

TRIBUNE

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Train Derailment

—on playing down the news—

THE RAILWAY DISASTER NEAR MEDAWACHCHIYA last weekend is one of the most serious that has taken place in this country. The fact that the casualties were so low was no doubt a "near miracle"—as the General Manager of the Railway had correctly stated—but, this is no reason for not paying due attention to the extent and scope of the tragedy. The fish plates had been taken off at a point where trains usually pick up speed in a stretch of semi-open jungle, and the engine had gone off the rails. The ground was reasonably level and hard, and (there being no obstructions) the engine had ploughed through without turning over. The carriages had been dragged behind without telescoping one into another and only a few of the bogeys had tilted slightly. The fact that most of the carriages had not overturned or had not telescoped one in to other was responsible for the low casualty rate.

What was an even greater miracle was that the Police party had arrived at the scene of the derailment within a short time of the occurrence and thus prevented the wholesale robbery of over 1500 passengers at gun point with full moonlight to help the robbers. It is likely that the Police had arrived at the place on a tip-off—a wee bit too late to prevent the derailment. The passengers and the public must be thankful for this degree of police vigilance and alertness that had made it impossible for the shadowy figures who might have been lurking in the jungle to help themselves to the goods and posses-

sions of the passengers—and also whatever was in the mailbags and in the luggage vans.

THOUGH THIS TRAGEDY—tragedy it is, in spite of the fact that the loss of life was minimal and the casualty rate was low—is being talked about through the length and breadth of the island, the daily newspapers and the state-controlled radio have played the story down to the point where these papers have further increased credibility gap between themselves and the reading public. The *Daily News*, *Thinakaran*, *Dinamina* and the *Observer* played the story down so much that it was reminiscent of the ostrich that buried its head in sand in the belief that it will escape attention. The *Daily Mirror*, *Lankadipa* and the *Times of Ceylon* had followed the *Lake House* lead and made their readers feel that nothing serious had really happened. The *Virakesari* and the *Mithran* had given the story the front page banner headline prominence it deserved and thus further pushed the *Thinakaran* into virtual oblivion among Tamil readers. The *Aththa* had a front page editorial that the rail disaster was the work of UNP saboteurs still left within the Railways. The *Janadina* also made it a front page story laying emphasis on the General Managers' suspicion (not reported in other papers) that it was sabotage. The *Janadina* did not say that it was UNP sabotage. It seemed to have left (very correctly) the matter an open question.

Even if the daily papers of the *Lake House* group did not want to highlight insurgent activities,

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(whether this slant is the correct way of approaching the problem is another matter), newspapers which impose partial and total blackout of nationally important newsworthy news in ordinary times (such as these) are doing more harm than good. With the blackout imposed by the daily newspapers, the public is left to the mercy of gossip, rumour and whispers to fill in the gaps in their thirst for information.

The wildest rumours are afloat about the Medawachchiya rail crash and also about the series of bus holdups in the Kabbitogollawa, Padawiya and Batticaloa areas. It is also common talk that the reported hold-ups and robberies are all confined to buses from Jaffna and that most of the passengers robbed were Tamils. It is open talk that the train which was derailed last Saturday night was marked for robbery and that once again the victims were Tamils. If there have been hold-ups and robberies in other areas, where passengers of other communities were involved the blackout of such news tends to give a communal twist to the whole thing.

ONE CANNOT SEE ANY GOOD OR VALID REASON why the *Lake House* and the *Times* should impose a blackout on such news. If they do not want to attribute these occurrences to insurgency—lest it give a fillip to the subversive movement—the papers must at least report the news in a manner which normal newspapers do in a democratic society. The Medawachchiya derailment was first page, and at least three column, news. Photo-

graphers and on-the-spot reporters should have been rushed to the scene. Human stories of the difficulties endured by passengers are part of the newspaper treatment of such events.

It is not enough to wait for an official report alone about the tragedy. The papers must investigate the occurrence and point out defects in the security system which had made such a derailment possible. If it was sabotage, how was it possible? And derailments have been frequent and numerous in recent times. At first if they were mainly confined to goods trains which had food cargoes, and because of the news blackout the public believed that many such trains were deliberately derailed and the cargoes robbed before the Police or the Security Services could arrive on the scene. And now, public gossip states that the passenger trains which carry the largest number of long distance passengers had become the target.

It is bazaar talk that all bus-holds and train derailments are the work of insurgents and released detainees. Nobody has yet thought of attributing these unfortunate incidents, in the underground world of gossip and rumour to plain and simple robbers because the kind of slant and blackout indulged by the newspapers does not encourage people to analyse such events for themselves in a healthy manner. In the attempt to make people believe that there was no "insurgent activities", the Government controlled newspapers have let loose (through their feeble efforts at slanting and blacking out) an uncontrollable avalanche of gossip and rumour of a far more dangerous kind than what they have sought to suppress. And what is even worse is that the newspapers are increasingly stultify themselves in the way they handle important news.

The kind of news which receive first page treatment these days are such that peoples will soon forget the habit of newspaper reading. If a dumb public is what the Government wants, the present policy of *Lake House* can be justified. But if the Government believes that the public should be alert and conscious, then the manner in which the newspapers are being run will result in the

most bizarre and grotesque consequences. *Lake House* was taken over to eliminate a Wijewardene slant. But the tragedy is such that the present slant and blackout will lead to consequences of a far worse nature. It is yet too premature to proclaim the doomsday of a vigilant public opinion in this country, but unless newspapers change their policies in regard to news reporting such a Doomsday will arrive sooner than what even many pessimists envisage.

The continued news blackout of certain kind of news and the total absence of political interpretative news analysis—some of which must necessarily be of a speculative nature treading on the corns of VIPs—have given rise to the most dangerous kind of underground talk and this will give rise to insurgency of a new kind among people and classes who are now not classified with the insurgents in the jungle.

Unless a totally authoritarian and regimented society is imposed on the country, the newspapers have a certain role to play. And it is an important role. The newspapers should be a forum for opinions on a more comprehensive scale than what a ruling government party thinks is good for the government. The newspapers should report all the news fit to print even though some of the news may be unpalatable to important personages in the Establishment.

In the world of today, with radio networks available to everyone who can afford a transistor, it would be foolish to think that a slant and regular blackout in newspapers will give immunity to those who want to exercise power in a particular way. It will be argued that radio networks will only give news about other parts of the world that the Government can with reasonable safety "manage" local news. This is another piece of fiction which will burst like a bubble in Sri Lanka very soon.

In the Wijewardene era, *Lake House* bosses had felt a supreme sense of complacent satisfaction that what they ordained will be accepted and that the kind of world they sought to fashion would be perpetuated for all time. A similar kind of amnesia seems to have

gripped the present hierarchy of *Lake House*. They seem to think that if train derailments are played down, insurgency can be contained thereby.

This is not the way newspapers should deal even with minor manifestations of insurgency. This will be the surest way of undermining the prestige of a government and make people lose confidence in the government. Today, whilst some people believe wild stories about the derailments and bus hold-ups, others think that the Government was ignorant of the true state of affairs which give rise to such acts of real or suspected sabotage.

Other questions are also floating round the country: why have these activities surfaced in particular areas and at particular times? Was there a pattern in such acts of unlawfulness? Was there a method in what to some appears to be madness?

And, unless such matters are aired in the public in open and in free newspapers, a great deal of harm will ensue in the state of the public weal.

Sri Lanka is a small place. News travel fast. Gossip travels faster. News blackouts will engender rebellions thoughts. News slanting will arouse mass indignation. Because in these days the truth cannot be hidden—for long.

POSTSCRIPT

As we go to press, several persons on the train that was derailed have come to our office with their stories on how it all happened and what happened after. The picture gets more complex as these stories come in. Memories and recollections get exaggerated or blurred after a traumatic experience so close to death. But one thing is clear. Many passengers did lose their belongings. Who stole them? Did some passengers turn robbers? Or did some persons come in from jungle and join the shaken and excited crowd on the derailed train? Another baffling question: how soon after the derailment did the Police arrive on the scene? Was it within a short time or was it about two hours later?

Tribunania

Thoughts On May Day

AT THE TIME OF WRITING these notes, the preparation for the May Day Rally are going on apace. The JCTUO, the other trade unions and the three parties of the UF are making feverish preparations to make the Rally a mighty show to impress upon one and all that political power still rests with the United Front because the "people" were with the UF. The UNP, which will hold its Rally at the Town Hall, seems determined to show that it is an effective challenger for political power.

The UF's Rally will no doubt be the bigger because the UNP does not have as a big a base among the workers as the two Left Parties. The SLFP too has now built up a sizable following in the working class. Furthermore, though a quota of buses have been promised to the UNP, there is no doubt that the overwhelming majority of the buses of the CTB will bring people the UF will carry to town on May 1.

At one time, fears had been expressed that certain circles were intent on downgrading the UF rally with restrictive measures or even totally banning it or suppressing it under a curfew. This was at a time when the two Left Parties and certain sections of the SLFP were apprehensive that a National Government with the UNP on a new programme was round the corner. This fear has now temporarily receded, and the two Left Parties have made a serious effort to carry the SLFP with it. With this end in view, the three partners of the UF have drawn up agreed resolutions to be moved at the May Day rally. These resolutions, it is believed, will seek to push nationalisation much further than some sections of the SLFP would like. Banks, Big Business Private Sector Enterprises (eg. Wellawatte Spinning & Weaving Mills Ltd., the

Ceylon Tobacco Co. Ltd., certain Synthetic Textiles Factories, etc.) and the Agency Houses are expected to come under fire.

It will also be probably proclaimed at the Rally that the UF has much to be proud about — two years had been a period of achievement — and that the time had come to push ahead without delaying at bus stops and other halting places. Naturally, the promoters of the May Day rally cannot be expected to refer to the serious shortcomings which neither a Workers' Charter nor further nationalisation can resolve, immediately, that is on the food production front. Imports, gifts and PL 480 flour have saved this country from mass starvation.

But we are nowhere nearer self-sufficiency than we were when this Government launched the Food Production War. The drought can explain away only a little of the gap between production and need. Tube wells and the exploitation of groundwater will take years before they can make an impression on food production. In the meantime, the unrestricted import of wheat and wheat flour and the flooding of the cereal market with imported wheat has completely disrupted the local cultivation of manioc and the substitute cereals—and maybe even paddy for the next season.

After the damage was done, the Government has rushed with inadequate (in the present circumstances) guaranteed prices for maize and sorghum, but not manioc. Persons who had planted acres and acres of manioc hoping that the price (for producer) would be stable between 25 to 30 cents a pound cannot now hope to get anything more than 10 cents a pound. They had made the investment when costs of labour and planting were higher—when cheap flour had not yet invaded the market—but now they are faced with a big loss. It is not likely that in future farmers will grow manioc, maize and sorghum on the scale government would like them to do.

In addition the uncertainties on the food and agricultural front, the law and order situation in certain parts of the country continue to cause concern not only to the authorities but people living and working in certain areas.

Robberies, bus hold-ups and even train derailments seem to have become part of the way of life in certain parts of the country. Furthermore, the minds of the the young are once again being disturbed by dangerous thoughts and the word of a new gospel of hate is being carried, (amongst others), by groups of pop musicians, drama troupes and troubadours who are going from village to village providing cheap entertainment to the people



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(while the highly sophisticated and pedantic Film Corporation is seeking to bring about a high class cultural revolution at great cost through banning entertainment films from foreign countries and straight-jacketing local film production). It is not known how many people in high places have woken up to the thoughts which have entered the minds of the young. The older politicians in power, many of whom are already, regarded by the young as senile and anti-diluvian, think that they can dazzle the people by talking about mahaveli water, by boasting about the prospects about tourism and the untold oil wealth from Delft to Hambantota.

