

TRIBUNE

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Political Perspectives

DECEMBER OF THE YEAR ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY FOUR has been one of agonising re-appraisal for the leading political parties in the island, and the year 1975 begins with new political perspectives which are difficult to evaluate at this stage. It is even more difficult to anticipate the events which are likely to make 1975 one of the most eventful in the contemporary political history of the young Republic

of Sri Lanka. A detailed and careful analysis of the developments within the different political parties; written by a keen and informed student of current politics, will be published in the *Tribune* in the coming weeks, but for the moment a general indication of current trends will provide our readers with much to think about.

The UNP and SLFP have had their annual sessions during December. The LSSP had its 39th Anniver-

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PADDY PROSPECTS

From the middle of November, 1974, *Tribune* had been focussing attention on the severe drought which had overtaken the rice-producing areas in the Dry Zone owing to the failure of the Northeast to bring rain. Our politicians, bureaucrats and even our meteorologists kept hoping that the Monsoon would burst "within a short time" and make amends for lost time. By the third week of November all rain-fed paddy areas had been so badly affected that it would have been prudent for our planners to write off this crop—except for a small and negligible portion. The tanks were dry and a start had not been made on the irrigated paddy for Maha and there seemed little likelihood of realising the targets for the Maha even if a deluge thereafter filled the tanks—and even if this happened only a partial Yala would have been possible in these parts. *Tribune* had urged that steps should be taken to switch to other crops and cereals without delay—crops for which the restricted amounts of water available would be enough. This was not done and even the Political Authorities in these districts had gone to sleep in the fond belief that the rains would come. The realisation that the situation was really bad and desperate had come to many when the *Observer* of 22.12.74 published the statistics furnished by the Minister of Irrigation, Power and Highways to the Prime Minister regarding the water levels in the major tanks of the Wann, as on 7.12.74. From these statistics it was clear that the situation was much worse than had been envisaged even by pessimists. After the 7th December 1974, there was rain owing to cyclonic low pressure depressions in the Bay of Bengal, and the *Observer* of 24.12.74 indicated the increase in the levels as on 14.12.74—but the increase was minimal. During the Christmas week there was more rain but this was again from a low pressure depression and the bulk of this rain seems to have fallen in the already wet central, western and southern parts of the island. If this kind of rain persists in the Dry Zone, a restricted *meda* crop may be possible around some of the tanks. Sri Lanka should be thankful for small mercies.

sary which was made the occasion (during the prolonged six-weeks old celebrations starting from November) to promote an LSSP-style *putsch* to pressurise the SLFP and the UF to adopt the ultra-radical programme (far too *ultra* for the bulk of the SLFP and the rural masses and the middle classes) of the vociferous revolutionary leftwing of the LSSP. The CP contented itself with a mildly upgraded (from the radical point of view) programme with a request that three UF parties should confer to bring about a revision of their Common Programme on which the Government had been formed in 1970. The FP and the TUF have also been thinking things over and at the last Working Committee meeting decided to postpone *sine die* its permanently recurring threat of peaceful civil disobedience and satyagraha—the reasons attributed for this welcome change of attitude being the government's decision to hold the KKS by-election, secondly to release the 42 Tamil youth who had been detained (even though in driblets) and lastly the desire to resume some kind of dialogue with the TUF ignoring the diehard hardliners in the UF (from the LSSP, CP and Kumarasuriyer adherents) who insist that the progressive UF should have no truck with the reactionary TUF.

THE UNP SESSIONS was noteworthy for three matters: first, the Constitution of the Party was changed making the President the only elective post; parliamentarians were disbarred from holding key posts in the organisation and J. R. Jayawardene has made himself a

little dictator within his own Party: second, a new party policy and programme was formulated and adopted in which definitive stand was taken on many matters on which the UNP had been silent for a long time; and, third, it was made clear that J. R. Jayawardene was not willing to risk a confrontation with the Government over the question of his demand for a general elections in 1975.

(In regard to this matter, it will be recalled that J. R. in his exuberance, or his frustration after his failure to strike a bargain with the SLFP over Kalawewa by using the bait of Anura, had declared that as the Government had no right to continue after May 1975 everything done by the Government or its bureaucrats after that date would be illegal.

By implication it meant that JR had wanted public servants to desist from doing anything after 1975. This was seized upon by the Government to bring a special emergency regulation in regard to the "subversion of the constitution." On this matter of an election in 1975—a legalistic quibble looked at from any angle—JR has been threatening blood and thunder from 1973: satyagraha at one time and now the threat that the future UNP government would not recognise the validity or legality of anything done after 1975, but JR is certainly not willing to risk a confrontation with the Government.

The UNP under JR is now looking for its allies for the next elections inside the SLFP. JR wants a coalition of the centrist and right-wing forces in the SLFP and the UNP. The new programme and policy of the UNP is directed towards weaning the non-left forces within the SLFP to the new coalition. (In this quest for new allies, JR has begun to neglect his erstwhile friends in the FP and TUF, but he does this on basis, no doubt, that the FP can be brought easily into the new centre-right coalition).

Just as the UNP (especially JR) is not willing to enter into a direct confrontation against the SLFP, the LSSP too (under the old NM-Leslie-Colvin leadership) does not seem anxious to push its brinkmanship tactics to the point of no-return. The LSSP, just before, during and immediately after the

Budget, had done everything to stage a kind of putsch within the UF to compel the Government to adopt an ultra-radical programme (for the SLFP). The JCTUO was mobilised to bring further pressure by reviving the 28-point demand (which had been kept in cold storage from 1970).

But when the Prime Minister took a firm stand and refused to be pressurised by the LSSP and the ultra radicals—in the way she had succumbed on many vital matters during the last four and half years—the LSSP has staged a retreat, strategic no doubt but constituting a major climb down. LSSP unions however are keeping the battle going with strikes, slow-downs and other industrial disharmony, and the JCTUO seems to have been nudged into a 24-hour token strike on January 31, 1975.—a long way off still, giving time to government to announce a small wage increase!

While the LSSP continued "to lick its wounds" (as the UNP Journal thought fit to describe the situation), the Prime Minister has been asserting herself and has insisted on her centrist position and laying down that one had to follow a cautious and a gradual process in regard to further nationalisation which the LSSP had made the cardinal point in its new programme. At the Minneriya United Front Rally, the Prime Minister had publicly for the first time come out against the ultras in the UF. After that she had sniped at them at different public meetings whilst the new-born Ada began a heavy barrage on the LSSP (and even the ultras within the SLFP), but on December, 17, 1974, at a meeting of a newly formed Union of railway employees, (reviving SLFP and UNP trade unionists who had been sat upon and discriminated against since 1970 by the LSSP unionists), she had lashed out in strong and vehement terms.

FOR THE RECORD, we reproduce the report of the speech she made at the meeting from the Daily News of December 18, 1974. The CDN published the report with a sober headline about the need to cultivate every inch of land, but the Daily Mirror used more sensationally spectacular headlines:

"WE ARE PREPARED TO WORK FOR UF UNITY—OR EVEN WAR"
—PM LASHES OUT AT CUT-THROATS IN UF. The CDN report read:

Conditions prevalent today are such that it has been realised that the five year plan cannot be implemented, particularly because of the oil crisis. Therefore, a crash program is now being prepared by sectoral committees. A special crash programme is being prepared for the food drive with the hope of achieving self-sufficiency in food, said the Prime Minister Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike at the inaugural public meeting of the Sri Lanka Nidahas Dumriya Sevaka Sangamaya (S.L.F.P. Railway Employees Union) held last evening at the New Town Hall.

"Next year the food shortage in the world will be worse. Therefore we must give preference to the food drive. Every inch of land must be cultivated. The solution to the cost of living is to achieve self-sufficiency in food. The government is preparing a new programme aimed at achieving self-sufficiency in food Mrs. Bandaranaike said.

"Some people are saying today that they are prepared to march forward alone leaving the reactionary sections behind. It is very easy to make such statements. But, such statements help only the reactionaries. We have been silent about these statements. But it is high time for us too to say something in this connection. I wish to tell these persons 'if it is unity I am all for it and if it is a fight I am prepared for that too."

Mrs. Bandaranaike continuing her comments said "We must strengthen unity to fight reaction. Statements like these only strengthen the reactionaries. I have been patient all this while. But it appears that some people mistake our patience for weakness. If we are to fight reaction mere talk of unity is not enough, we must put that into practice. You cannot have unity whilst carrying on cut-throat activities.

The Prime Minister followed these comments with an appeal to all SLFP ers to join S.L.F.P. Trade Unions. Earlier in her speech, Mrs. Bandaranaike said that though the S.L.F.P. was the youngest of all the recognised political parties in Sri Lanka the people having faith in the policies laid down by the late Mr. S. W. R. D.

Bandaranaike, voted the S.L.F.P. to power thrice. That proved that the people trusted the S.L.F.P. more than they did parties that were twenty and thirty years old.

Mrs. Bandaranaike said: "I must mention that we are aware of victimisation of our party members in certain places. Such victimisation is utterly wrong. It is very wrong to adopt cut-throat tactics under cover of unity. It is equally unfair and wrong to use pressure to compel workers to join particular trade unions.

"Some of our supporters have told us that they would be denied promotions, transfers and other benefits if they do not join certain trade unions. We are convinced that this allegation is true, particularly in the Railway and the C.T.B. I am happy that the GMR is present here today. It is his duty to see that such things do not happen in his department. I would request him to use his authority to stop such victimisation.

"It is we who took the initiative to achieve unity. We have now heard some people say that they did not come to rest in 'ambalamas'. We too did not come to rest in 'ambalamas'. One must realise that you cannot drive a car at the same speed everywhere. If you try to drive like that you will only crash somewhere and perish. At certain places you should slow down a little and pause to think.

"No one knows better than I do the ideas and the thinking of our late leader Mr. Bandaranaike. No one should try to teach me therefore about the way Mr. Bandaranaike thought, his plans and his programs for the people.

"If anyone says that they are prepared to march forward pushing the reactionaries aside I wish to tell them that we too came here to march forward crushing the reactionaries. It is for that purpose we formed a united front. I am sure Mr. Bandaranaike would have taken the same step in 1964 had he lived then.

"The three party leaders when they signed the common programme of the United Front have pledged to implement the policies of Mr. Bandaranaike and not anyone else's policies. It was the late Mr. Bandaranaike who started nationalisation in this country. It was a pure SLFP government that proceeded to nationalise the oil business even at the risk

of offending the United States. We are not against nationalisation. But nationalisation has to be approached cautiously. If we act like mad men, like someone who drives a car at full speed without due precaution, we might perish."

On the day after this speech was made, the LSSP held its Founder's Day anniversary (39th), and many had expected vehement polemic and rhetorical replies from the LSSP leaders. But they did not chose to fight back. Except for a sly retort here or there, they ignored the PM's lashing and spoke about unity and still more unity. This was the theme of the LSSP leaders thereafter—that no power on earth could break the unity of the UF, come what may. (But the LSSP trade unions continued to indulge in strikes on a low profile).

AT THE MATARA SESSIONS of the SLFP last week-end, the PM in her public speech had continued in the same strain, as on December 17, but at the closed sessions of the Delegates Meetings she had been even more vehement about cut-throat actions which were undermining UF unity. For the record, we are publishing relevant extracts from her public speech to indicate that the PM is no longer willing to have unity at any price with the LSSP.

