

# TRIBUNE

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## Standardisation and Separatism

STANDARDISATION LANGUAGE-WISE AND SELECTION DISTRICT-WISE, whatever the noble intentions (if any) of helping children in backward communities and districts to enter the University, has turned out in practice to be an infringement of a basic human right by denying university education in Sri Lanka to many children who have proven talent in examinations. The 1972 Constitution has its own peculiar version of human rights and fundamental freedoms which is different in many vital matters from the UN Declaration of Human Rights. One result of this colourable infringement of human rights has now manifested itself in the kind of standardisation and selection that has been made a way of life in this country.

This exercise was originally intended, under a smokescreen of many camouflages, to contain the exploding industry in Jaffna and among the Tamils of educating youth for export for occupational employment in the rest of Ceylon and also abroad. But, in 1975, standardisation and districtwise selection has already begun to adversely affect an increasingly large number of Sinhalese students in the developed Sinhala areas. As long as Jaffna and the Tamils were the victims of this obviously pernicious system, nobody in the Establishment seemed to mind, but now that some Sinhalese students (and parents) have begun to feel the sting of this standardised-districtwise selection, a demand has arisen for revision. A Sectoral Committee of the Cabinet has been assigned the task of examining this new methodology of standardisation and selection, unknown

anywhere else in the civilised world, with a view, no doubt, of suggesting modifications to make it less vicious than it is now.

Standardisation had arisen, in the first instance, as a device to meet a longstanding grievance among the Sinhalese Buddhists that the British colonial rulers had given the Tamils an unfair advantage over the Sinhalese in the matter of employment in the government service and even the private sector. The Tamils, coming as they did from the geographically less endowed and less developed regions, had been amenable to missionary educational efforts and this had given them a head start far ahead of the Sinhalese. The British had deliberately planned everything to sustain their rule through the old Roman technique of *divide et impera* and utilised the Tamils to man the administrative and mercantile services in Ceylon—and also export many of them to other British colonies like Malaya.

As long as the Tamils had lived in their traditional homelands in the comparatively bleak and poor North, Northwest and East of the island as they had done for countless centuries before, the Sinhalese had not been unduly perturbed. But when the Tamils began to penetrate the southern and central regions of the island in British times, it was not difficult for interested parties to revive old historical memories of the Chola invasions from South India which had utilised the indigenous dravidian population in the north, east and northwest to undermine the bastions of Sinhalese power.

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The first of these invasions had taken place under Elara, a prince from the Chola kingdom, who had captured the city of Anuradhapura and ruled the northern areas of the Sinhalese for 44 years—until he was defeated by Dutthagamani who was the first Sinhalese to bring the whole island under his sway (circa 161-137 BC). But the Tamils soon regained their sovereignty in their areas. The Chola invasions, however, kept coming from time to time, until the peak was reached in 1017 A.D. when the Cholas had brought the whole island under their control for about 70 years. The Sinhalese had then pushed the Cholas back and confined the Tamils to their homelands in the north and east, and it was during the reign of Parakrama Bahu (half his army was Tamil mercenaries from the Pandyan kingdom in South India), a nascent Sinhalese civilisation began to flourish. Thereafter, in the beginning of the thirteenth century, a separate kingdom was established in Jaffna, as a distinct sovereign political entity (not as an extension of the Chola empire), and this had continued to exist (except for a brief 17 years when it was captured by the Sinhalese prince Sapumal, i.e. 1450-67 A.D.) until Jaffna's final subjugation by the Portuguese in 1618.

After the Portuguese, it was the Dutch, but it was the British who had brought Tamil labour from South India to work in the plantation that were opened out in the Sinhala areas. This was regarded, quite rightly, as a further intrusion into Sinhalese territory by the Tamils. It must be remembered that the Sinhalese Buddhists (Kandyan and



Low Country) had been neglected during the 450 years of western rule. It is also true that the majority of the Sinhalese had felt that the post-Independence UNP government (1948-56) had not paid due attention to the Sinhalese Buddhists. And this was why Bandaranaike was able to sweep to power in 1956 and usher in what was undoubtedly a new era in Sinhala Buddhist history.

**SINHALESE BUDDHISTS**, at that time and for a long time before, had entertained fears about two minority groups, favoured by the British, and who had been established in positions of strength in the Sinhalese areas. First, the Tamils, who had been able to secure a disproportionate share in employment in the private and public sectors. Together with the Indian Tamils, the Tamils in Ceylon, the Sinhalese felt, were a threat to the Sinhalese race especially in the context of the dravidian millions in the south of India. Second, the Christians were viewed with suspicion and fear. The majority of Christians were Sinhalese, and the rest were Tamils and Burghers. The efficient and rich organisations to run schools and other institutions, built up under British rule, by the Christians was regarded as a source of danger to Sinhala Buddhist hegemony.

An administratively and politically unified Ceylon, which the British handed over to the brown sahibs among the Sinhalese elite with a system of parliamentary government, offered new opportunities to the Sinhala Buddhist majority to achieve what they had never before been able to do in history, that is to establish complete hegemony over the whole of the island.

There were many legitimate grievances on which the Sinhala masses were persuaded to throw out the brown sahibs and bring a new ruling Sinhala elite to the seats of power. Two Surveys conducted by the Central Bank in 1953 and 1963 added fuel to the fire of Sinhala discontent. The survey of 1963 showed that more than half of the Indian Tamil population (51.4%) were gainfully employed whereas less than quarter of the total Kandyan Sinhalese population were so employed. Furthermore, a comparison of the 1953 and 1963 surveys showed that the income

gain of the Kandyan Sinhalese and Low Country Sinhalese was 20% and 26% respectively whereas in the case of the Ceylon Tamils it was 31%. Additionally, the Ceylon Tamils had a larger share in the per capita income while the Indian Tamils enjoyed a higher per capita income than the Sinhalese (Kandyan and Low Country) in 1953 and higher than that of the Kandyan Sinhalese in 1963. However, the figures showed an increase in unemployment among the Ceylon Tamils as between 1953 and 1963 whereas there was an all-round improvement in respect of all other groups. By this time, the policy of dislodging the Tamils from public sector employment had begun to take effect. The latest survey of the Central Bank in 1973 revealed that the Tamils no longer have any privileged position in the economic field, but this fact has not yet dawned on many Sinhala politicians.

In regard to admission to the University, there was a great deal of antagonism to the Tamils. A study conducted by a member of University's department of sociology had shown that a disproportionate number of Ceylon Tamils had obtained places in the science, engineering and medical faculties compared to the Sinhalese (employment was more certain for these graduates) and also that larger numbers of Christians entered the

university than their population warranted.

It is not necessary to examine how the Sinhala Buddhists had proceeded to deal with the Tamils, on the one hand, and the Christians on the other. There is also no need to go into the question of how the Sinhalese Buddhists had proceeded to extend their sway over the whole island from the time of the Donoughmore Constitution. According to the Tamils, their traditional homelands were handed over to Sinhala settlers under colonisation schemes even when there were Tamil landless in those areas (and Tamil landless were not offered any lands in colonisation schemes in Sinhalese areas.) Many Tamil areas had thus become Sinhalese dominated for electoral purposes and in others Tamil majorities had dwindled into minorities. Sinhala Only took the cultural invasion of the island one step further and the reasonable use of Tamil was regarded as a transitional measure to tide over a difficult period before complete assimilation. The mistakes made by the Tamil leaders were seized upon to establish Sinhalese power more firmly.

Such were the grievances of the Tamils: that they had been reduced to a second class position within a matter of twenty-five years. Standardisation language-wise and selection districtwise has come, as the Tamils

## POWER FROM HOT AND COLD WATER

A new engine which operates on the effects of very small temperature differences in a solid state material has been demonstrated in Lindau, West Germany, by Dr. Edwin M. McMillan of the University of California at Berkeley. The engine was invented by Ridgeway Banks, a young scientist working in Professor McMillan's laboratory. The new system is regarded as a promising development for using slightly heated fluids, such as waste water, as an energy source. The "Banks Engine" as it is called, can be used to generate electricity with a dynamo. The energy output for the engine comes from metal wires that pass between hot and cold water baths. The temperature changes of the water cause a change in the crystalline structure of the wire material. The wires then move and start the "engine". The wires are made of a special alloy called nitinol, a homogeneous metallic compound of nickel and titanium which has unique characteristics. McMillan's demonstration model consisted of a drum-shaped water container about 35 centimetres across and 7 centimetres high, separated into two compartments and a moveable inset carrying the nitinol loops attached to rods. When the loops touch hot water, they try to open to resume their original shape. This moves the rods. The rods push equally against a stationary crank shaft and against an outer ring. The ring moves and the "engine" is going. A single filling of the drum with hot and cold water will keep the engine going at a high speed for about 50 minutes.



say, as a last straw to the Tamils, and in their despair regarding their future has arisen a new and dangerous cry for a separate state. That an avowed believer in a unitary state like Chelvanayakam (his federalism had only been an answer to the marxist regional autonomy slogan of the marxists) should now be edged into pleading for a separate state, is an indication of the depth of Tamil frustration. It is also significant that the architect of the 1936 Pan-Sinhalese Ministry, Suntharalingam, (he had then thought it was a patriotic act to thwart the fifty-fifty of G. G. Ponnambalam who had believed that British would be in Ceylon for another 150 years at least) was the first to start this cry of desperation for a separate state of Eelam for the Tamils of Ceylon.

Anything born of desperation is bad. It is dangerous. It can lead to the most fateful consequences that will affect generations to come. For thousands of years, the Sinhalese and Tamils have lived peacefully in the island as sovereign independent peoples and there is no reason why they cannot continue to live in that way. Frustration and indignation against the present United Front government and also earlier governments should not lead the Tamils to adopt a course of action which will imperil their future for generations to come. And, it must be remembered that the discontent and dissatisfaction against some of the policies of the Government are becoming increasingly great among the Sinhalese also. The actions and policies of the Government, which have thrown the Tamils into despair, have also begun to adversely affect large segments of the Sinhalese.

It is well for the Tamils to remember that this is not the time for confrontation. It is time for a dialogue not merely with the Government but with all representative organisations of the Sinhalese. Such dialogue cannot profitably be carried on after laying down a priori pre-condition of a unilateral, irretrievable, irrevocable declaration of a decision to set up a separate state. The FP has carried on its politics for twenty five years on the basis of unilateral irrevocable populist slogans which have not taken the Tamils very far—but the FP has however ensured itself of mass support among the Tamil masses.

There are men of goodwill among the Sinhalese, even in the United Front, who are waiting for an opportunity to bring about a change in governmental policies which will prevent the growth of fissiparous trends in Sri Lanka.

VERY FEW PEOPLE among the Sinhalese and the Tamils seem to realise that standardisation language-wise and selection districtwise must lead directly to separatism. In a unitary state, such standardisation and selection cannot mean anything else. In a unitary state, such as the one the United Front government is committed to, backward districts and communities have to be helped and upgraded by devices other than the kind of standardisation and selection which has now been adopted. The main beneficiaries are the Muslims for the moment, but it cannot last very long.

Knowing the kind of plural society Ceylon had, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike and a number of others, in 1926, had envisaged a Constitution in which each of the nine provinces would be a federal unit. There was logic and justification for it. After achieving a unitary state, where majority rule has come as the last bequest of British imperialism, the Government has now had to fall back on standardisation language-wise and selection districtwise for a restricted number of places in the University. By implication, it means that the idea of separate development for the districts (twenty two now compared to the nine of 1926) and also on a regional linguistic basis has been accepted as a legitimate and necessary form of administration and government.