Whilst those who are now in the seats of power are lost in the euphoria of the plenty they see around the corner in oil, tourism and mahaveli water, the young in the country are thinking on different lines. The credibility gap between the rulers and the ruled is growing daily—especially with the mass media of the government. (Lake House and SLFP) spinning out fairy tales nobody believes.

This is the year of the *Rakshasha*, according to Hindu astrological lore, and there are many ominous signs of which serious note must be taken if the nation is to be spared unnecessary dislocation and unhappiness. Train derailments cannot be passed off with a shrug of the shoulder. A few security guards cannot eliminate ever-present and ever-growing dangers. What is going on, now underground, below the surface, is a battle of minds and ideas. Unfortunately, many of us are still shadow-boxing in the clouds.

It is time that the powerful VIPs come down to hard realities on mother earth to see what is going on in the minds of people who inhabit Sri Lanka. They will find that oil, tourism, mahaveli waters—not even nationalisation—any longer interest the young. What is it that can be done to win the hearts and the minds of the young who very soon will constitute the overwhelming majority of the population in this island? Old time assumptions and premises have lost the meaning they had when present top politicians were young.

WHILST IN SRI LANKA, the problems of food, shelter and

employment loom large on the horizon, the mighty celebrations organised on an international scale by the Soviet Union to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the defeat of Hitlerite fascism has found an significant echo within the island. The Left and the trade unions have sought to utilise the occasion by identifying the right-wing "pro-national government forces" as being as being fascist and have used the propaganda against Hitlerite fascism to denounce local political opponents. To the present generation of youth, the term *fascism* has little or no meaning and even many of the older people are so in difficulties of food and buried inflation that they do not seem to be worried about fascism.

Thirty years ago history was made when the Soviet Union together with the USA, Britain, France and other Allied Powers defeated Hitler and the Axis Powers. It was a landmark in history and a mighty achievement. But what had begun at that time is only now reaching some kind of finality in countries like Cambodia and the Vietnam. When the Axis Powers were defeated in 1945, anti-communist cold war fighting had erupted in Indochina and in Greece. In Indochina an active hot war has gone for thirty years whilst in Greece, a military junta had sought to bring finality to the clash of opposing forces. The Junta has now gone, but whether the present government in Greece will be able to stabilise itself is still problematic especially, with confrontations in Cyprus and along the Turkish frontier.

In these thirty years, Africa has opened out into new emancipation for several nations, but problems of racist white rule in South Africa and Rhodesia continue to disturb race relations. Whether political freedom will automatically bring economic prosperity and happiness is yet to be seen. The change of government in Portugal has not only marked the beginning of the end of the colonial age in Africa but has begun to shake the foundations of the rich Europe built on the prosperity of the early merchants, missionaries, freebooters, pirates, capitalists, colonialists and imperialists of western Europe from the

beginning of the sixteenth century (These foundations were first shaken by the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and later by the expansion of socialism in Eastern Europe in 1945). Portugal was the first of the colonial powers of western Europe and the changes now overtaking this country have more than ordinary historical significance.

Arab-Israeli relations are still in the doldrums and the oil crisis stemming from the actions of Arab countries in OPEC have only surfaced international economic maladies which have overtaken the world. When a new pattern of ordered economic life will be re-established in the world is yet to be seen, but significant efforts are being made by the rich, industrialised and advanced countries to achieve minimum targets to safeguard their economies before they are overwhelmed by catastrophe. The solution of one problem led to the creation of several new problems Lenin had one said, and this is true of the defeat of fascism thirty years ago. There are a multitude of problems today compared to what they were in 1945—problems crying aloud for solutions.

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CHRONICLE

APRIL 12—21

A DIARY OF EVENTS IN SRI LANKA AND THE WORLD
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SATURDAY, APRIL 12: Saudi Arabia has agreed to buy thirty thousand cases of mango nectar from Sri Lanka: this order will enable the Sri Lanka Fruit Board to earn £ 78,000 in foreign exchange: shipment for this annual order are scheduled to begin in August—CDN. The Union of Government Medical Specialists have announced that from today they will work strictly according to the rules laid down by the Ministry of Health and this move is expected to cause a go-slow in all government hospitals in Colombo—CDM. The Government will spend another Rs. 15 million on housing this year—CDN. The final draft bill of the Charter of Workers Rights was okayed by the Legal Draughtman's Department this week and this will be published as a sessional paper before May Day—CDN. Under the 'once and for all Capital levy' assessments totalling Rs. 100 million have so far been made by the Department of Inland Revenue: the highest levy so far has been for Rs. 4 million on a non-resident company and the highest levy on an individual has been for Rs. 750,000—CDN. According to reports from Paris where Sri Lanka Aid Group of countries held their eleventh meeting, indications are that fresh aid for 1975 will be significantly larger—CDN. Police sources in Colombo said that International Criminal Police Organisation (Interpol) has decided to set up an Asian Bureau to tackle the illicit drug traffic in the area: the new Bureau will cover the activities in eight countries including Sri Lanka—CDM. The latest police statistics reveal that there was a drop in murder rate in 1974 compared to the previous year—CDM. The Sikkim Legislative Assembly yesterday voted to abolish the monarchy and to declare the Himalayan state a part of the Indian Union. In Cambodia the National Liberation forces are engaged in active battle just five miles from Phnom Penh: in Peking Prince Nordom Sihanouk reiterated that there had been no negotiations between his Khmer Rouge forces and the Phnom Penh administration. Saigon High Command reported that its forces have repulsed a second PRG attempt to capture the key provincial capital of Xuan Loc. The Soviet Union announced that it would hold naval and air exercises on the high seas later this month: but the announcement did not say where the manoeuvres would take place.

SUNDAY, APRIL 13: The Minister of Public Administration, Local Government, Home Affairs and Justice, Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike, has ruled out the possibility of the United Front forming a National Government with the U.N.P. as a constituent partner or the S.L.F.P. forming a coalition with the U.N.P.: Mr. Bandaranaike's argument was that the U.N.P. was committed to one policy, namely the defence and protection of big business, capitalist interests and of private enterprise and it was inconceivable that the United Front can form a Government in association with a party that follows such a policy—ST. Fourteen Asian countries will be represen-

ted at the Asian Mass Communication centre's conference on Information Imbalance in Asia to be held in Colombo and Kandy from April 21 to 26—CO. The Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd has recorded an audited pre tax profit of Rs. 1.2 million for the period July 20, 1973 to December 31, 1973: the company's profit for 1974 has been Rs. 2.1 million—CO. Candidates sitting the new National Certificate of General Education (NCGE) will be examined on the work covered in schools and not on the entire syllabus—ST. Stage ii of the new educational reforms is now ready to be implemented: the new syllabuses for the HNCE examination which will replace Advanced Level examination in 1977 have been drafted and submitted to the Ministry of Education for approval—CO. Dr. John A. Ratnavale died on April 10 in Pennsylvania, America—ST. An Italian team of experts have arrived in the island to advise the local farmers on cashew growing—ST. Five U.S. Navy ships with 2,500 marines on board are standing by in the South China sea for possible evacuations from South Vietnam. Cambodian Prince Nordom Sihanouk said that, he had rejected an American request to return to Phnom Penh to take over power: in a statement issued in Peking he said that the request came in a written note from Mr. George Bush, Chief of the U.S. Liaison Office in Peking; Cambodia's Acting President Mr. Sauk Ham Khoy, was evacuated along with U.S. Embassy staff from besieged Phnom Penh.

MONDAY, APRIL 14: The Sinhala and Hindu New Year, Kali Yuga 5076 and Saka Era 1897 dawns this morning at 7.31 and the Sinhalese and Tamils the island over will observe the New Year today—CDM & CDN. In a New Year message to the nation the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, made a categorical statement that the Government will continue until May 22, 1977, when its term is due to end under the Republican Constitution of Sri Lanka and the Government will not stay a day longer than that: the Premier further said that no one can compel the government to have elections but elections will be definitely held in 1977—CDN & CDM. The Commission appointed by the Government headed by Mr. Bernard De Soysa, M.P., has recommended that Agency Houses be replaced by Government institutions: it has also recommended that a Plantation Management and Services Board be created under the Ministry of Plantations Industries and that the existing visiting agents system be abolished—CDN. Volunteers of the Tamil United Front headed by its Chief Organiser Mr. Kasi Anandan, will walk from Kankasanturai to the southernmost tip of the Eastern Province enrolling more members for the TUF—CDN. The Association of Medical Specialists said that unless a settlement is brought soon, the work-to-rule campaign by its members might spread to outstation hospitals too—CDN. Interpol has highly commended Sri Lanka for the measures taken by the Government to eradicate international frauds in foreign exchange and the growing menace of narcotic drugs traffic—CDM. The export earnings from coconut products recorded an increase of Rs. 9.2 million in December 1974 over the earnings in the previous month—CDM. United States has stopped its vital airlift of supplies to the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh. Government military sources in South Vietnam announced that Government forces re-established complete control of Xuan Loc provincial capital. In a meeting with the

Japanese Foreign Minister, President Ford reaffirmed US determination to continue its role in the future peace and stability of Asia.

TUESDAY, APRIL 15: (The *Daily News* and the *Daily Mirror* were not published today owing to New Year holidays). Nearly 87,000 tons of rice and flour arrived from China and are now being cleared in the ports of Colombo, Trincomalee, and Galle—CO. The last train from Opanaika to Ratnapura on the Kelani Valley Line was derailed last night: a complete length of railway line had been torn off its foundation by people who C.G.R. officials believed were protesting against the closing of this 56 year old stretch of track in what is perhaps the last of the world's commercial narrow gauge railways—CO. The uninterrupted supply of water will continue today and tomorrow to Colombo residents in view of the Sinhalese and Tamil New Year—CO. Sri Lanka will be among 41 countries meeting in Manila for the eighth annual meeting of the Board of Governors of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) from April 24 to 26: Minister of Finance, Dr. N. M. Perera, and Secretary to the Treasury, Mr. Chandra Cooray, will represent the country at this meeting—CO. Acute shortage of paper and the non-availability of colour films had affected the Tourist Board's publicity campaign in the country and abroad—CO. The Viet Cong's Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) has warned the United States to refrain from future military involvement in South Vietnam or face more bitter setbacks. President Anwar Sadat of Egypt asked Interior Minister Mamoudouh Salem, a 55-year old former policeman to become Egypt's new Prime Minister: President Sadat's choice of Mr Salem to form a new Government was announced minutes after he had made a television speech in which he promised important and drastic changes to improve Egypt's economic situation.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16: The police will deal very severely with inciters and mischief-makers on May Day: at a high level conference held yesterday it was decided to arrest any person who was likely to cause mischief or incite workers coming into the city to attend the May Day rallies: both the UF and the UNP have arranged rallies which will precede their meetings to be held at the Galle Face Green and the Town Hall respectively—CDM. In future medical personnel will not be allowed to go abroad on no pay leave for studies: a government circular to this effect which allowed medical personnel to go on no pay leave for five years has been withdrawn—CDN. A Insurance Fund will be operated by the proposed Department of Credit Councils to insure itself against any losses caused by loan defaulters: a specific provision for this purpose will be embodied in the Bill which will be tabled in the NSA on April 22 by the Minister of Finance—CDM. When the academic year commences on May 5, the Jaffna Campus of the University of Sri Lanka will consider the take-over of a number of private buildings to accommodate the new students from outside Jaffna district—CDM. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture will supply tractors worth Rs. 6 million to cultivation committees to help out cultivators in the dry zone—CDN. The Teachers Union of the Engineering Faculty of the University's Peradeniya Campus has protested against proposed transfer of the Faculty's staff and

equipment to the Katubedda Campus—CO. The State Gem Corporation will soon open two branches in Hong Kong and Switzerland—CO. The US Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. William M. Simon, will arrive in Sri Lanka on April 21 on a two-day visit—CO. Trade Minister, Mr. T. B. Langaratne, will this evening formally open the 266-room Hotel Lanka Oberoi—the largest hotel in the island—TOC. The British Government yesterday imposed steep new taxes on the luxuries of life from cigarettes and drinks to fur coats and jewellery in an effort to cut a yawning deficit in the nation's treasury accounts: the increases were announced in the budget for the 1975-76 financial year. US Defence Secretary told Congress yesterday that a North Vietnamese takeover of South Vietnam might result in the execution of nearly a million South Vietnamese.

