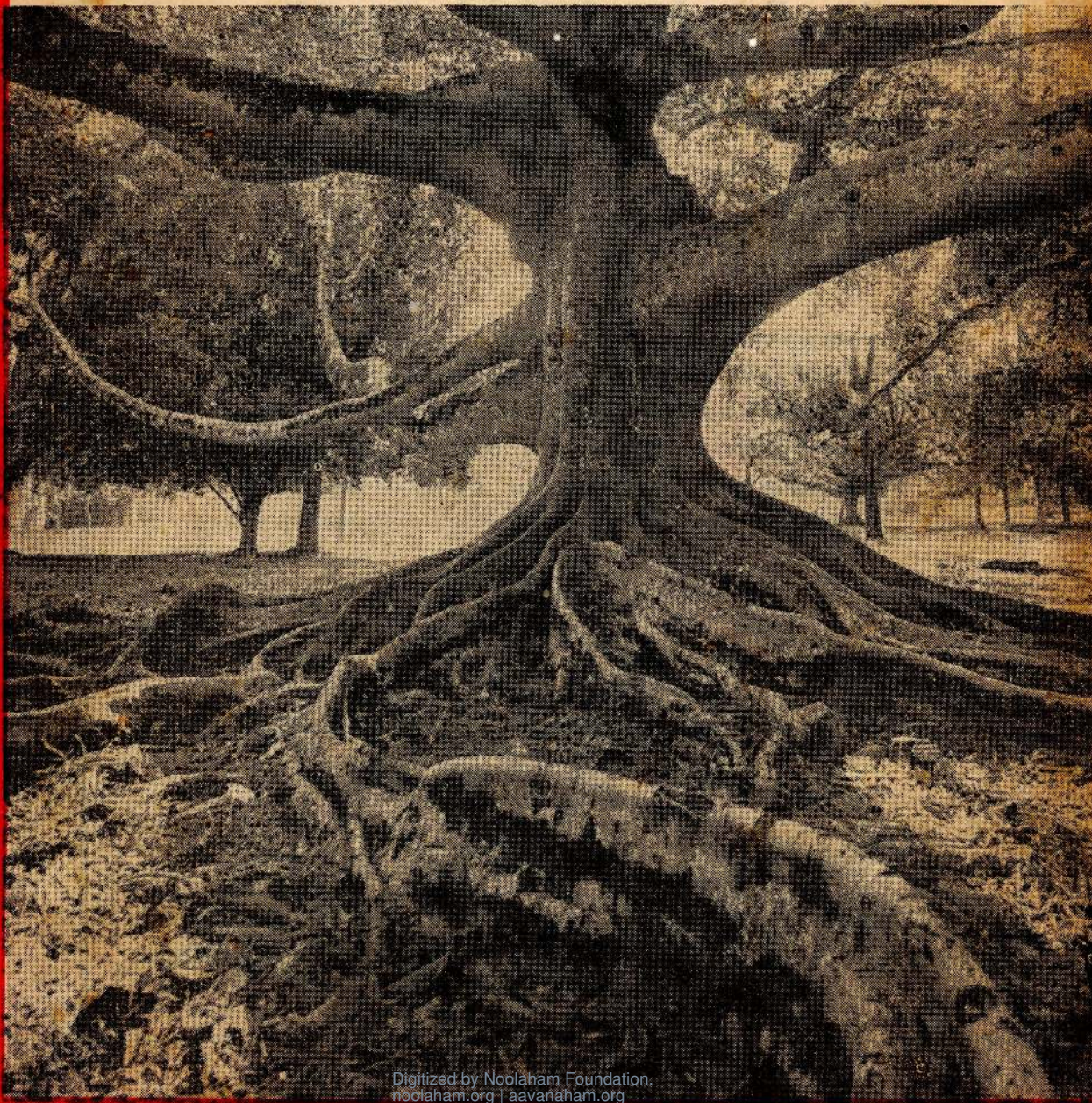


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Letter From The Editor

ON THE COVER, this week, we have a fascinating, beautiful and yet complicated pattern of the lower reaches of a tree. It does not matter to what species the tree belongs—a tree-lover tells us that it is of the many varieties of the *ficus*, the species among which are counted the *Bo* and the *Banyan*—but what the picture portrays seems symbolic of many things at the moment. For one, all those who have the latest Budget on the mind will see in this spreading multi-branched heavy-bottomed tree something of the kind of budgets this country has been saddled with for many years now—complex, complicated and tortuously intricate making it difficult for anyone to know what the priorities are (whether they rested on this branch or that). Though symbolic of the Budget—which is no different this year so far as the common man is concerned but a little more straightforward for the discerning and the knowledgeable—in this note we are chiefly concerned with the Tree, as such, and readers are invited to look for our preliminary comments on the latest budget elsewhere in this issue. THE TREE, as in so many other countries, has become an important issue in this country, because man in his greed, in his lack of perceptive vision and his total disregard for the future, has started cutting down trees and forests, indiscriminately and unnecessarily, and is thereby causing ecological unbalance enough to make future life impossible in the denuded areas. From time to time, in the past, *Tribune* has commented on the wanton vandalism that has been shown in cutting down trees all over the island, in towns, in villages, in tourist resorts (like Nuwara Eliya), everywhere for that matter. In this issue, we want to focus attention on an organisation about which the thinking public should know. Its basic name is RUK REKAGANNO in Sinhala. It is not easy to translate this. It was at first translated as THE TREE PROTECTION SOCIETY, but some of its sponsors seem to prefer, the plain and simple THE TREE SOCIETY. *Rekaganno* is a compositive word—when a hen watches over, protects and sits over its eggs, and hatches the young, it is *rekaganno*—and this Society not only wants to protect the trees from destruction but also generate new planting. If some enthusiast of the English language can find or coin an appropriate word, the sponsors of THE TREE SOCIETY will be thrilled with delight. Similarly, they are in search of an adequate translation in Tamil—a Tamil name for the Society. There is need for universal support for this Society which was formed only recently for the protection and propagation of trees. Some people have been tempted to dismiss the Society as the last refuge of sentimental tree-lovers who become hysterical at the fall of every tree. There are others who think that “protection” of trees was not in the best interests of agriculture and the food drive. But, WHY TREES? Trees prevent soil erosion. The canopy of leaves and the fallen leaves act as a barrier against the battering action of rain on bare soil. They also protect erosion by wind. Trees further shade the soil from the sun and prevent drying up of the moisture in it thereby protecting springs which feed rivers and tanks without which there could be no cultivation. Erosion is also prevented by the millions of roots and rootlets which bind the soil together. Trees purify the air by the production of oxygen in the leaves. Trees furthermore absorb and give out moisture and therefore constitute a vital link in the water or rain cycle—and this helps to keep the air cool and healthy. In the nodules of the roots of trees live the bacteria which convert nitrogen into nitrates and nitrites and are a vital link in the nitrogen cycle. In urban areas leafy trees are an effective sound and dust barrier. Trees give shelter to birds and insects which help to regenerate the forest. They support each other and in turn support man, for the soil is enriched by the decaying leaves and also by the decomposing bodies of dead animals. Man needs a rich soil for his crop to bear well. Nature is such an intricate web of many interwoven cycles that it is impossible to separate (of land or sea) and air and water and soil and creatures—including man. Trees are a vital link in all these cycles. Trees, it will be seen, do not hinder agriculture, but trees and forests are essential for it. Those who know call forests “the foster mother of agriculture”. No real farmer will ever dream of felling forests in the hills above his cultivated area—as is being done now in so many places. We are already witnessing the disastrous consequences of felling trees on mountain sides—Nuwara Eliya, Ratnapura, Kalawana and Kurunegala, to name a few areas. Can we never learn from the experiences of others? Must we fold our arms and wait till it is too late? Some, at any rate, are not content to sit back and watch, and for this reason have formed RUK REKAGANNO.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

An SLFP Centrist Ideology?

FOR THE FIRST TIME in Ceylon, (rather in Sri Lanka), an Ex-Finance Minister had questioned in advance the competence of his successor to produce a Budget. A few days after the LSSP Ministers quit the United Front Government, early in September, Dr. N. M. Perera, speaking at a LSSP Rally at Hyde Park in Colombo, had proclaimed that there was no one in the SLFP who was capable of producing a Budget, at least before the day he had fixed as Budget Day, viz November 5. In fact, if one took newspaper reports seriously one would be forced to conclude that Dr. Perera had stated that he alone would be able to produce a Budget in the time available. What was even more intriguing was that Dr. N. M. Perera had also tabled questions in the NSA wanting to know whether the new Finance Minister had signed any letters of Intent with the IMF. And, this led many to think that Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike had bartered away Sri Lanka's integrity for a mess of IMF pottage.

Mr. Bandaranaike opened his Budget speech on November 5 with a most gracious reply to Dr. N. M. Perera.

I have at short notice, been called upon to present the Budget for 1976, in place of my Honourable Friend and former Cabinet colleague, Dr. N. M. Perera, who as it happens chose this date. His choice could have a symbolic meaning in the context of current politics in Sri Lanka; for, the 5th November according to Parliamentary traditions, is the date on which for the first time an unscrupulous and designing politician, working from the inside, was foiled in his attempt to seize power by explosive means! For me, his choice of a date has been a happy one—it is my birthday! And, the nicest present I could receive on this occasion would be to have all of you wish me "many happy returns" to an office which I held for 3 years, 15 years ago.

Preparing a budget within the time available has been made all the more challenging by the public speculations of my Honourable Friend, the Member for Yatiyantota who has said that no one other than he would be able to present the Budget. I

cannot help feeling that he was trying to make it impossible for me to do the very same things that he would have done, had he continued in office. Would I have no alternative but to sign the Letter of Intent with the IMF that had been negotiated last July, and which he was prepared to accept, provided he had what he considered to be necessary political make weights through nationalising of Company estates? Would I be forced to devalue the Rupee? Or, would I have no way out but to resort to the printing of currency notes, risking a massive inflation? Perhaps, he thought that because of a common experience which we shared of being the only two Ministers of Finance who have had to withdraw sensitive Budget proposals under Parliamentary pressure, to use his own words, I would have to become like him "an instrument not of easing but of heaping additional burdens on the people" in the quest for that elusive glimmer of "a distant dawn"!

But before we examine the Budget speech of the Finance Minister in some detail—this can be done only in three or four instalments—it is interesting to note that Dr. N. M. Perera published a signed article in the LSSP's English journal, *The Nation*, in its issue of October 31, entitled **FIRST OBSERVATIONS ON THE 1976 BUDGET**, commenting on Estimates tabled on October 28. For the Record, it is useful to reproduce this note:

A preliminary survey of the revenue estimates for 1976 discloses features that deserve some comment. There are a number of items on which the Minister of Finance has recognized sharp drops in income. The Business Turn-Over Tax on petrol, coal, rubber and plastic goods show an expected fall of Rs. 30 million. This is clearly a reflection on the recent increase on petrol price. There is also an anticipated drop of Rs. 7 millions on the tea tax. I believe this is an optimistic forecast. The drop would be much heavier because with the take-over of estates under the new Land Reform Law, the transition period would seriously affect both the quantity and the quality of tea that would be produced. It does not appear that the Finance Minister has paid enough attention to this aspect of the question. This same optimism is shown in the expected income from tea through the export taxes. Although the revenue from rubber and coconut oil shows a downward trend and the

Minister of Finance anticipates a reduction of Rs. 24 millions in rubber and Rs. 8 millions in coconut oil and also Rs. 14 millions in desiccated coconut, it would be incorrect and a false anticipation to assume an increase in income from the export duty on tea. There should be a substantial drop in income on this particular item. It stands to reason that if tea production comes down, the quantum that can be exported will be correspondingly reduced and the income from tea duty cannot but fall below expectations.