This fissiparous foundation for standardisation and districtwise selection can lead only to separatism, and as the chief victims have been the Tamils so far, the cry has come first from them. Similar cries in desperation have already come from certain sections of the Low Country Sinhalese. Many Sinhalese, who were ardent supporters of Sinhala Only as a lever to right the wrongs the Sinhalese Buddhists had suffered during 450 years of foreign rule, have become desperate and are doing everything they can to leave the island.

We have pleaded often in the recent past that the Government should re-think its policies and

programmes on a large number of matters not only to stem the tide of discontent among the Sinhalese but also meet the cry of desperation among the Tamils. We must also urge the TUF not to slide into the politics of desperation but to approach the present situation in a concrete manner seeking allies among the Sinhalese and the other communities so that their grievances could be resolved.

This is a time for caution, restraint and re-thinking.



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## CHRONICLE

## FEBRUARY 2—10

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

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2:** All varieties of cigarette went up in price from two to three cents following an increase in the tobacco tax gazetted by the Minister of Finance—CO and ST. The Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, opened the new American Centre in Colombo and inaugurated an exhibition of the paintings of George Catlin, specially flown to the country from the Smithsonian Institution in Washington—CO. Theft of agrarian produce, offences against the state and rioting have been categorised as 'grave crimes' from this year: this has been done by the police following a recommendation made by a committee appointed for the purpose—CO. A conference of Muslims organisations in Sri Lanka, which includes the prestigious Muslim League and Moors Association, yesterday cabled King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and the Heads of State of the Union of Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain expressing their "sincere appreciation" of Arab assistance to Sri Lanka—CO. About 500 Parliamentarians from 75 countries will meet in Colombo from March 31 this year: they will represent the branches of the Inter-Parliamentary Union at this Summer meeting when part of the agenda for the September '75 meeting in London will be discussed—CO. Mr. Nissanka Wijeratne was elected Diyawadana Nilame of the Sri Lanka Dalada Maligawa at an election held in Kandy on January 31—ST. The Sri Lanka Rajaya Lipikaru Sangamaya, a pro Government Clerical Workers Union, in a Press release states that the token strike proposed by the JCTUO which turned out to be a damp squib was only an anti-unity and anti-working class stunt—ST.

President Ford and Prime Minister Harold Wilson opened two-day talks with a review of the world economic and energy crisis. According to the Indian Minister of Food, Mr. Jagajivan Ram, prospects are bright for the Winter grain harvest in India. The Federal Bureau of Investigation of America is on the look-out for a small, elusive band of violent revolutionaries who claim responsibility for bombing the US State Department. Soviet and American scientists, specialists and cosmonauts have ended a closing stage in their preparations for the Soviet-American Soyuz-Apollo experiment.

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3:** Soviet oil experts conducting off shore tests in the Palk Straits have discovered four oil-bearing structures with a vast potential: Soviet experts have told the Petroleum Corporation that the potential would be a minimum of 200 million tons of crude oil and this amount would yield over 75 years supply for the country or even for export: Sri Lanka's annual requirement is around two million tons of crude oil—CDN. A new Bill to provide for the establishment of a National Science Council of Sri Lanka has been issued as supplement to the gazette of January 3—CDN. The Government will grant financial assistance to co-operative societies, mainly multi-

purpose societies which are facing financial difficulties, to enable them to provide a better service to consumers—CDM. In a Press release, Mr. T. B. Illangaratne, Minister of Foreign and External Trade and President of the Sri Lanka-Arab Friendship Association states that the resources of the Arab people can no longer be exploited to enrich the economies of affluent industrial countries—CDM. The Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, speaking at a SLFP meeting yesterday said that she will seek foreign aid for the Government's crash food drive—CDN. The authorities anticipate a collection of Rs. 85 million from the increase in the tobacco tax imposed from February 1—CDN. The University of Ceylon will shortly hold several seminars to help the external students in a big way—CDM. Several Tamil speaking professors of the University of Sri Lanka, Peradeniya Campus, in a Press release appealed to the Kankasanturai voters to cast their votes to the United Front candidate to solve the problems confronting the Tamils—CDN.

President Ford yesterday announced a record 349,000 million dollar budget with a deficit of 52,000 million dollars designed to boost the US economy and cushion the effect of the recession. Soviet Foreign Minister Gromykov yesterday began talks with the Syrian leaders after re-affirming Soviet support for the Arab cause when he arrived for a two-day official visit: Palestinian sources said that he would meet PLO leaders Arafat before leaving for Egypt.

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4:** Sri Lanka has successfully negotiated for 250,000 tons of rice below world market prices under the Sino-Sri Lanka Trade Protocol for 1975 to be signed this evening at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall: Sri Lanka trade officials had earlier negotiated for the usual quantity of 200,000 tons under this agreement, but on the initiative of the Prime Minister, the Chinese delegation has agreed to increase the quantity by 50,000 tons—CDN. Speaking at a by-election at Maviddapuram in the Kankasanturai electorate, Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, leader of the Federal Party has told that his party is ready to have a discussion with the Government at any time to have the existing problems of the Tamil people solved—CDM. Mr. Pieter Keuneman, Minister of Housing and Construction, speaking at a by-election meeting in Kankasanturai said that the election was not at plebiscite to decide whether the Tamil people accepted the Republican Constitution or not—CDM. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has sent out to all Sri Lanka diplomatic missions a "fact sheet" explaining in detail the position of the Moslem community in Sri Lanka and on the political civic and religious rights they enjoy in this country on a basis of equality with all other communities—CDN. Sri Lanka exceeded its export target for local industrial products by over Rs. 50 million last year—CDN. Mr. Ananda Tissa de Alwis was yesterday elected General Secretary of the UNP: Dr. M. C. M. Kaleel was elected Treasurer—CDM.

In old Delhi at least eight people were killed and over 100 injured in a clash between police and crowds protesting over the arrest of a Moslem religious priest. Prime Minister Bhutto has left for Washington on an invitation by President Ford. Turkey is planning a three-nation conference with Greece and the United States to initiate new Cyprus peace moves but first wants assurances that US military aid will continue.



**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5:** The Ministry of Justice is now preparing instructions to limit the use of English in courts throughout the country: this follows a government decision last week empowering the Minister of Justice to issue orders from time to time varying an earlier decision with regard to the use of English in courts or in particular areas in the country—CDN. A further allocation of US 5 million dollars to Sri Lanka from the United Nations Emergency Operation to assist the Government maintain essential imports was announced yesterday—CDN. Senior Defence Council for Razeeq Sully and Farook Sully in the case now being heard by the Criminal Justice Commission (Exchange Frauds) concluded his submissions—CDM. The total trade turnover between China and Sri Lanka under the trade protocol signed yesterday evening is expected exceed Rs. 1,000 million this year: last year the total turnover was Rs. 600 million: under the terms of the agreement China will purchase a minimum quantity of 70,000 metric tons of sheet rubber: China will also buy coconut oil and other Sri Lanka products both traditional and non-traditional exports—CDN. The Kankasanturai by-election will be held tomorrow—CDM. Those public servants entitled to second class rail travel can now opt to travel third class—CDM. The Tourist Board's expansion program for this year envisages the completion of 1500 more hotel rooms which will increase the existing accommodation strength by as much as 60 per cent: at present Sri Lanka has accommodation for 2600 tourists—CDN.

US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has proposed a world minimum price for oil to safeguard the development of alternative energy source. A British MP has alleged CIA activity in Britain trying to block radical reforms by the Labour Government. A joint call by the Soviet Union and Syria for the Geneva peace conference to resume by early March adds a new note of urgency to Dr. Henry Kissinger's Middle East diplomacy.

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6:** Finance Minister, Dr. N. M. Perera, meets JCTUO leaders this afternoon to discuss in detail the implementation of the twenty-five rupee wage increase the Government promised last week to workers in the public sector: the pro-Government JCTUO called off a 24-hour token strike last week following government's decision to grant the Rs. 25 increase: at today's meeting Dr. Perera is expected to discuss with Council leaders the question of extending the wage increase to workers in the private sector—CDN. Tea estates have complained that the requisition of lorries particularly leaf lorries have adversely affected the industry and may result in a drop in production—CDN. There is a complete breakdown of discipline at the Vidyalandara Campus of the University of Sri Lanka: the Vice Chancellor yesterday appointed to inquire into the incidents connected with the ragging of the Maths teachers at the Campus—CDM. Rs. 25 million now available in the National Housing Fund will be expended during the course of this year for the grant of housing loans: the Department expects to offer at least 6000 loans under the Rs. 4000 category and another 2000 loans above Rs. 4000—CDM. A number of Indian universities will shortly introduce Sinhala culture and arts as a subject following talks between Sri Lanka's Education Minister and his counterpart in India—CDN. Members of the Sangha are being invited to participate with laymen in a series of seminars

where the Government's new development programs particularly the food drive will be explained and discussed—CDN. Mrs. Barbara Cartland the well-known British novelist who is now in Sri Lanka met Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, at Temple Trees yesterday.

Edward Heath, leader of the British Conservative Party resigned from his leadership yesterday. Mauritius has protested the installation of nuclear equipment on Diego Garcia. President Sadat has declared that a new chapter has been opened in his country's relations with the Soviet Union: he said Leonid Brezhnev would soon visit the Middle East.

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7:** The Charter of Workers Rights—the most comprehensive labour legislation yet to be written, into the country's statute book—will become law before May Day this year: the draft of this legislation was finalised by labour officials early this week and was presented to the Government yesterday—CDN. Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam leader, of the Federal Party, yesterday won the Kankasanturai by-election by a majority of 16,470 votes: Mr. Chelvanayakam polled 25,927 votes while his closest rival Mr. V. Ponnambalam of the Communist Party (Moscow Wing) polled 9,457 votes—CDN & CDM. The second round of talks over the question of extending the 25 rupee wage increase to the private sector will be held on February 12 presided by the Minister of Finance, Dr. N. M. Perera CDM. The Soviet Union has agreed to give assistance under a line of credit amounting to 40 million roubles to the Samanalawewa Hydropower Project which when completed will be the largest power project in the island with a capacity of 120 MW—CDM. The Central Bank has reported that Convertible Rupee earnings have been sold at prices ranging from 220—250 per cent of their nominal value (which is the FEEC rate of exchange) by private sector businessmen entitled to CRA earnings—CDN. The Presidents of four of the six campuses of the University of Sri Lanka have asked the Vice Chancellor that they be relieved of their present duties: their term of duty ends on February 14—CDN. Police and Price Control Units yesterday launched an all-out offensive against traders who resort to malpractice in the distribution of essential commodities—CDN. A high powered delegation from Pakistan led by the Secretary to the Minister of Economy, Mr. Afza Ahmed Khan, will arrive in the island on February 12 to discuss the Sri Lanka Pakistan Joint Economic Committee—CDM.

Algerian President, Houari Boumedienne, said in an interview published in Teheran that any threat against one oil producing country would be a threat against the whole group of oil producers. The Ford administration in America is giving active consideration to lifting the arms embargo on military supplies to Pakistan according to the White House.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8:** A foreign exchange windfall of Rs. 45 million has come Sri Lanka's way as a result of the European Economic Community deciding to drop the export duty on flour exports from the Community from January 1—CDN. A delegation from Pakistan, headed by the Secretary of the Economic Affairs Division is expected in Colombo next week to initiate talks for setting up a Joint Economic Commission—CDN. The Ministry of Housing and Construc-



tion will set up a Canal Development Board for the development, maintenance and operation of the canal transport system in the country: the Minister will soon introduce legislation in the Assembly creating this Board—CDM. A Coastal Authority will be set up shortly to tackle the problem of sea erosion and coast protection: the Coastal Authority (CA) would function under the ministry of Shipping and Tourism—CDN. Two leading UNP personalities, Mr. Karunasena Kodituwakku, the Secretary of the UNP Youth League and Mr. J. R. P. Suriyapperuma, candidate for Attanagalla in the last General Elections have been dropped from the Party's Working Committee nominated by Mr. J. R. Jayewardene—CDN. Salu Sala textiles, both off ration and on ration, at regular prices will be available at more sales points and in larger quantities than at present: the provisional sales points will be mobilised for this purpose—CDN. Sri Lanka Administrative Service Association has told the Government that the increasing cost of living has affected all public servants therefore the salary increase recently granted to public servants should be made available for those who are drawing more than Rs. 800 a month—CDN.