THURSDAY, APRIL 17: Members of the Association of Government Medical Specialists who were on a go-slow will resume their normal work from today—CDM. Sri Lanka police along with India and Pakistan police will draw up a blue print for a co-ordinated plan of action against types of criminal activity which are having serious repercussions on the economies of the developing countries: this is an assignment by Interpol—CDN. Agency houses in Colombo sought the Labour Commissioner's approval to lay off employees following the take over of some sterling company estates by the Government under the Estates (Control of Transfer and Acquisition) Act early this month: according to one leading agency house which has issued quit notices on 25 employees including five executives they are redundant labour after the take over of five of their estates—CDN. The Ceylon-New Zealand Conference has announced a two-stage general freight increase amounting to 25 per cent to be imposed within the next few months—TOC. The Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, spending a quiet birthday in Colombo has sent a message of good wishes to Prince Norodom Sihanouk on learning about the fall of Phnom Penh to liberation forces—CO. According to the results released by the University of Sri Lanka around 3,500 students have gained entry to the various faculties of the University on the results of the G.C.E. Advanced Level examination—CDN. Phnom Penh fell today to Khmer Rouge troops who seized key points in the Cambodian capital as embattled government troops surrendered. Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, a former President of India, died yesterday in Madras at the age of 86. North Korean President Kim Il Sung will visit Peking on Friday on his first visit to China since 1961. American civilians are being flown out of Saigon at an accelerated rate that would leave fewer than 1000 in South Vietnam by the beginning of next week.

FRIDAY, APRIL 18: A private members' motion signed by all MPs of the Opposition requests the Government to reduce the land ceiling to five acres because "the fiftyacre limit under the Land Reform Law is harmful to the economic development of the country" the motion on this issue is listed for discussion on April 23—CDN. In reply to the Prime Minister's New Year message to the nation, the leader of the Opposition, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, in an official statement has said that it is heartening to note that the Prime Minister had accepted the sovereignty of the people by cate-

gorically stating that the Parliament will be dissolved in 1977 and general elections held in that year: Mr. Jayewardene has also said that this is exactly what the Opposition wants the Government to do in 1975—CDN & CDM. All May Day processions and rallies of various political parties and trade unions will be allowed by the Government—TOC. The Ministry of Public Administration, Local Government, Home Affairs and Justice has informed all Government Agents except the Government Agent of Colombo that this year Republican Day will be celebrated on a austere note—TOC. The Aid Sri Lanka Group which met in Paris has shown keen interest in stage II of the Mahaweli project and according to Secretary to the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs this is an indication of financial aid by the Group—CO. Shipments of flour from Australia, US and the Continent are expected in Colombo next week—CO. The Senate Armed Services Committee yesterday rejected attempts by President Ford to get more military aid for South Vietnam, virtually killing chances of Congress providing any extra arms assistance: but in the House of Representatives, the International Relations Committee approved 327 million dollars in humanitarian aid, including funds to evacuate Americans and some South Vietnamese. China has congratulated Prince Sihanouk on the complete liberation of Cambodia.

SATURDAY, APRIL 19: The *Daily News* has carried a correction to its yesterday's story about the Opposition's motion on land ceiling: this motion which is listed for discussion on April 23 which is a Private Members' Day is to be moved by Mr. Prins Gunasekera, independent MP for Habaraduwa, and not by all Opposition members—CDN. On her way and back from the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting later this month the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, will pay goodwill visits to Iraq and Guyana: the Commonwealth meeting in Kingston, Jamaica, is scheduled for April 29 to May 6—CDN. Following an appeal made by certain members of the Government Parliamentary Group that the increase in the limit from 75,000 to 90,000 persons should not be disadvantageous to the rural voters because of the increase in the number of registered citizens: the Prime Minister has appointed two Ministers for each district to look into this matter more carefully: the deadline for making representations to the Delimitation Committee has been extended to April 30—CDM. Letters were exchanged between the Shipping Minister and the Chinese Ambassador yesterday which provide for exemption from income tax and any other form of taxes on freight earnings by the vessels of Sri Lanka and China in the ports of China and Sri Lanka respectively: this has been done as a further measure of promoting successful joint Shipping Service between the two countries—CDM. A further aid up to 5 million dollars has been pledged by Britain to Sri Lanka over her commitment last year: last year's commitment was 3 million pounds to finance essential supplies—CDN. Prince Sihanouk has stated that Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan, who led the liberation forces into Phnom Penh would hold administrative power in the new Cambodian Government. PRG forces were engaged in fierce battle only six miles from Saigon. President Ford said yesterday that the United States views the loss of Cambodia to communist liber-

ation with sadness and compassion. Mao Tse-tung and Kim Il Sung had talks in China.

SUNDAY APRIL 20: At the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference beginning in Jamaica on April 29 the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, will make a series of proposals for Commonwealth action on problem of the brain drain: A Sri Lanka 'position paper' has already been sent to the Commonwealth heads of government and a separate item on the agenda has been set apart for this discussion—CO. Just before leaving for the eighth annual general meeting of the Asian Development Bank beginning in Manila this week the Minister of Finance, Dr. N. M. Perera, accused the U.N.P. for the dearth of fertilisers in the country: he said that a fertiliser plant which would have cost Sri Lanka 25 million US dollars in 1964 would now cost 100 million US dollars because the UNP Government "slept over it for five years and did nothing": according to the Minister had the UNP started it this country could have been self sufficient in fertiliser—ST. A spate of inquiries have been received by the Ministry of Shipping and Tourism regarding the plans to make Trinco malee a safe haven for tying up big tankers and other ships driven off the international sea-ways by the energy crisis and a general shipping recession—CO. According to the Chairman of the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation, seismic surveys are conducted right round the island in search of oil—CO. During the New Year season the Sri Lanka Sugar Corporation has earned Rs. 1 million by liquor sales—CO. According to military sources communist forces have captured the port city of Phan Thiet, the last Government stronghold on the central coast 100 miles east of Saigon. Prince Nordom Sihanouk said he would only be a figurehead of the new Cambodian Government and real power would be in the hands of his Deputy Prime Minister, Khieu Samphan. The Indian Government has agreed to a proposal from the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam to set up a permanent mission in New Delhi.

MONDAY, APRIL 21: The Commonwealth Secretary General, Mr. Arnold Smith, in his latest report to the Commonwealth Heads of Government has described the widening gap in living standards between industrialised and developing nations as "neither decent nor sane": Sri Lanka will be represented by the Prime Minister Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, at this conference which will be held in Jamaica from April 29 to May 6—CDN & CDM. The Minister of Finance, Dr. N. M. Perera, has brought to the notice of the Government the heavy withdrawals made from the funds lying in the Central Bank to the credit of PL 480 during the past few months: Dr. Perera has observed that earlier the monthly drawings from these funds had been between Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 80,000 but in March this year the amount drawn had been about one million rupees while in April it had increased to one and half million rupees—CDM. As a part of a passive protest the TUF will be holding public meetings, protest meetings, processions and prayer meetings on May 21 the day proceeding the Republic Day: it was decided to confine this protest only to the northern and eastern provinces—CDN. Though only 3,493 students were admitted to the University this year 15,446 students have obtained marks eligible for admission—CO. The Prime Minister has

appealed to the Army to lend more support to the Government's food drive—CO. Mr. William E. Simon, US Secretary to the Treasury, and Mrs. Simon arrived in the island this morning—CO. Over a hundred foreign companies operating in the country are falling in line with the Government policy of incorporating them selves under the Companies (Special Provisions) Law: June 1 has been set as the dead line for the incorporation—TOC. US marines will be used to protect helicopters

ferrying Americans and their Vietnamese dependants out of Saigon. Liberation forces kept up their drive on Saigon advancing further down the coast towards the provincial capital of Ham Tan and edging closer to Bien Hoa Airbase 18 miles from the capital. Holland is coming under increasingly powerful left wing pressure to pull the country out of NATO and ban key American tactical nuclear weapons on Dutch soil.

MALDIVIAN MYSTERY—4

Something About The Background

A Tribune Analysis

IN THE LAST THREE ARTICLES, the manner in which the so-called coup on March 6/7 in which the Prime Minister Ahmed Zaki was deposed and banished was handled by the daily papers in Colombo, was examined together with an interpretative slant contained in the news despatches sent by the local correspondents of foreign newspapers. It was seen that there was an active and influential pro-Zaki group operating in Colombo which had put across different slants to explain the event—to win as much sympathy for Zaki as possible.

At first it was suggested that it was India that had been responsible for the coup, then it was made out that the CIA had done the job, and finally it was conceded that it might have been an indigenous affair where reactionary elements had ganged up to remove a progressive Premier. So far as Sri Lanka was concerned none of these theories were examined in detail by any of the local daily papers but the effusive cordiality towards the Maldives, which had manifested itself in the columns of these papers immediately after good relations had been established with Ahmed Zaki, disappeared completely. The removal of Zaki had, it was seen, made a section of the local press turn sour towards the Maldives and a spate of stories about the smuggling activities based on the Maldives appeared on the front pages of certain papers under banner headlines.

Apart from this, there was one article in the Daily News on March 14 by A. B. Mendis which attempted to give some kind of

general background to the Maldives. It was a descriptive article based on two trips made by the writer to the Maldives, first in the late fifties when the RAF had opened their station there, and second less than a year back, when the Hululle landing strip was opened. No attempt was made in this article to provide a political analysis, but much of what he says provides information of political significance. The heading sounded lofty and comprehensive: BACKGROUND TO THE MALDIVES.

THE FIRST POINT, Mendis made was that the "calm" which was supposed to prevail in the Maldives even after the ousting of Zaki, was understandable in view of kind of people the Maldivians were. His story of his visits makes interesting reading:

The news report which spoke about the 'Maldivian incident' also stated that there was calm in the islands. This is no surprise because the Maldivians are not equipped for battle. They are essentially a peaceful people whose main concern is to bring boatloads of the balaya fish and convert it into Maldivian fish for the palates of the Ceylones. My picture of these peaceful islands is still fresh after two visits to Male, (the capital city island), Gan and Hululle, and a bird's eye view of some of the other islands or atolls. At the time I went there as a "Daily News" representative, once on the invitation of the RAF, and again on the invitation of the Maldivian Government and the Sri Lanka Ministry of Communications, there was not a single gun on the islands and I am told that there are still no firearms there for any purpose other than for ceremonial use. A few weeks before our second visit (which was in connection with the inauguration of the Hululle airstrip, a present to the Republic from Sri Lanka), there had been an uprising: the weapons used, we were told, were sticks, stones

and bottles exchanged by warriors who came by outrigger.