It is significant that the Minister envisages a drop of Rs. 58 millions from profits and dividends of state sponsored Corporations. This does not show that any effort is being made to put these Corporations on a viable footing. If a serious effort has been made to make these Corporations efficient and economically run there is no reason why there should be this enormous drop in the earning capacity of these Corporations. On the other hand, the Minister envisages a substantial increase in earnings from import duties through the Customs. According to the figures published in the estimates, there is an increase of Rs. 20 millions on duty on vegetable products. There is a similar increase of Rs. 20 millions of prepared food stuffs, spirits and beverages and an increase of Rs. 30 millions on chemical products, Rs. 15 millions on paper, 18 millions on the import of textiles and Rs. 20 millions on the import of base metals, Machinery and electrical equipment, will provide an increase of Rs. 15 millions, and Rs. 22 millions on the import of cars. This works out to nearly Rs. 150 millions increased revenue from customs duty. What is the basis for this revenue increase in 1976.

There can be one of two explanations. What is unlikely is that this presages an increase in import duty at least of certain articles. What is more likely is the alternative explanation. Imports into this country fall into two categories. Category A, which is free of FEECs and Category B, for which FEECs have to be paid whenever an article is imported. As a result in the fall of international prices of rice, flour and sugar, a bigger sum of money is available for the import of Category B articles. This would imply a bigger quantity of imported articles which would lead to higher duty from these imported items. This is further borne out by the fact that

he has included an increase of nearly Rs. 500 millions in income from FEECs in the year 1976. One is inclined to ask whether the benefits of the reduction in international prices of essential commodities like rice, flour and sugar should not be passed on to the consumer. It has to be remembered that this promise was given when prices were jacked up in response to the jump in the prices in the international market. The consumer expects the benefits of the reduced price being passed on to him in order to alleviate the hardships that they are now undergoing.

IT IS SIGNIFICANT that an LSSP leader has for the first time publicly stated that the quantity and quality of tea will suffer as a result of the Land Reform. This is one further proof to support Tribune's contention that Land Reform was politically motivated and not based on economic considerations.

It must be also pointed out that the LSSP, for some months before the split, had started a campaign that Mrs. Bandaranaike, under the influence of Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike (later nicknamed Satan), had begun to tilt to the USA and the money bags of the IMF and the IBRD. The preliminary barrage on this had started with an uproar about PL 480 counterpart funds. The LSSP had openly hinted that Mrs. Bandaranaike, Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike and other "reactionaries" were on the brink of selling the country to US and Western Capitalists.

Mr. Bandaranaike met these accusations squarely and in his Budget Speech stated:

My predecessor in his latest predictions has been claiming that when he left office he had also left behind Rs. 200 million with which he intended to give relief in the budget for 1976. All I can say is that this new discovery of his is in direct contrast to his earlier predictions of the hardships I would have to impose on the people either through devaluation or through recourse to the printing press I shall come to devaluation in a moment. My views on inflation can be summed up by saying that what is relevant is not the budget deficit as such which is financed by bank borrowing but the need to ensure that the overall limits set to money supply taking the Government and private sector together are

"safe" in the sense of not provoking an excessive rise in prices. I am far from being a believer in outright inflation which is simply a disguised form of taxation and fraught with dangerous consequences as Galbraith has recently said. "A country seeking inflation was like a woman of exceptional virtue deciding, after many adverse warnings of conscience and friends, to take a lover, only to discover that the lover was both unwilling and unable."

Perhaps the only inference that I can draw from all this as a lawyer is that my predecessor really did not know the true state of the finances of the country, expecting the worst when he left office. This made him think in terms of devaluation and the printing of currency notes. Could it be that with the open administration that I have run since I assumed office, he was able to discover information which might provoke me into a pre-budget debate? Mr. Speaker, before I dispose of the subject of devaluation let me draw the attention of the Honourable Members of this House to the existing dual exchange rate system, which was first introduced by the UNP Government in 1968. The most vociferous critic of the FEEC Scheme at the time it was introduced was none other than the former Minister of Finance, the Honourable Member for Yatiyantota. The speeches that he made on the floor of this House on that occasion and at the time when the Sri Lanka Rupee was explicitly devalued in 1967 reveal how strongly he was opposed to any form of devaluation, let it be partial or devaluation. He had such strong views on the subject that the re-examination of the FEEC Scheme with a view to abolishing it was included in the United Front Manifesto. Perhaps he publicly announced that I would have no alternative but to devalue our currency hoping that I would give him an opportunity to mobilise some political support. I must say straight-away that he will not have that opportunity. My own view is that issues such as this should be approached by weighing the pros and cons and not on the basis of political expediency.

I have often said on the floor of this House, that I do not propose to hide anything from the Members of this House in regard to major policy matters. After reading the Letters of Intent which my predecessor has sent to the IMF on various

occasions, I find that he found himself in a dilemma in so far as the subject of devaluation was concerned. He was not in a position to accept devaluation publicly, though he did not mind implicit devaluation which came about through—

(i) the increase of the FEEC rate from 55 per cent to 65 per cent.

(ii) the extension of the coverage of goods subject to FEECs and,

(iii) the linking of the Sri Lanka Rupee to the Pound Sterling, which was depreciating vis-a-vis other hard currencies.

Mr. Speaker, in 1971 the percentage of merchandise imports subject to FEECs in value terms was 49 per cent. In 1974 this proportion had increased to 56 per cent through the transfer of certain items of import to the FEEC category. The FEEC rate in 1971 was 55 per cent, as against the 65 per cent rate prevailing today. The official parity rate for the US dollar in 1971 was Rs. 5.95 as against Rs. 7.50 which is more or less the rate prevailing now. It may be interesting for Hon. Members of this House to know that between 1971 and now, the implicit devaluation of the Sri Lanka Rupee consequent upon these changes is as much as 25 per cent. This rate compares with the explicit devaluation of 20 per cent made by the UNP Government in 1976. Whether explicit or implicit the end results of devaluation are just as painful or as advantageous as the case may be depending on how you look at it. What my Hon. Friend was trying to achieve, though he never publicly told us this was, to use his own words, which I have taken from the Letter of Intent he sent to the IMF on April 16, 1974 to progressively nationalise the exchange system, with a view to the establishment of a realistic exchange rate.

After stating this, Mr. Bandaranaike went on to set out, in ideological terms (for the first time in such an integrated manner), a philosophy for the SLFP, but taking great care to treat The Thoughts of SWRD Bandaranaike as the front and source of his wisdom.

My purpose in this Budget is not to follow doctrinaire theory, but to achieve practical results before the General Elections in 1977, so far as that is possible in the eighteen months available. In doing so, I shall, seek to act in keeping with

the hopes and aspirations of our people, and in keeping with the economic philosophy underlying the democratic socialist principles of the late Prime Minister, Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike. With him it was an article of faith that political freedom would be meaningless without economic liberation. He rejected the theory that the solution to the problems of economic class barriers lay in giving the rich and privileged classes licence and opportunity to become richer on the premise that when the rich become richer, prosperity will trickle down to those less fortunate—the classic theory of the UNP. Mr. Bandaranaike also rejected the theory that economic class distinctions in our society must inevitably lead to class warfare—a theory to which some members of this Assembly who are prone to Marxist slogans sometimes lean.

Every action of the late Prime Minister shows that he firmly believed that the true solution lay in the narrowing of the gap between the economically privileged and underprivileged in our society, not in a spirit of hatred or confrontation, but through the regulation of the role each through social changes and the better distribution of the social product throughout society. He sought through the transfer of power and privilege to new classes in society such as school masters, ayurvedic physicians, workers and peasants through instruments such as agrarian reforms and new nationalised institutions to ensure a transformation of our society within the framework of a mixed economy. Every single step of the way that has been taken by Mrs. Bandaranaike's Governments after him, from the take-over of denominational schools to the recent Land Reform Legislation, are all instances of how she has led our country towards the attainment of economic freedom as a concomitant of political freedom, through this same peaceful process.

The policy of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party falls four-square within the framework outlined by our late Prime Minister. Its major political premise is that the commanding heights of the economy must come under the control and supervision of the State on an essentially pragmatic basis while at the same time preserving our national character and cultural values. It follows that those areas of activity which have, in terms of this philosophy passed into State hands, culminating most recently in

perhaps the most sweeping land reform conducted anywhere in the world under a democratic system, must be subject to a set of fiscal incentives and sanctions conducive to their productive maintenance. This means a complementary set of inducements to work and effort on the part of those entrusted with management of the State sector no less than inducements to direct participation involving the labour force of State enterprises.

It follows also that our policies must ensure adequate incentive to work, investment and risk taking in that part of the economy which is not directly State-controlled. The trouble with our so-called private sector—and I use the word 'so-called' advisedly—is that there is too much in it that is 'private' and much too little of it that can be called a 'sector'. The classic prototype of this was the absentee landlord of the coconut plantation who occasionally supplemented a secure rentier income by dabbling in essentially side-line forms of business activity, and for whom 'privacy' meant tax avoidance or evasion. The rest of the corporate mercantile sector was an adjunct of the plantation economy providing ancillary commercial and banking services.

When industrial development began to occur in the private sector in the Sixties, essentially as a result of import curbs imposed for balance of payments reasons, the rentier elements of the Ceylonese bourgeoisie did not display any special anxiety to participate in that process. Industrialisation was rather the result of merchants whose business was subject to import restrictions integrating backwards into producing domestically the sort of things which they previously used to import; and in part the result of the emergence of a new brand of indigenous home grown entrepreneur starting from humble beginnings but with capacities for taking risks and hard work. Within the interstices of all this activity was the middleman and certain professional class, who became rich by purveying their skills to help others to beat the system as it was.

All of these elements, the bourgeoisie of the ancient regime the nouveau riche entrepreneur and, the prosperous professional only constituted a threat to the concept of socialist democracy to the extent to which success breeds both bigness

and social irresponsibility. Whenever these characteristics were in evidence the regulatory power of the State had not shirked intervention and indeed nationalisation. None-the-less it is essential that the system contains some form of in-built mechanism to prevent the abuse that goes with the unhampered concentration of wealth in a few hands and help build a new sector of medium and small-scale enterprises and co-operatives, which lacks some of the parasitic qualities which distinguish today's private sector.

The specific proposals I intend to elaborate later will be designed to move towards these objectives. They include a new role for the banking system and the provision of incentives to encourage the existing private sector to move into more socially responsible lines of activity. An essential step in this direction will consist of measures to ensure that these incentives are not abused. This I propose to accomplish by disciplining their activities through a continuing process of performance review and discussion through mutual consultations, which I have already

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initiated in respect of synthetic textile manufacturers.

After thus setting out a policy statement for the SLFP in the jargon and idiom of United Front manifesto (and logic), Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike went on to outline the guidelines on which the Budget was based. These will be examined in subsequent issues.

We have reproduced in extenso excerpts from the preliminary part of Mr. Bandaranaike's speech because this is one of the best formulations of a centrist (mixed economy)

gospel in modern ideological terms. There was a time when the Leftist parties in the UF had a virtual monopoly of political ideological formulations, but Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike's Budget speech is a clear indication that the SLFP has come of age. There was a conscious effort not to tilt to the orthodox Right whilst forswearing doctrinaire leftism.

Whilst we cannot agree with some of Mr. Bandaranaike's formulations, there is no doubt that we cannot but admire the deft manner in which he handled his

brief. It can be said that the SLFP now has a kind of economic ideology embryo. Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike had originally outlined the basis of centrist political and economic policies for Ceylon, and now for the first time we have a fresh statement of an economic and political creed on which the SLFP can go to the country. It is an eclectic amalgam of a great many politico-economic philosophies.

The UNP has to march thus. For a long time it has been logging behind. The Left, too, has to do a great deal of re-thinking.