At the sessions, the pro-LSSP ultra radical elements in the SLFP, had sought to make their presence felt in a bid to carry the delegates with them, but all reports indicate that their efforts proved abortive. The Centre-Right, which constitutes the bulk of SLFP, had easily prevailed over the noisy ultra SLFP left—many of whom, it is said, had not shown their hand (or themselves) openly leaving a few boisterous elements to do all the shouting.

"All these are but a continuation of the many steps taken by our leader in 1956 to build up a Socialist Democratic Society. He freed the people of this country from imperialist bonds completely, and he stabilized fully the democratic rights of the people. Thus he toiled and laboured and even sacrificed his life to establish this socialist democratic society.

He pioneered nationalisation so that the national wealth will be distributed among the people of this land, and we have, taken nationa-

lisation even further. That is why we do not need any further counsel on the subject of nationalisation.

Even from the standpoint of political science, we do and we shall carry forward the people's peaceful democratic revolution begun by our late leader in 1956. We have still not completed that task. Therefore all steps we take should be in consonance with the concepts of that struggle, and not in a manner that confuses and makes enemies of friends. We can realise this if we



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base our understanding on our own experience. Mere book-bound orthodoxy will lead us only to catastrophe

Countries which have arrived at Socialism, have not done so through such orthodoxy. All these countries have followed the principle of acting according to the conditions prevailing in these countries and basing themselves upon the realisation that comes through experience. We must understand that it is not possible for a responsible political organization to act like a bull in a china shop merely because a few are in a frenzied flurry.

Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, who was regarded by the people as an impartial leader, brought together various forces, at a time when such progressive forces in this country were not unified. We have much more yet to achieve by effecting greater unification and working together as one Force in order to achieve the aspirations of the people of this country.

I wish to stress that there is no single path to achieve the socialist aspirations of the people, or to establish a socialist democratic society which is our ultimate aim. The Soviet Union adopted one path, and the People's Republic of China another. Socialist countries of Europe have followed other paths of their own. Similarly Cuba took yet another road. I reiterate that we follow the socialist democratic path of the late Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike.

I wish to remind that it is for this purpose that the late Premier formed the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna in 1956 and I formed a coalition government in 1964. Something has to be said about the formation of the United Front and the United Front Government of 1970. No one can be permitted to take any action outside the basis of the common programme.

The reactionary forces are at an advantage if the progressive parties are in disarray. It will be clear to every mindful and right-thinking person, that we have to work in this fashion if we are to take away that advantage from the reactionaries and to stabilise the victories the people have gained since 1956.

If we do not act in this manner, we will only be helping the United National Party, which held a conference recently and passed several resolutions, to succeed in their attempts to deceive the people.

The PM, in concluding her speech, had declared that a new crash programme to bring self-sufficiency in food had been adopted and called for unity around this programme. But in making this appeal she made it clear that unity would be on the basis of democratic centralism as understood by proletarian parties—once a decision was arrived at there could be no adverse statements or carping criticisms.

Amidst all this we should set up a programme of work to alleviate the burdens which are now on the people. We should accept that responsibility as the people expect it of us.

I am happy to state that we have now started a crash programme for implementation within the next 2 1/2 years. This carries forward the same programme decided upon by the United Front in 1970. You will recall that the 1970 programme was for the creation of a socialist democratic society the foundation for which was laid by our late leader. This programme was also for the continuation of the principles of our late leader based on the work started by him in 1956.

I have no doubt that this programme will be another step forward in our common march towards socialism. I would like to add a word of caution here. Once the Government has arrived at a common conclusion with the agreement of the other parties in the United Front, all extraneous agitations and contrary statements must cease. I have to say this because a great confusion has arisen within our own party regarding the common programme, as some persons within the Government party publicly declare their own private views.

We should unite, not merely for the sake of unity, but because it is necessary for the implementation of a programme to solve the people's problems, and help in the achievement of their aspirations.

We have been accused of moving too fast by some sections on the one hand, and of not moving too fast by some sections. Whatever they might say, I must state that we have learned a few things in the struggle for survival and for national development. We cannot borrow nor transplant values and institutions. There is but one universal value, and that is that of human dignity. And we have to cherish it and protect it,

and approach it according to the dictates of our own hearts, and the logic of our authentic experience.

This is the policy followed by our late leader. It is to act upon those principles that we always swear allegiance before the people.

IT IS AN AUSPICIOUS AUGURY that the PM and the SLFP have at last woken up to the fact that food production and attaining self-sufficiency in such foodstuffs as we can easily produce in this island is the paramount task before this country—without diverting attention by engaging in "book-bound orthodoxy" which flaunt doctrinaire remedies that prove abortive.

The Prime Minister at Matara talked about tapping ground-water resources. This is a great step forward. It will be recalled that Tribune alone for many years now has been pointing out the need to tap ground-water resources without depending on the uncertain rains which the Monsoon winds bring (or have not brought in recent years).

The ultra radicals and the revolutionaries believe, or at least preach, that the "capitalist structure" must be destroyed and changed before the production war can be really started—even if the process they favour should bring about a virtual collapse of the productive machine. Without having an alternative structure ready (or even the indoctrinated cadres ready for such a venture), the ultras want socialism overnight in a society and in a country not ready for it—or without any big allies or countries neighbouring it which can help the little island to stampede its way into socialism.

A left-leaning (right) centrist, according to the dominant thinking in the SLFP, is the only way of pushing ahead for a little island like Sri Lanka: the PM and many of her SLFP colleagues believe that anything more than the current leftward tilt would at this stage endanger the economy and political stability of the country and that further tilting to the left should be by gradual stages. But the ultras disagree with this line of thinking.

Will the Left and the ultras accept the PM's and the SLFP's view of this matter, or will they stage a "revolt" in 1975?

FOR THE RECORD

From The Observer 22.12.74

Severe Drought In Dry Zone

The Dry Zone is now experiencing a severe drought. The water level of most tanks has dropped considerably. The Minister of Irrigation, Power and Highways, Mr. Maithripala Senanayake, has appraised the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, of the prevailing situation in most Dry Zone areas. The Government Agent of Anuradhapura, Mr. P. B. Manamperi, who had discussions with the officials on Friday about the severe drought prevailing there is trying to make best use of the little water available for cultivation. The water level of Nachchaduwa, Basawakkulama, Nuwara Wewa, Kala Wewa, Padaviya, Hurulu Wewa, and Rajangana are at their lowest now. If rains come even at this late stage, there might be a prospect of a "meda crop", Irrigation Ministry sources told the "Observer". As a emergency measure to tide over crisis, the authorities hope to encourage the peasants to cultivate crops that need little water like sorghum, cowpea. In Jaffna too, the severe drought has affected the crops badly. Of the 80,000 acres cultivated about 30,000 are irrigated and 50,000 rain fed. Due to the poor rains, about 40,000 acres are badly affected. Last year the Jaffna district harvested 2.5 million bushels of paddy. The prospects this year are rather low, a spokesman said.

ANURADHAPURA

Name of Tank	Full storage,	Situation at 7.12.74
NACHCHADUWA TANK	42,200 acre feet	1075 acre feet
NUWARA WEWA	36,049	3000
KALA WEWA	72,678	3150
RAJANGANA	81,603	10,900
MAHAWILACHCHIYA	32,000	2,300
PADAVIYA	85,000	12,800

POLONNARUWA

PARAKRAMA SAMUDRA	95,000 acre feet	42,100 acre feet
PIMBURETTAWA	40,000	10,800

JAFFNA

IRANAMADU TANK	82,000 acre feet	3500 acre feet
AKKARANYANKULAM	21,030	200
KALMADUKULAM	9,152	400

VAVUNIYA

TANNIMURIPPU	15,000 acre feet	900 acre feet
MUTHUIYANKADDUKULAM	41,000	280
IRATPERIYAKULAM	3,534	70
CHOMAMADU	2,002	20
PERIYATHAMBANIA	1,095	10

MANNAR

VAVUNIKULAM	33,300 acre feet	1900 acre feet
PERIYAMADU	4,478	200
TENNIYANKULAM	4,375	309

BADULLA

SORABORA WEWA	16,800 acre feet	3600 acre feet
DAMBARA WEWA	12,900	3125
NAGADEEPA	12,370	2800

MONARAGALA

HANDAPANAGALA WEWA	5,700 acre feet	1240 acre feet
HAMBEGAMUWA	3,375	2880
MAHA WEWA	635	420
BALAHARUWA WEWA	630	525

MATALE

NALANDA OYA RESERVOIR	12,400 acre feet	540 acre feet
KANDALAMA TANK	26,800	977

LETTER

Political Authority

Sir,

The step taken by the Government to decentralise and to give more authority at local levels is a good one. But unless serious measures are taken to get serious and critical participation by ordinary rural folks there are enormous dangers that we shall eventually set-up power-hungry and power-drunk individuals rather in the pattern of the feudal walauiwa overlords. We know how much corruption and moral degeneration resulted from these forms of Government, and these eventuated precisely because there were no local checks to control and temper the powers of the over-lords. In this country there is real danger that we run true to tradition in this matter. When power is concentrated as it is today in the person of the "Political authority", it is hard to resist the temptation to run life in the traditional fashion. And when the Political Authority is innocent of serious political discipline save the desire to ensure a permanent seat in the National Assembly and permanent power by consequence at the local level, the road to serfdom for the masses has been well paved.

To prevent this disastrous development two things are necessary; first, we have to try to ensure that the chaps vested with such regional power have some patriotism, cherish some social values and are not completely innocent of the dangers of political power to the attainment of Nirvana. Not every soap box, slogan mouthing man with political ambitions, automatically develops these traits—alas for us lesser mortals. More important therefore is it to devise some system for regular and concerned participation by ordinary chaps in the decision-making processes, but to ensure that those participating do not degenerate into a band of toadies is not easy. The way jobs are given to political favourites, the commonly held belief, true or false, that letters are necessary from Political Authorities to ensure employment, the feel everyone in the area has that the Political Authority is the final word, all tend to breed bitterness or frustration, or more obviously

Name of Tank	Full storage	Situation at 7.12.74
KURUNEGALA		
MAGALLA TANK	6,190 acre feet	1400 acre feet
MEDIYAWA TANK	2,475	45
AMBAKOLA TANK	5,900	600
ATTARAGALLE TANK	4,800	450
PALUKADAWELA TANK	7,140	1500
GALGAMUWA TANK	6,450	400
USGALA SIYAMBALANGAMUWA	22,000	580
BATHALAGODA TANK	4,840	1400
KIMBULWANA OYA	3,500	1300
HAKWATUNA OYA	16,000	1600
TRINCOMALEE		
ANDANKULAM	1,780 acre feet	19 acre feet
PERIYA KULAM	1,560	55
KANTALAI	110,000	1832
VENDARASAKULAM	20,200	10
GALMETIYAWA	7,700	300
AMPARAI		
GAL OYA L.B. SCHEME		
(i) SENANAYAKE SAMUDRA	7,70,000	31,550
(ii) NAVAKIRI TANK	42,500	8,000
NAMAL OYA	37,000	4950
PALLANG OYA TANK	23,000	2,400
PANNELAGAMA TANK	35,000	2,770
AMBALAM OYA TANK	35,000	7,900
EKGAL ARU TANK	21,500	5,700
BATTICALOA		
UNNICHCHAI TANK	38,350	5,100
KADDUKAMUNAI TANK	5,000	525
RUGAM TANK	18,600	217
VAKANERI TANK	13,500	3705
KADDUMURIPPU TANK	4,256	469
WELIGAHAKANDIYA TANK	1,698	629
HAMBANTOTA		
UDUKIRIWILA TANK	3,220 acre feet	3721 acre feet
MURUTHAWELA	38,875	12,500
TISSA WEWA	3,510	2400
YODO WEWA	8,375	4600
WEERAWILA WEWO	10,500	9,000
BODAGIRIYA TANK	21,750	7500
RI DIYAGAMA TANK	21,750	14,000
MATARA		
KEKANDURA TANK	2,330 acre feet	1190 acre feet
DANDENIYA TANK	875	680
HALI ELA TANK	3,075	2,400
ELLAWALA TANK	792	792
RATNAPURA		
HINGURA ARA TANK	340 acre feet	185 acre feet

From The Observer 24.12.74

Tanks: Slight Rise In Water-Levels

A slight improvement in the water levels of tanks in the drought-stricken areas was noticeable during the last week, according to information gathered by the Ministry of Irrigation.