The Soviet Union and the United States are negotiating a new agreement to limit the number of offensive nuclear weapons they can have. Prime Minister Bhutto of Pakistan and US State Secretary Kissinger had discussions in Washington on US military assistance for Pakistan. The Arab Defence Council has allocated 12 million sterling to help Lebanon protect itself against Israeli attacks.

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9:** Three sterling plantation companies with Sri Lanka interests in excess of 10,000 acres of tea and rubber have been bought up on the London Stock Exchange by a consortium that includes businessmen from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain: also in the deal are two investors from HongKong, one of whom is now in Sri Lanka—CO. The Vice Squad has been given the green light to go ahead and prosecute the businessmen who was allegedly involved in hoarding and channelling hard-to-obtain consumer items into the blackmarket—ST. Planning Ministry and Central Bank officials assess that Sri Lanka will clinch nearly Rs. 2,200 million in foreign aid in 1975: it would be the highest figure inspite of recession and the oil crunch: government planners are confident that the next meeting of the World Bank sponsored "Aid Sri Lanka Club" scheduled to meet in Paris in May will double its aid as the World Bank team headed by Allan Colliu has been impressed with the corrective fiscal measures adopted by the Government in a critical global economic situation—ST. Police will enforce a total ban on foot-board travelling on all buses—ST. The original handwritten manuscript of the Leonard Woolf's "Village in the Jungle" has been presented to the University of Sri Lanka and is being held in deposit at the Campus library at Peradeniya—ST. A giant fisheries complex aimed at revamping the industry in Sri Lanka is taking shape on the once barren marshy lands of "Crows Island" in Mutwal, Colombo—CO.

The twenty-two year old dispute between the Indian Government and Sheik Mohamed Abdullah, the Kashmir leader, is likely to be settled within the next two weeks. Israel reaffirmed its readiness to negotiate peace treaties with each of its Arab neighbours without pre-conditions.

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10:** Several anomalies have been cited in the University admissions by district quota system and a number of parents have appealed to the authorities to review the admissions of the last GCE (AL) examinations—CDN. The incidence of polio during the last five years has shown a steady increase: according to the Epidemiological Bulletin of the Health Department incomplete immunisation of the infant and pre-school population is to blame—CDN. The CTB has informed that the Government's recent decision to pay a salary increase of Rs. 25 would cost the Board Rs. 14 million a year: the Board's Finance Controller has said that this would eventually result in the CTB having to write off its projected profits for 1975—CDM. The President of the Asian Development Bank Mr. Shiro Inoue arrives in Sri Lanka today: he is on a tour of nations receiving assistance from the Manilabased bank—CDM. Fire completely gutted two railway carriages of the Kandy and Batticaloa trains minutes before their scheduled departure from the Fort Railway Station yesterday evening and the CGR has estimated the damage at Rs. 250,000: this is the third fire mishap in the railway within the last five days and the Fire Brigade has not ruled out the possibility of arson—CDN. The Paddy Hopper was yesterday declared public enemy number 1 by the Department of Agriculture in the latest newsletter issued by its Information Division—CDN. Nearly fifty students will begin a course in gemology at the Technical College, Maradana, in April—CDN.

President Ford assured Premier Bhutto of support for the independent and integrity of Pakistan: this assurance is contained in a joint communique issued at the end of Mr. Bhutto's talks with Mr. Ford. A Senior Minister of the North West Frontier Provincial government and a one time member of the Federal Cabinet was assassinated in Peshawar in Pakistan yesterday. Fortynine Opposition politicians in Saigon slashed their fingers and mixed their blood to sign a protest letter into President Thieu assailing him as a dictator.

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## Progressive Nationalist Party

# For a Federal System In Sri Lanka

By T. DURAISINGAM, J.P., U.M.  
Attorney-at-Law

This article is the fourth of the series on some aspects of the political history of contemporary Sri Lanka. T. Duraisingham, who was a member of the executive committee of the Students Congress, later renamed the Youth Congress, sets out here the political objectives of the Progressive Nationalist Party, which organisation was described by its members as "an advance party of the youth of Ceylon who aim to secure national emancipation."

"A FRESH STEP has been taken in Ceylonese political aspirations by the formation of a Progressive Nationalist Party." This was the observation made, at that time, by a daily newspaper on the formation of this political party in October 1925. The Leader of the party was S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, the Deputy Leader was Valentine S. Perera and the Hon'y. Secretary was C. Ponnambalam. Among the members of the committee were R. S. S. Gunawardane, D. N. W. de Silva, M. T. Jalaheen, James T. Rutnam and H. S. Ginige.

This Party introduced concepts which were new in the political life of the country. Up to that time loyalty to the British Crown was avowed by all political parties and organisations, with the exception of the Students Congress, Jaffna, formed about a year earlier, that is, in December 1924.

The new Party stated that the ultimate aim of the Party was to obtain for Ceylon self-government within or without the British Empire, consonant with national honour. Further, this party suggested fundamental changes in the form of the constitution that should be adopted for Sri Lanka. Up to then the British Constitution was looked upon, by all politicians of Sri Lanka, as the ideal constitution and the then politicians and political parties aimed at copying the type of Government as existed in England.

THE CONSTITUTION of the Progressive Nationalist Party set forth that "in view of the existing differences among the people of our country, the only solution of the problem will be the adoption of a federal system of government. While realising that our national progress requires a development of our own national culture, institutions, literature and art, we are of opinion that an intelligent adoption and use of western institutions and culture is necessary in view of the conditions in the modern world. "Socially, (1) in religion we realise that it is a matter for the conscience of each individual and we therefore stand for complete freedom of religious belief; (2) with regard to caste distinctions we feel that their elimination at the earliest possible time is desirable in the best interests of the country. We feel that the attainment of economic independence is a very important step towards political emancipation."

The nature of the state which the Progressive Nationalist Party advocated for Ceylon was a federal state in preference to a unitary one. A unitary state has been described as one organised under a single central government, that is to say, whatever powers are possessed by the various districts, within the area administered as a whole by the central government, are held at the discretion of that government, and the central power is supreme over the whole without any restrictions imposed by any law granting special powers to its parts. "Unitarianism" in the political sense has been defined by the late Professor Dicey as "the habitual exercise of supreme legislative authority by one central power." The British Constitution is a unitary constitution where the Parliament is sovereign.

A FEDERAL STATE is one in which a number of co-ordinate states unite for certain common purposes. To quote again Professor Dicey, "a federal state is a political contrivance intended to reconcile national unity and power with the maintenance of 'state rights'. In a federal system of government there is a division of powers between one general and several regional governments, each of which, in its own sphere, is coordinate with the others and each government must act directly on the people. Further,

according to the type of federation each government, to a greater or lesser extent, must be limited to its own sphere of action and each must within that sphere, be independent of the others. Certain matters, for instance, foreign affairs defence and tariffs, will be within the exclusive sphere of the central or general government. In respect of other matters each regional government will manage its own affairs.

The scheme for reform of the aspirations of the party. This scheme was as follows: 1. That the Government of Ceylon should be responsible to the people of Ceylon. 2. That a federal system of Government is most desirable to Ceylon. The federal system to be based on the 9 provinces, each province having autonomy. 3. That Provincial Government be carried on by Village, District and Provincial Councils, the Councils to be uni-cameral. 4. Franchise to be granted on a graduated scale, ranging from universal franchise in the Village Councils and to a graduated, restricted franchise in District and Provincial Councils. 5. That the Federal Government should be controlled by two Houses. 6. That the people of Ceylon should have the right to amend their own constitution without reference to any power outside Ceylon. 7. The two Houses to be called House of Senators and House of Commons respectively.

Commons to have 100 members. Territorial 3/4, special interests 1/4. Of the 75 members to be elected on the territorial basis, 16 to be elected from the Western Province, 15 from the Northern, 10 from the Southern, 6 from the Eastern, 6 from the North-western, 4 from the North-Central, 8 from the Central 4 from Uva and 6 from the Sabaragamuwa province. Of the 25 members for special interest, 5 for the Burghers, 7 for the Muslims, 7 for the Europeans, 4 for the Indians and 2 for the University. Senators to have 45 members, 5 for each province with the Province as electorate. The scheme of reform also set out provisions for the Executive, Judiciary, Army and Navy Provincial administration, the election of Speakers and Presidents and the relationship between the councils. Each Village, District and Provincial Council shall have limited



powers of taxation and administration expressly stated by the Constitution. The Parliament shall have all residuary powers.

The Progressive Nationalist Party's scheme also stated that "the majority of us feel that in view of the local conditions, particularly racial differences, the most satisfactory method to minimise and gradually remove such differences is a federal system of Government. Such a system of Government has in other countries particularly in Switzerland tended, towards national unity. We feel that the present arrangements of 9 provinces should remain and be the basis of the federal system. Any other division, particularly the one suggested by C. E. Corea that there should be three provinces more or less divided on the basis of race, will accentuate rather than tend to remove racial differences."

At a meeting organised by the Students' Congress and held at Jaffna in July 1926, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike set out, in brief, why he opposed a unitary constitution for Ceylon and why he thought a federal constitution was more suitable for conditions here. He outlined the difficulties that would crop up if a centralised system of Government was introduced.

"The Legislative Council", he said, "would under the anticipated reformed Government, elect their Prime Minister and the various Ministers. Now there was a certain proportion of members to represent the various communities. If that proportion was maintained, in the ministry too the communities would demand a certain proportion." Bandaranaike further stated that a centralised form of Government assumed a homogenous whole. He knew no part of the world where a Government was carried on under such conflicting circumstances as would be experienced in Ceylon. Those would be the troubles if a centralised form of Government was introduced into countries with large communal differences.

IN A FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, each federal unit had complete power over themselves. Yet they united and had one or two assemblies to discuss matters affecting the whole country. That was the

form of Government in the United States of America. All the self-governing dominions, Australia, South Africa, Canada had the same system. Switzerland afforded a better example for Ceylon. It was a small country, but three races lived there—French, Germans and Italians. Yet Switzerland was a country where the federal form of Government was very successful. Each canton managed its own affairs. But questions of foreign affairs, commerce, defence etc., matters about which differences and controversies would be at a minimum were dealt with by the Federal Assembly.

In Ceylon each Province should have complete autonomy. There should be one or two assemblies to deal with the special revenue of the island. A thousand and one objections could be raised against the system but when the objections were dissipated, he was convinced that some form of federal Government would be the only solution. He had not dealt with the smaller communities. For such communities temporary arrangements could be made for special representation. Those temporary arrangements would exist till the fear existed about one community trying to overlord the other. He would suggest the same for the Colombo Tamil seat. The three main divisions in the island were the Kandy Sinhalese, the Low country Sinhalese and the Tamils. It was difficult to find a system that would completely satisfy everyone. That was in brief the Federal system.

THE PROPOSAL of the Progressive Nationalist Party in its scheme of reforms to apply the federal system to the internal Government of Ceylon was opposed by some members of that Party. James T. Rutnam, in a letter to the daily press in July 1926, stated that the federal type of government was made for big countries like the U.S.A., Australia, Brazil and Germany. Switzerland was an exception. He pointed out that "after long years of mutual distrust and suspicion the Frenchmen, Germans and the Italians who belonged to the several cantons have by mutual helpfulness and forbearance built up a nation at once stable and free". He further said that the Swiss had a highly developed political conscience and sense of public duty.