CHRONICLE

Oct. 28 — Oct. 31

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

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

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28: Mr. K. B. Ratnayake, Minister of Transport, will today order the Ceylon Government Railways to suspend all proceedings in regard to the award of Rs. 50 million tender for the supply of ten diesel power sets to a Japanese firm, pending investigations: Mr. Ratnayake told the *Daily News* that he would take with the Cabinet the entire question of the structure concerning the final judgement on tenders: According to the *Daily News* a Commission of Inquiry which probed two purchases of broad-gauge diesel locomotives to the C.G.R. in the 1950s and 1960s has found that the foreign company which supplied the two locomotives had only little experience in the manufacture of the said machines and had sold these two engines to the C.G.R. with the intention of making Sri Lanka as the testing ground for the evolution and development of the new make of diesel electric locomotives. In welcoming Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, Chief Organiser of the SLFP and Youth Adviser to the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, the inmates of the Pallekelle Rehabilitation Camp who were involved in the April 71, insurgency, said that they invited him because they have faith only in him and on no one else: Mr. Bandaranaike visited the Camp as the President of the new Front formed to assist released insurgents—CDM. Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike, Minister of Finance, will table in the NSA today the estimates of revenue and expenditure for the 1976 budget: according to the *Daily Mirror*, the gap between the revenue and expenditure for the financial year 1976 is Rs 919 million. Several leading trade unions in the country appealed to the Prime Minister to stop the formation of the proposed Security Board for Government Corporations: according to these unions this Board will ultimately result in the formation of a new Police force which could disrupt

the smooth functioning of work in state corporations—JD. Following the removal of the ban imposed on the transport, and stocking of paddy and rice, reports reaching from rice producing areas indicate an upward trend in the prices of rice and paddy; this price hike is attributed to large-scale buying up of rice and paddy by traders—ATH. The *Aththa* editorially commenting on the speech by the Prime Minister at Nuwara-Eliya where she said that the most important problem facing the people was the cost of living, said that this question should be given priority at the forthcoming Budget: the paper also said that there is only 18 months left for the next general election and before that the Government should do something constructively for the welfare of the masses. On the recommendation of the Minister of Education, Dr. Badiuddin Mahmud, special facilities for religious activities will be provided by the Government for the benefit of leaders of Muslim nations participating in the Non-aligned conference to be held in August next year—VK. Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, leader of the Federal Party, has appealed to the Secretary, Ministry of Justice, to inquire into certain incidents that occurred at the Welikada Jail where Tamil youths arrested for political reasons have been assaulted by Sinhalese prisoners and by some Jail Guards too—VK. Mr. Pieter Keuneman, Minister of Housing and Construction, speaking at a meeting in Colombo said that the ousting of the LSSP from the UF was a great loss to the progressive forces in the country and furthermore the common enemy, UNP, will benefit on this situation: the Minister further said that all progressive forces in the country must unite together to bring back the LSSP into the UF, once again—VK. Giving evidence before the C.J.C. (Exchange Frauds), the Deputy Commissioner of Inland Revenue said that Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, former Governor General of Ceylon, held taxable assets worth Rs. 3.5 million—DM. The joint committee of delegations of China Ocean shipping Company and the Ceylon Shipping Corporation which held discussions recently agreed to extend the joint shipping service between Sri Lanka and China to Europe in the future—CDN. U.N. Secretary General Kurt Waldheim conferred with King Hassan of Morocco at the start of the diplomatic mission aimed to resolve Morocco's dispute with Spain over the phosphate-rich Western Sahara. US Ambassador to the United Nations, Mr. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, said that if the UN General Assembly votes in favour of an anti-Zionism measure, America would dismiss the UN as unimportant.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29: According to the 1976 Budget estimates tabled yesterday by Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike, Minister of Finance, in the NSA, there is a gap of Rs. 2495 million between revenue and expenditure—CDN. According to the estimates tabled yesterday the expenditure on national planning is up from Rs. 126 million to Rs. 251 million: this includes the outlay on the food production drive with the general scheme of decentralising the allocation of funds for capital works of a local nature: according to the *Daily Mirror* with the next Budget the Government has taken steps to reduce the prices of many essential utility goods and bring down the cost of living: synthetic sarees and suitings, shirts, toothpaste, soap, batteries etc are likely to come down in price. According to the *Daily News*, the Government has come to know that the sale proceeds of teas shipped direct to the London auctions from Sri Lanka are not being remitted by certain principals of Agency Houses, as they should be, in keeping with the requirements of the local exchange control laws: according to the paper these proceeds are held in London by principals as insurance against rupee compensations for the estates nationalised: the Secretary to the Ministry of Plantation Industry has written to all Agency Houses seeking within 24 hours full details of shipments made to the London auctions in the past few months and also inquiring for the balance sale proceeds. The verification of all movable and immovable properties from the estates taken over from local and foreign companies is now complete—DM. Replying to a question by Mr. V. Dharmalingam, M.P. for Uduvil, in the NSA, Mr. K. B. Ratnayake, Minister of Transport and Parliamentary Affairs, said that it was false to say Tamil youths arrested by the Police as suspects in the Duraippah murder investigations were harassed by the Police—VK. Following vigorous buying by traders production committees in the rice producing areas have expressed fear that until the next season even farmers might not have paddy for their own consumption—JD. The *Janadina* editorially brought to the notice of the Minister of Transport that several employees who were sympathisers of the LSSP are being systematically removed from office: the editorial requested the Minister to intervene in this matter. Following a theft of air tickets worth nearly \$ 2 million, the International Police alerted the Katunayake airport to be on the lookout for passengers possessing the stolen tickets—ATH. Under an Ordinance promulgated by the President of India, bonded labour system has been abolished. White House announced that President Ford might visit other Far Eastern countries during his tour to China in November. China yesterday said about a latest nuclear test it conducted in the Western area: this was an under ground test.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30: Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, President of the UNP, in his reply to Mr. Robert Senanayake, father of Mr. Rukman Senanayake, MP for Dedigama, said that the UNP no longer belonged to Senanayakes' or any other family caucus: in his reply Mr. Jayewardene further said the UNP belonged to the masses, and on their behalf and as the leader of the party he will be true to those who have entrusted this task to him, without fear or favour, affection or ill will—CDM. A Government source has told the *Daily News* that the Government does not anticipate much difficulty in getting back to Sri Lanka the sale proceeds of teas shipped before October 17, to the London tea

auctions: three Ministers, Messrs Felix Dias Bandaranaike, T. B. Illangaratne, and Ratnasiri Wickremanayake on Tuesday reviewed the position in regard to shipments of tea to London and the repatriation of their sale proceeds. According to the *Daily Mirror*, some of the major tea houses in the UK which were handling Sri Lanka's teas for the London auctions have sacked their agents in Colombo, following the take-over of Sterling Company plantations in Sri Lanka. According to the *Virakesari* the Credit Councils will start functioning from next January: according to the *Aththa*, the reason for the delay in functioning of the Credit Councils is attributed to the delay in holding of elections to these Councils in the various government departments. Following a ban on a procession by the villagers of Gampola and Pussellawa to receive the Minister of Agriculture and Lands the villagers who thronged in their thousands to participate in the procession protested to the ban order and blocked the entire stretch of road: it is understood that the ban order was given by a responsible person in the Government: the people who blocked the road from Gampola to Pussellawa shouted slogans condemning the reactionary leadership of the Government: this procession was organised by the villagers to receive and express their thanks to Mr. Hector Kobbekaduwa for nationalising the local and foreign company-owned estates—JD. Once the present operation under the Assets and Liabilities Law was over further categories of public officials will be included under this law—CDN. A Squadron of US ships left Singapore port yesterday to the Indian Ocean and the departure of this fleet is linked with the massive build-up of a military base in Diego Garcia. The US and Egypt on Tuesday signed an agreement on the sale of 98.1 million dollars worth of American wheat flour and tobacco to Egypt. About 75 people were killed yesterday as Lebanon's civil war raged on with mounting ferocity. Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, West German Head of Government, received a unusually warm welcome on his first visit to China.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 31: According to the *Daily News*, the Convertible Rupee Account of a large Colombo Agency House was yesterday frozen on the orders of Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike, Minister of Finance, preliminary investigations by the Ministry of Finance have revealed that this firm which publicly disclaimed responsibility for a number of sterling companies for which it was agent before the recent take-over of company owned estates by the Government, had shipped on behalf of its principals in London teas worth over £ 300,000—CDN. The Commissioner of Examination told the *Daily Mirror*, that the standardisation of marks of those students who had scored the minimum required for admissions to the University, will be done by computer. At a seminar that will be held today at the Central Bank Auditorium the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, will take a decision on District Political Committees, Co-ordinating Committees and Agricultural Committees—LD. Eight leading trade unions in the country have decided to hold a mass rally at the Hyde Park, Colombo, on November 22 and to come out on a day's token strike on December 4: the meeting and the strike will be to demand equal salaries for certain categories of teachers in Government service—ATH. The *Janadina* editorially commenting on the JR-Rukman Senanayake tussle said that there is much more to this than what appears on the surface: the editorial further said that

the reactionary leadership of the SLFP and the UNP are determined to safeguard the capitalist class in the country and Mr. Jayewardene is against the Dudley Group of the UNP barging into this: the paper further said that even the Dudley group's only aim is to safeguard the capitalist class in the country. Today is the last day for MPs and other public officials to make their declarations under the Assets and Liabilities Law—CDN. The Mahanayake Thera of the Asgiriya Chapter, Venerable Godamunne Sri Nagasena Dhammananda, passed away at his Aramaya at the Kandy Asgiriya Temple yesterday: the funeral is likely, to be held on November 6 with state honours—CDN & CDM. The acute shortage

of drugs had hampered the anti-malaria drive in the country—CDM. The entire staff and the attorney-at-Law of the Point Pedro Court struck work on Tuesday following the arrest of a minor employee of the Court by the Point Pedro Police over the incident at Point Pedro recently in which the public were involved with the Army and the Police—CDM. United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim will visit Egypt, Syria and Israel shortly. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat yesterday called for the resumption of Middle East peace talks in Geneva including representatives of the PLO. Spain sought peaceful withdrawal from the disputed Spanish Sahara in talks with Morocco, Mauritania and Algeria.

FOR THE RECORD

Budget Proposals In Brief

Rice:

Paid ration rice reduced from Rs. 2.20 to Rs. 2.00 a measure.

A fifty percent subsidy on fertiliser for paddy and plantation crops;

Control on tractor hires to farmers;

No import duty on two wheel tractors.

Flour:

No price change in flour (Rs. 1.10) and bread (Re 1 per pound). Instead there will be a Rs. 15 wage increase in public sector and large private sector establishments to employees earning less than Rs. 800 per month in lieu of reduction.

Sugar:

Ration remains $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. at 72 cent per lb.

Off ration sugar down from Rs. 7.50 to Rs. 6.

Synthetics:

New Control prices plain sarees Rs. 8.00 per yard; printed sarees Rs. 9.00 per yard; dress fabrics Rs. 10.00 per yard; suitings Rs. 16.00 per yard;

Knitted fabric shirts, Rs. 32.50 and woven fabric shirts Rs. 37.50.

Excise Duties:

Cigarettes up by one cent each. Imported liquor up by Rs. 10 per bottle.

Local liquor up by Re 1 per bottle.

Import Duties:

Duty removed on pharmaceuticals and two wheeled tractors.

Duty on Synthetic yarn down by 10 percent.

BTT Rates:

Handloom sarees down to 1 per cent.

Cotton sarees and cloth, down by five per cent.

Sports goods, down to 5 per cent.

Coal gas, from 15 to 5 per cent. Sewing machines from 25 to 10 percent.

Pensions:

For new entrant public servants, pensions, will be restored with retrospective effect from 1972. Their provident fund contribution go to State coffers.

Gratuities:

A gratuity scheme for workers will be formulated.