When Mendis first went to the Maldives, the population was said to be around 90,000. Now it is said to be 135,000. But he has some interesting remarks and comments about Maldivian women—and it must be remembered that in 1975 a woman had come forward (with the backing of the Nasir-Sattar-Alimanicku oligarchy) to contest Zaki for the post of Prime Minister.

..Maldivian women observed a kind of purdah behind coconut cadjan screens when strangers were about the place. I remember now when we approached a community well around which were about 30 women, each one holding a 6 foot long stick to one end of which was stuck a tin to draw the water. At the sight of us, they disappeared behind the closest cadjan screen. Later we were conducted to a hastily improvised cottage industries centre where 25 to 30 damsels were giving a demonstration in various home industries of the islands for our benefit. But it was a dumb-show. We stood by and watched with a kind of pretended seriousness while the demonstrators went about their work. Heads cast down. Not once did they favour us with a glance....

Mendis was surprised about the way in which the women folk were guarded. It is not likely that matters had improved in 1975 in spite of a woman Prime Ministerial candidate.

We realised how the Maldivians guarded their women folk when, after quenching our thirst at the oasis of the RAF bar in the desert island of Gan, some of us wandered round to explore the islands and, perhaps to strike a bargain on Maldivian fish. As we walked we felt that some one was watching us: yes as hundred yards away was a Maldivian adult, CID fashion, keeping a watch on our movements. When we asked the RAF man in our company whether

Maldivian Mystery

he knew the man, he said "that is big brother watching over you—and their women folk". We visited a few cottages, but their occupants made short work with us by saying that there was no Maldivian fish for sale. We had, however, learned that there were ample stocks in each cottage because the curing season was just on....

Mendis writes about the welcome they had received at the island when they had gone at the invitation of the RAF.

..When we arrived by rowboat on Male, the entire island was there to meet us, except the Sultan the most important personality of the islands. The Sultan later gave a reception to the Minister of State who was in our group; and the journalists, too, were admitted to the two-storeyed bungalow. He spoke to the Minister through an interpreter. Male was a compact little island. It was cut in four by four pathways of pebbles which met at a central spot. When one stood at the centre, he could view the whole island. Male, at the time, had no guest house, hotel, modern school or hospital. It has all these amenities now and the Maldivian Republic has depended on Sri Lanka to man these institutions. The Ceylonese are also training Maldivians to take control of management in time. The Capital City-island had a radio receiving and transmission station, and a four page cyclostyled newspaper. The days are long, and often arduous in the islands. When the corals and sand-stones are heated by the noonday sun, the Maldivian guides told us, they could "touch the heat in the air with their hands." Life was made drab by the fact that there was very little information about the outside world. The women cooled themselves during the heat of the day by swinging from hammocks which dropped from trees. They waited till the men returned from trips to Colombo to listen to traveller's tales which were spiced by the returning men as all travellers do. When the fishing boats returned, the fishermen spoke about their exploit. at sea.

Mendis recorded the fact that it was RAF money that had brought a new prosperity to the Maldives, the money the Maldivian government got from the British for leasing Gan and also the money which came in by the presence of the

RAF pushed the Maldives into the twentieth century (with its mixed blessings and sorrows):

With the establishment of the RAF staging post on Gan island and the British naval base, money came into the islands. The administration made good use of it—building schools, hospitals and tourist facilities. As a result, the tourist trade is flourishing in the islands. The credit for much of this goes to the Sri Lanka Air Force and Air Ceylon.

Mendis feels happy as a Sri Lankan that this country had been able to help Maldives develop her tourism—but it was a two-way trade in which Sri Lanka had earned much needed foreign exchange. Furthermore, a number of Sri Lankans had obtained lucrative employment—on remuneration much higher than they would get in Ceylon—in the Maldives.

Mendis, after the last trip, had discovered that the Maldives had leap-frogged in a big way into tourism. Today it is in a position to offer a major challenge as a competitor to Sri Lanka herself, especially if the Maldives ties up with the Indian tourist industry. And with the allergic inhibitions and snootiness many of our top brass have developed towards Maldivians who do not want to accept Sri Lankan big brotherliness, the Male-Cochin or very soon (Tuticorin) sea connection and the Hullule—Trivandran air connection (maybe even Hullule-Bombay) will make (unless Sri Lanka wakes up without being overcome by grandiose notions of having the Maldives under a Sinhala non-aligned umbrella), the Colombo-Male connection thing of the past. A returning American tourist told me that a holiday-maker would find it difficult to find another resort like the Maldives. There was sufficient food and drink. There were many facilities for enjoying the sun and sand, and water. Being away from the beaten track, there was quiet and isolation. For the average holiday maker, the islands were the ideal place for a short holiday.

The Maldives have much more to offer tourists who want a quiet holiday than Ceylon can ever hope to provide at the present juncture. There are quiet islands and beaches where tourists can enjoy the sea and the sun without being pestered

with touts, pimps, peeping toms beggars (most of them respectable) and currency racketeers. They can also be free from the awful sights and sounds of Sri Lanka lost in foreign exchange crisis—no cheese, no foreign liquor, no nothing—and have the kind of holiday they want. Sri Lanka could have long ago joined the Maldives in joint ventures in tourism, but our doctrinaire political theories, our bureaucratic high-mindedness (red tape) and our overbearing attitude of patronising arrogance (intellectual and otherwise stemming from a belief in our infallibility in all matters economic, political and cultural) had made it impossible for us to up with simple-minded profit-desiring Maldivians like the Nasirs, the Sattars, the Alimanickus, the Didis and others to enter into joint ventures to develop tourism. Some of us are so committed to state enterprises that we dissipate all our energies in wishfully wanting a near-socialist regime in the Maldives before starting any joint ventures. Others among us regard the Maldivians as unsophisticated country cousins of some kind with whom one cannot enter into arrangements on the basis of equality. And above all, all of us want to remove the mote in the eyes of Maldivian businessmen without being concerned with the beam in our own eyes which makes our vision on all matters cock-eyed and jaundiced.

Mendis records that the change which has come over the Maldives is real and significant as he harks back nostalgically to a past that is no more.

All this shows how far the Maldives have come from their traditional isolation. I remember, before the islands became a republic, what a colourful day it was in the Fort when the Maldivian sailing boats descended on the port of Colombo with their tribute to the British-raj at Queen's House. Men clad in colourful costumes walked in procession while the citizens of Colombo watched. A few hours later there would be dozens of Maldivian vendors offering 'daguru' Bondi-aluwa and other Maldivian delicacies.

Unfortunately, as Tribune as so often stressed in the last one year, there has been no realistic evaluation about the socio-economic chan

ges in the Maldives and the impact they have had on men and matters in that country. On the other hand, our desire to help fashion a non-aligned socialist state there and our willingness to be exploited by designing individuals who are smart enough to use idiom and jargon we think infallible hallmarks of progressivism has ruined, at least for the moment, any possibility of Sri Lanka establishing a purposeful relationship with the Maldives which can lead to joint economic ventures and greater economic co-operation.

In the concluding article next week, the prevailing theory among certain circles in Colombo that the Maldivians are only an ethnic and cultural extension of the Sinhalas will be examined.

K A Z I — 4

Milking Cows: Wanni Cameos

By ANATORY BUKOBA

February 27,

ON A COCONUT ESTATE—2. On this estate, teak grows like a weed in places, and an expert on furniture said that if the teak here grows that fast, there is a greater proportion of pulp to hard wood than there is usual in teak. The Concise Oxford Dictionary offers us the information that pulpy wood is used in paper-making. I had thought that wood was made into pulp for paper-making, but, of course, certain types of trees must make better pulp. The tops of large teak trees have masses of seed in the season, and the lighter-coloured panopy, or hood, or umbrella, of these seeds, on the tree, are a pleasing and pleasant contrast to the not-so-light colour of the leaves. Dead teak leaves on the ground make the scant grass even more so. They are so much a hindrance to grazing as fallen coconut leaves can be. Teak provides good shade for cattle, and it was a particular favourite with one old Friesian cross-bred cow.

There are some cadju trees which seem to have been self-sown;

not many, as their seed does not germinate easily like teak, and like wood apple in other places. Even Jak is not self-sowing, or not much. Nor is *madhu* of which there is a tree or two on this estate. Some people insist on saying that the *madhu* is a big tree. I would not know. Cotton does not germinate easily. There may be more than one type of cotton tree, but the one that grows on this place is the giant *kotton* with its prickly bark. Every pod of cotton contains hundreds of seed. As I was walking along a road in another place, on the other side of the village, I heard a thud behind me. It was the seed of the *lunumidella* tree. It is best known for its wood for ceilings. It is not well known that it makes excellent light wood for clinker racing boats, when it is used with *halmilla* ribs. *Lunumidella* has a long grain, a forestry expert told me. *Halmilla* because, of its peculiar strain of another type, is useful for angular shapes.

Fallen coconut trees can give you the complete material for building a house; I should rather say it gives you three basic constituents of a house. Stripped of its pulp, and then used entire, it provides *kamu*, the upright posts of a house. The *kamu split* into two or three, gives you *yata lea*, the beams of a house split into three or four, it gives you the *parala*, the rafters on which to rest your cadjans. Cadjans are made of coconut leaves, split down the middle after being scaled and each half woven into a cadjan, they are used in pairs on a roof, and usually singly on the walls. You do not need string or rope to tie cadjans on to the rafters: you can use fresh coconut leaves singly, but heated over a fire first to make it more malleable and less likely to break. On estates, the walls of houses are usually of mud and-wattle, and the estate bungalow of brick. Tiles on a low roof makes the house too warm or hot; they can only be used on a very high roof.

The milk dropped suddenly because of a change of milking hands. Cows do not give their milk to someone they do not know, if that man is inexperienced. Like houses with their riders, they know if the milker is experienced or not. In our country, when using tradi-

tional methods, a sudden drop like this, because of bad milking, can be made up later, because the cows suckle their calves until they go dry, and so, providing the cow is not too heavy a milker, the calf does the stripping the milker failed to do. On this stripping depends the cow keeping up her highest possible yield. A cow would soon go dry if she was not milked, as happens in the case of some cows who lose their calves, as some Ceylon-bred cows will not let down their milk if they lose their calf. So, where the calf does the stripping, it is not difficult for a milker to bring up a cow's yield again, the calf getting less milk. With the high cost of feeding stuffs today, a dairy farmer, who has stuck to the old island tradition of letting a cow suckle its calf in addition to being milked, has good reason to thank his lucky stars. A calf of course, can be bucket-fed on cows milk, but to my mind it is rather pointless if the calf is getting only cow's milk; but bucket feeding is invaluable where it is a case of a calf losing its mother. Many of our milking hands, a hand is a farm worker, milk with one hand only, the other holding the bucket; nor do they use stools as a rule, the traditional three lagged milking stool, for they squat on their haunches when milking a cow. The cow suckles the calf for about half-a-minute before the milking starts, or she will not let down her milk. While the milking goes on, the calf is tied up by the cow's head.

