the plant? That the atmosphere of the entire place stank with this rotten mess, both close to the plant and also away from it? That apart from the stench there were millions of flies of every variety on these rubbish heaps feasting away to their heart's content? That if any foreign buyer had seen this or even smelt it he would have cancelled any order he may have placed? That if he had not actually placed the order, the environmental ecology in which this plant is enveloped will deter him from placing an order? That only the foreigners who have not visited the plant will be induced to place any orders for its products? That permission is not given to any person—except the specially approved—to visit the plant inside? That even inside, according to those who have managed to get into the place, conditions are unsatisfactory? That whilst a superficial attempt is made to keep up appearances of hygienic cleanliness, the trained eye will detect so many glaring features that will make any buyer think twice before placing an order? That *Tribune* is aware that many local people—no less patriotic than the most patriotic National Assemblyman—have stopped eating or drinking MD products (jams, cordials and others) after visiting the plant? That if such were the reactions of local patrons (who do not insist upon such high standards as buyers from western countries), it is not difficult to imagine that finicky buyers from abroad will think a hundred times before buying MD products?

That these are only general comments evoked by our reader's query? That one of our investi-

gators will endeavour to find out if any large orders had been cancelled because of the insanitary conditions at the plant? That in reality there is no need to re-investigate into the question about the sanitary conditions in the place? That if any top person in the Government or the Ministry goes to the place *incognito*, without any notice (even the peon in his office should not have prior information), he will discover for himself the stench, the dirt and the flies which surround the canning plant? That he will also find that while the inside is comparatively cleaner (compared to the outside) he will realise why snooty foreigners (afraid of cholera and every kind of virus infection) will not buy MD products once they see what the plant is like? That if a Ministerial or VIP visit is proclaimed, the whole place is cleaned up? That the workers are fitted into freshly washed uniforms and a grand show is put? That a foreign buyer will also receive similar red-carpet treatment but not in such a comprehensive or careful manner? That if a foreign buyer chooses to pay surprise visits, unannounced, he will be confronted with the usual stench, flies and dirt? That it is one thing to get an initial foreign order on a sample? That it is a different thing to get repeated orders especially after the foreign buyer has paid a surprise visit to the MD canning plant? That in the competitive world of today there are rivals, in Sri Lanka and abroad, who will not hesitate to draw attention to the state of affairs in the MD canning plant at Narahenpitiya? That just over 30 months ago there was a hue and cry in the country about a crash programme to grow more passion fruit to meet an almost unlimited demand for passion fruit juice and cordial? That today this international market seems to have evaporated into thin air so far as Sri Lanka is concerned? That with FEECs our export prices was attractive to foreign buyers? That, in spite of this, they will continue to buy only if they are satisfied that the canning was done under sanitary conditions? That it is time that the Government did something about insisting on hygienic cleanliness inside as well as in the immediate proximity of the Narahenpitiya canning plant?

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