Taxation—Personal Income Tax:

Exemption limit for salaried employees up from Rs. 6000 to Rs. 9000. Only those earning over Rs. 750 per month will be taxed.

Aggregation of husband and wife employment income for taxation abolished up to certain limits.

Aggregation of employment income with other sources of income also abolished up to certain limits.

Maximum level of taxation on personal incomes reduced from 65 to 50 per cent.

Tax exemption for those on short assignments of employment or professional work.

Compulsory savings abolished. Funds already deposited to be credited to controlled bank accounts with facilities for withdrawal. Ceiling on income abolished.

Expenditure tax will be reintroduced.

Company taxation:

Rebate of 10 per cent for approved specified investments.

Tax holidays to companies to be reviewed.

Flat rate of 40 percent for broad-based shareholdings.

Worker incentives:

Legislation for profit sharing.

Production incentives:

Tax discounts for increasing employment.

Tax rebates for companies obtaining their foreign exchange requirements outside the country.

Rebates for increased exports.

Rebates for increased production.

Rebates for investment in housing and urban development projects.

Gem trade:

Gem Trade will be taxed.

Tourist hotels:

BTT increased from one percent to ten percent.

Tax evasion and under valuation:

More penalties.

Decentralised budget:

More funds from capital budget.

Land Reform Commission:

Gets vote of Rs. 50 million.

Anti-monopoly legislation:

New laws to be introduced.

Interest rates:

To be reviewed.

Postal revenues:

Variations in some postal rates.

Embarkation Tax:

Up from Rs. 10 to Rs. 25.

Export development and promotion:

Export duty on copra, coconut oil and desiccated coconut abolished.

CRA rates to be varied according to product and foreign exchange earned up to a maximum of 15 percent.

CRA on gems will remain at 20 percent.

Rs. 25 million allocation in foreign exchange for raw materials, and capital requirements for export oriented ventures.

Bank of Ceylon and People's Bank will liberalise credit policies for export enterprises.

GAP BRIDGED

EXERCISE IN FIGURES

Despite the fact that the government's expenditure bill was nearly four times (Rs. 8 billion) the provision the Minister sought in 1962 when he presented his last budget and the resources available to the government had not increased at the same pace as expenditure, the Finance Minister was yesterday not only able to bridge his deficit of Rs. 1,918 million but also show a cash surplus of Rs. 382 million.

This is how he did it.

The recurrent expenditure in estimates amounted to Rs. 5,184 million. The additional cost of petroleum products amounting to Rs. 30 million was added to this and under expenditure of 2 per cent amounting to Rs. 104 million was deducted. This then gave a figure of Rs. 5,110 million. A sum of Rs. 100 million, an advance account payments, was added to this sum which made there current expenditure Rs. 5,210 million. The revenue in the draft estimates was Rs. 5,628 million deducting the recurrent expenditure from this sum a current account surplus of Rs. 418 million ensues. The capital expenditure in the estimate is Rs. 2,940 million out of which Rs. 649 million relates to the provision of monies for paying debts. Deducting this sum and allowing for a 22 per cent under-expenditure of Rs. 504 million the capital expenditure was reduced to Rs. 1,687 million. Adding the sum of Rs. 649 million provided for paying debts known as Sinking Fund and Amortisation payments the net capital expenditure totted up to Rs. 2,336 million. The total net expenditure then amounted to Rs. 5,210 (recurrent) plus Rs. 2,336 (capital) that is Rs. 7,546 million. The budget gap was then Rs. 7,546 million (expenditure) minus Revenue of Rs. 5,628 million which resulted in a deficit of Rs. 1,918 million. How was this to be financed? The Minister said he was having recourse to borrowing Rs. 1,300 million from the non-banking sector which is non-inflationary; Rs. 750 million from counterpart funds and other aid Rs. 750 million; from project loans and outright grants—Rs. 250 million. The total

finances available is this way amounted to Rs. 2,300 million. A cash balance of Rs. 382 million was obtained by deducting the deficit of Rs. 1,918 million from this financing of Rs. 2,300 million.

—Ceylon Daily News
6-11-75

expenditure figure should corrected from '22 per cent' to '26 per cent' and the figure against that of under-expenditure has consequently to be corrected from 'Rs. 504 million' to 'Rs. 604 million.'

Ceylon Daily News
7-11-75

* * * * *

ERROR CORRECTED

RS. 100 MILLION

The Secretary to the Ministry of Finance, Dr. Lal Jayewardana, yesterday issued a press communique on an error which required correction in the Budget Speech which the Minister of Finance made in the National State Assembly on November 5. He states that the Minister of Finance had directed him to issue a correction immediately for public information although the Minister himself intends to make a short statement on the matter in the National State Assembly.

The following is the full text of the communique; "On reading through the Budget Speech which the Hon. Minister made in Parliament on the 5th of November I have found that there is an error requiring correction by me. The Hon. Minister told me he would be making a short statement on this in the National State Assembly but that I should make this correction immediately for the information of everybody even before that. In dealing with the financial year 1976, the text reads as follows: 'For the fiscal years 1973 and 1974 under-expenditure on recurrent votes has been 4.3 per cent of voted funds, while the under-expenditure on capital votes during the same period has been 22 per cent. The rates of under-expenditure on recurrent and capital votes that I have assumed for 1976 are 2 per cent and 22 per cent respectively.' Again in another place, it reads: 'As I have already indicated, the margin for under-expenditure that I am allowing is 22 per cent as against 25 per cent allowed by my predecessor.' In both these statements, the figure '22 per cent, should stand corrected to '26 per cent'. In the final accounts again, the under-

ARITHMETICAL ERROR

Interview Explaining Mistake

The following is the text of the interview of the Finance Minister with Mr. Philip Fernando of the *Sunday Observer* (9/11/75)

The Budget proposals of November 5th stand. There will not be any deviation or any need for changes. The relief given to the consumer through reduced prices of textiles sugar, rice, drugs, and to the working class by way of earned income tax relief, salary increase of Rs. 15 and to the farmer by way of increased fertiliser subsidy, lower price for two-wheel tractors etc. as well as the outlay of funds for capital development will be untouched, the Finance Minister, Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike, assured the people of Sri Lanka. He was answering a query "What next?" following the alteration in the rate of under expenditure announced by the Ministry of Finance on Thursday because of an arithmetical error in the estimates.

"Come and see for yourself. The files are open for anyone to see. There is nothing to hide." Mr. Bandaranaike said inviting the Press to a chat sending our journalistic hunches working on probabilities going back to 1962 when Mr. Bandaranaike set an honourable and healthy precedent by resigning his portfolio no sooner the backbenchers decided to disagree with his rice proposal.

The flashback to 1962 that haunted us vanished as the Minister, along with his top officials, placed all his cards on the table.

"We are in a very happy position—most fortunate for I do not believe in getting hold of scapegoats—certainly the people will not

be made the scapegoat. There is hardly a change in the final figures and there is no need to change any of the proposals. "You know I have kept a figure 382 million as surplus cash balance and how realistic this outturn will be is not a prediction I will venture to make. But certainly I don't hope to be wrong by as much as Rs. 467 million" Mr. Bandaranaike added—the figure Dr. N. M. Perera's budgetary outturn ultimately fell short of by last year.

The next question we posed was. 'How will the proposal go down with the people'. This prompted the Minister to take hold of the interview his predecessor, Dr. N. M. Perera, had given to a daily paper criticising Mr. Bandaranaike's proposals in a variety of ways. Before giving a point-by-point reply to the criticism levelled by Dr. Perera Mr. Bandaranaike fired a comment typical of him combining his candour as well as a witty rejoinder that would be long remembered by sophisticated budget critics. Budget critics in the form of ex-Finance Ministers are in an unenviable position of having to undergo the painful reappraisal of their own efforts as Finance Ministers in the light of what they are now saying of somebody else's budget. There is a performance that can be judged by the same yardstick they are now using to judge another's budget. Obviously NM who had presented the last five budgets, faced this odd situation. His budget comments would be as disastrous for himself as his budgets had been.

WHEN THE TREASURY made their calculations they came up with a most remarkable revelation that there was a wide variation from Ministry to Ministry. In some Ministries under expenditure was low as 15 per cent and in some as high as 40 per cent. I am not going to tell you which these Ministries are because it will be a criticism of my colleagues. Most of them however averaged about 25 per cent. "Before preparing the Budget I wanted this under expenditure figure to be on a much more accurate basis and I instructed that these figures be worked out Ministry by Ministry on the basis of actual-performance and capacity. This was done. This was the method I adopted. On this basis

the actual figures of under expenditure supplied to me was under the control of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs. They supplied me with certain figures. We had then to decide the normal under expenditure figures. The results I gathered came to Rs. 604 million. The under expenditure for the Ministries came to this figure. "I wanted to know how this was calculated. I did not want them to present them indicating different Ministries. Then you work it out on an average in that way come to an average of 26 per cent. The sum total of Rs. 604 million actually works out to 26 per cent this year. 'I told them to put that down. What actually happened was that somebody made a mistake of assuming that the 1973-74 figure which was 22 per cent applied to this year instead of the actual 26 per cent. On this basis the actual under-expenditure figure turned out to be Rs. 504 million and not Rs. 604 million.

Q: What does this error mean in practical terms?

A: Shall I put it simply.

"Supposing a contractor makes a mistake in formulating an estimate to build your house. The only thing of importance is whether he is going to bill you on the higher expenditure due to his arithmetical miscalculation. The mistake as such in the bill of quantities is unimportant to the extent

of the price to be paid. If the contractor in spite of the mistake ends up with the same estimate, the matter ends there. Likewise this budget is still a balanced budget with a cash balance of Rs. 382 million.

THE RELIEFS GRANTED will be there and everything else will fit into place. There will be no change due to this error. As a building contractor the important thing is that the customer will not be called upon to pay an increased price.

Q: How accurate are these estimates anyway.

A: If you take the figures Dr. N. M. Perera has given last year his estimates have gone out by nearly Rs. 467 million. The same is true in every year he presented his budget.

"The question is now realistic is my outturn for a balanced budget? The answer is if everything turns out right it will be okay. I can predict this. I am not one to say that there is a light at the end of a tunnel or that Utopia is round the corner. I believe my estimates are realistic as I can make them out to be now. I won't pretend or say that I could be proved wrong in my estimates. A difference of Rs. 100 million or less is possible. But certainly it will not be like Dr. N. M. Perera's deficit of Rs. 467 million.

MUSLIM OR DAWOODI ?

IS IT NOT TRUE that a daily newspaper had reported that a "Muslim religious dignitary"—a High Priest to boot—had been apprehended by the Customs authorities following an attempt at smuggling on Friday, October 31, 1975, after he had been cleared for boarding the Rameswaram bound ferry steamer at Talaimannar which was due to sail on the morning of October 31? That he was detained for questioning at Talaimannar and was granted permission to make telephone contact with one of the members of his Congregation in Colombo to tell him that he and his entourage (accomplices) had been fined Rs. 78,000 and that he would be held in custody until the fine was paid? That the amount required to meet this fine was deposited by this member of the Congregation with the Colombo Customs who thereupon informed the Talaimannar Customs that the fine had been paid? That this High Priest was then allowed to join the Rameswaram bound ferry which sailed on Sunday, November 2, 1975 (the last ferry for the season)? That as the newspaper report had stated that it was a "Muslim" High Priest, many ordinary Muslims were perturbed because they feel that they and their religion were being tarnished by the Dawoodi Sect priestly hierarchy's activities (about which *Tribune* had raised many queries in the past)? That Muslim readers have brought it to the notice of the *Tribune* that it was not a mere Muslim religious dignitary who had been involved in this smuggling attempt but a high dignitary of the Dawoodi Sect of the Borahs? That *Tribune* has in the past spotlighted news about the conflicting factions among the Dawoodi Borahs?