Life on a coconut estate can be compared to that in the south of England, the deep gulf the separates the farmer from his hands, or to use the old English word *hind*, the farm servants. Life in the Wanni on the other hand, is more like that in the north of England, and more so in the country of Cumberland. Farmer and servant, there, lead a common life most of the time. There they eat together, which they never do in the south of England. This means that it is not easy to write about life on a coconut estate, and an account of an estate becomes more like a text-book on farming, leaving out all the human elements. A woman writing about farm life in Kenya, before the first world war, overcame this, and she managed to write

Coconut Estate & Rajangane

about her African farm-hands not as if they were servants. I have just looked for the book, and it is the *Flame Trees of Thika* by Elspeth Huxley. This may be because the African has the temperament of a Cumbrian; independent. I think our Ceylonese have it, too, especially those, I am speaking of, the poorer people, those our well-to-do politicians delight to call the masses, who have not been in contact with the western side of life; live cheek by jowl with it in the same house. Life is probably beginning to change on coconut Estates.

Jeremiah writes: *Cursed in the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, whose heart turns away from the Lord. He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.*

He goes on; *Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.*

The trust that Jeremiah speaks about is like a fear: we trust one man because we fear another, and the rich, I think fear the poor, and they do not trust God enough to take the poor to their heart. So, one man was clothed in purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day. A poor man, full of sores, desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table, moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. They both died and were buried. The rich man was told, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and the poor man, in like manner, evil things, but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish, in this flame.

In the old days, the farm worker, the estate cooly, had a much smaller wage than he does now, yet he was more content because he had more. Now he has much less of essentials, because their cost has risen out of proportion to his rise in pay. He knows it too.

March 2,

IN THE RAJANGANE AREA—2
There will, I believe, be no water

from the main Rajangane Tank this year because of the drought. Government is giving relief work to couples to the extent of Rs. 70/- per month, sixteen days' work for men, ten days for women, the work finishing at noon or earlier, about four hours work each day. The men are paid at the rate of Rs 3/- a day and the women Rs. 2/25. The odd fifty cents, I was told, is not paid, or the sum would come out to Rs. 70/50. I am personally not aware of many people taking advantage of the scheme, but there are other areas, I believe, where they do.

Games are not something that I have been played much here. It has just occurred to me that it may be because people are ordinarily too busy. Yet one does not expect to see people, who are reputed to be on the verge of starvation, to play games. Now what I saw was during the hottest part of the day, on a very hot day, out where there was no shade, in grilling heat, in short. One young man wore a vest, another shirt, and the rest were barebodied; some I knew, and I had never seen them handle a ball before, and here they were, more than six-a-side, I should think, playing volleyball, and they had been at it some hours, I would say. They were all lean, I did not notice muscular bodies, but strong they were by repute and by the nature of their work, and they were intent on their game and playing it well. So much for the starving Wannai. The English cockney, by the reason of the travails of his life, for which he has developed his own brand of humour to see him through it, is reputed to be about the best type of English fighting soldier. I would say that our lads would prove to be no less if only they were given a chance. That chance will depend on whether they get the right type of leadership. It was with this in view that I went to see Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* at the Rio, but I am afraid I came away confirmed in the impression that the less one sees of films these days the better. The following day I saw the same author's *Hamlet*. The diction in this was as good as the other was bad, but that was all. I have yet to see an Englishman who can read Shakespeare as he

should be read. Shakespeare is straight talk, and they all dramatize it so, in a way that I believe no Elizabethian did speak. The fact that it is verse should make no difference; it should make reading Shakespeare's plays easier. All this is a long way from volleyball, but I hope the reader of this will see some connection.

There was a house I visited. Some sections of the walls were of mud-and-wattle, but none of it, if I remember correctly, finished to the top. In the front, cadjans made a section of the wall. This was matched by a wooden doorway on the end of the same front wall and the boards were up. At the back, one section of the wall was not even there. So, I walked straight in without any difficulty. There was a fine fireplace, a *boorwa antha*, camp-bed, lying askew, and open, and, by its appearance, making it obvious that the room had not been used for some time. I had been warned of this. What was very interesting was that the house had a kitchen knife, a betel knife, among other things, there, with the room wide open, at the back at least and the house right by the road. If it had been any other's house any other house, these would have been removed long ago; stolen. This reminded me of a similar situation in England, where I lived with a family, every one of whose members went to work. I concluded, leaving the front door unlocked, and nothing of this well-furnished house was ever lost. I was taught a lesson of another sort after I just left school, and when I was waiting to be called up for my army training. We went to a holiday camp on a farm to help with the harvest during war time. The school ran the camp, a school I had not been at for years. The boys, my contemporaries, taught, me a lesson. One day I came back from the fields to find my suitcase missing. I did not appreciate the joke, but I found my suitcase hidden in the long grass not far away. The joke, such as it was, was explained to me, and I did not, after that, lock my suitcase. So imagine my surprise, many years later, when I returned to Ceylon and found that undergraduates locked their rooms.

The point about the house, that inspired all this last paragraph,

was that its occupier, a lad, had left. A brother of his I was told came one day and took him away. He had made a brave attempt to stay. He had planted some cannas and they were still there. There were plantain trees in the garden, and a young coconut tree, coming on, that he could not have planted himself. He had lived in this area a long time, but he had only recently moved over to this house. He told me he had paid a sum of money for it and the land, but a neighbour told me this was not so. If he had, he would have been following the usual practice. Somebody clears some land. He builds a house. He has no title deeds to the property, but one way he decides that the life is too much for him, and he goes if he can and a buyer. The newcomer takes over knowing full well that the government can turn him off if it wishes. What he has paid for is really the work that has gone into clearing the land and putting up a building, and also for whatever cultivation there is still to show.

As regards crown land, people, I think, much prefer the policy of the present government to that of the previous one. It has something to do with the Production war, they feel more secure in the tenure of the land that they have cleared. The previous government, if I remember correctly, was always uttering threats even if it was in no position to carry them out, and each threat was dutifully played up in the newspapers. There is none of that nonsense now. It is the same with the C.T.B. We feel somebody now when we travel on that service. It was not so before 1970, or was it 1971?

BUILDING A VILLAGE HOUSE—30

Hallelujah! I'm a Bum

By Herbert Keuneman

IT WAS I think, during the Depression of the early 1930s that the song that opened so began to be sung; in the United States.

'Hallelujah! I'm a bum. (BUM!)

Hallelujah! (BUM! again)

Hallelujah! Give us a handout
To protect us from the rain!

Clearly there is the expression of a certain wry bravado in the bitter words with their cock-eyed military-march metre and their bass-drum crash, so that one recognizes and salutes the consciously ironical suspension of the luxury Self-respect by which alone a people that had hitherto prided itself upon its right and ability to earn, now, in circumstances none of them could control and few even understand, contrived to accept instead the right and necessity to beg. 'I'm a bum! (BUM!) Hallelujah!

One wishes one could trace some such rebelliousness of spirit, however vestigial, amongst us 'under developed nations' in our maintenance—grant the necessity—of our 'right' to beg.

When (for example) a bonus—a gratuity, a goodwill gift merited in an employer's judgement by the quality of an employee's work—becomes a handout to be demanded by all his employees regardless of merit, it can be argued that a principle not only of moral but of *morale* has come to be at stake.

I am well aware that this question of 'bonuses' is done with. I am well aware that many employers misused the custom, rewarding favourites and stool-pigeons. I am well aware that any gain the worker could win at the time the back of the bonus dispute was broken was probably a deserved gain. But if it was, in fact, going to result in a universally distributed Seasonable Allowance, it should have been fought for as such and the bonus principle and its name explicitly repudiated.

This is NOT the pedantic or over-moralistic splitting of a hair: it is a single example of an irresponsible political attitude of mind

which can become so preoccupied with an immediate and specific social good that it ignores completely any long-term psychological effects upon national self-respect and self-reliance. Because it was not made clear that, once the payment involved was established as a workers' right, the employer—(right or wrong) to grant it as a *bonus* was DIS-established, there was implied—and accepted—the demoralizing doctrine that there is nothing to be ashamed of in demanding a gift at pistol-point. And because, for years now, politicians have mortgaged the future to some claptrap benefit that would assure The Vote, the nation has come to leave to the State not only all initiative but also whatever commitment should follow, whether effort or expense.

WHEN MY WIFE and I first came to Ehetuwewa, the terrible floods of December 1957 when tanks breached up and down Bintenne and the Vanni cutting swathes of utter destruction wherever the unspent water madly ran, were still a vivid memory amongst the villagers, who had saved their own tank (swollen to the critical point by the bursting of several tanks above it, and the consequent uncontrollable overflow) by cold-bloodedly breaching their own bund where the outrush would do least damage: into the tank's own spillway, already overloaded though that was. That seems to have been about the last communal project the village calculatedly undertook—they were risking at least a year's crops, seeing the damage that the rain had done to the already standing one—and concerted carried out. To be sure, not much labour was required—a few mammoty strokes and the imprisoned flood leapt forth, carving its own way—but, at least, the Labour was done and nobody thought of compensation for what ever he had put in.

Shortly after we arrived, the tank—and, one would think, the village—were again in trouble. A phenomenal season of wind during a not very high water level had induced a wave action that had fretted and scooped the root of the bund into a stretch of caverns so deep and continuous that we continually expected the tarred bus road that ran above, on the

FOR NEWS

BEHIND THE NEWS

read

TRIBUNE

regularly

bund's crown, to collapse, and maybe the loaded bus go with it. The weakness in the bund lay just above the *gammandiya*, the homestead part of the village, and when the tank was full to spilling the water would stand twenty feet high above the little houses where they huddled in their small fertile compounds which the earth moist from the water pressing over them sustained. If the bund ever breached here, absolutely everything would go: homes, grain-stores, livestock, and the fields that swept away beyond.

When, therefore, the next North-east Monsoon approached I ventured to urge my friends in the village to take steps to protect themselves by blocking those threatening hollows before the rising water made them inaccessible. They said yes, something really should be done. But who should do it? I offered to supply the gunny bags I could afford to, then—if the villagers would fill them with soil and stuff the gaps with them. Instead, they sent a petition to the Government department involved (I do not remember which it was at the time) and another petition the year after and, the year after that—when they had spent a Monsoon season of terror while the tank swelled to exceptional proportions and the spray from boisterous little waves left puddles on the very roadway—they sent four petitions, by telegram, (to, I think, the Director of Irrigation, the Government Agent, the Minister of Agriculture, and their Member of Parliament who had once been a Minister of Finance). But when we left, the February following, nothing had been touched, for nothing could be touched unless the tank was drained. I think it was not in that Dry Season but the Dry Season after that a repair was carried out. It was carried out by the State; and that, of course, was what they had been staking everything for: whatever the anxiety or risk they would not do for themselves what Government might be impertuned into doing for them, it might establish a precedent. No precedent is more jealously supported by today's Ceylonese than the right to collect benefits from the Welfare State. All is serendipity.

WHO BUILT most of the Vanni thousands of village tanks? No governments. But whose business is it to see that the tanks, even in emergency, remain in order? Not the villagers! What, then, has changed an ancient and effectual habit of pride and self-resource into an unnatural indulgence of eleemosynary opportunism? Don't answer: some Big Brother jealous of the catchpenny 'benefit' he has promoted, together with himself! may be listening.