"The endeavour of human progress" he stated, "is to unify as much as possible and not to divide. It was on this principle that the Federal constitution was introduced to the U.S.A., the Australian Commonwealth and Switzerland. But the States existed before the Federation. There was no abrupt partitioning or segregation as contemplated for Ceylon. And in the case of the former two, they were big countries with isolated populations. One of the objects of the proposers in seeking to introduce the Federal System to Ceylon is to bring unity among the people. I may say that there is no better plan than this to bring disunion among the people. The Tamils and Sinhalese would be segregated. The Burghers, Muslims and the Europeans would be overwhelmed, for they are distributed throughout the country and in no single "state" do they command the necessary importance or influence to justify special representation in the local body. In the Federal Parliament at Colombo there would be eternal wrangling and complaining over the voting of supplies. Race individualism would be intensified, which would ultimately tend to internecine troubles and racial secession."

"There is a wide difference" he concluded, "between local government and the Federal system. Let us improve the local Government Ordinance and gradually extend it throughout Ceylon."

Up to that time politics has been the monopoly of a few and no interest had been created in the public mind of political matters. It was the Students Congress in the North and the Progressive Nationalist Party in the South who, by publishing articles in the Press and by holding public meetings and public discussions, set about educating and interesting the public in constitutional reform, government and politics.

FOR NEWS  
BEHIND THE NEWS

read  
**TRIBUNE**  
regularly



SEVERE DROUGHT  
IN THE DRY ZONE

## GRIM PROSPECTS until March 1976

By D. W. R. Kahawita

These headlines were carried in the Observer Magazine of 22.11.74. Everybody in Sri Lanka and in India were aware of the failure of North East monsoon, but neither our National Press nor the Ceylon Broadcasting Corp. had breathed a word about it except for the Ministerial reference, to it on the 22nd. Up to the time of this statement by the Minister for Irrigation, everything was very rosy: millions of bushels were being collected by PMB, thousands of acres had been cultivated in subsidiary food crops and recipes were given over the Radio how to prepare wholesome and nutritive foods from subsidiary food crops. Even the Department of Agriculture, which is always over-enthusiastic to broadcast its achievements in the field of food production referred to the large extents of land brought under cultivation in various crops, did not realise that nothing could be grown without an adequate supply of water. This is how things were moving in This Year of Production.

The drought conditions have spread to the Wet Zone also i.e. to the West and Southern sector of the Island. The Paddy crops standing in the Wet Zone need plenty of water now, for, this is the most critical period in the growth cycle. If there is no water during this period, yields would be very low and estimates of collecting surplus paddy are all fictitious and can only mislead a Government.

The drought is islandwide and the country must be prepared to face a grim situation till March/April 1976. It is no use fooling ourselves to think that the silver lining is around the corner. No! what we have to get ready is to face malnutrition and starvation. It is already on us.

We are almost towards the end of December and according to the water levels of the major tanks in the Dry Zone as given in the Observer Magazine are below the

dead storage level, in some cases bone dry. So even if the rains come now, the tanks will not get any water till the watersheds, now parched get saturated. However the next spell of rains can be expected only April-May. These rains seldom come in such intensity to generate sufficient surface flow to saturate the soil and establish a sustained flow into the tanks. With large scale village tank development in the watersheds of the major tanks, they will be the worst affected in the coming months. Till the village tanks start spilling there will not be any appreciable inflow into the major tanks. They will be the last to register a rise in water levels. So even if we have abnormal rains in March, April, May, for the larger tanks with a heavy concentration of village tanks in their watersheds there will be very little prospect of a Yala cultivation that is April-August 1975 season. That means we have already missed the Maha 74/75 crop and the Yala 75 crop. This is the spectre facing us till September 1975. If the 1975/76 North East Monsoon follows the normal pattern then the tanks in the Dry Zone will begin to fill around end of December 1975 and it may be possible to get through a 75/76 Maha cultivation provided our farmers take the risk of undertaking a Maha-Crop depending on Rainfall in October 1975 and see them through with tank water during January/February. So the earliest date to gather the crop is in March/April 1976.

What are we going to eat till then—almost 18 months from now on? This is what we have to be prepared for. In days gone by a situation like this was met by relief work to enable the farmer to get some cash to purchase his food. Today he does not want money for there is no food to buy. How are we going to help him? Already there is starvation in the rural areas—starvation in the sense the average villager cannot get nutritious food and if conditions continue there will be mass malnutrition with all the ailments following therefrom.

It is a pity that our Meteorological Departments is not in a position to forecast our weather conditions, whereas our neighbouring country is in a position to do

so. In fact I gather my information from the Madras Hindu which often carries weather information of special interest to the farmer and to Sri Lanka. That paper carries daily information on weather prospects for crops etc. which I am sure helps the farmer and the administration to keep themselves informed on the food situation in the country. Compared to this we have a complete blackout in our country on weather and crops. In a way this news blackout is more complete than the blackout exercised on the activities of the opposition political parties.

In spite of the serious situation facing the country and its people, we do not seem to be much concerned, nobody seems to be bothered about the starving children, men and women begging for food in the urban as well as rural areas. Begging in the Villages was not heard of in the past. There was the village temple which dispensed charity on behalf of the village. Today temples are also starving. The Dayakas who supported the village temple have in turn are starving themselves. We cannot close our eyes to the tragedy facing the country. Everybody must take a risk in food production. Agriculture is the biggest risk man has been taking ever since he took to scratching the ground to grow his food. A time has come to make quick decisions at all levels and give vitality and enthusiasm to the food drive. This kind of quick decision making is not there in our present administration. They seemed to have been trained to pass the baby to the other down the line. There are thousands of acres uncultivated due to this attitude of the Administration. Even with a drought, there are crops that could be grown with the scattered rains we experienced and little flow in the rivers. They are now gone to weeds due to the pig-headedness of the administration. This is not a fiction of my mind. I can substantiate what I say by showing any individual who desires to see for himself. I have informed the various officers what is happening and told them what they could do. Their standard reply is see so and so, you see so and so, again see so and so. This is not saving a country from starvation, to my mind, it is just sabotaging the Government's avowed



Production Year. It is useless crying after the milk is spilt as the schoolboy saying goes. Action is what is needed.

The failure of the North-East was forecast in Madras. They forewarned the farmers, they informed the Union Government, they set up machinery for a third season crop and organised schemes of relief to the farmers with the result that today there is five crores of rupees in relief schemes in operation in Tamil Nadu alone.

And what have we done? What is our answer to avert the crisis? Are we ready with anything to be implemented immediately?

Nothing.

Our main efforts are in party Politics and not how to save our people and our country. I have lived through a number of droughts and I have participated in relief work during "the bad old colonial days" and post-Independent days. I do not see the same effort and vigor brought to bear to save the situation as then. Our people may not yet be dying of starvation but they are of malnutrition. Only three weeks ago I came across a family of five in Diyatalawa whose night meal was boiled knol-khol — believe me, nothing else. They will not die of starvation, but as the father of the family said "Do not worry about me, what about my three children, on this diet, will they grow up to be useful citizens of this country?"

The answer is the verdict.

### Good While it Lasted

Yvon de Loison, a guard at the model prison in Fleury Merogis (France), was dissatisfied with his salary and hit upon a bright idea to supplement it: he began selling "escape kits" consisting of saws, ropes and rope ladders plus instructions on the best route out of the prison to inmates for 2,000 francs apiece. It was good while it lasted, but the police got on his tracks. They established that he had thus helped in at least five escape attempts, in which two prisoners got away.

## A SOLILOQUY

### Christmas & New Year —In Bed

BY R. C. TEE

NO, IT IS NOT WHAT YOU ARE THINKING OF, the Honeymoon suite in Hotel Waldorf-Astoria, Dorchester, Crionne or even our local "Hinter" Continental Hotel with plush carpets from Bokhara, perfumes from Araba Eider—down mattresses, Champagne, sprays of freshly-cut Tulips from Amsterdam, caviar and the entire gamut of lazy, luxurious living of the affluent which "Petro-dollars" and precious gems could purchase. The bed I allude to was the standard type of Government hospital bed with the good, and hard "Kohu" mattress.

I had been strictly confined to compulsory bed rest with a history of a damage to the heart. Metaphorically, it had been subject to damage before but this time it was clinically pronounced as "Sub-Endocardial Infraction". The thought of spending the Christmas in bed was not too exhilarating but one has to resign one's self to the inevitable.

CHRISTMAS EVE dawned and the Hospital staff set about their duties as if it was just another day. I recalled the Christmas Eves of Yester-years—the "pilgrimages" to the "Altars" of Bachchus in the Metropolis singing "Silent Night"—not so silently but with a raucous din and with Stentorian gusto, unmindful of the spirit of Franz Gruber, the composer and Rev. Fr. Joseph Mohr, the author, who so much desired it to be sung in solemn and silent adoration. I recalled the "Crawl" from the pubs on to the streets when the breadth of the road mattered more than the length. My friend, whose perpendicularity was very much in doubt, and who, despite my pleading, was straining every nerve, sinew and muscle to do his utmost to hold on to the lamp post in a valiant effort to prevent it from falling down. The Christmas Eve passed uneventfully in some what doleful reverie and pleasantly painful nostalgia.

CHRISTMAS MORN—an uncertain mist hung lightly and lazily over

the trees. A pleasant but sharp nip in the air roused me from bed. Instead of Christmas festivity, there was much Hospital activity. Dr. S. and his privileged proteges were up and about doing their share to heal the sick in our own native soil without being lured by the tempting lucre of foreign climes.

Their inspiring realisation was, according to George Elliot, that "the reward of one duty done is the power to fulfil another."

The domineering Matron sailed into the ward and, on seeing me, sardonically piped in a shrill voice "Still here, Mr. T. ?—you are fast becoming part of the Hospital". For a man with a damaged heart, I thought it was slightly below the belt. As if by way of consolation, she added "anyway, you can cheer up the place with your spirits" and, before I could say "Yes-with Seeduwa special", she was gone having executed a smart 'About turn' and with a supercilious swish of her freshly-starched veil. I am sure she can out smart even the most rumbustious and moustachioed Regimental Sergeant Major on the parade ground.

LUNCH HOUR and how I envied my friends who would be wolfing down scrumptious roast turkey, chaud-froid, ham and chocolate cream! When my palate and salivary glands were working overtime for the exquisite aperitif that not only warms the cockles of the heart but also induces vaso dilation which dislodges even the most obstinate trombos, I opened my mouth only to receive the mercury end of the thermometer so unappetisingly coated with Savlon antiseptic.

CHRISTMAS CHEER, my foot! there were no fathers—city, urban, rural, domestic and not even Father Christmas. Dear old Santa Claus may have dropped in at some prestigious and exclusive club which insists on members wearing cravat, or necktie but would make exceptions for Santa especially if he was accompanied by any one draped in a Keffiyeh. While he was having his "quick one", Raddolph, the reindeer must have extricated himself from the sleigh for his "tot" in a humbler bar. After all, he deserved one with all the energy crisis pushing all those gift parcels around.



The frugal meal of rice, dried fish and vegetables in aluminium plates were distributed to the expectant mothers in dire need of better nutrition. Where were the armies of social workers and stalwarts of charitable Institutions? Was it in vain that Helen Steiner Rice wrote:—

"Christmas is really  
God's pattern for living  
To be followed all year  
By unselfish giving  
For in giving to others  
And being kind  
Man finds true joy  
And peace of mind"  
And PEACE ON EARTH  
Will come to stay  
When we LIVE CHRISTMAS  
EVERY DAY."