Between December 7 and 14, there had been improvement in the water level. Padaviya tank registered a rise to 15,900 acre feet of water on December 14 from 12,800 acre feet the previous week.

These are the water levels in different tanks—

a group of rats who uncritically bow in obsequious surrender to any behest of the Political Authority. In this way no critical evaluation of the region's program is possible and in this manner we hasten the march of the Political Authority himself towards those forms of human hubris or ahankara swollen with disaster for individual and community alike.

In China, Mao's Red Guards were used precisely to subject Political Authorities to severe and open criticism. Anura Bandaranaike's suggestion of a National Youth Assembly would develop more punch if in every region under Political Authorities such assemblies were established where at regular intervals the Political Authority was required to be present to defend his policies and to receive the kind of merciless criticism which youth alone sometimes is capable of making. Such a measure would clear the air as it were of a kind of evil miasma which has gradually seeped into our island's atmosphere, bringing in a political pollution which could be much more disastrous than many other forms of pollution which we have been warned against.

Prithipura, **Bryan de Krestler**
Wattala
15.12.74

Tribune Readers

Owing to the conditions prevailing in the country today, we are compelled to reach our readers directly through subscriptions rather than through newsagents as in the past. We are, therefore, discontinuing distribution through newsagents in many outstation areas and even in the Colombo district. Apart from anything else, with the expansion of the Co-operative Store's movement, shops which have acted as newsagents disappear overnight and it is often weeks before we became aware of this.

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ANURADHAPURA

	Full Storage	On 7.12.74	on 14.12.74
Nachchaduwa	42,200 acre feet	1,075 acre feet	2,550 acre feet
Tissawewa	42,870	232	270
Nuwarawewa	36,044	3,000	3,800
Padaviya	85,009	12,800	15,900

POLONNARUWA

Parakrama Samudra	95,000 acre feet	41,500 acre feet	42,100 acre feet
Pimburutteva	40,000	11,100	10,800

JAFFNA

Iranamadu	82,000 acre feet	3,500 acre feet	3,700 acre feet
Akkanayanankulam	21,030	2 00	300

MANNAR

Vavunikulam	33,300 acre feet	1900 acre feet	1,900 acre feet
Tenniyankulam	4,375	309	309

MATALE

Nalanda Oya	12,400 acre feet	540 acre feet	780 acre feet
Kandalama Tank	26,800	977	1,075

Art Scrap

Californian hoteliers acquired in Belgium \$ 150,000 worth of decorative bronze statuary of mid-19th century Italian workmanship. But when the statues arrived, many parts were found to be missing. Several days later, says the "Japan Times", Kobe port customs officials discovered the missing parts in a consignment of scrap imported from the U.S.A. It transpired that in California a gang of thieves had resold several crates to metal scrap-dealers who had shipped them to Japan.

CHRONICLE

NOVEMBER 24 — NOVEMBER 30

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

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24: According to the *Sunday Observer*, long-term economic co-operation between Sri Lanka and the Soviet Union is considered a distinct possibility by diplomatic observers in Colombo following Prime Minister Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike's visit to the USSR: the possibility of a 20-year economic agreement is considered very much on the cards: a Soviet mission is expected in Colombo in January next year for discussions about long-term economic co-operation. According to the *Sunday Times*, large-scale smuggling operations are now going on off the coasts of south Chilaw and intelligence reports reaching Customs have confirmed this: some of the shady operations are done under the alleged active support of some police personnel and certain VIPs. A delegation from Sri Lanka is leaving today for Manila to finalise arrangements to establish a Fertilizer Factory: according to a press release from the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs; this project will cost nearly £ 100 million and is to be financed by the Asian Development Bank, the United Nations Development Project and the Governments of Federal Republic of Germany, India, Kuwait and Iran. According to the *Sunday Times*, in a talk with an APN correspondent Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, chief organiser of the SLFP Youth League dwelt on the development of contacts between the Soviet and Sri Lanka youth: he said that the relations between them have always been good. In a letter to the Prime Minister, the Ceylon Federation of Labour states that it regrets that it has become necessary to lodge a protest with the Prime Minister against the prohibition of the procession which was to be held along with its Delegates conference. According to the *Sunday Times*, the members of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party trade union in the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation are perturbed over

the dictatorial attitude of certain executives and are making arrangements to interview the Prime Minister to probe the maladministration: they have cited one incident about the refusal to accept the obituary notice of Mrs. Abraham Kovoor, wife of the President of the Ceylon Rationalists Association because Dr. Arbaham T. Kovoor did not believe in a life after death. There will be total eclipse of the moon next Friday.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 25: According to the *Daily News*, Sri Lanka's efforts to sign a commercial co-operative agreement (CCA) with the European Economic Community enter another stage next month with the departure on Wednesday of the Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign and Internal Trade for negotiations with the EEC: preliminary negotiations have already been conducted with the EEC by the Sri Lanka Ambassador in Brussels. From midnight today election meetings for the Kalawewa by-elections will not be allowed and the election will take place on the 27th. According to the *Daily Mirror*, students of the five campuses of the University of Sri Lanka will launch a massive protest if immediate action is not taken to improve the content of some degree courses which they say has now fallen to a very low level: the Inter-University Students' Front which comprises students of the Colombo, Peradeniya, Katubedde, Vidyaodaya and Vidyalankara campuses has sent a strong note to protest to the Minister of Education, Dr. Badiuddin Mahmud and the Vice Chancellor, Mr. L. H. Sumanadasa, on the matter: a Department of Christian Civilisation will be set up in the Vidyalankara Campus of the University next year. According to the *Daily Mirror*, the volume of trade between Sri Lanka and the People's Republic of China is likely to increase next year: a Chinese trade delegation is expected next month for discussions with the Minister of Foreign and Internal Trade, Mr. T. B. Illangaratne, and Trade Ministry officials on the renewal of the Rubber-Rice bilateral trade pact between the two countries. Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, Minister of Plantation Industry, will represent Sri Lanka at a symposium on International Tea Expansion, sponsored by the Commonwealth Secretariat will be held in London

from December 3 to 10. According to the *Daily News*, by 1980 all teachers in Government schools are expected to receive some form of professional training. United Nations General Assembly has endorsed Palestine's claim for independent statehood and appealed to all countries and International organisations to help them in their struggle to restore their rights: the resolution also granted UN observer status to the PLO. Egypt has bowed to the demands of the hijackers of the British VC 10 airliner and released five commandos held in prison: in return the hijackers released 13 passengers.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26: According to the *Daily News*, protests have been made to government about the manner in which lorries are being requisitioned in order to meet the urgent needs of sectors like the co-operative movement, agriculture and state Corporations: protests have been mainly from the export trade: private sector groups have pointed out that by acquiring lorries from firms engaged in the export trade the movement of tea from the estates, which is perishable commodity will be hampered. According to the *Daily Mirror*, the Government may shortly decide on a uniform policy in regard to the payment of bonuses for employees in State corporations and Government undertakings: two Ministers, Mr. T. B. Illangaratne, Minister of Foreign and Internal Trade, and Mr. T. B. Subasinghe, under whose purview a majority of state sponsored corporations function, had a conference with officials of Ministries and the Corporations last week to discuss the payment of bonuses and the financial implications arising from such payments. Over half a million candidates sitting the GCE O Level Examination starting on December 10 have paid in Rs. 10,223,999 as Examination fees to the Government: this is a record income for the one single public examination since the inception of modern system of education. According to the *Daily News*, around 3,700 students will be admitted to the university next year: they will be picked from the 15,000 candidates who qualified for entry on the results of the GCE A-Level examination: admissions are expected to be finished by the middle of next month. The threat of a prolonged drought has receded with reports of welcome rain in many parts of the country. President Gerald Ford and Soviet Communist Party Chief Leonid Brezhnev have reached agreement on an upper limit for nuclear weapons systems at their summit meeting. Ethiopian Radio reported the mass execution of 60 former government ministers, generals and even two former Prime Ministers without trial by the Ethiopian Army Council which has taken over the Government from former Emperor Haile Sellase. The hijacking drama which began in Nairobi ended with the release of all the hostages aboard the VC-10 airliner: the hijackers are now under guard in Tunis.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27: Polling in the Kalawewa by-election begins at 8 a.m. today and the results will be known by 2.30 a.m. tomorrow. According to the *Daily Mirror*, Dr. N. M. Perera, Minister of Finance, addressing the National Chamber of Commerce has said that the United Front Government came into power to foster socialism, but one cannot have socialism overnight and therefore the private sector has still a place in this country. The cost-of-living index for the first nine months of this year reached a new high: the average of Living index for the first nine months of 1974

was 12.9 per cent higher than the average index for the first nine months of 1973. According to the *Daily News*, a full-academic course will be made available for the first time in Sri Lanka in international Relations with the establishment of a new Institute to commemorate the late Mrs. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's exemplary contribution to Sri Lanka's foreign policy and its relations with the outside world. According to the *Daily News*, three persons have been arrested by the police in Madras in connection with the explosions on the premises of the Deputy High Commission for Sri Lanka and the Mahabodhi Society in the city in the last week of October: police sources said that the arrested persons have indulged in these acts to "draw attention to the problem of Indians in Sri Lanka": the explosives used in both cases was gelignite. The *Madras Hindu*, in an editorial comment on the recent visit of India's Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr. Y. B. Chavan to Sri Lanka has said that this being his first official visit abroad as Foreign Affairs Minister, must be deemed to be mainly aimed at getting personally acquainted with India's close neighbours, rather at discussing any serious pending issues. Soviet Communist Party leader, Leonid Brezhnev, has rejected China's demands over disputed border areas as unacceptable: Mr. Brezhnev said that the Soviet Union did not make any claim to foreign land. U Thant, third Secretary General of the United Nations, died yesterday. Although the agreement reached between President Ford and Brezhnev on nuclear arms control has been hailed in Washington there is general feeling of wait-and-see. Japanese Premier Tanaka resigned; he said he was assuming moral responsibility for public questions about his financial affairs.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28: Mr. A. M. S. Adhikari of the United National Party won the Kaledwewa by-election: his majority was 2857: the detailed results are Mr. A. M. S. Adhikari (UNP) 13,799, Mr. D. B. Ratnamala (SLFP) 10,942, Mr. W. Y. Herath (Ind) 2,760, Mr. M. D. Gunatillake (Ind)-200, Mr. D. Wijekoon (Ind)-108. According to the *Daily Mirror*, the two high powered missions from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund currently in Sri Lanka have commenced the first round of talks with top officials of the various Ministries and Government departments: these two missions are here to review the progress of the economy and the quantum of aid required by Sri Lanka during 1975 to accelerate the pace of economic development: the talks which commenced on Monday at the Central Bank will continue for some time. The Deputy Minister of Defence and Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lakshman Jayakody, disclosed in the National State Assembly yesterday that the total number of persons who died as a result of the incidents during the insurgency of April 1971 was 1260. The Speaker, Mr. Stanley Tillekeratne yesterday appealed to members to act with a sense of responsibility before they attempted to get documents tabled in the course of debates: he said that allegations could be made in petitions sent to members but members should satisfy themselves that they were authentic before trying to get those into Hansard. According to the *Daily Mirror*, the National Organisation of the Sri Lanka Jaycees has been adjudged the best in the world at the Jayceed International World Congress held in New Zealand this month. Since the nationalisation of the three major graphite mines there has been a marked progress over