Somebody thought up the admirable notion of *shramadana*; somebody balanced it by thinking up a way to vitiate the salutary discipline of 'voluntary effort' by promising to those who actually made the effort: regardless of how it stultified the very principle—selfish incentives in the form of free handouts of flour and *parippu*, sugar and powdered milk; then, to complete the corruption, somebody came up with the idea of calling for more voluntary effort, and therefore fatter benefits! from particular politically preferred villages. (I speak of actual happenings). Galkadawala, though fairly solidly SLEP, is for some reason not such a village; and Pinhamy, for instance, ended up with—of sugar—1 oz. for his household of 11.

It is thinking of Pinhamy and his apparent absence of enthusiasm for the well whose sinking I was describing last week that has brought me to this week's complaint. I have a feeling he just lost interest in it, having decided that I and not he was going to be the chief beneficiary, that he was going to have virtually to do *shramadana* on the job, and that if that were the case the rewards were simply not commensurate with the work he should have to put in. So, especially when the well went bad on him, as I related, he opted out.

Poor Pinhamy! From the beginning of this series he has appeared so often as an incarnation of one or the other Deadly Sin that he must appear to a reader uncritical of my judgements to be a most inestimable man! Actually this is thoroughly unfair. My judgements of him—I realize it while I make them—are captious and tend to ignore the context in which, ideally, they should be made. The fact is Pin-

hamy displays many of the rather pinched village virtues—the more pinched today—and especially he has often been generous to me according to his lights. Nevertheless, I think something of this sort that follows is what happened concerning our well.....

Although Pinhamy had not been required to expend money upon it—and, mind you, he could find money for a cause or a speculation he believed in: for example, last year he twice paid for a tractor, at the new hire of Rs. 125 per acre, to have his three acres of dry field ploughed, in the hope (both times disappointed) of reaping a rice harvest from the *yala* rains which never came; for another example, three of his children have sat for the "O" Level' five and four times and twice respectively, at Rs. 35 each per go, in order to secure a 'full pass', and this year all three have entered again, obviously forlorn though the enterprise must appear—I fear that he judged the well a luxury designed, as I say, primarily to benefit me.

That is fair enough. He has himself afforded me several benefits, and it would be unreasonable at this juncture (with every crop failing, and barely enough water left in the village tank to wash oneself clean) to ask for super-erogatory kind deeds.

But it is disconcerting—it is disconcerting to the point of being frightening—that apparently he has not yet recognized the well as a benefit to himself. He must surely be aware that I need it very little—at best it will save his own daughter-in-law labour—whereas, if it is going to fertilise so much as the acre of his allotment within which my house stands, if it is going to allow him the cultivation of a mere patch or two of sweet potato or manioc (both impossible in this soil without water) or of sorghum or cow-pea or pumpkin (all dependent upon sufficient water at least to initiate their growth) or any kind of substantial 'staple' with which to outface the ineluctable shortage which—despite newspapers and radio and all other over-optimistic media—looms before this entire area, a well will prove to him a boon beyond reckoning?

I do not believe he is aware. I do not believe half-a-dozen farmers in this grimly menaced region are aware. They are, of course, aware that sometime soon they will run short of rice. But, though many are already grumbling that wheat flour is an unsatisfactory substitute—they can do, they say, with a certain amount of bread, but wheat-flour roti, wheat-flour pittu stick in their throats—they are confident a State handout of some kind will see them through; there is little or none of the strong and purposeful activity directed towards arming themselves against the menace of the future. This people who until the 1930s had fought almost unaided against poverty, sickness and famine and have now won through to 'welfare'!

Is it not a lamentable thing, for any crass benevolent or shrewd ulteriority, to have transformed a hardy, resolute and co-operative people into an ignominious congeries of self-centred panhandlers?

① ②
EIGHT POUNDS A WEEK—2

Non-Rice Cereals

— processing them for the table —

by R. Kahawita

IN OUR FIRST ARTICLE we came to the conclusion that four pounds of rice per week per person is a promise that could be fulfilled; bulk of the rice being grown under more progressive Agricultural and Land Policies than what it is now. Our suggestion was to supply the balance four pounds promised, in other cereals, partly grown in the country such as kurakkan, thanahal meneric and Amu, two pounds of above cereals according to consumer preferences and two pounds a week per person in imported wheat flour or "American flour."

On the same basis of evaluating quantities of rice required per annum to maintain the issue of 4 lbs per week, the Government need to import 485,000 tons of American flour and produce 485,000 tons of other cereals locally—though we are aware that this kind of equat-

ing substitute food grains is not correct. However the error is to our advantage.

Taking the imported quantum of substitute, viz wheat or American flour, currently Sri Lanka has received 94,000 tons of "Pimpitty" from the European Economic Community, Australia, United Nations, Sweden, France, West Germany and Italy. All these countries are very frequently attacked, criticised, names called by us because of their economic structure and political systems; but they are the only countries, in spite of our slandering them who give material expression to their feelings towards the developing countries, who are concerned with suffering of the peoples of poor countries and are ever ready to offer assistance and aid to those developing or under developed countries.

We on our part do not seem to do anything to help ourselves but use the aid to change overnight our traditionally established social, cultural and economic patterns of life to aggravate our misery and to set up the road socialist prosperity. Those who have followed this road are no better than ourselves so they cannot offer any help to us in our dire need. Guided or prompted by these same countries our leaders attempt to indoctrinate the people to be anti this, anti that of the countries who help us, but while carrying on this kind of anti propaganda we stretch a begging hand for food.

This is how we were able to stave off starvation during the National New Year festivities. In spite of them being abused like pick-pockets yet they disburse charity. It may be their social consciousness and obligation "indoctrinated" in them by their religion or it may be due to higher human values they eschew in their traditional culture. Whatever the reason may be, they practice what their religion preaches. 'If your enemy hits you on one cheek, turn to him your other cheek never raise your hand in anger against him.'

At the moment we are witnessing a very inhuman scene in Viet-

nam and Cambodia. Millions are starving, innocent people are being mutilated and maimed for life, their way of life and their livelihood are being destroyed—thousands are rendered homeless, many children are rendered orphans, many many more are fleeing for fear of repression and mass shooting when a new order is established after the holocaust for what reason the people themselves do not know, except the mercenaries who hope to be paid for the murder, pillage and destruction they have been engaged to do.

IN THE MIDST of this carnage some countries rush to recognize the new regime and establish diplomatic relations with the forces that wrought the destruction—these countries do not know what form law and order will take after the freedoms of the people are destroyed and a new regime is set up. What these countries recognize no one knows except their recognition condones the destruction, murder, infliction of untold misery on innocent men, women, and children, but what of their suffering, they do not care two hoots for them. They must be the first to recognise the Political philosophy that motivated the destruction of established system.

And those who stood against it are labelled re-actionaries. In contrast to those countries who rush to condone the carnage inflicted on a people, there are the other countries in the other camp who are motivated to spend their money and men on humanitarian grounds, to save the people from suffering and treat them as human beings. They organize relief schemes, medical care, supply of foods and clothing find homes for orphans in their own country, and perform many acts on humanitarian grounds. They do this at tremendous risk and expenses, while the supporters of the "new Regime" watch and compliment them for the destruction done. These other countries in the other camp can also recognise destroying forces, say well done boys and sit tight instead of risking everything they have, deny their own people their due share of a good Government or force them to make sacrifices to help a suffering people they have not seen or known anything about them.

Sacrifices follow charity and it is this charity that has motivated the countries to come to the aid of suffering humanity. And it is this very same motivation that Sri Lanka was able to get a gift of 94,000 tons of flour. Big Question is Do we deserve it?

In addition to this gift the Generous Americans have given another 94,000 tons under their P.L. 480. Thus we have got 188,000 tons against our annual requirement of 485,000 tons, to meet, the current critical situation to keep our people happy and belly full "This month of April being the festive season of Sinhala New Year" as one of our Honourable ministers announced. So whatever the party in Power we can always expect some "Christian charity" to provide the people with two pounds of American flour. All that we got to do is to stretch the begging hand a little longer. So the offer has been made with the tongue in the cheek. How long can we go begging around for our food? Begging will go on as the flour we get now under the P.L. 480 has to be paid in rupees over a period—we understand spread over 30 years after the period of grace is over. That is to say that you and I will not be paying for it, and on this road to a socialist Shangrila we will be increasing this commitment yearly—no one could not keep on marching to this Shangrila and at the same time produce our food. It is one or the other.

Therefore it will be our children who will pay them to keep your stomach and mine full. We have mortgaged the future of our children and their children. There is no way of forecasting what they will have to do to pay for what you and I have eaten "to save our country from foreign domination." This is what our Politicians say when they beg and borrow for food. This is socialism and We must sacrifice the future of our children to get on to the high road to a socialist State. On the march there are no bus stops, except to beg. The two pounds of the rations in flour is no problem as long as there is christian charity among the capitalist countries.

THE THIRD PART of the ration is in cereals that can be grown locally and our people are used to eat. Kurakkan was the staple food of about 60% of our population in the early thirties and beyond. It is a very nutritious and wholesome food which our brethren substitute cereals from the North realised long ago and the only people in Sri Lanka who grow it under irrigation. In addition there are other cereals grown in our dry zone in a small scale they are: Meneri, thanahal, Amu and irrungu. The production of these cereals should be about 485,000 tons to meet the other part of the challenge.

Can we produce this?

Here again our equation is not correct and we have no serious programme for the production of these cereals, nor have we a research programme to develop high yielding varieties; except for some very useful research and development work done at Maha Illuppalam Research Station when New Zealand was dumping money there for research work: there is nothing done today in this field, even the work done then has fallen back and the officers who produced very good results then cannot be located.

The whole Institution has fallen back once the "aid programme" was stopped. This is the kind of programming we have experienced right down the line in food production. What one Political party does the Party that comes into power next destroys: And then we stretch a begging hand all over the world

As things are, it is extremely difficult to work out any scheme of production of these cereals as there is no data or information available. These crops can be grown as a dry season crop after the main maha paddy crop, in certain areas utilising the residual water in tanks. This is a crop rotations suggested under the Mahaweli Development scheme. In other areas it is grown as a highland maha crop, should be an item in the highland cultivation programmes in the colonisation schemes. If a target of 600,000 crop acres a year can be achieved then the needs of the distribution scheme can be met. When the diet is diversified it does not mean that 2 lbs. of rice should be substituted with 2 lbs.

of other cereals or American flour. Due to variations in food values and needs of the human body, substitutes cannot be equated quantity wise. It has to be equated quality wise and food value wise. When this is done requirement of cereals and American flour are much less than my theoretical figures used to analyse the practicability or otherwise of the challenge.

The growing of substitute cereals is not a problem. The problem is the processing of the grain like Kurakkan Amu, and Thanahal. Any village House-wife will tell you that processing is difficult and that is why it does not find a place in their daily Menu. This has discouraged the growing of it much more than any other factor.

To encourage the growing of it and place it as a regular item on the menu, research and experimentation have to be undertaken by a Government. The processes involved are threshing, husking, cleaning, removal of grit and other foreign matter and finally converting into flour and packeting it to be on the grocer's shelf. If all this can be done and is done as in the case of wheat flour and available to the average housewife at a competitive price like wheat flour, then these cereals can become a regular item in the diet of the people.