From the high pedestals and pulpits great personages have pontificated—"Alleviate the suffering of your less fortunate brethren by giving them at least a square meal. This is the best way to celebrate Christmas day. Writers of eminence have propounded" Abundance is a wonderful word. I like the sound of it. It is full and rich. The root of this word is Latin "UNDARE"—which means "To rise up in waves". Was it of any relevance that we should be inundated with etymological explorations and Theological sophistry? Was it a mere academic or literary exercise when St. Paul so effectively enunciated "though one speaks with the tongues of men and of angels and not have CHARITY, they become as sounding brass or tinkling cymbal"? What is required is creative religious activism and not pedantic philosophy.

VISITING HOUR brought in its wake the usual sentiments so empty and boring. The wife led the throng unduly exuding with uxorial concern at the dismal prospect of being an early widow. There was Aunt Flotilla whose usual loquacity was at rest for once. The person who named her must have been a psychologist who had deep insight into her physical and mental attitude. She had a face that could not only "launch a thousand ships—IN RETREAT—but also a tongue that could make 'minced' meat of any Fleet—be it fifth, sixth or seventh. Her cold black omniscient eyes spoke a message through her bifocals perched precariously on the promon-

tory of her nose. I am giving a poetic—prose rendition of her unspoken message:—

My prodigal nephew  
You had all this  
Coming to you  
You've tried to do  
What young bucks do  
At your old age  
Of FIFTY TWO.

After her visitation, I was convinced that my aunt always kept her mind so sharply and assiduously alert with the all too strenuous exercise of jumping to conclusions. I have had enough for the afternoon. I lulled myself to sleep to the dull, monotonous staccato beat of the rain drops kettle—drumming on the "Thakkaran" roof of the building next door.

Came evening of Christmas Day—and the dull weather continued. By way of diversion I felt quite "regal" from the high hospital bed and, like "Good King Wenceslaus on the feast of Stephen looked out". Instead of the spotless snow that lay on the ground, I saw something quite different. There, on a tattered mat lay a mother in rags cuddling her new born babe—because there was no room in the ward. The freshly born was not wrapped in flannel, or wollen mittens, not even in "swaddling clothes". Nature's loving Proxy—the watchful mother tenderly wrapped the little one in her arms and offered the only warmth of her frail body protecting it from the cold and cruel December night. With the most excruciating poignancy, the words of the children's popular Christmas carol flashed into my mind with a dull aesthetic pain:—

"Away in a Manger  
No Crib for a bed".

Impressionists and other Masters like C'ezane, Picasso, Van Gogh, Rembrandt or Da Vinci may not have found the place inspiring enough to produce a Master-Piece—"Mother and Child".

I thought I could seek escape in the daily papers only to read.. Troops alerted by a series of.. guerillas attack kept watch over the Holy Land as Christian pilgrims gathered to celebrate the birth of Christ. How strangely ironical, that over a thousand years ago, it was in the same Town "Softly the Night was falling". It was a

different type of "Watch" that the lowly shepherds kept "all seated on the ground when the Angel of the Lord came down and glory shone around". One can add the trite, thread-bare Latin Phrase "O tempora, O Mores" but who would care for such hackneyed journalistic trivia?

The shadows of the night enveloped the pace in an eerie darkness when I heard a woman's pathetic wailing. Her child born a few hours ago had breathed its last. The remains of the infant had been removed to the mortuary. There was no elegant limousine or a motor hearse, no expensive wreath, no solicitous undertakers or relatives to be seen. Alone and, wilting under the pangs of grief and misery, the weeping mother was going round the empty cot aimlessly with no one to console her. A materialist may proffer the explanation that Nature preserves its strange sense of balance. The Philosopher might add that Death is a natural and inevitable corollary to Birth. A perverse cynic with his thwarted sense of humour might say 'one mouth less to feed'. "O Death, where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory? some religious Pundit will sermonise and may add the words of another Christmas carol:—

"God bless you merry gentlemen  
Let nothing you dismay,  
For Jesus Christ, Our Saviour  
Was born on Christmas day."

I turned over the pages of the copy of the Bagavad Gita so thoughtfully and graciously gifted to me by Mrs. E. R. P., a lady of true nobility not only by lineage but also by her magnanimity and selfless service to others and whose maiden name symbolises her EARNEST desire to serve and not seek reward. The Gita say "Death is certain for the born. Rebirth is certain for the Dead. You should not grieve for what is unavoidable". How could a layman like me convey all these to that poor, unfortunate woman?

Yes—this Christmas was unique. The eloquence of the poet so vibrantly meaningful resounded in my ears:—

"Two men looked out through  
Prison Bars,

One saw mud, the other—the stars"  
Remindful of the inexorable truth of the man who cried because he



had no shoes until he met a man who had no feet' I counted blessings. Christmas and New Year in a sick bed in Hospital was certainly better than on the icy cold slab of amorgue or in the sombre sepulchral confines of a garishly ornate coffin—All dressed up and NO WHERE TO GO!

## UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS

### SCIENCE STUDENTS —Massacre In Jaffna—

Sir,

I am sending herewith a note on the massacre of the science students from Jaffna District for admission to the University this year. This is the subject of conversation in almost every middle class home in Jaffna today. You know that Jaffna values education more than food, clothing or housing. Several families have decided to move into Vavuniya, Mannar, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Amparai districts as a result of this. The children who qualified are asking their parents to sell their lands and send them abroad for further study. But you know that the Government restricts even this. Jaffna College would have taken about 100 of these students. But the Jaffna Campus has taken over Jaffna College. V. Ponnambalam would have lost at least 5000 votes on this issue at KKS. The point I am trying to stress is that we are all for helping backward districts. But all districts who are in a position to help must join in the process. I made a rough calculation and found that Jaffna lost 202 places and Colombo 15 places only in the process of helping.

From the 3,994 candidates who have qualified in Science subjects the University is admitting 1,280 candidates to the Physical, Engineering, Medicine and Bio science sections including Dental Surgery, Veterinary Science, and Agriculture. That is 32% of the candidates who have qualified in Science subjects have been selected for admission this year.

In the case of the Jaffna District only 103 out of the 973 who qualified in Science subjects have been selected for admission. That is

10.6 of those who qualified have been selected. This large disparity between the all Island figure of 32 % and the figure of 10.6 % for Jaffna District is worrying the minds of the students, parents and the Educationists in Jaffna.

AN ANALYSIS of the unfair manner in which the Science students from Jaffna District have been treated when compared to other Educationally advanced Districts like Colombo, Kandy and Galle is shown in the following table:—

### MEDICAL BIOSCIENCE

Qualified Admitted Percentage				Qualified Admitted Percentage			
Colombo	751	— 245	— 32.6	803	— 230	— 28.7	
Kandy	145	— 59	— 40.8	124	— 75	— 60.5	
Galle	114	— 36	— 31.5	161	— 63	— 39.3	
Jaffna	398	— 50	— 12.6	575	— 53	— 9.2	
All Island	1802	— 573	— 31.8	2192	— 707	— 32.2	

A more detailed analysis of all 22 districts shows that the less from the Jaffna District has been used to help educationally backward Districts. Any reasonable man will agree that these backward Districts must be helped. But it is unfair to place all this burden on one District and keep out of the University a large number of excellent candidates who have toiled very hard to obtain a place for higher education.

It is said that Media Standardisation of the raw marks obtained at the G.C.E. (A.L.) Examination, 1974 and the selection on the District population basis have produced this unfair result. If this is correct, both these methods should be given up and a more equitable system should be evolved to help backward areas.

The Jaffna man has always given priority to Education especially Science Education at the expense of his food, clothing and housing. Therefore it can be imagined what amount of worry and heart burning have been created by this years unfair selection to the Science Faculties. Some adjustment of the intake of students from Jaffna

even at this stage is absolutely necessary in the interest of justice and fairplay.

**S. KANAGARATNAM**

200, First Cross Street,  
Jaffna.  
10.2.75

Note:—1. Numbers qualified obtained from Ceylon Daily News of 28th December, 1974.  
2. Numbers admitted obtained from Student World of 22.1.75 & 5.2.75

### Unprofitable Investment

Forty-three - year - old Hugh McNatt of Miami (U.S.A.) recently sued his church because he felt God had not rewarded him for his \$ 800 in contributions. Pastor Donald Manuel, he alleged, had promised "blessings and awards would come to a person" who gave 10 per cent of his wealth. When none had come to him three years after his last contribution, McNatt decided he had been cheated and went to court. He agreed to drop the suit only after his money had been refunded.

UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS FOR 1975 have been done on the results of the G.C.E. (A.L.) Examinations held in April 1974. It has been reported that 41,405 candidates sat for the examination of whom 15,446 qualified for University Admission. Of those found fit, 11,452 have qualified in Arts subjects and 3,994 have qualified in Science subjects.



## BUILDING A VILLAGE HOUSE—21

## FIRST VISITORS

—lan, Lester—

By Herbert Keuneman

IT WAS EXTRAORDINARY, and extraordinarily heartening, to see how great a difference it made to the pace at which my house now grew, even with only one mason and one carpenter regularly at work, now that I was personally on hand to prescribe, supervise and inspect—in general, to organize—the effort. That must have been what had been chiefly lacking hitherto; for now, at last. Jayawardana's 'pata-pata gahala' progress began to be a reality.

True, to my impatient eye each day's progress seemed negligible. But even if your mason can accomplish only 100 sq. ft. of mud-plastering a day, you have 1,000 in a week-and-a-half; if your carpenter can lay only three widths of floor-boarding in an eight-hour session of mixed betel—chewing and actual labour, you still have no less than 400 sq. ft., or thereabouts, completed in the same period. . . and I had a total of only about 800 sq. ft., all told, to do. Yes, indeed things were looking up; and so was I. I had been only a fortnight in the house when I felt both it and I were ready for our first guests.

No one could want better house-warmers than lan Goonetilleke, Librarian at the Peradeniya Campus, and his wife Roslyn; and it was on them the blow fell! But the facetiousness is a little unjust to myself: actually it was lan himself mooted the visit; and, having known him from a schoolboy and loved his quiet donnish drollery for years, and since he and Roslyn had already been my guests in my pro-tem headquarters while the real house was still nothing but excavations and I had seen how nearly to my ideal they conformed as representatives from the wider world to the provincial one of the village, there could be nothing but delight in the contemplation, as well as the realization, of their stay.

Judged by standards of physical comfort it could easily have been less than delightful to them. They were put to sleep, poor things, in what was eventually going to be

the Dining Room—we ate in the kitchen—and their time of siesta, that lusk benison of the rural work-a-day, was eliminated by Menik Rala's sloth-like activity amongst the timbers that overhung them; while I slept in the Hallway under the skeleton of the stairs that Pinhamy and I were putting up, as a special project, together; and we had nowhere to sit and talk, save, after the afternoon's sun-blaze had gone sufficiently down, in what I have earlier called the Futility Area (but once that had taken place the young moon, by the same token, laved us with cool light while we talked her tired 'and sent her down the sky'). I remember those talks still: not what we talked but that we talked and that the talk was urbane and serene—even when we discussed such matters as insurgency—and civilized—even when we discussed such matters as politics!

SO GREAT a success was the Goonetilleke's visit (anyway, from my point of view; although, now I come to think of it, it has not been repeated in two years! But for one of those years lan and Roslyn have been away on a sabbatical) that I became ambitious; and when another good friend, Lester James Peries, proposed that my house become the headquarters for a new film he planned to make I readily, I eagerly acquiesced.

It was a temerarious acquiescence; for immediately after lan and Roslyn had left I left too, the better to survive in Colombo the burning memories of the previous Christmas, and it was not until early in January that I returned. The new guests were due by the end of the month and once again, despite all my pleasure in the prospect, something of the old panic began to return. So much to do, so little (comparatively) done.

Had I then known the panic conditions under which films are, apparently, customarily made, how much Lester had to do yet how little—from a variety of frustrations—he too had been able to actually establish; I might have taken great comfort from the knowledge.