the past three years both in production as well as in export earnings says a press release from the Ministry of Industries and Scientific Affairs. Dr. Kurt Waldheim, UN Secretary General, at present in the Middle East, is optimistic about a renewed mandate for the UN force on the Golan Heights: Israel has already said that it has no objection to renewal of the mandate. Dr. Henry Kissinger, the US Secretary of State, held over three and a half hours talks in Peking, described by U.S. sources as "constructive and businesslike": his main partner in the discussions was Vice-Premier Teng Siao-Ping: Mr. Teng is tipped as the successor to the Premier Chou En-lai.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 29: According to the *Daily News*, the Government has appointed a high level committee of officials to report on the financial and administrative aspects of part two of the L. B. de Silva Salaries and Cadres Commission report. When the Prime Minister's votes were discussed in the National State Assembly yesterday, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike said that her trips to foreign countries were not for pleasure and all her visits were important to the country and were productive: the Premier also said that the situation in the country had not returned to normal after the insurgency of April 1971, and that was the reason why the Government still continued having the Emergency Regulations in force: Mrs. Bandaranaike said that the curfew in Colombo on the 16th of November was imposed on her instructions from Georgia and stories that she was misled by certain Mudalalis to ban the procession were all nonsense: the Premier said that the Government would consider diplomatic relations with North Korea only after the completion of the CJC insurgent trial. Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike Minister of Home Affairs, Public Administration, Local Government and Justice, speaking in the National State Assembly yesterday said that there was no discrimination against the Tamils: every Tamil enjoyed the same fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution: therefore his advice to the Federal Party members was to "keep their mouths shut and stop raising racial disharmony in the country and creating further problems." Mr. Mohamed Farook Sally, Director of Mount Lavinia Hyatt Hotel was yesterday remanded by the Criminal Justice Commission (Exchange Frauds): the order remanding Mr. Sally was made by the Chairman of the commission, Mr. G. P. A. Silva, soon after Mr. Sally concluded his evidence at the inquiry against him and his brother Razeen Sally. According to the *Daily News*, the Police have a strong suspicion that there is a tremendous leak of rationed commodities like flour into the open market through the co-operative network. According to the *Daily Mirror*, all school children will be issued five yards of poplin cloth each, at a rate of Rs. 7.50 a yard. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who is now on a visit to Moscow, has been assured support by the USSR for the struggle of the Palestinian people. The United Nations stunned by the news of the mass execution in Ethiopia has appealed to the ruling Military Council to spare the lives of Emperor Haile Selassie and others under detention.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30: According to the *Daily News*, the Minister of Justice, Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike has asked the Chairmen of Corporations for details of legal expenses incurred by government corporations for the years 1970, 1971, 1972, and 1973;

the Ministers inquiry covers expenses incurred in defending cases at the Labour Tribunal, fees in connection with legal advice sought and charges in connection with written contracts like bonds, agreements or other documents. According to the *Daily Mirror*, it is very unlikely that Sri Lanka will get four from the United States under US Public Law 460 next year: the last consignment received from the States under this Public Law was 20,000 tons which was received this year following an agreement signed at the end of last year. The Deputy Minister of Defence and External Affairs, Mr. Lakshman Jayakody, disclosed in the National State Assembly on Thursday that certain persons who were alleged to be involved in an incident during a religious festival at Mahiyangana this week have been taken into custody and legal action instituted against them shortly. According to the *Daily Mirror* a multi-million rupee State Gem Corporation-Japanese venture will start producing watch dials with "Jasper" a semi-precious stone that is now virtually thrown away. The FAO will help Sri Lanka restore 800 village tanks in the dry zone: the Irrigation Department has informed the *Daily News* that already 800 tanks have been reconstructed: a further 1600 will be reconstructed: with FAO assistance: little over Rs. million had been made available for the purpose by the Food and Agricultural Organisation. According to the *Daily News*, in the age groups over 35 there are more males than females while in the age group 14-35 there are more females than males in Sri Lanka, according to the findings of the latest Consumer Finance Survey of 1973. George Ball former US Under-Secretary of State has forecast a war in the Middle East in six to eight months, if the present armaments build-up continues. President Amin has sacked Mrs. Bagaya his Foreign Minister for making love to an unnamed European in a Paris Airport toilet and for alleged leaks to American and British intelligence: he has described her as a Security risk. Archbishop Makarios is having discussions with Greek Government preparatory to his return to Cyprus.

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POINT OF VIEW

The University Widens Its Base?

Mr. V. Manicavasagar, retired Judge of the Supreme Court, has sent us this letter for publication because the *Ceylon Daily News* has not so far published it although it was a reply to an article by Mr. Dudley Fernando in the *CDN* of September 21, 1974. We are publishing Mr. Manicavasagar's letter because it is an informative and revealing comment on the subject.

Dear Sir

The reference is to the article by Mr. Dudley Fernando on Admissions, under the above caption, published in your issue of 21 September 1974.

The author has been deceived by the Ministry's subtle propaganda, of half-truths, and his role as an apologist ill-suits him.

UNIVERSITY ITS BASE: EDUCATION UNIVERSITY AND EXAM AUTHORITIES AND OFFICIALS-

Traditionally and universally the education set-up is likened to a pyramid with primary education at the very base, secondary education above it and tertiary education, comprising technical professional and university at the crown. Any attempt to widen the base of the topmost part of the crown will obviously do violence to the stability of the whole structure. The edifice can however be made to undergo a complete change into a prism, in which the bases of all three stages of education would be the same and everybody moves from primary education to the university, thereby rendering Sri Lanka unique in the world of education: this process would also prevent a recurrence of the recent spectacle whereby only a fourth of the sixteen thousand had "qualified" to enter the University, a matter which caused the Deputy Minister of Education to lament in public.

The monolithic University of Sri Lanka is only the Senate House, which now functions as a mere branch of the Ministry of Education; the six campuses which constitute the university are in reality nothing more than sub-departments of the Ministry. The real university has no knowledge of or say in the selection for admission, it has no information, it cannot advise or help, nor can it reveal the simplest report or return without Ministry authority. There are no University, Education, or Exams "authorities", only Ministry employees. Autonomy has become an anachronism in Education.

MERIT:

Merit means excellence that deserves reward. It is not something endowed by nature but achieved by one's own effort. To say that "merit is equally distributed in all geographical areas and in all social classes" is a deplorable mis-understanding of the connotation of the term. Of course, for the effort to achieve excellence, meaningful facilities must be provided by the home, by the school, by the environment, and to the largest extent by the State, which wholly controls education. Besides, merit is not mere excellence, which can be judged variously for various purposes at various times, but excellence which deserves recognition. This is the universal understanding of it, and explains why sometimes prizes and awards are withheld. The UN universal declaration of human rights holds that higher education should be accessible on the basis of merit and leaves it at that, because merit is merit.

The assessment of merit rests solely with the examiner and not with any outside personage, with or without authority to manipulate the marks awarded by the examiner. The process is inexorable, impersonal. It is not concerned whether one candidate had enjoyed excellent laboratory facilities and private tuition during the entire period, and had the financial backing to stay in the race a second time as against another, a rural boy, who studied Science under very poor conditions and had to drop out after the first attempt. It has no objectives such as, breaking the barriers of privilege in the university, achieving regional fair-

play, stabilising rural-urban balance etc. If however such factors are given consideration with the concealed intention of veiling the lapses of the State of a decade and a half in rectifying educational imbalance in different parts of the country, then the academic world knows that selection has ceased to be on merit as understood universally, and that it is by extra-academic methods.

In order to make confusion worse confounded the Ministry has deliberately dragged across the track the red herring of *minimum* entrance requirements. The idea and the term itself, appropriate to an external university, which takes no responsibility to instruct its students, have been adopted from the Regulations of the External department of the University of London, with which we have had a long association. Internal universities everywhere refer simply to admission requirements. And it is understood by all and sundry that the mere possession of these does not necessarily entitle one to admission, which is selective in varying degrees. In contrast, for the London external exams possession of the minimum requirements does entitle one only to registration as an external student, *not* to admission to a teaching institution of the university. That any and every candidate in possession of the minimum, three ordinary passes and one weak pass is *entitled* to admission to the internal university of Sri Lanka is an untenable assumption. Nowhere else in the world is such an impossible situation encountered. If an applicant is rejected by a university, after consideration of his grades at his secondary school leaving certificate exam, his school record, his Principal's recommendation sometimes, and perhaps the result of an interview to assess aspects of excellence other than purely academic, like character, motivation, social attitude etc. the applicant should understand and accept that his betters on merit have exhausted all the available places. It is the university's decision not that of an outside agency controlling the university.

If 12,500 candidates have at least three ordinary passes and one weak pass, it does *not* mean that they are qualified for admission; they are qualified for consideration for admission. But if only 3,500

are in fact admitted it must be remembered that this number, by an invalid rank-order inappropriately operated, is constituted of first rate Sinhala medium candidates and first rate Tamil medium candidates and second rate Sinhala medium candidates and even of third rate and fourth rate Sinhala medium candidates only, by the operation of "media-wise" standardization, as proved by statistics. In these circumstances it is ludicrous for the Ministry to shed crocodile tears over the fate of the "shut-out's or mount frantic manoeuvres to transform them into "take-in's. This is labelled selection on merit by the Ministry.

STANDARDIZATION:

Here there is evidence that the Ministry has fooled the author by its not unusual tactic of dropping the qualifying tag "media-wise" from "standardization". The method adopted by the Ministry is not standardization but "media-wise" standardization; while the former is all that is claimed for it, the latter is an invention in Sri Lanka and unknown to international education. Under "media-wise" standardisation the order of merit of the candidate in a subject is not maintained, thus proving once and for all its invalidity. It is without the least doubt "a way of automatically adding marks to a student of one community and of deducting marks from a student of another community"; the former community is Sinhala and the latter is Tamil. This cannot be so airily dismissed as "mischievous propaganda" but the plain truth to the intellectually honest. Why has not the Ministry canvassed the opinion of an independent (i.e. a man of intellectual honesty with the capacity to maintain it under all circumstances) and competent statistician, these many years, instead of producing the same old irritatingly false note on its propaganda trumpet.

In Sri Lanka, and nowhere else in the world, the Ministry monopolises the AL exam, which is a school attainment exam, and imposes on it the role of a competitive exam, by standardising the marks. An attainment exam is designed only to assess the degree of proficiency in the subjects, while a competitive exam aims only at granting each candidate a rank-order, irrespective of his attain-

ment in each of the subjects. Standardisation is appropriate in a competitive exam, but inappropriate in an attainment exam, and if applied will result in large numbers of candidates taking the identical rank-order; that is how a difference of a mere "5 marks in each subject" determine inclusion or exclusion from the 225 places available. Another question that arises is when several scores of candidates take the identical rank-order, who fills the last vacancy on what basis is the single candidate selected. Is it according to race, religion, urban or rural, advanced or deprived area, political affiliation etc. Apparently the Ministry has been chary of initiating the author into this mystery.