If we can keep politics and party rivalry out of it and move forward as one people, one country, the realisation of the challenge is near at hand. That is to say the challenge can be met not by one political party but by any leader who places interest of the People of Sri Lanka and the Country above all wranglings for Power and popularity to stay in power for their benefit at any cost and say—go to hell with the people who placed him or her in a position of power hoping for a better deal.

Nation before Party is what we need to win our freedom from the "Begging Bowl" and any Political leader can achieve it if Policies and their implementation are based on "Country and her people first: all other after."

* *

Inania of this, that and the other

Safeguards Adequate

BY INNA

A Singapore paper, the *Straits Times*, once carried the following news item:

"Six Arab sheikhs went to Paris and ordered 20 luxury flats valued at (S) \$ 21,76,000,000 (about 10 million US dollars). Then to the West country of London and bought an estate and safari park valued at £ 1,000,000 (5.44 million S(\$)) and solid gold tea-services and flats. The Arabs wish to keep the rich nations, their customers, prosperous. Malidi Al Tajer—United Arab Emirates 'Ambassador to GB bought a 20.7% share in the giant property empire of Richard Costain, and the Park Tower Hotel was acquired by Abu Dhabi government. Saudi Arabian businessmen secured over 1,000,000 shares of company stock in two months; spent £ 4,000,000 for 100 Concorde in 67 days..." (*Straits Times*, 23 March '75, page 20)

ONE DAY the Sri Lanka papers had a similar news item, factual, stark, un-commented; the *Time* magazine also carried similar, but slanted material. It is strange that no one bothers when certain people spend their own and other peoples' money, but if it is someone they hate, then even the little spent is made to look big, the capital letters come up in the world's scapital presses and the margin between truth and falsehood gets blurred.

No one would accuse the Singapore government of being guilty of such things: no one would fling mud at the *Straits Times* reporting, but in the process, it is good to take stock of our attitudes towards the OPEC countries, emerging from Third World oblivion to First world opulence. May be the religious thrust that belongs to these regions, where the benign Muhammad's warnings and the Merciful Allah's injunctions hold sway, will somehow tell these people that the Qur'an always

opts for the poor, the distressed, the widow and the orphan.

These are timeless reminders of an insistence on Sympathy rather than Tea, on Justice rather than Jute. Is there a single Western country that has given 1% of its GNP as Aid? Haven't the Middle East countries, at least some of them done it earlier and far better than others? Comparisons are odious. True. But it is not persons but situations that are herein compared, and every judgement carries with it a contrast or comparison inevitable, not belaboured.

If all this new-own affluence would percolate down to the poorest of the poor in these countries, how grand would it be? If the gold tea-services would provide meditation for those who look at the contents (the tea), at the back-breaking work that went into the highly competitive tea, then, they would, in the cool of their air-conditioned drawing rooms, not only think of the Underground streams of paradise, but will also be led to an evaluation of man, seven-times tried by fire as gold in the furnace, man who is born of a clot of blood, Viceroy of Allah.

And the three great monotheistic religions, says H. V. Morton, began in the loneliness of the desert, under the vast expanse of day and the limitless horizons of the night. Judaism, Islam, Christianity. May be the nostalgia is there, undefeatable. Surah 43 will remind us always: the trays of gold are in the immortal Garden (ayet 70-71)

LETTER

Complexities And Perplexities of Modern Education

Sir,

There have been in the recent past considerable correspondence in the press relating to Higher Education in Sri Lanka, and the latest news reveal that 48,432 candidates (33,526 from schools and 14,906 private) are taking up the GCE-A level in April this year, as against 41,405 last year, and about 800,000

are to sit in December next for the GCE-O-level and NCGE which is to replace the GCE-O-level. These are definitely startling figures, not only for the candidates, but for their parents and educational authorities as well.

We are getting used to discussing our food problem from the world level and it is therefore high time that for the peace of mind of all concerned, we take this education problem too in that level. As one who subscribes to the view, "There is only one Earth and it is the home of all mankind"

I keep myself in touch with all developments relating to the progress of humanity. In the course of these studies, I have come to realize the fact that difficulties and handicaps in the fields of population and higher education are not peculiar to India and Sri Lanka as many people suppose. It is global, developed as well as developing countries facing the same crisis.

Let me in the first instance quote some interesting and instructive facts and figures from an article by Ralph Townley, Director of the United Nations World Population Conference held in Bucharest last August, written for the *Journal of World Education* (Huntington, New York, USA):—

"Student enrollment rose faster in the generation after the Second World War than ever before in history. From 1950 to 1960 school and university students increased by 102 million; during the next eight years the rise was even swifter, from 325 million to over 460 million—an increase of 135 million, or more than the corresponding rate of increase of the school-age population, and 135 per cent higher than the rate of world demographic increase."

"But this remarkable progress is tempered by two facts. First, the total number of children not enrolled in schools increased by 165 million (30 million more than those added to school enrollment). Secondly, the breakdown of the world total of those going to school shows much less progress in the developing countries. And, disturbingly, recent enrollment statistics show a general slowing of expansion. Population growth, however, has not slowed down, and if present trends continue to the end of this century, every year

would witness the addition of 17 million children who could not hope to have what the world has recognised as a necessary, and increasingly essential, human right..

"This vast and building pressure of numbers has two main implications for education. One is quantitative: educational facilities must expand even faster than they have during the last two decades. The other is qualitative: the concepts, methods and aims of education must change if we are to remain abreast not only of demographic growth but also explosive growth of knowledge. When planning for education we are not only aiming at a moving target; we are aiming also from a moving platform. So much new information is available every year that the traditional ideas of education are too static to meet our needs. Increasingly, there is need to orient educational systems not so much at teaching specific bits of information, as at creating the attitude and capacity to acquire and use information."

"If population growth, has major implications for education, education likewise has a significant influence on population dynamics. It is the educational system (or lack thereof) in the world's rural areas which fosters the ideas and values that send millions to cities..

"We face a time when the need for cultivated intellects will be great. Now, and in the future, a little learning may prove not only dangerous but positively disastrous."

The last para remind us of H. G. Well's statement that "Human history is more and more a race between education and catastrophes" and warns us that his words are going to be prophetic!

Exactly ten years ago, the British Government faced this crisis and formed a binary policy according to which higher education was divided into two sectors, autonomous universities on the one hand and on the other local authority maintained Colleges. In April 1965, Mr. Anthony Crosland, the Secretary of State for Education and Science, made the following bold declaration at the Woolwich Polytechnic:

"Let us now move away from our snobbish, caste-ridden, hierarchical obsession with University status."

The policy proclaimed in these fifteen forthright words, gave birth to polytechnics, a year later. Speaking at Lancaster University in 1961, the same Minister said: "We want not a monopoly situation in higher education, but a variety of institutions, under different control. A unitary system would surely imply an omniscience which we do not possess." Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, (the present leader of opposition), extended full support to the above binary policy when she was Secretary of State for Education in the Heath Government. In all recent speeches Messrs. Wilson and Prentice have reiterated the Government's commitments to build up a strong polytechnic Sector in higher education. To sum up, there is almost unanimity in 1975 in what seemed a radical departure from the traditional pattern ten years ago. However, it is rightly recognized that the support for the polytechnics should, by no means, imply any hostility to the universities which have suffered a great deal from inflation and austerity in recent past.

From the perplexing problems of one of the most advanced countries in regard to higher education, let us have a glimpse of the situation in one of the most back-ward areas. We mean the Arab countries where the education methods were till recently on the old traditional patterns. Like the cathedral schools in Italy and the Privena institutions in our own land, most of the Arab lands had only the Quoran schools where everybody was taught to learn the Islamic scripture by heart. Egypt was the first state to have private and foreign schools where primary and college education in the modern science had its success. Lebanon copied this example. During the French mandate, attempts were made in Syria to introduce the French system. It did not stay long, for with Independence, an Arab curriculum was introduced. Under the Covenant of Arab Unity signed in 1964, the aim of education was proclaimed as:

"The creation of generation of Arabs, believing in God, loyal to the Arab home-land, confident in themselves, and in their nation, aware of their responsibility to their nation and humanity..armed with science and morals so as

to share in the advancement of Arab Society.."

With the new oil wealth, great strides have been made, but higher education still has a long way to go. In certain states, secularisation based almost wholly in European experience and theories is also attempted. However, spectacular progress in education is seen with the Petro-dollars flowing in. For instance, there were only 700 pupils in the seven Trucial States in 1953 but in two decades the figure has shot up to 37,000, and is expected to reach 60,000 before the close of 1975. Kuwait with a total population of 883,000 has nearly 120,000 in primary schools, Colleges and its University. Half of this school population are girls, many of whom can aspire to reach the University level. Unlike India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Burma, these newly advancing countries have still the chance to avoid our errors and excesses, and thus save themselves from the impending dangers indicated earlier.

K. Ramachandra

Jayanthipura,
Talangama,
27th March, 1975.

CITY OF COLOMBO

Slum Conditions and the Poor

BY JEPHARIS

THE CONDITION OF THE POOR and the slum conditions of the city of Colombo, though they compare favourably with many another eastern city, still leave much to be desired. Though we say "compare favourably" because they are not as bad as conditions obtaining in, say, Calcutta, that city of extremes of wealth and poverty, or Shanghai, or even Tokyo, with their teeming millions, and therefore more intensive problems poor housing, sanitation and pollution, we are not nearly as advanced or as hygienic as these ultra-modern Asian cities of New Delhi, Singapore, Manila, Taipei, Peking, Osaka, Karachi and Jakarta. For example, and could perhaps just about compare with the mediocre standards

of Bombay, Madras, Rangoon, Bangkok and Saigon.

However, as far as slum conditions, sanitation and the beggar menace go, we are certainly "more advanced", and have provided better amenities, e.g. drainage, lighting, etc., than in colonial times, though poverty, and lack of food, clothing, housing and employment is just as widely prevalent now, if not more so than ever before. Gigantic strides forward towards the elimination of poverty, the eradication of the beggar menace, and the solution of the housing and employment problems, were taken after 1956, when in that Buddha Jayanthi year, the great silent Socialist Revolution which swept the late SWRDB and his SLFP into power, ushered in a new era of peace, plenty and prosperity for all, and consolidated and made more real to the masses of this nation the gains made by the achieving of Political Independence in 1948.

We say that poverty is more widespread now than it was in colonial times, as with the closing of the gap between the rich and the poor, the rich have become poorer, being heavily taxed, and losing much of their lands, houses and wealth, and the poor have become richer with all the combined, concerted efforts of the administration enlisting in their favour, ensuring their equality of opportunity, and encouraging them to help themselves as proud, unbending members of a no longer servile race. This explains the phenomenon of a class of people emerging after 1956 who have identified themselves as the "nouve riches" (new rich). So as no one is now as rich as he may have been under British or even UNP rule, neither is anyone so abjectly poor. There are fewer beggars nowadays on the streets of the metropolis than might have been seen late in the British era, for instance. The rise of many a new charitable institution in the wake of Independence seems to have taken care of this problem quite adequately.

NEVERTHELESS, the fact that Sri Lanka has one of the highest birth-rates in the world (and advances in medicine and gynaecology have produced a correspondingly low death-rate) and the structures of its society

are such (still blatantly capitalist) that the "population explosion" must ever be one jump ahead of all attempts made by Government to combat the problems of food, housing and employment which such an "explosion" generates.