In the house things had progressed pretty well as I had dared to hope. The chief disaster was that, whereas I had left instructions that the floor-boards of the living room be prepared and placed in position

but not nailed (so that the thoroughly unseasoned timber with which the Corporation had supplied me might have time to shrink and settle before they were finally adjusted) Menik Rala, seeking to delight me beyond expectation, had banged the nails firmly in. And once you have firmly nailed unseasoned *goda-kirilla* or *gokatu*—my floor-boards—to almost equally unseasoned *palu*—my joists—you had better bid goodbye to any hope of prising them apart without destroying the lighter varieties; nails hold in new *palu* like rivets. That is why today there are half-inch gaps in my Living Room floor, despite the boards' being tongued and grooved, and why no four-legged piece of furniture will stand on it without rocking except at two or three auspicious sites! Poor Menik Rala was so visibly distressed by his *foux pas* that my own distress seemed negligible in the face of his. Nevertheless I wished that instead of his work of supererogation he had made the window shutters I had left him to complete, and I said so. But again he disarmed me by protesting he could never have discharged so complicated a labour without the aid of my personal presence!

SO, NOW, before the end of the month we had to finish nearly a dozen window shutters, and hang them; and two doors, and hang those; the downstairs doors were done; and about half the flooring of the upstairs Bedroom as well as the Toilet attached remained to be installed. Suffice it to say it was all done before the film-makers arrived...but it never would have been ready had they arrived on schedule!

As I was to learn, the making of a film goes much like a protracted Dress Rehearsal on the stage: traditionally, schedules get shot!

The original schedule promised—Lester (schooled in his hard school) was wiser than to state categorically—that location work on the film, in Ehetuwewa, would begin in early February, to end by the beginning of March. I (unschooled) believing that indeed it would, and arguing that the interests of an individual must be accounted subservient to those of a large and intricately interrelated group—to say nothing of the direct benefits which I expected would



from the project accrue to my precious adopted, village and which did indeed so accrue—therefore felt justified, if a little un hospitable, in writing to yet another most valued friend of mine, a foreigner, who had shortly before engaged to pay me during the first week of February a long-anticipated visit to take place as soon as the house was reasonably habitable and begging him, in the circumstances, to defer his visit until the film-makers had come and gone. (This he readily agreed to, and without any trace of pique such as might have been feared in a Ceylon friend: one of the reasons why I so valued his friendship). A few days before F-day, however, the film-making had unavoidably to be put off until after the 10th of the month. Eagerly I wrote to my foreign friend; but he had already made alternative plans, and we fixed instead upon a date late in March.

As F-day again approached it became evident that the date was an Act of Faith and Will but took not enough account of the vagaries of Stars and Technicians and technicalities and logistics which together add up to an Act of God. If God had really exerted Himself and Lester had also had to cope with the vagaries of weather after he did arrive—as well he might have: even as it was, by the vagaries of agriculture the tank which had so delighted him when it was plump with rain and lapping with full lips at the farthest reaches of verdant sward had already been part used up for the *maha* irrigation and the grass was beginning, though as yet barely perceptibly, to brown—I cannot see how the film would ever have been made at all. Not in Ehetuwewa in that year, anyway. F-day had again willy-nilly to be put off for the 1st, and then the 2nd, of March. Yet again my other friend had to be put off, likewise, and it speaks well for our friendship that his visit did eventually take place: in May; after the fortuities of mortal planning had been reduced to accidents of the more normal kind, earthquake, fire, famine and pestilence. Heaven deliver me only from the infinitely more fearful catastrophe of being involved in the making of a film!

NEVERTHELESS Lester, frail and slight as he looks and unassuming (for all his genius) unemphatic

and affable though his address, is forged of something *dere perennius*. This time he arrived, with all his train attendant, on the day. Though not, to be sure, on the dot. We expected the influx at 9.00 a.m. and had breakfast ready; they arrived at 9.00 p.m. and what could be salvaged from breakfast had to be transmogrified. Lester was as imperturbable and kindly-humoured as ever, unconcerned at being served a breakfast *re'chauffe'* when he should have been consuming a decent dinner. (It was only later I discovered that for this, alone, he deserves no special credit; his only concession to the tensions, of his world is a gastric phobia which inhibits his enjoyment of anything more adventurous than a rice pudding or a poached egg. Once, thinking to tempt him, I put myself to special pains—and, though I say it that should not, I am a good cook—to prepare him a fricassee' of chicken as bland as mother's milk, there was nothing in it more out-of-the-way than a few carefully selected mushrooms and a soup *con* of good sherry, and sherry and much stronger stuff in a glass his stomach accepts without qualm, but he dared not eat it. Sadly I put the fricassee' away... myself!)

But all this belongs in a special story, about the making of the film, which (D.V.) I shall relate next week. I am concerned, for the moment, with first visitors to The House, and the pleasure they brought.

And, incidentally, with the unforeseen effect of their visits upon Nesan my paradoxical factorum.

I have earlier written of Nesan and his elevation above his humble origins and the pressures that were consequently at war within him and the dog-in-the-manger village prejudice against his advancement, at best, beyond a point. Now he was about to undo himself. NOBODY in the house more looked forward to visitors than Nesan. Now that Jayawardana Baas was out of business with me and Alpin had his own mason's-assistant, Nesan had returned to full-time domestic employment and I was teaching him to cook. We now prepared our own meals, a skill for which Nesan showed remarkable aptitude, and I had hopes for him eventually of the

Hotel School and thus perhaps of a final emancipation. I think that in our guests he saw—it was perfectly natural and justifiable — useful future 'contacts', those brittle instruments of possible advancement that the ambitious so assiduously collect in the belief they will serve better than less labour-saving equipment. Certainly, most guests were charmed by Nesan. But it seemed that the more 'important' he judged his guests the more his self-confidence failed him and he sought the illusory boost of stand-by, alcohol.

Every villager is film-struck (I turned back streams that came begging me to place their still wholly unproved abilities before Lester's eye) and Nesan was a dither of excitement on the day the company was to turn up. When it became evident they were hopelessly delayed he suddenly disappeared and returned only at dinner-time so drunk that there was nothing sensible to do but send him off to sleep.

Actually, Lester had already agreed to take Nesan on as a kind of bus-boy (whatever they call such a functionary in the film world) and so, to his credit, he did though Nesan's exhibition could scarcely have been reassuring. And to Nesan's credit the jobs he was given were acceptably carried out, though they would probably have been carried out better if he had laid off the bottle. But he did not. There were drinkers amongst the film technicians, with whom Nesan was in liaison, and he drank with them (only, a little harder: to show he was anyone's equal) until on the last day, with so many 'contacts' to impress—technicians, manager, film-stars, Lester, old Uncle Tom Cobley and all—he drank himself so drunk that he could not find his way home that night and was *hors de combat* for two days. Lester went straight on from making this film to his work with *The God King* and Nesan applied, with my approval, for a place on the minor staff; but it could hardly be a surprise when he was turned down.

Nesan's truancy that night was a fairly serious dereliction; since one of his chief duties was to be available during the lonely hours because I am subject to distressing though clearly quite innocuous! 'heart attacks', when I might need



him. All the same, within a few weeks he was guilty of it again. And this time I felt his drunkenness could not be passed over. On this occasion, amongst our guests was a diplomat of some seniority. What Nesan hoped for I do not know: an ambassadorship? but the diplomat loomed large to him as a 'contact' eminently desirable. (Nobody, incidentally, was a nicer diplomat, or less like one.) The guests were expected to lunch, and Nesan had been sent to Galgamuwa at dawn for fresh meat and vegetables, the difficulty with these is one of the impediments to rural entertaining, and he should have been back by nine or half-past; but he was not, and we lunched off my guests' picnic basket. He was not back to dinner; and we dined out of tins. He turned up late the next morning still non compos and I could see nothing for it but to give him the standing sack.

I helped him, later, to a job in a State Corporation, to sink or swim—he is still swimming—but he could have done better. So much better.

## SHAMBA

# End Of The Year

by ANATORY BUKOBA

December 25.

THE BUS was right on time, and an hour and a half to go to midnight when I arrived. The rain started simultaneously in Colombo and here today, but there had been slight rain yesterday. The cowpea germinated before the rain, which says a lot. Sown after the last rain, we had been having a dry spell since then. I have brought two garden packets of sorghum back, the short stalk sort. The long stalk kind, I know, does well on this land, in the shade. It does not even need water. The night following the day I left, I left at 3 a.m., and while her parents were carrying bricks through the Shamba for someone else, and Major thinks it was 2 a.m., our three-year old is said to have seen a ghost, one of a dog, and she fell ill. There is no ghost of a dog, but you could get an evil spirit appearing as one, unless you imagine it. The *vedarala* had to be called in. He tied strings, *nul bandila* as they call it. There had been a turn for the better today, but I gather the *samil* one had been pretty ill. I came on time; there is no food or money left. The illness took up some. My house was spotless when I came. Major said he has been busy.

December 26.

WE HAVE broken through at last on the one side we had not yet reached our boundary. Major did it while I was away; a corridor again, near the corner of the *shamba*, and by the footpath which people use to the second and less public bathing place, which many people approach through the *shamba*. There were fourteen heaps of vegetation set fire to this evening. It took us between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m., two hours and two of us, for the heaps need close attention in the last stages of burning, if all in them is to be consumed by the flames. We had our dinner before dark. The housewife's elder brother was very angry about the thread tying that went on over his niece, so the housewife said, and he refused to sleep in her house and came here. I told Major

we do not have any dealings with the devil, and he admitted that this *nul* business was to do with the devil. The housewife says her daughter was better after it, I saw a chair in her house which was brought there for the ceremony. The girl had fever this evening. She looks a little thin perhaps because she had not eaten for a few days, otherwise she looks not at all bad.

December 27.

A HOST OF VISITORS did the *shamba* have today, the housewife's mother, step-brother, and two of his friends, both boys who, I gather, work for the P.W.D. Last night I was awakened over the child. We have some free-lance, private apothecaries or doctors near us, and at 11.30 p.m., the child was taken to them; both were out. I suggested the hospital today, but I was glad about the family turning up. We cleared nearer our house. I made a new pile. One of our nearer neighbours came to see the cause of all those fires we lit last night. What I read this morning gave me a clearer idea of how to express what I am trying to do. I got the word from the first four verses of the first epistle of the apostle, John. It is the word fellowship. I had rejected the word co-operative, and I had chosen the word corporate to express the kind of institution I am trying to create and popularize; but what is a corporate? It is a fellowship of people to occupy themselves in gainful employment; in other words, to subsist, educate their children, and to do all those things that people like to do. Oxford and Cambridge have their fellows of colleges and their college servants. There will be no corporate servants, but there may be servants of people who belong to the corporate; this will be a private matter between them. More, some other time.

December 29.

SWAHILI has some semblance to Sinhalese, it seems. *Mesa* Sinhalese for table, resembles *meza*, the swahili word which mean the same thing; *Kamba*, the swahili word is not much different from *kambi*, and both mean rope. The swahili *karatasi* is like the sinhalese *Karadasi*, and it means paper. *Chai* is obviously taken from the

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TRIBUNE, February 22, 1975



Urdu word and means tea. Got in, a visit to a place north of Vavuniya, and it was raining everywhere. There is a difference, it seems, in financing a *shamba*, or corporates, and all other institutions. The one tries to finance itself from international sources, and what is more personal than one's family or families? The other, that is, all the rest look to outside sources, this ultimately means banks, even if it is the country's central bank, and these do it largely by creating new money. This leads to inflation and depreciation of currency. It also leads to a new style of living, and one wonders if this change is for the better. There used to be a word to describe this change, and the word was progress; and the world is beginning to wonder if the change fits the original meaning of the word, or rather, what it was thought to mean. Are the Vedhas and the gipsies in possession of some secret about life that we have lost? The pigmies of the Ituri Forest of the Congo, to take another example; reading Colin Turubull, you would think that they have some secret, and that they are not often willing to share it for fear of losing it.