In "accepted" (i.e. universally) standardisation, the raw mark of a candidate in a subject is considered as relative to the standard of the entire group of candidates who took the one and the same subject under the one and the same scheme of marking. To standardise is to convert this mark as relative to an arbitrary standard which is common to all subjects. Now, since, the raw marks in the four subjects have been converted to the same arbitrary standard, the 4 standardised marks can and are aggregated for a final order of merit. This the correct and proper procedure. In the "media-wise" standardisation the raw marks in one and the same subject are separated into Sinhala medium marks, and Tamil medium marks. Thus the raw mark of a candidate in the Sinhala medium is considered as relative to the standard of only the Sinhala medium group of candidates in that subject, and that of a candidate in the Tamil medium as relative only to the standard of the Tamil medium group. The two medium-group standards are found to be and in fact are different. Then the raw marks of the Sinhala medium-group candidates are converted to the arbitrary standard, common to all subjects and to all media; similarly the raw marks of the Tamil medium group candidates. If the Sinhala medium-group standard is lower than the Tamil standard, as can be expected in Maths and the Sciences from the record of performance over the years in the past, on standardisation, the Sinhala medium marks will generally be higher than the Tamil

medium marks. The marks of both groups are then brought together to form one list of marks for the subject as in accepted standardisation; this is repeated in the remaining subjects and the aggregates of the Tamil medium candidates may be expected to be lowered fourfold; thus it is that the Sinhala medium candidate with lower performance is granted on a platter a higher rank order for selection for admission.

Where else among educationally comparable countries is such a massive operation mounted as a prelude to university admission, which is unwarranted and discriminatory in its objective, which involves the expenditure of so much energy, money, and several months of time after the results are released and which requires the use of an electronic computer for a petty purpose. Standardisation is taught in the university, in teachers' college and is used for investigatory and other academic purposes. If an entrance exam is found to be essential, in the rare instance, the method adopted by educationists is to have objective tests in areas like General Intelligence, General Knowledge and perhaps a paper or two on all the basic Sciences considered necessary, and designed for competitive purposes. The raw marks are taken to determine rank-order

SELECTION FOR ADMISSION POPULATION-WISE, DISTRICT-WISE, COMMUNITY WISE.

In a Press release in March last year, the Ministry observed that the ratio of Tamils in the number of students admitted was much higher than the ratio in the general population, and that this was proof "that no preferential or adverse treatment was meted out to a particular community". This Ministry added that "admission was not on a district basis", an insight into the amazingly tortuous working of the Ministry mind. The following table gives the admission to Medicine and to Engineering, the most sought after Science based courses, of Sinhala medium candidates as a percentage of Sinhala medium and Tamil medium candidates taken together;

Faculty	1969	Dec 1970	Jan 1972	Feb 1973	May 1974
Engineering	51.7	57.8	66.7	73.4	81.5
Medicine	50.0	56.7	58.6	62.0	72.7

In 1969 selection was on merit, as assessed by the raw marks. No standardisation.

In 1970 on arbitrary qualifying raw marks, lower for Sinhala medium and higher for Tamil medium.

In 1972 and in 1973, "Media-wise" standardisation.

In 1974 "media-wise" standardisation plus district-wise selection.

These figures should please the Ministry immensely that its purpose is being achieved with success; on what other basis can this "great leap forward" in merit of the Sinhala medium candidates be explained, except by the simple expedient of prostituting every psychological or educational principle, method, rule or formula in the book.

How can population ever be an index of merit. To determine admission to university on the same basis as admission to primary education is too obtuse a method to be worthy of consideration. Primary education is a basic right of the human without any regard to merit, but not higher education. Of course, to compare and contrast educational facilities with the population of countries, of districts, of communities, of nationalities is a useful and necessary exercise regularly practised in other countries; but the purpose is always to detect points of inadequacy, and remedy these and not to treat the symptom alone by artificial adjustment; the latter the politicians favour because they are in a hurry, even if it means putting the cart before the horse.

Selection district-wise would be appropriate to a district university; we have no district or regional university. Our University is the University of Sri Lanka, and admission should be on merit applicable to the whole country, and not on population, not on district, not on language medium, not on community not on religion; if resort is made to any one of these, surely the academic standard of our one and only university will deteriorate resulting in the tarnishing of its image in the international world of learning. Selection district-wise will be of great benefit to the Sinhala medium candidates only, because nearly a million Indian stateless, resident in the Sinhala areas and virtually with

no comparable educational facilities are counted in the population. The Ministry can be said to have been quite dextrous in its preference. The Muslims have also had a boon conferred on them by the alternative of all-island-wise selection from them alone; the public is totally ignorant of the procedure followed; the number of Muslims admitted this year is unknown, and I believe unobtainable, as the Ministry treats it as classified information. The merit of the Tamil medium candidates, established over the years has now been artfully denigrated, whilst the several races that go to form the Ceylonese nation, earnestly look forward for national unity, social justice, and equality of opportunity. The mal-odorous smear on education known as "media-wise" standardisation must be wiped away.

V. Manicavasagar

78/1, Ward Place,
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20.11.74

BUILDING A VILLAGE HOUSE—14

GETTING MOVING

By Herbert Keuneman

IT IS HIGH TIME, I know, to re-justify the title of this series by some account of actual progress on The House. But no real progress—and what there was, minimal—took place for a long time. I am ruefully aware that of late these articles have been full of digressions from the straightforward tale. Only, there is no straightforward tale: building a village house is no straightforward matter since one must deviate so often and for so many reasons from what seems an open path to a clearly seen goal.

So, though I shall indulge you for this week, poor Reader, and offer a proleptic account of work in progress, I must warn you that I shall deviate again, and again.. For never shall it be said that, irresponsibly, I left you with the idea that to build a house (in a village) all you did was build it. You must build a dozen other things, besides, that have nothing to do with architectonics: protection against jealousies you all-innocently stir up; hedges against disappointments of multitudinous sorts; and what goodwill you can where you can, to maintain a fairly even balance, or you will find yourself overdrawn in unexpected quarters. I suppose that this is what real architecture is all about (or used to be all about until society expressing itself in more sophisticated communities became to depersonalized to be actively relevant) the skill not only to build but to integrate.

BY MID-JUNE—and that, remember, after two months of unremitting effort—the rubble foundations of the house were beginning to appear above their trenches, and I could feel the house was a-borning from the doubt that always assails one at this stage: how very small the rooms look! (They will grow, of course, to the size you envisaged, as the walls gradually rise to enclose and define the space you planned for. But at first experience one has as much doubt and must commit oneself as trustingly to the drawings as a pilot feels, yet must will himself to trust his instruments rather than his senses, on his first attempt at blind flying).

As early as the 6th of May I had (as I think I have related) lined-out the ground for the excavations. Yet, when I got back to Ehetuwewa from a trip to Colombo, more than 10 days later, not a mamoty-full of earth had been turned; the soaked lines had contracted and some had snapped; cattle had invaded the garden and kicked several pegs out of true. I did not doubt Pinhamy's explanation: that with the centipung showers the ground really was too soft to dig—parts had been actually under water during the lining-out—but it was exasperating that, with everything else to do, there was this to re-do. It was not until the 19th that it was re-done and

the digging finally got under way: a month of my six-month lead on the 'official' start of the *maha* rains (in mid-October) had been fruitlessly frittered away.

There had been however, an even more imperious deadline (from Pinhamy's point of view; though he disclaimed it) and a certainly more immediate one; the *nakata* for the laying of the foundation stone. A *nakata* is an astrologically auspicious moment for a specific undertaking, and if we had missed this we should, it seemed have to wait nearly two weeks longer for another as good. Our *nakata* was the 22nd of May at 6.23 a.m.: a time of day that become automatically inauspicious for me, a devoted late sleeper! And Pinhamy, as I say, had declared himself a sceptic. But any hope I might have entertained that in the circumstances we might ignore the occasion and possibly unnoticed slip one over the Planets was doomed. Pinhamy was adamant, ostensibly out of loyalty to his wife. It was 'all women's nonsense', he kept maintaining; but there was no question about his indulging Mrs. Pinhamy's nonsense one hundred per cent. Goodness! what an indulgent man. He saw to it that everything was done so impressively and so 'proper' that his own expression became quite rapt during the simple and rather charming proceedings.

I HAD TO BE UP at 4.00 a.m.—I am an excruciatingly slow riser—to keep my date with my future destiny; but when I got to the site at 6.15 everything was ready. A stake had been planted at the four corners of the house, and on each rested a domed basket of tender coconut-frond. Each basket held a bunch of prescribed leaves, flowers of five colours, and a *pana* (or saucer lamp) in this case ingeniously—and delightfully—contrived of half a papaya whose hollow held the oil. The 'foundation stone', a small rough boulder which was all I could afford, but one nicely adjusted to Pinhamy's with Mutu Menika's ability to lift it, for it seemed only right that she should have this honourable responsibility, lay ready to hand near where it should be laid.

At 6.20 the *panas* were lit (by Pinhamy, with great gravity) Mutu Menika stepped, down into the

seepage water that still gathered in the trench, and when I signified on my Omega's authority that the *nakata* was precise she faced South, as the planets bade, and laid it approximately where it should go; but only approximately, for it quite disappeared under the water. To firm it in place with mortar in these conditions was manifestly impossible, and indeed I have forgotten exactly where it went—about the middle of the sill of the door to the hallway, I think—so maybe that is why my house is still not quite the abode of unbroken tranquility I should like. Yet it does quite well; and if this lovable little ceremony has made any contribution towards such tranquility as it does know, then I am glad I woke even at that horrible hour in order to share in it.

After the stone had been laid, four plastic-stoppered medicine phials containing some bluish substance with the useful property' so Mutu Menika assured me, of frustrating ill-wishers was buried underneath where the *panas* were flaring. Then the *panas* were put out, and we all went off to an 'auspicious meal'—but also, one sincerely felt, a kind of pagan *agepe*—of *kiri-bat*.

I RETURNED HOME that day feeling illogically comforted and as though something had really been accomplished: an altogether wishful feeling in point of fact, for nothing beyond the formal ceremony had yet been accomplished at all. I had not yet collected—though not for want of effort—even *material* sufficient to begin any worthwhile construction; and I was to struggle through a month more of impotent arid frustration before I should reach so much as the point at which this article began.

The middle of June, however, proved a kind of turning point (as I thought) in my luck since it marked the starting point of actual work on the building. All the rubble for the foundations had been delivered at the site; one third of our estimated requirement of cement was in, and was stored in a house nearby; there was a small pile of bricks and, in proportion, a large pile of broken bats shattered by careless off-loading; the greater part of the sand I had contracted should be supplied had been dumped in a careless unconfined heap

under the *rukattana* tree, too far away, but at least it had been dumped; and I had purchased several trees (for sawing up into timber) *palu*; *khomba*; *mal-mara*—or, as a friend of mine describes it, *para-mara*, Roadside Mara, *Pithecolobium saman*, a beautiful timber, strong and reasonably light and available in very large sections and white-ant resistant and very cheap, but liable to warp and difficult to plane. All this timber was still very much 'in the green tree': they must be felled, sawn, and as far as possible matured as lumber, and all before that dire day of crisis, the beginning of the Rains; but I had a sawyer lined up—Pinhamy said he was the best and most trustworthy sawyer in the district; a nephew! needles to say—and somehow, so hopefully does one clutch at the slimmest straw, I felt the project beginning to move.