PALMYRAH REPORT—4

Mechanics Of Tapping

—Toddy, Main Product—

THE CULTIVATION OF PALMYRAH in the Jaffna region is haphazard because the palm has been allowed to propagate itself by natural methods. Generally it is found in thick clusters or groves, a large number of palms striving to reach the sunlight and survive. There is no doubt that an unduly high concentration of palms retards productivity because as the density increases, there will be more palms competing for the limited resources of soil and sunlight. No one apparently has been concerned with this problem probably because it only arouses a marginal interest in the owner as well as the tapper. To the former, it only provides a marginal income. The latter who only hires or leases the palms, in any case can do very little about it. He is, however, generally credited with an innate "sixth sense" of spotting the high yielding palms within a cluster of palmyrah and it is the usual practice to tap only these palms.

This leaves a large number of palmyrah virtually unproductive, and in terms of land use, this appears to be a great waste. Hence it is necessary that future plantations should be carefully planned with adequate spacing between palms. It may also be useful to consider thinning out of palms in too heavily concentrated groves. Further research has to be done on the optimal spacing of palmyrah with a view to obtaining maximum yields, and it had been suggested to us that a spacing of 12 ft. in the rows, 15 ft. between the rows are optimal.

The tapper usually leases or rents palms, for the season, from the land owner. This is not so easy as it reads, because there are instances when tappers find it difficult to lease out palms from landlords. In most cases he agrees to pay a fixed rental, which of course varies not only from one area to another, but also from one palm to another depending on the productivity of the palms. Generally the rates range from Rs. 5 to Rs. 10 per season, a rate higher

than in India. In certain instances, such as tapping sweet toddy only, the tapper is called upon to supply the domestic toddy requirements of the land-owner as well. In such cases, it is not uncommon for the produce to be shared by the tapper and the landlord on alternative days.

The tapper usually climbs each tree with the aid of a foot-loop. The juice is generally collected twice a day—once in the morning and once in the evening. Slightly porous earthenware pots are used for collection. These pots are specially manufactured by a group of persons who have organised themselves into a trade union monopoly. In order to arrest fermentation the pots are usually lined with burnt lime. The unfermented sweet toddy of the morning session is allowed to ferment for about 3 hours to produce fermented toddy. The evenings collection is generally allowed to ferment until the following day.

THERE IS NO DOUBT that the present system of extracting the sap is quite cumbersome. The use of footloops is a tiring and time-consuming method and the simple device of tying coconut husks on appropriate spaces along the trunk would certainly be time and effort saving. The aerial ropeway system that is adopted in coconut areas has been suggested to us and this should be possible in clusters where there is a sufficient number of tappable palms at a given time. It is strange indeed that these elementary devices which have been adopted for a long time in other regions of Ceylon have not been emulated in Jaffna region. The only possible reason for this is the indifference of the land owner and the lack of enterprise of the tapper. As to the quality of the sap, there is no doubt that there is a lot to be desired. According to Ratnasingham, (K. Ratnasingham: *Sap from the inflorescence*—Chapter 4 of CISIR Bulletin No. 2 of 1967-op. cit.) the use of arbitrary quantities of lime to arrest fermentation gives a dark coloured and bitter final product. He also mentions that a lot of impure lime is used and this is a source of foreign matter such as sand and charcoal in the product. The pores of the earthenware pots were a virtual breeding ground for the harmful micro-organisms. He found that

periodic heat treatment of the pots and the use of clean earthenware vessels should be sufficient to check fermentation. There is no doubt in our minds that the quality of the sap could easily be improved if more hygienic methods of tapping are adopted. The use of trunk notches and aerial ropeways, should considerably improve productivity.

It is estimated that about 80 percent of the sap is used as toddy for direct consumption within the region. Generally, the practice appears to be for the tappers of a family to operate one selling booth in close proximity to the grove tapped by them. With effluxion of time, most of these booths appear to have come under the control of a "Mudalali". Sometimes, he could be a more affluent tapper and sometimes, a man of means from a non-tapping community. He is the manager of the booth, and commonly, purchases the toddy supplied by tappers at a fixed price of about 20 to 25 cents per bottle. In certain instances, he controls the tappers (who have become his wage-labourers) by deploying them according to his requirements. His power may derive from his wealth, his lending of money to tappers who are in distress, his ability to lease out palms which the tappers are unable to do, and/or the fact that tappers live on the land owned by him. According to the Excises authorities, there are about 2,000 or more such booths in the region, which are made use of by about 15,000 tappers. There is no doubt that the emergence of the "Mudalali system" is contrary to the spirit of the tree-tax system, which was meant to give freedom of action to the tapper. With the passage of time, a powerful intermediary appears to have emerged, who is not much different from the tavern renter.

There are widely different estimates of the yield of palmyrah palms. This, as mentioned earlier, could be due to the heavy concentration of palms in certain groves. It could also be due to climatic, seasonal and soil factors. The better palms are reported to yield about a bottle each from each inflorescence in the morning clearance, and about half of that quantity in the evening clearance. Generally, the better palms would have 5 or 6 inflorescences being

tapped at a time, and this would give a yield of about 1 1/2 gallons of toddy per day. Thus, at the height of the season, a palm could yield about 45 gallons per month. At the beginning of the season and at the end, however, yields tend to be lower. Of course, the yields vary considerably from year to year and from palm to palm and this estimate should not be taken as a norm. No attempts have been made whatsoever in the direction of increasing the yields of palmyrah, as the plant has never been looked after. It should be possible with careful maintenance, thinning out of concentrations, and application of fertilisers to get a much higher yield from the current acreage. As the Palmyrah cultivation has been no body's business, this aspect has been completely overlooked.

As referred to earlier, a successful attempt was made to bottle palmyrah toddy a few years ago. The producer had no difficulty in disposing of the early production in Colombo and its environments, in spite of the high transport cost apparently the Excise authorities decided to tax and control its selling price at the same level applicable to bottled coconut toddy, which did not have to bear such a high transport cost. This decision immediately rendered the enterprise uneconomical and it had to be closed down. It was unfortunate indeed, and the producer assured us that there was even a potential export market for good palmyrah toddy.

(To be Continued)

BUILDING A VILLAGE HOUSE—57

More Shadows (Of Justice)

by Herbert Keuneman

I WAS WRITING, last week, of the shock—and perhaps a salutary one—that had been administered to my jealously cherished belief in the possibility of practicable applications of absolute right and wrong, even (or should I say, especially) in the rarefied sphere of the dispensation of Justice, when the Editor of *Tribune*, a man whose humane scepticism I sufficiently know and trust not to confuse it with the callous irresponsibility

of the cynic, suggested that justice—simple-j: that is, as a mere system of civilization—was no less than any other civic rule-of-thumb a plain workable expedient valid for the nonce!

This, as I explained, set off on my part a certain amount of re-appraisal: into the service of which I adhibited the consideration of a few local folk tales with which I was familiar, as revealing the traditional (rather than the contemporary and probably sophisticated) view of the matter taken by the Villager. And I found that he too seemed indeed to regard justice when applicable to himself with an eye by whose complaisance even the Editor might be dismayed!

In fact I found the exercise so illuminating that I have been dipping farther into Parker (on whom be peace! for his devoted compulatory labour) and have found more evidence yet to unsettle my transcendental assumptions!

Here, then, are a few more Sinhalese folk tales retold: Anglicized; and in some ways modernized but not, I trust, as to their basic theses.....

'FOR NOTHING GOES FOR SENSE OR LIGHT THAT WILL NOT WITH OLD RULES JUMP RIGHT ! Here is a quite maliciously caricaturist comment on the reliability of circumstantial evidence.

There lived once upon a time a rich and foolish man—an ancient time; for the two endowments have long been not incompatible—who left, at his death, to his spoiled and only son each habilitation incremented.

Now, there had arrived to attend the father's obsequies an even richer acquaintance borne most regally in a horse-and-carriage. He had had a hard time of the journey, for the parts in which the deceased rich man and his son lived knew nothing of made roads and still continued in rural peacefulness; nevertheless nothing would satisfy the young (and very foolish) heir but the acquisition of an equipage no less elegant and pretentious. Summoning a retainer, therefore, he paid into his hand a hundred golden *masuran* and bade him, howsofar the quest might take him, buy and bring back the finest horse-and-carriage he could find.

The servant travelled a long way with no success until he came at last to a place where by dint

of *pour boires* judiciously expended he heard of a horse, at least, that might be up for sale; and rightly putting the horse before the cart he decided that the horse, at all events, if it might by any means be purchased, should become his master's. A couple of further gratuities here and there, and what he had hoped came to pass; though, what with tips and one thing and another, the horse alone had cost the better part of his hundred golden pieces.

Leading his unaccustomed animal, the servant set out happily for home. But his charge was awkward as well as unfamiliar and made the road seem twice as toilsome as before. Night soon overtook him. Casting about for a place to bivouac, he found an open field in which stood a stone oil-press: a *sekkuva*. Nothing could provide a securer hitching-post; and, firmly tethering the horse to the great stone bowl, he lay down and slept an untroubled sleep.

At dawn the owner of the *sekkuva* wandered into his field, saw the horse, silently untied it, led it to his yard in the village not far away, and there carefully re-tied it. 'God bless my soul' he kept repeating to all who happened to see him, 'my *sekkuva* has given birth to a horse! Can't possibly leave it in the field. Unsafe!'

When the sun was well up the tired servant awoke and was dismayed, first thing, to see that the horse was gone. It did not take him long, however, to track the creature to the village compound; though his conclusion that it had merely strayed and been found by a kindly passer-by was rudely dispelled when in reply to anything he might say the *sekku*-owner only scoffed: 'Your horse? Your horse, you say? When did my *sekkuva* give birth to your horse in my field? Preposterous! Never heard of such impudence!'

Sadly the disillusioned servant set out to travel again, this time in search of some authority who would restore his master's property to him.

But the Magistrate, when he found one, was no comfort. 'But of course!' he announced sententiously. 'If the oil-mill gave birth to the horse, then the horse belongs to the man who owns the oil-mill. But of course!'

Haplessly horseless and miserably minus *masuran* the servant was making his way home, steeling himself to face his master's accusations, when he met a jackal trotting down the track.

'You look troubled, my frined,' said the jackal with kindly concern. 'Tell me all about it.'

The troubled man needed no second bidding. 'Nari-nayide' he began respectfully, 'I have been robbed.' And he went on to explain the whole sorry circumstances.

The jackal regarded him sympathetically. 'Don't worry', he comforted. 'Go back to the same Magistrate and beg him to reopen the case, saying you have fresh arguments to lead I myself will present them for you. I shall be there in good time.'

The servant gladly did as told and the Magistrate agreed to reopen the case, but when the servant looked for the jackal the jackal was nowhere to be seen. 'Sir,' the trembling man pleaded, 'my advocate has not arrived.'

'Well, send for him, send for him', scolded the Magistrate irascibly. 'Always wangling postponements, these lawyers!' he muttered; and turned to the next case.

But the following day, too, there was no jackal; nor on the next day nor the next. It was only on the fourth day he turned up, looking very, very sleepy and rubbing his eyes.

'Why did you not come the first day?' the angry Magistrate asked.

'Oh, your Honour,' said the jackal, 'on the first day I looked at the sky and there was such a storm brewing.'

'It didn't rain a drop,' said the Magistrate sternly.

'Exactly!' replied the jackal.

'What! Oh! Yes, I see' replied the Magistrate, perhaps a little thoughtfully. 'And the second day?'

'The second day I was actually on my way, when the ground suddenly sank beneath my feet! It was a marsh, your Honour, a deep marsh. And it looked absolutely solid ground. Mere appearances are simply not to be trusted, are they, your Honour?'

'I see,' said the Magistrate a second time, even more thought-

fully. Then, somewhat recovering his poise: 'And to what happy circumstance do we owe your actual presence today? And why the hell' (he hissed *sotto voce*) 'do you keep yawning and blinking and rubbing your eyes? I'll have you up for contempt!'