This explains why, although many of the old-fashioned, colonial-style rows of slums and "tenement gardens" have been replaced with modern flats, such as Mr. Premadasa's model housing estate at Maligawatta, Mr. Keuneman's schemes, and the Bambilapitiya, Thimbirigasyaya, Wanathamulla and several other flats: unauthorised shanties housing illegal and non-rate-or-rent-paying squatters have sprung up like toadstools, ostensibly overnight, on the banks of the Beira Lake (the North and South "Koreas" of Vauxhall Street, for example), on the borders of the Wellawatte-Kirillapone and Dehiwala canals, and other such unfavourable soils which encourage the growth of such unhygienic, insanitary, immoral and overcrowded eyesores.

It is true that a progressive Socialist Government has taken long overdue measures to "clean up the shanties" and "clear the streets" of Colombo, but where do the poor, displaced and dispossessed shanty-dwellers and pavement-hawkers go? Alternate accommodation is seldom or never found for them, and there are not enough surplus houses or ready-made vacant flats on hand to absorb all of this "surplus" population, although the pavement-hawkers, for one, were recently given permission to sell their wares in a certain public park, there by increasing the threat

of such close competition leading to strife amongst themselves, when they were all gathered together in one place, a kind of "open market" as it were.

Then there is the problem of our "floating population" who have no home to call their own, but who live a nomadic life, as vagrants, and whose roof at night is either the starry sky itself or the awning of railway station; their beds being the green grass, park benches, road pavements, or platform seats, IN MANY of our city slums, overcrowding is widely prevalent, and a scramble of ten, fifteen families around a single garden water-tap, or perhaps a couple of lavatories, is the order of the day, or should one say, a common sight in the early morning abluting hours, and even throughout the day. This problem has been alleviated to some extent by the provision of more taps and lavatories by the CMC, but there is still a great deal of room for improvement. Many of the tenements are in a sad state of disrepair, with leaking roofs, cracked or crumbling walls, and broken doors and and posts.

Besides the problem of overcrowded and dilapidated homes, the hygiene, sanitation and accumulation of refuse in these gardens, probably as a direct result of overcrowding, also leave much to be desired, although the Municipality has cleaned up a great deal in recent years, and the tenants themselves have shown a greater responsibility and civic sense in the matter. As regards lighting, the tendency as time went by the the old kerosene lanterns with alad-

VITAMIN C HELPS TO KEEP ARTERIES CLEAN

Hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis) which leads to heart attacks is a disease caused by Vitamin C deficiency, according to work done at the Pinderfields General Hospital in England. Dr. Constance Spittle of the hospital has found that Vitamin C keeps the arteries clean by preventing deposition of the fatty cholesterol. It also helps in transporting cholesterol from arteries to the liver, for conversion into bile acids. The conclusion is based on a trial carried out on 25 atherosclerotic patients. The trial showed that when Vitamin C is low, cholesterol in the blood moves to the heart, where it gets deposited in the arteries.

"By keeping the cholesterol moving in the right direction, by enhancing the metabolism of cholesterol once it is in the liver, and by maintaining the arterial walls in good repair, Vitamin C can keep arteries clean," it is claimed. For peoples with confirmed or suspected atherosclerosis. Dr. Spittle has recommended one gram of Vitamin C per day. For others half a gram a day is enough to keep their arteries clean—BIS

din and petromax lamps, which don't flicker so much, and later with electric lights, has certainly been a boon to all the occupants, none more so than the poor students who can now do their homework or study for examinations without risking the impairment of their eyesight. It also reduces the risk of the infants and old folk, or even anybody else, getting accidentally burnt.

To sum up, the conditions of the slums and the poor in the city of Colombo, though not yet "out of the woods", has improved a great deal when compared to what they were in the years since independence.

FROM LONDON

Lome Convention: From Paternalism to Co-operation

By Robert Macdonald

London,

The Lome Convention, signed in the capital of the west African state of Togo provides a new model for relations between the developed and developing world. Representatives of the European Community and 46 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries put their names to the Convention which, in the words of Britain's Overseas Development Minister, Mrs. Judith Hart, "replaces paternalism with co-operation". It is a trade and aid agreement which could have far-reaching effects on the economies of many ACP countries, helping stabilise the price they get for their products on the European market and thus enabling them to plan their development more confidently than ever before.

The Lome Convention has many advantages over the old Yaounde and Arusha Agreements which preceded it as trade and aid conventions, and linked a smaller number of developing countries in association with the Community. Avoiding the word "association", which was thought to imply an unequal relationship between EEC and the developing world, it also avoids the

danger of creating an exclusive club of developing countries linked with the Community in a way which could cause resentment among outsiders.

IT ENDS THE PRACTICE, disliked by the United States and other governments, of granting EEC exports preference in the markets of the former Yaounde associates—the system of "reverse preferences". What the Convention does do is give the ACP countries duty-free entry for all industrial products into the EEC market, without requiring these reverse preferences in return. The only reciprocal requirement is "most favoured nation" status, which means that the ACPs are to give EEC exports no less favourable treatment than they give to third countries. (The developing countries can however be granted better terms of access).

It provides generous arrangements for their agricultural exports to the Community. There will be free access to all ACP farm goods that do not compete directly with what EEC farmers produce. For those that do compete (16 per cent of the value of the ACP's total farm exports) the barriers will be lower than for third countries. It provides financial compensation for steep commodity-trading losses—a major innovation in relations between the developed and developing world. If prices of certain commodities on which the ACP's depend for export income fall below a defined point, they can draw foreign exchange from an export stabilisation fund ("Stabex"). The terms are more generous for the relatively disadvantaged countries of the ACP group.

It also gives the ACP countries industrial development assistance, in the form of help with industrial programmes, projects and schemes, promotion of their products in foreign markets, measures to transfer technology and industrial skills and access to industrial training programmes in the EEC countries. For their part the ACP countries have given an assurance that EEC companies will be able to invest there on terms no worse than those available to others, and that they will be welcome provided they take account of national investment plans. THE CONVENTION provides aid from the European Development Fund (EDF) totalling, together with the Stabex, about £ 1,600 million,

and loans of £ 200 million on soft terms from the European Investment Bank (EIB). The EDF element equals a fifth of United States aid to all parts of the world and is additional to any aid the separate EEC countries may decide to give.

Britain sees the Convention as a considerable step forward in the renegotiation of the terms of British membership of the European Community. It embodies generous terms of access for commodities from many Commonwealth countries, to the benefit of their economies and of Britain's domestic food bill.

Separate protocols annexed to the Convention are especially important in this context. One provides that beef from the ACP countries—particularly beef from Botswana Swaziland and Kenya—will not be subject to any general EEC ban on imports. Other protocols on bananas and rum are particularly favourable to West Indian producers, while the most important protocol concerns the import of ACP cane sugar into the Community.

The Yaounde Convention mainly concerned Francophone Africa and although the Arusha Agreement brought a number of Commonwealth countries into relationship with the EEC the Lome Convention goes much further. The agreement signed on 28 February extends the Community's horizons in the developing world and helps remove fears that the nine EEC partners are simply creating "a rich man's club." It will run for five years and may provide a springboard for even greater future co-operation between the industrialised and developing worlds.

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IS IT TRUE?

Sherlock Holmes

• Our Mountain of Butter

IS IT NOT A FACT that the new Chairman of the Milk Board has more than a Herculean task in getting some kind of order into the place? That the affairs of the Board are in a worse plight than the proverbial Augean stables? That though it may be unfair to refer to the affairs of the Board before the new Chairman has got fully into the saddle, it is necessary to bring into focus at least one of the more glaring defaults of the Board? That two newspapers which have paid special attention to the affairs of the Board are the *Times of Ceylon* and the *Aththa*? That the *(UNP) Journal* has also taken a swipe at the Milk Board whenever it felt inclined to do so? That, at one time, *Tribune* had paid a great deal of attention to the Milk Board but that it had given up the Milk Board as a lost cause? That the exposures of grave shortcomings, coupled with pointed criticisms, slid over the back of the Board like water off a duck's back? That finally the Government's premier daily, on 13/3/75, the *Daily News*, had solar-plexus shot at the Milk Board? That in a frontpage story by a reporter, Latheef Farook, it was pointed out that 200,000 pounds of butter had piled up? "The National Milk Board has come up against serious consumer resistance in the marketing of one of its major products, butter. A stock of nearly 200,000 lbs. has not been moving for several weeks following the price hike to Rs. 8.40 per lb. and the board is now looking for extra storage space. Board sources told the *Daily News* that housewives throughout the country considered butter a luxury beyond their means. There was also a considerable quantity of imported butter being marketed at an even higher price at most city stores."

That the report then went on to explain the steps taken by the

Board to see that the butter stocks were properly conserved until the consuming public were in a mood to purchase the butter even at the reduced price of the Board? The *Daily News* understands that the Board has made arrangements to lease a section of the deep freeze facilities available at the Fisheries Harbour in Galle to store the unsold stocks pending a decision. Board sources told the *Daily News* that one answer to the problem would be to make use of the Board's surplus fat for the production of condensed milk. The marketing of the Board's butter has been a perennial problem, caused at times by production shortages and at others by the price factor. Local butter enjoyed an unprecedented demand during the first quarter of 1972 due to a wide price disparity between this butter (then Rs. 2.50 a lb.) and the imported variety (then Rs. 5.60 a lb.). According to the Board's report for 1972 the first price increase was imposed at that stage due to the heavy demand and the limited quantity available. The Board faced distribution problems and on instructions from the Government, production was stopped from the third week of March that year. In early May production was resumed as an import substitution measure. A few months later the price of imported butter went up to 6.60 per lb. According to available figures of consumption, average monthly sales before the price hike in 1971 was 53,250 lbs. Consumption dropped to 9964 a month soon after the price hike in 1972. Now according to board sources the movement of stocks has dropped to almost zero."

That the *Aththa* in a stirring story on 28/4/75 reverted to the sad story about local butter? That the *Aththa* reported that nearly

150,000 lbs. of butter belonging to the Milk Board had started "to rot" in various stores of the Board? That unable to sell this large quantity the butter was now stored in the Board's warehouses at Kurunegala, Galle, Kandy and Colombo? That out of this quantity of 150,000 lbs., 60,000 lbs were piled up in the Marketing Department Store in Kurunegala for the last five months? That the Milk Board paid the Marketing Department a rent of one cent per one pound per month? That another stock of 70,000 lbs. was lying at the Galle Fisheries Corporation's cold rooms and for this the monthly storage charges were two and half cents on every pound? That all this butter has accumulated unsold when the Board pushed up the price from Rs. 2.50 a lb. to Rs. 8.40 a lb.? That this upward hike was done in stages? That the ambition of the Board was to push up the price of its butter to a little below the price of the imported butter (on which 65% FEECs was paid)? That recently the Board has tried every sales' gimmick possible to sell this butter? That a commission of 15% was offered to special selling agents? That several news sales agents who had bought the butter returned the stocks posthaste because it was found to be rancid and spoilt? That now an effort was being made find out why the Board's butter has gone bad? That the Board's laboratories have been entrusted with the job of finding out whether the mistake was in the manufacture or in the storing? That it is whispered in the corridors of the Board that the Advisory Committee had suggested that the reason for the poor sales of the Board's butter was due to the import of butter? That the Board has now urged the Government that in future import licences for butter should be granted only with the concurrence of the Board? That licences should be granted only to traders who will buy an equal quantity of local butter? That this will only lead to a further increase in the price of imported butter because the trader has to make up the losses on the local butter? That it will be a crime against the consuming public to compel them to buy and use bad local butter?