JAYAWARDANA BAAS was, it seemed, sustained by a different and still futuristic faith: he seemed to reckon that our worst troubles would be behind us once we reached an apparently magical turning-point which he referred to as the *dipisi*. It was some time before I recognized this as the prosaic Damp-proof Course or D.P.C.

Hardly more logically than Jayawardana Baas, I had persuaded myself that the two climatic effectuations in the building of a house apart, of course, from the act of moving into the completed place, which is no proper part of the *building*—were the laying of the foundation stone and the erection of the roof-tree: those, at all events, were the occasions we had celebrated in my earlier ventures into building; especially the roof-tree thing, which had been treated as quite a celebration: with the tying on of a white flag to wave over it, and arrack all round, and a holiday for the rest of the day. In the village—anyway, in Ehetuwewa—the roof-tree is no notable achievement at all: you lay your foundation stone, and the rest is between you and the Gods. And, naturally, your *baas*.

I do not know anyone else who shares Jayawardana's belief in the D.P.C. as an auspicious 'point of departure'. But certainly there are strange local conceptions and, especially, misconceptions concerning it. At their most rational, it is simply the height at which

the foundations are levelled off ready to bear the walls. No one thinks of it as what, to be sure, it is: a layer of water-impervious material applied to prevent damp from the ground creeping upward. On the contrary, there are a few who maintain, that the practice is positively deleterious! Such a one was my young friend Kapila, who insisted—quoting as his authority an unnamed Engineer—*mahattaya*—that the insertion of any such formalistically theoretical tomfoolery only weakens the wall's cohesive structure; a theory whose truth he undertook to demonstrate by delivering to the wall above D.P.C. level a good stout kick, whereupon (according to the Engineer—*mahattaya's* tuition) it would all 'come tumbling down!' The worst of it was that Kapila had been a candidate (JVP) in the 1970 elections—he lost his deposit—and as even a contender for Parliament he had a far greater moral and intellectual standing than I. It took a great deal of insistence, consequently, to persuade Jayawardana to lay my cherished 1/4-inch of asphalt over the finished *dipisi* as he conceived it; for he counted it an unconscionable waste of effort—and, if you please, of time! This was the only occasion I know when Time claimed to enter into Jayawardana's calculations!

Gradually the foundations mounted. I laid—personally—reinforced concrete spread-footings for each pier which would come in the middle of a double archway. I was forced by the sudden intrusion of a huge boulder of rock where I had planned my cess-pit (and by Government's deep hungover suspicion of any open application for dynamite) into increasing its capacity by widening rather than deepening it, and was thus compelled to put in a sizable concrete beam on which the ends of the cover-slabs could rest: to re-site and re-excavate the pit and rearrange the sewage pipes would have cost more than the beam, so I had to pocket my prejudice against concrete as a village building-medium. But these and lintels over the doorways and some windows remain the only such betrayal in the house.

At last—mid-July—the *dipisi* itself was reached (full stop)

Full stop (full stop)

SHAMBA

LIFE GOES ON

—with ups and down—

by ANATORY BUKOBA

November 14,

Returned I this evening to find that *major* and *minor* had done much clearing. No time had I to have a good look at it, except noticing that not only had light clearing been done, but some of the heavy stuff, too. It had all been done with the two long-handled knives. My friends would rather have had a *katha*. A *katha* is expensive. They want this place fenced. They are used to the idea of wire; I am averse to it. We are all aware of the value of a life fence, though. When I first came here, I planted *thel-enduru*, which grows wild here, and in some profession, at the edge of the grass verge of the road above us, at the top of the bank. There is a larger type of tree which is also called *thel-enduru*. *Enduru* oil is taken from the larger tree; it is used as a medicine for the hand, and also on children for their stomachs. The smaller plant is very hardy; it does not die easily, and it is easily transplanted. The smaller plant can grow to a height of six feet or more, but it grows slowly. It grows straight before branching out, and so it is more decorative than useful.

The heat has really been bad, and it rained today. I cannot remember the name for this type of rain. I call it local. The monsoon is a month late; I am not surprised, what with all the family planning or population control going on, for the goods, if I may speak loosely, cannot be pleased. When I used the word they earlier on, I should have said *major*. *Minor* is more reticent about his views. I crossed the river three times today, on urgent business, fetching mail, and the like. I crossed by the more frequented bathing place, the place where I rarely bathe.

The family seems in tip-top form. The child is fat. Goodness know how they eat, but the housewife has been doing our cooking. There was a lively conversation going on until five minutes ago.

November 15,

The *thel-enduru* which is used as a medicine may be castor-oil; yet someone has promised me some, what he calls, castor seeds, the base for castor oil, and so I am all at sea. *Karambe*, a creeper, thorny, grows here; it gives an edible, berry. Profuse though the creeper grows, I hear it is no good for fencing as it will not be transplanted; it will not survive. In the English countryside, there are edible berries of many kinds that grew in hedges. Other edible berries that grow on this *shamba* are *borathamma*, which is a large tree; *vira*, another large tree, and quite common in Ceylon; *illipathera*, a large tree, but only small on the *shamba*, like a bush; *loerlu*, another large tree, the fruit, flower, and leaves of which are edible, and, in fact, we had the leaf as a vegetable for dinner tonight; and *eraminia*, a creeper, whose thorns had me by the shirt today; also, *megong karapincha*, a small tree which grows in some profusion here all these six are edible berries, four of which are trees, and two, creepers. An edible leaf found on the *shamba* is *ranora*, as I have mentioned in a previous *shamba* article. I have heard this acre referred to as the *dhul watta*, as there are so many wood-apple trees growing here. The tree are regularly stripped of their fruit, before they are ripe, by outsiders, all fearful in case others get in their pick first.

We were out, before breakfast, clearing. Towards the end of the morning, I dropped in at the blacksmith's to see if he had a *katha* for sale. He had, and I bought it for Rs. 20/-, which included the cost of a new shaft, and sharpening the blade. I collected it, the job completed, three hours later, and so we have our first *katha* or slasher. My own feeling is that the *katha* does not do as clean a job as the knife, but it is quicker. When I first came here, we borrowed a *katha*. Other considerations apart, it is not easy to find one. Hence my investment today.

Epics are tragedies, and it is easy to see they are popular. I have felt bored on the few occasions when it has looked as if we were going to succeed in making a success of this *shamba*. That was the feeling I had this morning as I lay a bed. Matters soon righted them-

selves. First, there was the question of control, of people just doing as they liked, or appearing to do so. Then, money. How am I going to feed my two co-workers? I think the less I think about it the better. I think *major* is spending less than I would, and so the fault is not with him. Why are the boys here? *Major* because of me, and *Minor* because of *Major*. I think it is these relationships which are going to count more than money. I think I must be a bit of a recluse. Certainly I get no time to myself now, and I miss it. It is not so much privacy, but time to write letters and read, that I miss, and above all, to order my life as I wish. I can no longer do that. *Major* is telling the housewife the whole story of a Sinhalese film. He has just finished, and *Minor* has just made an observation that has set them all laughing. I just think that *Major* is about to start the story of another film. He has. *Minor* killed a *Kunu-katuwa* today. The snake and I just missed each other. It slipped on to the path first. It was a small one, but poisonous. We killed it in case someone fell foul of it sometime and was bitten. To let it go was like taking a chance with someone's life.

We have not moved into the other house yet, as we cannot come by the *cadjans*. A married family and three men are a crowd for this house. The story that is going on now is an amusing one, and they are all laughing at one time or another, including my colleague. The baby is asleep. I write this on the ground, on a mat. The floor is earth, and this has been a house for a year and three-quarters.

November 16.

Before breakfast two of us cleared up some of what had been out at the far end of the *shamba*, I making piles of it, and *Minor* using the mammy on what had been missed, mostly thorny stuff. It was just like picking a hole in it, there was so much still to do. After breakfast I went away on an errand, and when I was back they had switched to the middle of the *shamba*, clearing, and making a pile of what they cut. *Major's* father turned up. There is only one *illipathera* tree on the *shamba*; it was a tree, not a bush, leaning to a side under the leaf of a wood-apple. As it is the only one, I shall leave it, but

it is a pity it is not standing on its own. *Major's* father says that the plant we are saving for the hedges is not *thel-enduru* or *enduru*. He mentioned a name, but we cannot remember what it was. There is apparently a *murunga* tree still alive; so said *minor* when he had a look at it. The housewife says it was planted by her son. She says the passion fruit creeper is dead. The *murunga* tree is just a stump, just as it was planted, and so it passed unnoticed. As it has not a leaf on it and it has been planted a year, I can only presume that our three-year old breaks all the shoots off it. I have caught her doing so only once, and unprimed by the parent who saw her. I certainly feel like a sleep or a rest after lunch, but my companions are not used to it. We have to bathe while there is still sun enough to dry our clothes. It seems unreasonable to expect anyone to work after five, unless there is watering to be done, but I managed to get in an hour's work.

It was making heaps of vegetation again at the far end. This time the brunt of the work was done, and what a difference it makes to the whole *shamba*; there is a new landscape. With all the green piled into heaps there is just the brown of the earth and of the dead leaves showing. The piling was slow business. It is easiest done if someone piles while another cuts. What I made heap of today and yesterday was cut the day I was away; or rather, what I made heaps of today; we had the *katha* going for the first time yesterday: You can work quickly with it, but I rather think it does only half a job. The result is a great mess, which makes piling difficult and it encourages the broad firing that is such a favourite with *chena* cultivators.

My companions are asleep, or they appear to be. My colleague went off for a bath accompanied by his wife, leaving the child behind, asleep, and although they were not gone ten minutes, my companions took advantage of it to fall asleep promptly, and it is not yet nine o'clock. Someone said there is a curfew in Colombo, and another that five members of a new sort of J.V.P. have been arrested. *Cadjans* were Rs. 40/- a hundred today,

up by Rs. 10/-. Any connection? Tomorrow will tell.

November 17.

The weekly day of rest, it was today. It was hard stopping working. There is sometimes a reaction against work that seems to start on Sunday, with disastrous effects. Once, I think, two young men arrived on a Saturday, and they spoke, eagerly spoke about working. The intervening day of rest, before the Monday, demolished all their enthusiasm and they went home a day or two later, ostensibly with sores in their legs. I believe in the Sunday rest; I have hitherto always observed it, but I must say I rather dreaded it today. Cooking has to be done, and the morning for one of us seemed to be taken up with it, and the other two went for a walk, I spent the afternoon catching up on letters, but I was not able to do, what I call, any real reading, and I had no sleep.

Perhaps I have been too free warning one person of another one's faults, and I tripped over myself with it today. As this other person seemed to be ubiquitous, he may have overheard a phrase or two of mine more than once, indicating where the conversation lay. There was a little rumpus tonight, hence my sombre mood. Whatever caused the Colombo curfew seems to have blown over.

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The little reading I have done the last few days seems to have been mainly about pride, the disastrous consequences of it. Well fed I have been the last few days. People who saw me at the beginning of this period have remarked how much better I look. Yet, I have been acutely hungry, felt it, I mean, many times. It has been a great help feeling that the money, we had used, has been spent to the best advantage; our advantage, that is.