'Your Honour,' said the jackal yawning prodigiously, 'I came today because—all last night, without one wink of sleep—I watched a most propitious omen: I watched the fishes playing in the fire.'

'You did what?' shouted the judge. 'You must be lying! In what country do fishes, which belong in the water, spend a whole night playing in the fire?'

'Your Honour,' pleaded the jackal, making a deep *acharaya*, 'I submit: in the same country in which *sekkuvass* give birth to horses!'

A BURIED TRUTH? *This may shock even the Editor; or any advocate of Human Rights: a plea for 'reasonable use' of the Third Degree?*

There were once three friends who resolved they would go gemming. They dug until their own resources were exhausted; they borrowed money and continued digging until that was exhausted too; they borrowed more and went on digging until not only the money but their credit was exhausted also; and all they had found was one gem.

Now this they had found quite early on—which encouraged them—and, being unable to decide which amongst them should be its guardian, each made a box in which he thought the gem should go. But there was still the question: whose box?

It was fortunate that each built his box to match his own physique. Lokka, who was big and muscular and perhaps a little brainless had a big box; Madda, who was middling every way, had a box of middle size; and Podda, who was short and fat cunning, had a little box. So they put the gem into Podda's little box and he locked it; and they put the little box in Madda's larger one, and he locked it; and they put that into Lokka's box, which he locked in its turn. Each kept his own key. But Podda went one better and managed to get duplicates turned out of the two keys that were not his own.

When the friends finally decided they were nearly bankrupt and must sell their single gem and redeem their debts there was no gem to sell. The boxes were all locked, but no gem was there. How could that possibly be? With touching faith in the wisdom of authority they took their problem to the King.

The King, quite unable to account for the mystery and deconstructing (as ever) authority's frequent substitution of expedient procrastination for wisdom, postponed the case. Day after day the friends waited upon him for a solution; but day after day he put them off.

At last, even the Queen was moved to interiere. She said: 'Look here, you—Your—er—Majesty, if you keep these three fellows hanging about your durbar much longer, all in their span-cloths and all, folks are going to take them for your courtiers and your Audience is going to become a laughing-stock. If they have a case before you, why don't you judge it and have an end, or send them packing?'

'Woman,' replied the King, you don't know what you're talking about: this is one of the most complicated cases in history, I should think, and I'm waiting for the gods to reveal its solution to me.' And he explained what it was all about.

'Oh! you—Your—er—Majesty!' scoffed the Queen. 'Make me your deputy for one day and I'll reveal the solution!'

And so, the next day it was to the Queen the three reiterated their oft-told story; and the Queen showed no hesitation whatever. 'String them up!' she ordered. And then, to the Whip-Master-in-Chief: 'Now lay it on!'

'Produce that pestiferous gem!' shouted the Whip-Master as each stroke fell. But Lokka bore his castigation (and it was a severe one) yet revealed nothing. Because he could not. Likewise Madda bore his and revealed nothing. Because he could not. With Podda, of course, it was different: hardly had the third stroke fallen that he was bellowing to be released in order to produce the gem from under the dung-heap where he had hidden it.

'Simple!' said the Queen.

THE PROPORTIONABLE GIFT. *Alas! even what might seem to the disinterested near enough to absolute Justice may be far from satisfying to an accipient more involved.*

A poor farmer once harvested a pumpkin of altogether noble dimensions. It was such a superior vegetable, in fact, that he and his wife could think of none worthy to eat it save the King. So, hiring a drummer—they could afford no more than one—to walk before them, and covering the pumpkin with a clean white cloth, the pair carried their offering to the Court and made their presentation.

The King was as delighted with the singularity of the gift as with the loyalty that had prompted it, and heaping upon the farmer a great reward of gold appointed him Minister of Agriculture.

Learning this, an ambitious and calculating *dissava* (the Governor of a District) decided to take the King a gift, for his own part. Having a pretty, white heifer which had often excited admiration, he decorated her with auspicious marks (specified, for no small fee, by an astrologer) and, capping her horns with silver and encircling her brow and neck with garlands of blue beads, he placed her under a silken canopy, hired a whole band of drummers—and of oboists, beside—set before and behind all a great procession of functionaries, and conveyed her thus to the Palace.

Nothing could have exceeded the King's delight and urbanity. 'Why, my dear chap!' smiled the King. 'Why! what a charming present! and how opulently presented! What a very rich man you must be! Chamberlain,' he called, 'we must reward this personage royally.' And he hurried the Chamberlain off on a whispered errand.

In a minute or two the Chamberlain reappeared staggering under a veiled and heaped-up tray. 'Finest gift We Ourselves have seen in donkey's years', the King explained as he whipped off the covering and bestowed upon the overcome *Dissava* the farmer's princely pumpkin!

* * * *

And finally, topping off these fictional though acute village estimations of the purity of Justice

in practical applicability, this true example quoted by Ralph Pieris from Lawrie's *Gazetteer*:

'a gamsabhava having difficulty in dividing a field between two brothers, noticed a snake crossing the field, and unanimously decided to adopt the line of its path!'

KAZI—29

Near Kurunegala

by Anatory Bukoĵa

October 25,

Late as it was that night two men got off the bus with me, and I was asked, was I a Pakistan? I had come for three days of rest, and I had walked slap into a conference cum seminar. They could hardly, I suppose, turn me away at that hour, and I was invited to join the first day's proceedings and stayed for the next. My room had two beds. That first night I was alone and spread myself around the room. The second night I shared my it with a Professor of Economics from India. The third night there was in his place, a farmer post-graduate of Campion Hall, Oxford, and, I understood, of the Gregorian University. The last man was a Ceylonese like myself.

The next morning I saw an Ayrshire cow milked by a man who knew me. I was asked in for breakfast. I told that in *Bangladesh* there was no need for family planning. An Indonesian invited me to join the Conference. It took all day, and it was on *Poverty and Population Control*. People working on the farm were never out of sight. There was even a farm road being built or improved. There was a shop run by another man who knew me. Off the main road it was, but its biggest patrons seemed to be the village. There were women. They were quartered at what I would for convenience call the hospital. It was a medical centre of sorts, an infirmary. When we broke up, we mixed, the farm workers and ourselves. The Head of the institution was called a *Sevaka*. He was present at some of the conferences; for the most part he was away. The delegates seemed to be Marxists of a sort, but their common denominator seemed to be their Anglican reli-

gion. You can imagine my surprise and delight when I found that they seemed to be unanimous that population was not a problem. They seemed to be an understanding, too, that poverty is not the problem that riches is, that the 2% rich are more of a problem than the 98% poor. I was glad to hear that the old clichés such as land reform, co-operatives communes, were not trotted out.

Governments seemed to be a problem, the establishments, sometimes the police. The second day was devoted to the theological angle. Christ, so it appeared, had a meaning for us. On the surface, the only point really in dispute seemed to be whether we could have the *millenium* here, or whether we must expect the cross. I think enough scriptural quotations were brought out to prove, *millenium* or cross, that something is expected of us. Luke, chapter twelve, says, quoting Christ, Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required, and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more.

SOME HOURS and a night have elapsed since I wrote this. So what I am about to write is like chapter two of this *Kazi*. The Indo-Pakistan war, the *Bangla-Desh* revolt from Pakistan, any seeming trouble between *Bangla Desh* and India, and I remember, a friend putting me between a Pakistani and an Indian at a dinner, years ago to keep them apart; and here, a replica of *Viceregal India*, one country, one people, a Tamil pulling a Bengali's leg about the reluctance of the man to talk about the recent happenings in his country. At least, I suppose he was a Bengali. They talked about their countries. Just here there was an interruption, but of this more anon. On the first day. I think, they talked more on the subject of poverty and population, analysing it, wondering just what poverty is, and the right of people to be poor. After all we have the great mendicant orders, the Franciscans and the Dominicans. They all were one that an excess of population was baloney, and they resented the interest that the richer nations were taking in this matter as regards the poor. They felt that it was some kind of trick, of the same sort that we feel about tea estates now, I suppose, and

they all recognized that there was a great deal of money in it, money in the form of aid that the poorer nations would find it hard to resist. After long feeling like a voice in the wilderness about the matter, it warmed the cockles of my heart to hear that the people of so many nations felt about this the way that I do. If there is a problem about population, they were of one mind that the way to tackle it was not by limiting population the way that governments are trying now, but by other means such as catering for a larger population and even by migration.

About that interlude, I was told a cow had calved and I went to see it. Three of us were bringing the cow and her calf quite happily back till at one place the cow tossed one of us right between her horns. Fortunately he was tough and he got away with two minor abrasions and which I promptly sterilized with Dettol. But he could not remember where he had left his knife and keys and that caused us quite a bother. Looking vainly for them we found his sandals which he had forgotten about. I am still hoping St. Anthony will produce the keys.

The food at this place was adequate, and if there seemed to be a big pile of it when we started a meal, it was only natural that so many of us should lick the platter clean. I was sorry I could not stay for the subject to be discussed on the day I left, which was Mass Education, not that the subject interested me, but I would have liked to have heard what was said and to have contributed my mite but I left consoled that the matter was at least safe in the hands of Campion Hall, and the Gregorian, to boot. I have noticed the short letter in the current *Tribune* about bad spelling, missing words and bad composition. I do not know about bad composition, whose correction. I can leave safely to the Editor, or, at least, to his judgement, but I do hope, at least, that the names of Campion Hall, and Gregorian, spelt correctly in this manuscript, appear as they are spelt here in print.

There were books here that I would have liked to have read, both ancient and modern, some that I had not seen before by old authors, and far more books than I could have possibly gone through. Some of the most delightful were

short stories, with a religious vein, by ancient eastern authors whose names, I suppose are not even known. Their translation must surely have been by Europeans. The atmosphere was easy at this place, not stuffy.

So what of India, Bangla-Desh, Pakistan, Indonesia and Ceylon? Our common language was English. The Indians were very earnest, the Pakistanis frank, and Bangla Desh reserved, Indonesia was the soul of Kindness, and Ceylon of rational thinking. One people, I do not think there was any doubt about that. On an occasion like this, there are people who are invited to lead the talks on this day or that, what of them? They entered into the spirit of the discussions. It would be pointless to analyse them by race or nationality. The talks or discussions showed the natural differences that there must be among those who agree. I am wrong here. It was not like a maze. Every man's views fitted into a picture and they made a whole.

A COMMUNICATION

From A University Don On University Admissions; Standardisation and District Quotas

Dr. C. R. de Silva, Senior Lecturer in History of the Peradeniya Campus, wrote to us the following letter on 21.10.75. Together with it he sent us a letter he had sent to the *Daily News* dated 13.10.75 which the paper had not published. We are publishing this letter for the record. He also sent us a seminar paper (referred to in his letter as "my article")—Ceylon Studies Seminar papers, 1975 Series No. 2, Serial No. 54, entitled **WEIGHTAGE IN UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS: STANDARDISATION AND DISTRICT QUOTAS IN SRI LANKA (CEYLON)**. This is one of the most comprehensive and knowledgeable studies on the question of University Admissions, and depending on the exigencies of space we hope to publish this article in the *Tribune* in instalments in the near future. —Editor.

To the *Tribune*
Sir,

Your assertion in the last week issue of *Tribune* (vide *Tribune*, 18/10/75)—that if media-wise standardisation was retained the Keuneman Committee recommendation of selecting 70 per cent to the University on the basis of "merit" would be negated so far as the Tamils are concerned is not quite correct as far as the science-subjects are concerned.