December 30,

Major, who does not know English, is getting on well with Sir Walter Scott's *Lady of the Lake*. He can read aloud a little of it, and he has a general sense of the meaning of what he reads. As it is verse, the general sense of the words has to suffice. I use the verse as a peg on which to hang, or hand him, a vocabulary, choosing the easy words in the poem as the pegs for the associate words I write down, too. All these I write in column form. Then, in Sinhalese, he writes their pronunciation in a second column, and in a third column the meaning. All this is his idea. It was my idea to choose the verse. Clearing gets along slowly, slowed down by my having to heap what is cut. What Major cut while I was away, I have not touched yet. My colleague was out of work. There was work for him, but he would not touch it, because he did not think the money sufficient, or perhaps, the quantity of work, for the money, too much. When he worked for this casual employer, he certainly used to have to work very late.

Major cooks and shops, so I go easy on him as regards the field work. We are having a number of holidays now, Sunday and Poya, Christmas and New Year. I use them for reading and writing letters when I am on the *shamba*. That keeps me here. If Major had another companion I would go out visiting. My colleague's family's presence is helpful to him while I am away. He goes over to the other house while I write these notes. We had a number of visitors today, one from as far as Colombo, or that was where he used to be. He is now married and has some land much nearer us. Major has just come back, and he wants to put up a fowl house in a hurry.

December 31,

POLLA OR MARKET DAY it was, and that was major's business, and so when I got to work outside, it was alone. Right after lunch, Major, said, let's get to work, and so I went. Clearing it was first and then my colleague and he cut posts for a hen-house. It looks like being a stout hen-house, but he does not want to do things by halves. While clearing, the *katha* shaft went a little more; Major said it was done for, that we must have it repaired. What with the holiday tomorrow, I nearly went to the blacksmith's at once to have a new shaft put on. I decided to try the handle myself, and I used the *katha* on a piece of wood stout enough to need an axe. The handle or shaft held. Major had borrowed the heavy knife earlier, and he used that knife in a way that I thought would break it. It is a question of being unfeeling to the strength of a tool. When Major said that if he used the *katha* gingerly, he would get no work done at all, my reply was that it would be out to the question anyway with a broken tool.

#### Scrap Iron

An almost incredible theft has been registered in Argentina. According to the police, a gang of thieves, who doubtless included experienced technical experts, one night dismantled a bridge across the San Antonio River. The parts were cut up and sold as scrap metal.

Inania of this, that and the other

## Bandage Bondage

BY INNA

ONE DAY the great christian saint, Augustine said: "What are kingdoms without justice but bands of robbers?" If our government is vowed to root out all exploitation, injustice and corruption in high places and low, then this narrative would spur them on to action this day.

The letter came to a friend of Inna only the other day: "In the coastal town of M., there is a mushroom industry called D. Nishpadakayo. A young girl working there is paid to the tune of 1.35 per day, which is rather low key. She thus earns less than 60/- a month. While the Manager spurns the labour laws of the country, rejecting EPF, violating Sunday rest, easily dispensing with overtime, extra emoluments, etc, they keep on spinning 288/- per day for the sale of a gross of handkerchiefs. Imagine that: a girl makes 144 hankies per day and earns 1.35 for it. The owners K. and A. keeping them in bondage, make 288/- per day, a rousing disproportion of 1:250. Some critics of the income distribution in the island said that the income distribution yielded 1:110 in some areas—which remains to be studied further—but this is the limit: two and a half times more of exploitation. K and A gaily rake in the shekels, riding rough shod on the backs of helpless poor girls. Any socialist reading this should swoop down on such exploiters if they could be traced. In June 1974, the poorly paid Manager, a fearless Miss, was dismissed because she tried to point out some injustices. She did not fear about her 125/- but she had to leave for no rhyme nor reason without EPF, sans everything."

THE WRITER of these line rightly raves about these injustices that are allowed to go scot free. The 40 girls working there—making bedsheets, bandages (or are they bondage?) just go on silently, working, working, working. Labour laws are not for them, the flower of Sri



Lanka's youth, because of the greed of some exploiters. Flouting labour laws will bring them to a bad end.

Are these men gone mad?

Where is the just and righteous Church or Churches in all this?

What of the catholic Pope John XIII who said:

*"Since women are becoming ever more conscious of their human dignity, they will not tolerate being treated as mere material instruments, but demand rights befitting a human person both in domestic and in public life" (Pacem in Terris, p. 9)*

*"Today workers, all over the world refuse to be treated as if they were irrational objects without freedom, to be used at the arbitrary disposition of others"...these words were written by the same catholic Pope.*

ARE THEY not valid any more today? Do religious leaders hope to escape from the wrath that is coming? Do they, more than others, not hear the cries of their people, of all peoples? If the fence starts eating the corn, to whom shall we go?

Are they hell bent on making religion the opium of the people?

Murder over a handkerchief: enough material for an Agatha Christie novel, and these oppressors are the murderers; their slow-sure task is genocide of our peoples, our coastal, rural, urban poor. They have not heard the end of the story. Money cannot buy happiness; it cannot as they two will learn too soon, when the labourers whom they have defrauded will cry to heaven for vengeance.

### REPORTAGE

## Soviet Archaeologists In Sri Lanka

WHEN I WAS ASKED to meet two Soviet archaeologists who have come here on the invitation of our Ministry of Cultural Affairs, I expected to come face to face with two venerable old men, much like our Dr. Paranavitana, former Archaeological Commissioner.

You can imagine my surprise when I was confronted with two charming ladies. I was even more

surprised to hear from them that about 50 per cent of all archaeologists in the USSR are women. Here's women's lib for you!

The two ladies in question were Tamara Zaimal, deputy head of the Oriental Department of the famous Hermitage in Leningrad, and Natalya Sichova, of the Moscow State Museum of Oriental Art. They have been here since 6th January, touring Sri Lanka and acquainting themselves, through our archaeological excavations, with our ancient culture. From them I learnt much about the history of Buddhism in the USSR too.

BUDDHISM, they told me, is generally thought to have come to Central Asia in the first century. But archaeological excavations have proved that its origins there date even earlier. But Buddhism gradually faded away with the Arab invasions leading to the flourishing of Islam. Thereafter it survived only in inaccessible mountainous regions till about the 12th century.

Our own chronicles mention that our famous Ruanwelisaya was founded with several monks from foreign temple too. Some of them are supposed to have come from a place known as Alisander, somewhere in Central Asia. Probably they hailed from a region situated somewhere in what is now Soviet Uzbekistan.

RUSSIAN SCHOLARS started the study of Buddhism early in the 19th century. But excavations to unearth the remains of ancient Buddhist temples and other sites started only after the victory of the October Revolution.

In 1919, by special decree, Lenin established the Museum of Oriental Cultures. It was thereafter that excavations began in real earnest. The first excavations at Kara-tepe, on the townsite of old Termez in southern Uzbekistan revealed three caves half buried under the sand. A. S. Strelkov, the leader of the excavations, was inclined to believe that the mound of Kara-tepe constituted the remains of a Buddhist cave monastery, the first monument of its kind on the territory of Soviet Central Asia.

Later excavations, renewed in the 1960's, resulted in uncovering a part of a large courtyard with an underground sanctuary and three

large cave-complexes. Fragments of plaster statues, bits of murals, and fragments of stone architectural ornaments were also found.

MESDAMES ZAIMAL AND SICHOVA, who have already toured our ancient cities, Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, seen Sigiriya and Dambulla, and gone to Hambantota and Tissamaharama are surprised at the many similarities they have found between the archaeological objects unearthed in Uzbekistan and in our own Sri Lanka. At the same time, they told me, there is after all no cause for surprise for Buddhism, both here and in the Soviet Union, derived from a common source and so did Buddhist culture.

The two Soviet lady archaeologists are highly impressed with the work of our own archaeologists who have done yeoman service unearthing our ancient cultural treasures. They are also impressed with our conservation and restoration methods. However, there was scope for improvement in the various methods we use in our excavations. They are happy that we in Sri Lanka will apply some of the methods tried and tested in the USSR in our next archaeological excavations at Akurugodella in Tissamaharama.

Mesdames Zaimal and Sichova have also given valuable advice to the authorities concerned here about the arrangement of exhibits in our museums. They hope that archaeologists from Sri Lanka will also be enabled to visit the USSR soon to get specialised training in all these matters and in that way contribute to the mutual benefit of our cultures and better understanding.

B. P.

### White Only?

"White Horse" Scotch whisky is well known in the world. But it is particularly popular in South Africa, the distillers note in their annual report. "The South African market continued to be by far the largest outlet in Africa," it says. "White Horse" again had a remarkably good year there and remained the leading brand." And what about "Black and White" whisky? It is obviously out of favour with the racists.



## IN MODERN TIMES

# The Growth of the Aramaya Way of Life

BY JEPHARIS

THE DEBATE will go on as to whether the Aramaya or Monastic Life is superior to the Family Life and no doubt each way of life has both its strong points and its weaknesses, its advantages and disadvantages (which would provide an interesting subject for debate), as they each constitute an essential part of collective human existence and experience, in a democratic society.

The Monastic or Ashram way of life, with worship of GOD as its pivotal centre, and paddy cultivation, collective farming and so on thrown in as adjuncts, was a prominent feature of the way of life of the Buddhist Sangha in the time of the ancient Sinhala Kings; though it went out of fashion and out of practice during the four-and-a-half centuries when we were subjected to foreign rule, first by the Portuguese, then by the Dutch, and finally by the British. Buddhism, Buddhist worship and service, culture, folklore and practice was stifled, and even its temples looted and destroyed by these three foreign powers, though in a lesser degree, by the more tolerant Englishman. During Queen Victoria's reign, Buddhism, and everything appertaining to it, once again raised its head, and flourished under a more tolerant administration. However, the religion of the majority of the Sinhala people was not given its rightful place until the emergence of Independent Ceylon in 1948.

ONE OF THE GREATEST, among the many benign, and not so benign legacies bequeathed by the Englishman to the people of Sri Lanka, has been the Church of Ceylon, with her rich heritage of scholarly industrious and hard-working priests which among other things, has been responsible for the establishment of Ashrams, where the Christian-Sinhala Buddhist, and Christian-Hindu Tamil (as in the Christa Seva Ashram, C.S.I., Jaffna) dialogue has been carried out in various parts of the island. It has been my privilege and good fortune

and happiness to visit some of these "Ashrams" or "Collective Farms", such as 'Suddharsana', situated at picturesque Buona Vista (Roomassala Kande) Unawatuna, Galle, which was formerly an Anglican orphanage "donated to the care of the unfortunate and the fatherless" by Acting Governor Lt. Gen. Sir Edward Paget in 1823, as the cornerstone of the 150 year old building testifies. It is now used as a centre for the training of young men in agriculture, animal husbandry, and household chores like cooking; and also as a book depot for the sale and distribution of scriptural and spiritual literature, and the promulgation of Bible Correspondence Courses, in the Southern Province.

There are also the following 'Ashrams' and/or 'Collective Farms' sponsored and administered by the Diocese of Kurunegala, viz. Devasaranaramaya, Ibbagamuwa; Christodaya, Kurunegala; Hevadiwala, Rambukkana; The House of Joy, Talawa (founded by the late Miss Evelyn Carney); and the projects at Galgamuwa and Talampitiya, and maybe one or two lesser ones that I am not aware of. Of these, I have on several occasions visited the first two, which are respectively run by my cousin Sevaka Yohan Devananda (formerly the Rev. John Cooray, a grandson of Sir James Peiris and nephew of Sir Henry de Mel) and Rev. Udeni de Silva, almost neighbouring my coconut estate, Heraliawala, at Malkaduwwa.