Recently I have reading how this over-population fallacy has been debunked. More interesting, it was, reading that the world population conference at Bucharest, become alive to this, too; how they broke up convinced that socio-economic changes for the better, leading to more equality, will mean a natural fall in the birthrate, and that it is a great mistake to imagine that an artificially-compelled reduction in the birthrate can ever lead to socio-economic improvements. I hope that our own Director of UNCTAD reads about what really happened at Bucharest, how the advocates of population control received an enormous slap in the face. I hope our own officials read this, too, especially those in the Planning Department. It is too much to expect those in the Health Department to do a complete about turn, and, so, population control in this, our Island, will go on, and so will the delay in the monsoon. I let go no opportunity of warning people against birth control when I get the chance.

November 18,

Bitterly cold, it was, just before dawn, like a cold English winter's morning. We cleared this time near the road, and not long after we resumed work after breakfast. I heard that *Minor* wanted to leave to start studying at once for an examination in December. The original idea, announced soon after he joined me, was that he would leave a few days before the examination started. Whatever caused his abrupt change of mind, he was beginning to have serious trouble with his feet; thorns. So it is perhaps as well that he has a rest. I lost no time getting him away. When I questioned him about it all, he was full of his intention to come back; at least, he said so, for he is not a man of many words.

I could not help pointing out that his leaving threatened to put the clock back right where it was, so far as it concerned the progress we have made in the last few days. However, in spite of continuous misgivings I had, *Major* seemed determined to stay, unless I wanted him to go. I thought I just had to accept his *bona fides*, or professions of it. Rather, it never seemed to have occurred to him to leave. I had even suggested that he might like to go away for a while to think it over.

The housewife has not been well today, and her husband out of work. He had the chance of working today, but he lost it through incompetence or laziness. So he has gone without his dinner tonight. The whole family missed lunch.

St. Augustine's *City of God*, a slightly abridged version of it, is what I am reading now, stimulating and thought-provoking it is. A book by an African written 1,500 years ago ought to be read anyway. All this reminds me of the parade by school-children that I saw on Bandaranaike Day. I saw the procession or parade go by. I think I read somewhere that they had five hours of it, and when I heard this, I could not help thinking, what wonderful material for the invasion of Africa; but, to judge from the composition of the parade, half would have to be women. It is only 9.20 P.M., but I have been nearly asleep and *major* has been snoring. The family were in bed long ago. *Major* still snores on. I gather from the *City of God*, that the main business of religion is worshipping God and not asking favours and of course we worship this by the kind of life we lead.

My arms were really weary using the mamoty today. The heaps of vegetation have to be set alight well before dusk here, or else, damp or dew gets at them. A thought that struck me today was that. Christ left us the *Mass* as a constant reminder of Himself. Without it, we might be inclined to forget. I have the beginnings of two sores on my legs.

November 19,

An eventful day it was. We had our visit from our first Bishop. He came an unusual way, fording the river, hopping from stone to stone, with his shoes on. He was

better at it than me. He sat down in our abode on the very narrow plank bench that *Minor* had fixed up, using rope and not nails, and talked to the housewife and my colleague. It turned out providential that my colleague went to work neither yesterday nor today or he would never have met the Bishop. God certainly has a way of arranging things, even making use of people's apparent weaknesses. This house is the particular Bishop's furthest outpost in one direction, although he approached us from enemy territory, as it were, using no man's land, the river. It was good of him to come. He had only one attendant and he was from the church opposite. I do not think the attendant, if I may call him so, had crossed the river in his life. Anyway, we are all in better heart.

Certainly, our work of clearing has progressed wonderfully. We broke through today right in the middle of the *Shamba* opening up a clear vista to the cleared land beyond. This leaves us with two main areas to clear, a long rectangular stretch separating us from our new neighbour, who has not yet moved in, but who has cleared his land, and a triangular bit, not quite so large I should think, straight on the side that faces the road, with the other two sides rather concave. Both are heavily wooded and there is much thorn left yet. This evening I set light to an old heap of vegetation that has been lying there for months and resisted many of my efforts to burn it, and this evening it very nearly defeated me, too. When I did set it alight and went away after a while, I came back in time to find that it was all set to leave one half of the pile quite untouched, and I was lucky to get the fire going properly again and to burn the other half as well. This heap lay in the triangular patch where, a little clearing has been done by the road, and where some of the worst thorn is to be found. The housewife is shivering with cold from malaria, and the weather is quite warm.

This evening the young *kadday mudalali*, whom we had entrusted with some money for cadjans, came here to tell us that the cadjans fifty of them, making two bundles; had been landed if I may use that term, and would we please come

to remove them in case they were lost during the night. We did so. The puppy has been putting its snout, or should I say muzzle, in all the cooking pots, and he was suspected of being bitten by a rabid dog not so long ago! I do not think this would have happened if the housewife had been well enough to attend to the matter of tidying up herself. She has just got sick outside. She swept sand over it quickly before the dog could get at that.

So life does not go smoothly. St. Augustine writes beautifully on this subject, and he says it is the Christian who is best fitted to take the downs with the ups. And, in fact, to take, I mean to cope with, the ups. Pardon me all the others yet. He recalls the story of Marcus Aurelius Regulus, a pagan, who was tortured to death in an inhuman way by the Carthaginians, because he had, when on parole, advised the Roman Senate against an exchange of prisoners, himself then a prisoner of the Carthaginians, who wanted this exchange of prisoners. He then returned to Carthage to honour his parole. He died of fatigue, shut up in a box in which he could not lean on any side for sharp nails.

More Fresh Water From The Sea For The Middle East London.

Nearly 1,500,000 gallons of fresh water a day will be provided by three sea-water distillation plants being supplied from Britain for the Middle East. Weir Westgarth has announced two contracts worth more than £2.25 million from the Saudi Arabian Government's petrochemicals agency for the plants to be installed at Jeddah, on the Red Sea. One of the contracts is for civil works and site erection which will be carried out as a joint venture with Maphar Limited, a Saudi Arabian company. Produced by a process pioneered by the Weir Group, the water will be used in refinery jobs. The scheme is expected to be operational by early 1976. This order follows another contract won by Weir, for a plant in Abu Dhabi.

CONSTRUCTIVE REJOINER

To Mr. Duraisingham's Article On Origins Of The Radical Movement

Sir,

I was delighted to read the article under the above heading from the pen of Mr. T. Duraisingham. Since the heading is 'The Origins', it is essential that the background of his series should be complete and historically accurate.

By coupling the 1920 and 1923-24 Constitutions for discussing the personal jealousies and dissensions, he has confused the issues and come out with certain erroneous statements. Under Ordinance No. 13 of 1910, which was the first result of agitations for reform, not only an elected educated Ceylonese seat was created but the European and Burgher nominated seats were turned into elected seats. Under the Order-in-Council of August 1920, the Council consisted of 14 officials and 23 unofficials. By the Order-in-Council of December 1923, the Council was enlarged to 12 officials (5 ex-officio and 7 nominated) and 37 unofficials (3 nominated 34 elected).

THE WRITER is correct in stating that the leadership in the agitation for Constitutional reform in Ceylon was in the able hands of Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, but he has not done full justice to this great and noble son of Sri Lanka who was not only the inspirer of patriotism and rationalism, but the pioneer in Social service, worker's welfare, tax reforms, local Government, rehabilitation of the Rodiyas, etc. His welfare activities did not start in 1917 as stated in the above article. It was long before his retirement in 1913 from the Civil Service. His transfer from Colombo to Kurunegala was as a result of the Government's displeasure over his activities behind the scenes.

He had a trust-worthy friend and a kindred soul in Mr. William Digby on the Editorial staff of the *Ceylon Observer*, who urged him to make full use of his brilliant qualities of head and heart in the best interests of the people. In fact, Digby's contribution to the 'Calcutta Review' suggesting the introduction of Representative Government into Ceylon under the title 'An oriental Colony ripe for self-Government' was the joint work of these two energetic and enthusiastic reformers.

A. M. Ferguson, the Editor and Proprietor of the *Observer*, although a man of liberal views, compared with other Europeans of the time was in no mood to accelerate the pace of political reforms and Digby got frustrated and left for India. When A. M. Ferguson died and his nephew John Ferguson, controlled

the *Observer*, Arunachalam found the opportunity for writing letters to that paper under the pseudonym 'Reform'.

All these were in 1902. The Government Rules and regulations could not restrain the rebel and reform spirit in Arunachalam, but he was quiet for a few years after his return to Colombo as Registrar General. In 1909 Armand de Souza, Editor, of *Morning Leader*, wrote to him and reminded him that the appropriate times had approached "for the real work of safe-guarding the interests (political reforms) he had furthered so far." The letter Editor added "The principles of the reforms may be accepted, and yet rules so formed as to render the entire advantage mitigatory. That is what men like you have to lead us in guarding against."

MR. DURAISINGHAM refers to Ceylon National Congress as if it was the first Political Organisation. There was first the Ceylon National Association of which Mr. D. R. Wijewardene was Secretary and H. A. P. Sandrasegera, the last President. At the request of the former, Arunachalam delivered his first public political lecture on "Our Political Needs". Let me here quote the words of Sir James Peiris relating to this epoch-making event: "Although there were several agitations for political reform in Ceylon from time to time, the people woke to the necessity of persistent and organised agitation only after Sir P. Arunachalam delivered his address on "Our Political

Needs". I would ask especially those young men who are studying politics to read that lecture and cognate publications of Sir P. Arunachalam and treat them as a sort of political bible."

Thereafter, Arunachalam founded in May 1917, the Ceylon Reform League, following the example of Dr. Annie Besant in India, with the definite object of securing Self-Government. Under its auspices two political Conferences were held, one in December 1917 and the other in December 1918. The memorandum on "Case for the Constitutional Reform in Ceylon" in September 1919 in the name of the Joint Committee of the Ceylon Reform League and the Ceylon National Association was prepared by Arunachalam himself. You will thus see that the Ceylon National Congress was really the off-spring of the above two earlier Organisations.

In his over-enthusiasm for making out a case for the Congress of Students in the first non-communal body, he has omitted the above facts. As one who had attended the Students Congress Sessions, though not a member of it being a Government servant, I am in the happy position to state that the youths were really guided by high ideals and had dreamt of a United Ceylon.

Mr. Duraisingham is not correct in his statement that the Tamil Mahajana Sabbai was established in 1921. There was absolutely no provocation for it. The disputes and dissensions started only after the introduction of the 1923 Reforms over the distribution of the territorially elected seats including the Western Province (Ceylon Tamil) seat. The All-Ceylon Tamil Conference held at the Ridgeway Hall, Jaffna, was the first result of the quarrels over the fruits of the labours of Arunachalam. The very paper which had its first issue in 1918 with his blessing turned against him when power-politics reigned supreme. I shall quote at the end of this article some inspiring passages from that inaugural message.

Mr. Duraisingham refers to A.E. Goonesinghe's radical views and his disagreement with the Ceylon National Congress in 1923 but he does not say a word

about S. W.R. D. Bandaranaike's eloquent speech at the session of National Congress held at Kandy in December 1925 and his poignant question directly addressed to the three leaders seated on the platform who proposed Dominion status for Ceylon.

Your correspondent quotes J. V. Chelliah's message to the Youths in 1924. "You are the future citizens of Ceylon. On you depends the weal or woe of this beautiful Island. May God help you to stand together unitedly for righteousness and justice!". Almost a similar message couched in much more beautiful and inspiring language, was addressed to the youths of Sri Lanka in the first issue of the Ceylon Daily News in 1918. I quote below some striking passages from that Message:—

1. "In our zeal for political reform, we must be on our guard against making it an end. We seek it only as a means to an end. We seek it not to win rights, but to fulfil duties—duties to ourselves and our country."