I myself share your distaste for both media-wise standardization and the district quota system—please see my article enclosed.—(this article will be published in instalments in *Tribune* if necessary —Ed.). Nevertheless the end effect of standardization as far as the University is concerned is that each medium will get admissions in proportion to the number of candidates in that medium. The Tamils have had 30 per cent of the total candidates in science subjects in recent years (see table VI of attached article reduce approximately 1/10 for Muslim). The proportion had been declining, but very slowly. Thus under the new scheme they should gain 30 per cent of the 70 per cent places given on merit (i.e. approximately 21 per cent of the total admissions) plus at least 1/7th of the 30 per cent allotted for the districts. This will give a total of 25 per cent of entrants for medicine engineering and other science based courses. This is an advance from the figure of last year (which is secret but was certainly under 20 per cent) though not yet up to the 35 per cent gained by the Tamils in the last year of open competition (see table VIII of my article).

I am also sending for your reading a copy of a letter sent to the Editor, *Ceylon Daily News*, at the height of the anti-Keuneman Committee campaign which the *Lake House* newspapers did not think it fit to publish. You are authorized to publish it if you so wish.

To
The Editor, *Ceylon Daily News*,
Sir,

The recently announced decision of the Government to limit admission to the University under the district quota system to 30% of the admissions and to open 70% of University places to merit as measured by standardized marks

is certainly a step in the right direction.

The operation of the district quota system has been very unsatisfactory largely because the system has been based on two erroneous assumptions. It assumed firstly, that districts were homogeneous educational units; in other words that educational facilities within each district were evenly distributed. But this was far from being the case. The grant of a 'quota' to an educational district system helped only those in the best schools in that district and as the Keuneman Committee has pointed out "...the bulk of the schools in many areas considered "developed" educationally such as the Colombo district and wide areas of the Western Province are as poorly equipped and sometimes more so than schools in areas considered "under-developed"..." (Quoted from *Ceylon Daily News* of 6.10.75)

The district quota system was also based on the assumption that the number of students seeking admission to the University from each district somehow represent the "intelligence and ability" of the total population of the district. But this was hardly the position. Many children from poorer homes either dropped out of school early or were not provided with schooling facilities at all. Others both in the Western Province and in other areas were diverted to courses that might not have been their first choice because other facilities were not available in the schools they attended. In 1974 there were only 3 science students in Grade XII in Moneragala, 6 in Polonnaruwa, 8 in Amparai, 14 in Vavuniya, 19 in Mannar, 50 in Anuradhapura, 53 in Trincomalee, 63 in Hambantota and 72 in Nuwara Eliya—a total of 288 students. Yet these districts had 37 places in the Medicine, 48 in Engineering and applied science and 117 places in other science oriented courses reserved for them. It seems difficult to justify this when 4292 Grade XII students from Colombo were given only 90 admissions to the Medical Faculty and 70 to the Engineering and 2538 Grade XII students from Jaffna gained only 25 admissions to Medicine and 18 to Engineering. Of course it might be argued that students from some districts deserve special consideration because they are studying without good

teachers or adequate facilities—but here the crucial factor seems to be not the district but the school, for as pointed out earlier schools with inadequate facilities exist in all areas. The Keuneman Committee's system of district schools buttressed by a more extensive and generous system of scholarships might well be the answer. For the interim period a grading of schools would be better than a district quota system but if district quota admissions are limited to 30% the injustice done might well be minimized.

The arguments against the restriction of the district quota to 30% of admissions are two in number. Firstly the *Sinhala Taruna Sangamaya* has charged that such a restriction will "almost completely" remove "the laudable aim of the district system of admissions to disperse higher education benefits to the rural sector" (*Ceylon Observer* 12.10.75). The Keuneman Committee is on record that those whom the district quota system benefited were not the mass of the rural poor but those who could afford to have a secondary education in 'developed' districts after having their primary education in "undeveloped" districts. Perhaps the statistical reports that convinced the Keuneman Committee should be made public to allay fears roused.

The second argument seems to be that the number of Sinhalese entering the University would be reduced if the district quota system were restricted. The Samasta Lanka Trinikayike Sangha Sabha was reported (*Ceylon Observer* of 12.10.75) to have decided to appeal to the Prime Minister to have University admissions on a population basis. For the information the Sangha Sabha, I give below the ethnic breakdown of University admissions obtained by the different communities under open competition.

	Sinhalese	Tamils	Moors/Malays	Others
1950	60%	33%	2.3%	5.0%
1960	67%	29.4%	1.8%	1.8%
1965	78.1%	19.1%	2.0%	.8%
1970	81.1%	15.2%	3.1%	.6%
Population 1971				
Census	71.9	20.5	7.0	.4

The Government has decided to retain media-wise standardization. The only argument advanced

so far in favour of this process is that it will prevent examiners in one medium marking more leniently than that of another. No evidence of significant examiner variability as between media have ever been found at the G.C.E. (A. Level) despite valiant efforts to unearth such differences. Nevertheless in the new atmosphere of suspicion arrived by standardization, it is possible that some examiners in all media might be tempted to mark more leniently than expected. The only way to avoid this is to structure University Entrance Examinations solely on multiple-choice questions which would enable Sinhalese examiners to mark Tamil scripts and vice versa.

One last remark; perhaps the University dons (not merely the University officials appointed by the Minister) should be consulted. University admissions are too important to be left to the politicians.

Dr. C. R. De Silva

Senior Lecturer in History
Peradeniya Campus.



TWO VIEWS

On Estates' Take-Over

—Bryan de Kretser and
Jayantha Somasundaram—

NATIONALISATION?

I suppose none of us who are nationals of Sri Lanka could help feeling that an injustice of history had been repaired with the restoration of the estates to Sri Lanka ownership. But this victory achieved, without blood sweat and tears could become an empty thing.

When thinking of the matter, I am tempted also to remember the national rejoicing when the British were driven out of Trincomalee. Many years have passed since that historic event, but we must ask if Trincomalee, and therefore the nation, has made anything out of it all? Far as I remember, the last time I was there, the place looked abandoned and the harbour was empty.

I find myself these days thinking also of Hongkong. I am fairly certain that the Chinese could achieve total victory and get rid of the British from that busy port, but they have not done so. Perhaps they are realists, they don't worry too much about empty hollow victories; they are strong enough not to allow themselves to be stampeded by wrong notions of race pride. Hongkong continues to be occupied by the British, but the Chinese folks are using it to the maximum to get an ever-expanding trade programme via Hongkong.

We are, alas, not a particularly good example of a nation guided by realism. We prefer substitutes—empty words—solemn gestures. We have nailed for instance Sinhala flags at the masthead of our constitution, when everyone with the dimmest of intellects knows that English was, and is, the language which really matters in this country.

We are a nation made up of Sinhala and Tamil peoples, but we are making no effort at all to enter into dialogue with each other—each by learning the language of the other, as other nations do. Instead we affirm a vague unity, and continue to ignore the neighbour's existence as far as this is possible.

But I have strayed from my subject, the estates having been taken over by the State. We have been told that inventories have been made out during these past few days, listing, I presume, how many imported chamber pots etc were in the Superintendent's bungalow. What these lists will truly achieve remains to be seen, I suspect they will end up on the floors of some harassed Government Agent's office. Frankly I would have been more impressed if, on the day of the take-over, the officials had gone round planting a breadfruit or jak tree, and perhaps applying some fertiliser to the rubber and tea plants.

For after all, when all the jubilation is over, we shall fast move into a vale of tears unless the latex yield improves and the tea sales shoot up.

Bryan de Kretser

ANTI-IMPERIALISM OR EYE-WASH?

For a start, Colvin got up in Parliament and told us what a fine chap Kobbekaduwa is; then Kobbekaduwa got up and told us what a fine chap the Prime Minister is; finally the Prime Minister went on the air and told us what fine chaps we all are. Then the Land Reform (Amendment) Bill became law.

From that time on, people have been falling over each others feet in acclaiming the new law, and what can be accomplished through it. However, it is conveniently forgotten that all that can be accomplished is the vesting, and not the physical take-over of estates. Further, no provision is made nor will any attempts be made to tamper with, the Agency Houses and the system that they have spawned.

The tea estates which are being vested in the State under the provisions of this law, and concerning which there is so much of jubilation, can hardly be considered assets.

"We should carry in mind that it has been a constant refrain in the representations of the Sterling Companies to the British Government," says Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, former Minister of Plantation Industries, "that they are running at little profit or actually at a loss."

He substantiates this by saying that "since November 1973 we (the Sri Lanka Government) have given the plantation sector a package deal, where we are pumping in Rs. 625 million over a five year period in order to render the estates more profitable."

Would it be impertinent to say that we are in fact, as a nation, doing the British plantation owners a great service by buying these unprofitable estates off them at a not unreasonable price?

In the computing of the compensation that is to be paid to the former estate owners, the State subsidy which runs at Rs. 125 million a year will emerge as a significant factor, so will the boom price in tea that had been registered from January 1974. These will immediately boost the apparent value of the estates, resulting in artificially enhanced compensation values being arrived at.

Has anything really changed in the plantation theatre beyond the Sri Lanka Government relieving the former owners of an embarrassing burden?

All that has happened is that the estates have been vested with the State. "But the possession and management of these plantations for and on behalf of the Land Reform Commission is by the same law entrusted to private parties, particularly the Agency Houses," says Dr. Colvin R. de Silva.

The Agency Houses represent the focal point of the imperialist system. Because they have evolved a paraphernalia of management and control which is significant and unique. They are also the principal avenue through which money drains out of this country. "More foreign exchange has gone out in recent years as Head Office charges (from the Agency Houses)" says Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, "than as dividends or profits."

Imperialist exploitation aside, what do we know about the degree and efficiency of management with which the Agency Houses have run the plantations so far? Let us quote from the report of the Commission of Inquiry of the Agency Houses:

"Several witnesses who gave evidence before your Commission and others who submitted memoranda have referred to the short sighted policies adopted by the Agency Houses towards estates under their management. They have stated that the concern of these firms is only in their own remuneration and the annual profits; and that the maintenance and improvement of the estates have been by and large neglected and that they have been allowed to deteriorate further."

No one has even begun to tell us why the Agency Houses should run their estates more efficiently now than they did in the past. The new law provides no penalty or punishment for a breach in the duties or obligations that Agency Houses have to perform in relation to estates.

Which would be a better term to apply to the whole process: anti-imperialism or eyewash?

Jayantha Somasundaram

MAJESTY OF THE LAW

Supremacy

by
R. C. Thavarajah

(Retired Superintendent of Police)

The Law is an ass—quite often has this revoltingly obnoxious truncated quotation been painfully inflicted on us by some pedantic pettifoggers who flaunt their pretended intellectual extravagance! Ostentation, by itself, may be perfectly innocuous but a pathetic and, sometimes, bathetic display of ignorance both of Law as well as English Literature is unpardonably intolerable. The particular quotation, taken completely out of its context, is from Charles Dickens's delectable novel *Oliver Twist*. The correct complete quotation reads "If the Law supposes that", said Mr. Bumble, "the Law is an ass—a idiot" (Oxford Illustrated Edition—Page 399)

Quotations, either notable or arresting are apt in compositions. They do not mean mere reference but a full mention or repetition and their chief virtue is in their accuracy. It is said of plagiarism that you should not murder what you steal and it was not in vain that POPE with somewhat trenchant condemnation said:—

"A little learning is a dangerous thing;

Drink deep or taste not of the Pierian Spring.

Their shallow draughts intoxicate the brain

And drinking largely sobers us again."

I CONSIDER this verdict fittingly condign particularly when a reference is flippantly and unjustifiably derisive as far as the Law is concerned. One should exercise utmost caution in expressing opinions gratuitously especially on the subject of Law as it can not only discourage the eager student but also mischievously mislead the public at large who should accept the maxim 'Ignorantia Juris non excusat'—Ignorance of the Law is no excuse.

When I refer to the Majesty of the Law, I do not intend that readers should conjure up in their minds the impressive grand and ornate Regal trimmings and trappings—the attributes to awe and splendour.