THESE TWO ANGLICAN PRIESTS are both doing excellent jobs in their respective localities, by raising the cross of Christ aloft in, and bringing the gospel of a Living Saviour to, their immediate neighbourhood, not by proselytising the people and gaining cheap converts to Christianity, but by a living demonstration of the FAITH which produces good works and service to the poor, the needy and the suffering. It is also a Faith which seeks to find and draw out whatever is godly, pure and holy even if found in an alien religion such as Buddhism. Both these priests, and also Rev. Nicholas Rose at Galgamuwa, are determined, energetic and full of ideas, and not only that, they are bold, courageous, practical and capable enough to put many, if not all, of their

ideas into practice, by turning them into living realities. They are indeed worthy of all our support, as by helping themselves and their neighbours, they seek to contribute their humble mite to the total agricultural effort of the nation, and peace and harmony among its various peoples. They are also trying to alleviate, in a small way, the vast problem of unemployment, which looms larger and larger on the horizon. I can do no better at this point than refer my readers to the booklet "THE MARA TREE OF THE WANNI" (GOD AT WORK IN SRI LANKA) by the late Rev. Chas. H. Wickramanayake; and also to quote in extenso (with his prior permission of course) a report by Mr. N. C. B. Lekamge in connection with the recent (November 1974) 14th anniversary celebrations of Devasaranaramaya. This is what he writes:

"Why is it so widely held that man is fundamentally selfish, ambitious and corruptible? And therefore collective experiments are bound to fail?" These are two of the many questions the young farmers discussed at the anniversary celebrations held during the last week-end of November 1974.

Fourteen young men manage the **Collective Farm** of 14 acres of coconut land, at Ibbagamuwa. They are attempting, as laid down in the 'Principles and Rules,' "To build according to Dhamma a new society on a socialist foundation; to live a life in common—"from each according to his ability, to each according to his need," "to develop individual personality, initiative and personal freedom."

One of their leaders explained that in other farms they had merely to carry out orders. Whereas here, at the end of the day's work, they discussed their problems, planned and divided the following day's activities, and by self-criticism improved their standard of work. He said that at the beginning they found it difficult to pull their weight and adjust themselves to the co-operative effort. They soon learnt that liberation could be achieved only through hard work and sacrifice for the common good.

AT TIMES a fellowship service of group meditation (for 10 Buddhists and 4 Christians) takes place



at the end of the day. Then they use a World Liturgy. "The common theme is the movement for development, justice and liberation—an attempt to integrate the values of the past with the values of the new world." Reading of suitable passages, talks or discussions, singing of lyrics, etc. are added at the discretion of the leader. (The main danger seems to be that worship is very often neglected or shortened, and not enough time taken off for peaceful quiet meditation and bible study, due to pressures of work and of practical living—Jeph.)

Some of the main topics are:—

(1) Seek the truth, (2) Honour the leaders who have enriched the lives of others and helped in giving love, justice and peace to the world, (3) We acknowledge our responsibility for sin and evil in the world. (4) Sharing of rice (or bread and tea) to the chanting of words from great leaders of mankind (a) "Lead me from darkness to light" (b) "...for the good of the people out of compassion for the world" (c) "I have come that men may have life in all its fullness" (d) "From each according to his ability to each according to his need" (e) "Wherever there is struggle there is sacrifice."

The opening of the Janadipatha Vedage (Community Health Centre) was an important event in this year's celebrations. After a day's "Shramadana" to clean the compound the opening took place on the 1st of December.

It began with readings from the Dhammapada, the Bible and Mao Tse Tung. Then the Chief Bhikkhu of that village chanted Pirith and in a short address said how grateful the villagers of Ibbagamuwa were to Devasaranaramaya, the Govi Samajaya, and specially to Sevaka Yohan Devananda who served the community. He thanked Sevika Daya for undertaking this social service with devotion and sacrifice.

A few words from the Roman Catholic Priest and Sevaka Yohan were followed by the lighting of the traditional 'pahan puja' by those who helped in constructing the building and the well, by Dr. & Mrs. Muthuvelu who had undertaken weekly visits from Kurunegala, and representatives of various groups present.

This was followed by a discussion on the type of work to be done at

the beginning, such as caring for the aged, mothers and small children. Some steps were to be taken to eradicate malnutrition which was prevalent in that village. The shop run by the young farmers, where farm produce and other wholesome food was available to the villagers at cheap rates partly met this need.

The site for the excellent well had been selected by a water diviner (or more by divine aid) and had cost nearly Rs. 6,000/- of which amount about half was spent on dynamite to blast the rock (about 170 blasts). A new hand pump took the clear water to a storage tank on the roof.

Sister Marie Louise (formerly a Miss Poulier) after a period working in Canada, returned to Sri Lanka to use her special ability and talent for God's Service. One or two more Sevikas are expected to join her to assist her in her work.

AFTER A SHORT INTERVAL for a cup of tea (with jaggery produced in the farm from coconut toddy) the final session was a discussion on the ACCOUNTS. The balance sheets, duly audited, had been pasted on a notice board for some days for public inspection. So all present were able to take an active part in the discussion. Of special interest was the Foreign Aid from the W.C.C. etc., which had come to the rescue of the farm to tide over a difficult period of insecurity, hardship and trial. Problems regarding the "NAVATHANA" (the INN) which was at times used by the wrong type of visitors (or couples) were also considered.

In the talks and discussions, it was often evident that the young farmers, who had been the 'have-nots' and victims of oppression or exploitation, expressed their strong feelings of bitterness and anger at the 'haves' or those who misused their ill-gotten wealth or power (who wouldn't?). They would in their present set-up eventually realise that only through love or 'maithriya' could they bring about reform or a new society, as the Revd. Pandit Rathkaruwe Wimaladharma expressed in his opening address.

A few of the young farmers seemed to be rather restless (perhaps a good thing?) to bring about

quick changes in society and in making an economic success of their undertakings. Perhaps they would realise that they could achieve more by setting an example and witnessing to others the simple life and slow but steady progress.

With constant evaluation and self-criticism (mixed with fun and laughter); solving problems and overcoming obstacles and weaknesses by discussion; sharing leadership and responsibility with discipline; working with a spirit of commitment and sacrifice for justice and liberation, produced by a religious background; with the Sevaka as friend, guide and counsellor; there is no doubt these young farmers will be the pioneers in building a new society and a model collective farm in Sri Lanka.

This idea should catch on in other parts of the country.

### Computerised Milking

This Herdsman is operating a new computerised British system claimed to be the first of its kind in the world, which automatically controls and monitors the operations of the milking parlour. The system, developed by the southern England firm of Seldown Electronics Limited, monitors all milking procedures for herds with over 150 cattle, and provides instant and continuously updated information on milk yields, herd strength, cow health, cost efficiency and forward planning projects.

All the herdsman has to do is enter the cow number by means of the keyboard and the computer automatically adjust the feeder to release the appropriate ration and records the milk yield information. Up to 32 milking stalls can be handled simultaneously either in a single milking parlour or in several small parlours.



# IS IT TRUE?

## Sherlock Holmes

### Rice Imports and PMB

IS IT NOT TRUE that press reports indicate that the Government seems to have decided to fix the amount of rice to be distributed on the ration next year at about 660,000 tons of rice (wheat flour at 540,000 tons)? That of this the PMB is expected to provide about 100,000 tons? That this means the PMB expects to collect only about 7 million bushels of paddy this year? That the 21 million bushels of paddy the PMB had collected last year had yielded 300,000 tons of rice? That it has always been Tribune's contention that the PMB was only able to get anything from 40 to 60 percent of the total production? That this view has now received support in the columns of the prestigious *Financial Times* of London? That in its issue of January 24, 1975, in a despatch from Colombo, a knowledgeable and wellknown correspondent, after revealing the price at which Sri Lanka had bought rice from Pakistan, went on to say: "...however, falling prices in the world price market will not help Sri Lanka very much since its last rice crop was severely affected by prolonged drought. The country's Paddy Marketing Board, which expected to collect 30 m bushels of paddy last year in fact collected only 21 m bushels, or about 300,000 tons of rice. The Paddy Marketing Board purchases about half the country's total production to maintain the present rice ration which stands at 3 lbs of rice per person per week?"

That if this estimate of the PMB's purchases are correct then the total production for 1974 was not more 42 million bushels? That this is less than what Tribune had estimated as the total crop—making a generous concession that the producers had retained at least 60% of the crop? That it is significant that no national newspaper (daily) has been willing to say that the PMB only bought about half the crop? That this fact is freely admitted privately by officials, poli-

ticians and others? That nobody wants to say this publicly and contradict the official claims made that the total production was about four times what the PMB had collected, that is, the PMB had collected only 25% of the total production? That those who know the rural areas of Sri Lanka know that this cannot be true?

IS IT NOT A FACT that the 3 lbs a week ration (mentioned in the *Financial Times*) is given only to persons in what is known as the "sensitive belt", that is Colombo, the bigger towns and certain other areas without paddy producing areas close by? That in all other areas the ration is only 2 lbs a week? That one lb is given free to non-income tax payers who can buy another lb for Rs. 1.10 a lb? That income tax payers pay for the first lb also? That it is on this footing that the Government has calculated 660,000 tons as the requirement for 1975? That on this level people will not die of hunger but they will be on a semi-starvation diet—unless they get adequate subsidaries? That nutritionists had long ago stated that a well-fed rice eater (manual worker) would require 8 lbs of rice a week? That when difficult times had come along, it was cut down to half, that is four lbs a week? That this was said to be the barest minimum? That today the ration is 2 lbs a week for the vast majority in the country whilst those in the "sensitive belt" get 3 lbs a week? That in addition to this, those in the "sensitive belt" get 1 lb of wheat flour a week whilst in other areas they get less and in paddy producing districts they get no wheat flour on the ration at all? That on this semi-starvation ration, people had pulled through 1974 because rice was available in the open market in spite of transport restrictions? That in the paddy producing areas off ration rice had varied from Rs. 1.50 a lb to Rs. 2.75 a lb?

That in some areas the price had gone up even higher? That in 1975, even if producers sell very little to the PMB, there will not be enough in the off-ration or open market? That in many areas a lb of rice already costs Rs. 3 a lb and in some other areas it is about Rs. 4 a lb? That at the time of the Maha and Yala harvest, prices may drop down a little, but one must expect the worst? That there are no hidden stocks with the producers or traders.

IS IT NOT STRANGE that whilst the price of the rice bought from Pakistan was not mentioned in any newspaper in Sri Lanka, the *Financial Times* revealed the price as US \$ 338 per ton c.i.f? That this must be taken as c & f as the Government does not insure its cargo? That Tribune's inquiries show that the 50,000 tons from Karachi was on a c & f basis? That there has been no official announcement of the price of the rice from Thailand? That it is known that the rice from Thailand is supplied on an f.o. b. basis? That one has to probably wade through the back files of the *Financial Times* to know the price of the rice Sri Lanka paid for the Thai rice? That 95,000 tons have been bought from Thailand in two or more contracts? That there is as yet no indication about the price fixed for the Chinese rice? That it has been customary for China to supply half the contracted quantity from Burma (from which country China buys rice on a bi-lateral basis and other half comes from China direct? That corridor possip is that Thai price, converted to a c & f basis will not be very different from the Pak price and that the Chinese price will also be thereabouts? That Sri Lanka must consider itself lucky for having concluded the agreements with Thailand and Pakistan before the world price started moving up? That today, at the time of writing, the price would be something like US \$ 350 a ton c & f Karachi? That to reach the minimum target of 660,000 tons, arrangements have to be made for the import of another 160,000 tons or thereabouts?