2. "I look to our youth to spiritualize public life and I believe they will do it. They will each seek his own well-being in the well-being of all, will identify his own life with the life of all, and his own interest with the interest of all."

3. "Without youth inspired with such a spirit and such ideals I look to see our Country rise with renewed splendour, paling the glory of Parakrama Bahu the Great and a beacon-light to all lands."

These are words which apply equally, if not more to the conditions today than to the conditions and circumstances that existed 56 years ago! Perhaps, Mr. Duraisingham has neither read them nor even heard of them. And yet he wants us to accept his statement that the "work for the realization of the ideals of a united Ceylonese nation" started with the Students Congress at Jaffna inspired by the writings in the Journals coming across the Palk Straits. I wish to remind him that Arunachalam was the first Asiatic who stood up for Tilak, the Indian patriot when the

British Government persecuted and prosecuted that noble son of India. This was in 1898, when Arunachalam was a Civil Servant and the shackles of Government service restricted his freedom of expression. When he was an Executive Councillor, no question whether relative to the poor farmer or the humble employee of the Railway failed to engage his interest.

How short is the memory of the people whom he served so diligently in a really dedicated manner. Power politics alone can play such a havoc with people's memory and their sense of gratitude! Even the Lanka Maha Jana Sabha, under the patronage of the late lamented F. R. Senanayake which was the direct result of Arunachalam's speech on the 20th September 1919, ultimately turned into a Communal body. In this connection, as a man of religion, I cannot do better than quote a sloka from Bhagawad Gita:

"Isham bhogan hi vo devah,
dasaynte yajna-bhavitah,
Tair-dattan apradaya ebhyah yo
bhunkta stena eva sah."

(For, nourished by sacrifice, the shining ones shall bestow on you the enjoyments you desire. A thief verily is he who enjoyeth what is given by Them without returning Them aught)

Let me add in conclusion that the Tribune and Eelanadu (weekly) are the two journals in Sri Lanka to which I subscribe at present. There is some impartiality, righteousness, justice and truth in what I read in their pages.

K. Ramachandra

Jayanthipura,
Talangama.
5th December 1974.

FOR NEWS
BEHIND THE NEWS

read

TRIBUNE

regularly

REPORTAGE

THE GEM INDUSTRY

—a seminar—

SEMINAR ON GEM INDUSTRY IN SRI LANKA HELD UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AT IRRIGATION DEPARTMENT AUDITORIUM 13.12.1974.

The well-attended Seminar, at which there were only four members of the Press, of which I was the only representative from the English-language press, began at 4.30 p.m. with an Address of Welcome by the Director of Studies, Association of Scientific & Technical Workers,

Dr. N. M. Perera, who presided, introduced the speakers, who all "exceeded their supposed" time limit of ten minutes each. The first speaker, **Professor K. Kularatnam**, Chairman, Gemmologists Association, spoke on various Geological and Historical aspects of the Gem Industry in Sri Lanka. He said that the industry was very old, dating back to the time of the ancient Sinhala kings, who however used primitive methods of mining and gem-cutting, in digging the soil to a depth where the essential minerals were to be found, and then extracting the gems from the mineral ore, and cutting and polishing them. Ceylon had been known for the richness and the variedness of her gems, which were to be found mainly in the Sabaragamuwa Province, and more particularly the Ratnapura and Matale districts, where geological conditions were most favourable, and gems were to be found at a not very great depth from ground surface. However we have been backward in exploiting the resources of precious stones existing in this island to its fullest potential until the British came here, and after over a century of their rule had elapsed, during which they had been engaged in other important priorities, such as the plantation of tea, rubber, coconut, and paddy cultivation, the building of roads, railways and canals for transport, etc., the Gem Industry, although earlier carried out on a subdued scale by the British, was officially started in 1904 by that renowned savant, Dr. Ananda K. Coomara-

swamy, during the Governorship of one of the island's most able and progressive administrators, the Irish-born Sir Henry Arthur Blake. Owing to certain difficulties the Industry was suspended in 1906, but was resumed again in 1921. The setting up of the Gem Corporation, however, did not take place until fifty years later, in 1971. The Geology of the island was then described.

The second speaker, **Mr. P. G. Punchiappahamy**, Chairman of the State Gem corporation (which was founded by the present Government in 1971) then spoke on some recent trends in the Gem Trade. He endorsed the previous speaker's observations that before the establishment of the Gem Corporation in 1971, methods employed in mining and gem-cutting were both primitive and obsolete. Modern methods employed since then may be more expensive, but they were highly organised, technically advanced and more effective. 9/10th of our land consisted of pre-Cambrian rock, which abounded in minerals and precious stones such as the sapphire, the ruby, the emerald, the catseye and other gems. Even the diamond, which was most common in South Africa and Australia, was occasionally to be found in Lanka. At Elahera (off Matale) and around Ratnapura there are signs of prosperity among the gem-mining community and their way of life. Around these areas there has been a big boom in prospecting for gems in recent years, with families moving in and taking up residence on land leased to them by a progressive Government for this purpose. The local inhabitants, too, have been engaged in this industry for generations. Buyers from other countries are now coming to Ceylon to examine and buy gems. There are several gem dealers in Colombo and the other major towns of the island some of them, mainly in the metropolis, who export gems.

The third speaker, **Mr. Mortimer**, the Deputy Controller of Exchange, spoke on the Convertible Rupee Account and its benefits for the Gem Industry. He said that the CRA was introduced primarily to promote non-traditional exports and the "cottage industries" of Lanka. Very little progress has been made up to now to earn fore-

ign exchange from exports other than the traditional commodities like Tea, Rubber and Copra. Under the CRA, exports of gems would be encouraged, and approximately 20% of valuable foreign exchange would be earned from the sale of these and other non-traditional commodities.

The fourth speaker was **Mr. Nalliah** from the Department of Customs, who outlined the Gem Trade from the Customs angle. He reiterated the view of speaker number two that all exported gems are exposed to the most detailed examination and scrutiny not only by the buyers who came to Ceylon for the purpose, but also as they passed through the Customs. Sometimes exported gems are returned by the buyers, if they are found to be unsatisfactory, and when they are taken as samples for approval.

The fifth and last speaker, **Dr. Nath Amarakone**, President, Association of Scientific & Technical Workers (and also incidentally, Mr. Pieter Keuneman's Secretary at the Ministry of Housing & Construction) apologised at the outset for any shortcomings as he did not have a specialised knowledge of the subject he was called to speak on. It was the need for a programme of skilled training for all those engaged in the various aspects of Gemmology. He emphasised that a lack of professionalism results in financial losses to the Industry—as indeed the lack of professionalism in any Industry must inevitably lead to financial reverses, inefficiency and inability to utilise the fullest potential of such Industry. In this connection he hoped to start Training Courses for all those interested in pursuing a career in the various departments of Gemmology. At the moment there were about 80,000 employees connected in one way or another with the Gem Industry, whether in mining, refining, cutting, polishing, buying or selling or brokering. There was about 1 engineer for every 100 workers, or about 800 engineers altogether. There were also promoters, canvassers and salesmen connected with gem dealing.

JEPHARIS

IS IT TRUE?

Sherlock Holmes

MILK AND THE MILK BOARD

IS IT NOT TRUE that the strike in the Milk Board has deprived the vast majority of the people in Colombo and the outstations of milk? That private dairies, which are today few and far between, cannot hope to meet even a minimal fraction of the current demand? That from December 23 the operations of the Milk Board have come to a complete halt? That reports indicate that the strike has arisen owing to a dispute on the bonus issue? That reports further indicate that most of the strikers are from the LSSP-controlled union? That workers belonging to the SLFP union did not go on strike but they are employed in sections and departments which are not connected with the actual distribution of the milk? That this strike has paralysed the distribution of milk throughout the island, though spokesmen for the Milk Board claim that the collection of milk has not been adversely affected and that the milk so collected was being sent to the powdered milk factory at Ambawela? That it is not known how much of this is fiction and how much is true? That in spite of this claim by the Milk Board (as revealed in the *Daily News* reports are floating around that the fast-diminishing numbers of milk producers are in a quandary not knowing what to do with the milk their cows produce daily? That they had sold it earlier to the Milk Board and it is not easy for them to organise sales to customers?

IS IT NOT A FACT that this over-centralised over-capitalised and unwieldy huge organisation known as the Milk Board has become a virtual white elephant taxing the economy in no uncertain terms? That according to the Minister of Agriculture the Milk Board receives a subsidy of Rs 40 to Rs. 50 million a year? That 65% of the losses in the Milk

Board were the result of FEECs paid on account of the import of Lakspray and the raw materials necessary to prepare Condensed Milk? That in spite of this huge subsidy the price of Lakspray was increased recently? That when the price of Lakspray was reduced a wee bit, the Minister had complained that there was a "loss" on each pound of Lakspray sold? That the increased price of the Lakspray and the other products of the Milk Board was attributed to the "increase in the world prices"? That this is just another piece of fiction? That the real reason for the increased prices of all products and also the losses is really due to the large overheads and the unnecessarily large labour force—manual, clerical and other non-technical staff carried by the Milk Board? That in addition, the waste and loss arising from inefficiency and corruption must also be added to the "losses"? That the corruption in the Milk Board is notorious? That it is also well-known that trade unions have been feather-bedded without the Milk Board getting any reciprocal benefits from the unions or the workers? That if the workers and employees did a honest day's work for the wages and salaries paid to them then things would be different? That in a Corporation (like the Milk Board), which has only losses to show for all the money invested in it from public funds for its employees to want a bonus seems most incongruous? That if the trade unions—through their Employees' Councils and/or other organisations—had been able to bring about effective improvements then nobody would have grudged them a bonus? That with this strike public sympathy has turned even more sharply than before against the employees of the Milk Board?

IS IT NOT TRUE that the time has come for some serious re-

organisation to be effected in the Milk Board? That a Parliamentary Committee will no doubt look into some of the complaints about the working of the Milk Board? That it will be interesting to know why the intake by the Milk Board had dropped from 170,000 pints a day to 140,000 pints? That this was sometime ago and the drop would be greater now? That the primary cause of this drop is that the private dairy sector (which supplied the bulk of the milk to the Board) has virtually collapsed owing to a variety of reasons including the prohibitive cost of cattle food and the disruption caused by an ever-hasty and imprudent (putting the cart-before-the-horse techniques) implementation of Land Reform? That the state dairy sector is either a distant dream or a mirage? That the state sector in the dairy industry cannot meet even a minute fraction of the needs of the Milk Board? That the overheads in the pasteurised and sterilised milk sections were well over 50 to 55 percent? That in an efficient and profitable organisation such overheads should not be anything more 20 percent on the outside? That the public is only subsidising the inefficiency and corruption of the oversized "overheads"? That a new red herring (or is it only a mirage?) has been drawn across the trail by saying that when the World Bank aid to improve our dairy facilities has begun to take effect everything will be hunky-dory? That the World Bank has promised aid to improve pasture lands and fodder supplies? That the minimum time required for these proposals to take effect would be 2 to 3 years? That in the meantime the Milk Board will limp into further losses? That the condensary is a scandal with an output of 25,000 pints a day though having a minimum potential capacity of 120,000 pints a day?

NEXT WEEK

- More About Paddy Production Statistics
- Continuing Bureaucratic Complacency About The Food Situation
- International Affairs—Upheavals Everywhere