What is decisively pre-eminent is what the great Cicero (106-43 B.C.) pronounced with the profundity of legal discernment—*Nulla Potentia Supra Leges Esse Debet*—'No Power should be above the Laws'. In his introduction to the 'Elements of Roman Law', R. W. Lee, D.C.L.F.B.A., Reader in Roman Law of the Inns of Court refers to the Institutes of Justinian to "Young men desirous of the Law"—*The Imperial Majesty should be not only made glorious by arms but also armed with Laws that war and peace alike may be well directed.*

It is this Supremacy which gives Law its most exalted position in the frame-work of Government—the divine right of the Rulers who should be scrupulously conscious of the fact that Law is a contractual covenant between them and their people. This concept is so vibrantly in conformity with the principle *Salus Populi Supreme Est Lex*—'The Good of the People is the Chief Law.'

By using the term 'Law', I do not merely confine myself to the academic content of written Statute. The Law, in its wisdom and comprehensive expanse, embraces codification, promulgation, the procedure of enforcement, subsequent arraignment and the final dispensation of Justice. It is unnecessary to dwell—to the disgust and tedium of the reader—on the many ponderous treatises on Criminal, Constitutional Commercial Administrative, International or Civil Laws. The purpose of my humble effort is to give emphasis to the simple fact that an erroneous impression caused by a senselessly absurd misquotation can result in serious damage.

TO BEGIN WITH—can it be seriously contended that Law, which has been over the period of years established from sources such as Custom, Religion, Opinions of Jurists, Judicial Precedents, Equity, and Legislation is empty, worthless and likened to a moronic quadruped? Even in accepting these sources, the exacting discriminations have been astutely exercised.

For example, according to the English Law, it is essential that, in order to accept Custom, the pertinent pre-requisites such as antiquity, reasonableness, continuity, certainty and uniformity are most assiduously observed to en-

sure that they are not contrary to Justice and good sense.

As convincing proof that these norms of adaptation are strictly adhered to is a judgement in the case of *Fernando Vs Fernando* reported in 42 New Law Report Page 40 where it was held that "though antiquity might be inferred and reasonableness might be conceded, there was a lack of certainty as to the nature of the custom."

In regard to Religion, the famous philosopher, C.E.M. Joad had said *Religion, if it is to survive, must become a social force. It must permeate every aspect of our personality and extend into all the avocations of our daily life.*

This view is consonant with what Savigny, of the German Historical School of Jurisprudence, said that Law is a product of Natural forces associated with the spirit of the people, something inherent in a society coming to the surface in certain practical manifestations. Consequently, organised communities with studiously developed ancestral cults have transformed religious rules into Law using the rational and immutable standards of right and wrong.

The Law of Manu, 'referred to in ancient Indian mythology as an important treatise on Law, the *Manu Smriti* (The Laws or Code of Man more formally called the *Manava Dharma Shashtra*) which is among the earliest of the post-Vedic metrical treatises on Legal and allied topics, the *Vinaya Rules*, the Law of Moses, the Ten Commandments handed by the Great Jehova at Mount Sinai, the Hadiths, referred to as the counsels or oral laws of Prophet Mohamed, the *Ijmas* or Apostolic Law, *Zeyas*, deductions from Koran are all the bed-rock foundations of Law.

It is totally unnecessary to burden the reader with protracted dissertations of the Legal systems of various countries. Standard text books amply and lucidly establish the fact that laws did not come into existence by some mythical process or by a proverbial 'touch of the magic wand.'

(To be Concluded)



LETTERS

* **University Admission**
 * **Bandaranaike**
And The Minorities

Sir,

It is very regrettable that the Cabinet has failed to listen to the voice of reason coming from the Pieter Keunemen Sectorial Committee. The media standardisation was an offering made on bended knees by one minority Minister at the expense of another minority to the dispensers of power. It was tolerated—if that be the correct word—by the socialist-minded Tamils as a passing phase; but to pursue the same course after the Sectorial Committee's recommendations is sheer obstinacy.

The T.U.F. is now fighting for two nations in Sri Lanka but what is left of the U.F. seems to accept the existence of two nations, two people as fact, with the difference that the U.F. wants to rule both nations with the help of the armed forces and the Tamil politicians who chase the dream of a single nation.

Will people in power understand that what is morally wrong can never be politically right? Will they realise that the triumph of ambition and the drums of power can never drown the still small voice of reason and fairplay, and this small voice shall for ever torment them?

In this era of united and dis-united fronts, memory seems unreliable. Reading the *Ceylon Daily News*, I wonder whether *Lake House* was taken over, or is it that *Lake House* has taken over as it did in 1958. There is yet time for those who rule to realise that a righteous cause is stronger than all the arms one could possess, and that the world is not rich or strong enough to hold a people wronged.

Dr. R. K. Selliah

Bar Road,
 Batticaloa.
 19.10.75

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Sir,

In espousing the cause of the common man did Mr. Bandaranaike espouse the cause of the Sinhalese only? While he strove primarily to restore the Sinhala

common man to his rightful place, he did not exclude the common man of other communities from his care and attention. This is why he is enshrined today in the hearts of everyone irrespective of race or creed.

The Reasonable Use of Tamil Act is concrete proof that he did not wish the Tamils to be left out of his march to true and complete freedom. Language is the soul and spirit of a race and he realised that, without Tamil, the Tamils would still be a subject race.

Having an Act on the Statute Book is different from giving it flesh and meaning. How far has the Government implemented the Reasonable Use of Tamil Act? The common man from the North or East coming to transact official business in Colombo with the Government has to grope to find the right Section in the Government Department. Having found the right Section, he has to find someone to help him. *Is this Reasonable Use of Tamil?* Can't the Government be magnanimous as to have the name Boards in all 3 languages and to appoint one or two Tamil officers to each section to help these unfortunate Citizens (now second class) to transact OFFICIAL BUSINESS WITH THEIR GOVERNMENT?

There are many who obstructed Mr. Bandaranaike in his march to progress and unity for personal reasons. Many there still are who would obstruct this Government in its forward march. But this Government has the strength and conviction to do the right thing. Will it do it and make the Tamils feel that they are not unwanted in their motherland where fate and not they themselves have planted themselves?

Ceylon Tamil (particularly Jaffna Tamils) pride over their language which is a refinement and improvement on the Tamil spoken in India or elsewhere. This is due evidently to its close contact and association with the Sinhala and English Languages. To deny Ceylon Tamils their language on the grounds that Tamil is firmly established elsewhere is therefore, a great crime.

If you tickle a Sinhalese, he laughs. If you prick him, he bleeds, and if you hurt him, he feels the pain. The Tamils have the same feelings and they are hurt to a

man over the question of their language even though some do not show it.

Politics have clouded and coloured a simple humane problem. Will this Government solve this simple issue and take the country forward as one united family winning the praise and gratitude of everyone both here and abroad?

The need of the hour is not political leadership but statesmanship.

D. J. Thamocharam

9, Vivekananda Avenue,
 Colombo 6.
 5.10.75

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Sir,

Through the article published on Bandaranaike commemoration day under the above caption, Mr. E. R. S. R. Coomaraswamy had sought to improve Mr. Bandaranaike's and the present Government's image in the eyes of the Tamil people. While appreciating his good intentions, I fear that unless some points are clarified, the article might create a further prejudice among the Sinhala people against the Tamils, as a people who cannot be satisfied.

For instance his statement "the New Constitution drawn up by the UF Government has gone far in the treatment of minorities and has certainly gone further than anything achieved between 1965 and 1970." is not factually correct. While it is not denied that this Government has taken a forward step in permitting the use of Tamil in Law Courts under prescribed conditions, the fact that it is not a Constitutional right is what irks the Tamil people, since this facility is revocable, unlike a Constitutional provision. Why this provision was not granted even on pain of the FP withdrawing from the Constituent Assembly not being known, this action has definitely increased the suspicions in the minds of the Tamils as to the Bonafides of the Government.

As against this one forward step which itself is weak by reason of it not being a Constitutional Provision, the Government has taken two steps backward which have gone to further alienate the Tamils. They are:—

1. The automatic abolition of protective Clause No. 29 of the Soulbury Constitution which guaranteed against discrimination

of Minorities, and the non-substitution of a similar clause in the New Constitution.

2. The putting into cold storage of the regulations passed in 1966 under the Tamil Language Special Provisions Act of 1958, thus nullifying certain benefits already granted by another Government. Such nullification was rendered possible by reason of clause I above.

In the matter of discrimination against Tamils, Mr. Coomaraswamy imputes it all to the UNP, when he states "Nor should we forget that he (Mr. Bandaranaike) did not discriminate in any way against the Minorities in practice in the way in which other leaders have done subsequently while paying up lip-service to National Unity and purporting to lead an ostensible National Government". But whether this Government has acted fairly by the minorities is a question he should sincerely try to answer. It not only lost the opportunity when promulgating the New Constitution to make restitution for the wrongs done during a period of emotional restlessness and immaturity, but it went beyond and rescinded what little other Governments granted. May I also inquire whether it is any different from the accusation Mr. Coomaraswamy makes against the UNP, when leaders of this Government have themselves indicated from time to time, at necessary moments, the need for dialogues to settle these issues, and failed to follow up with action.

When is this vexed problem of the Tamils going to cease to be the shuttle-cock in the political game between the opposing parties? So long as democracy continues to be just counting of heads, regardless of sectional interests, there can be no salvation for the minorities, unless the hearts of men widen out to embrace their fellow countrymen not only in economic and social spheres, but Linguistically as well, as so as to afford equal opportunities to all citizens.

J. K. Retnanandam

31 A/1, Boswell Place,
Colombo 6.
7,10,75

* * *

JEAN PAUL SARTRE

The Prophet Of Paris

"My career as a writer is completely destroyed" (page 26 *Time* of July 7, 1975), Existentialist Jean Paul Sartre, now 70 is reported to have said. He has according to this correspondent, "difficulty in walking more than half a mile and he has had treatment for high blood pressure." Almost blind in his right eye at the age of 3 owing to leucoma, vision is failing in the other, now. "I can still talk" this novelist and playwright is reported to have said. If the French television could find the financial backing Sartre hopes to do a series of television programmes.

Sartre acknowledged as one of the great French literary figures to emerge from World War II, was the founder (in the 1940s) of a new philosophy. Without a knowledge of French it would be difficult to appreciate his works as a novelist and playwright but certainly one can appreciate his philosophical work. His *Existence and Nothingness* which his most faithful followers have read and understood was a notable contribution.

The son of a French naval officer, Sartre was an ill-paid professor of Philosophy in a Paris Lycee. During World War II he joined as a private in the French army, was taken prisoner during the collapse of June 1940 and spent 9 months in a German POW camp. It was here that he first conceived the ideas that made him famous almost overnight. But before that he served actively in the Front National, the left wing of the French Resistance movement.

Sartre's philosophy simply amounts to this:—Man exists but he exists by his actions—"*I act therefore I am*". Existence is doubly a struggle for life, not only have you got to fight in order to survive but you must fight to live, for without fighting you are nothing. Such theories may easily lead to aggression though the same ideas could be viewed from another angle, as a call to arms against the invaders. A pre-condition is that Man must be free. It indicates a trend of thought predominant in some communities today.

Existentialism was whispered during the war years for many months in literary circles among especially students but it was only after the liberation of France that full public discussion started. A report says "Sartre's lectures were delivered to packed audiences, to be damned with faint praise, or praised with faint dams. But it called forth the unanimous concert of vituperation that greeted Sartre in the freed French press."

One respected magazine summed up his book *L'Étre et le Néant* as a fad of ugliness. "Sartre's books" continued the critic, "seems to be a transcription of the mental life of ignoble, pretentious people, a sickening mixture of philosophical technicalities, morbid tastes...one would take distinct pleasure in crushing"

But Sartre went on with his work.

He called his new philosophy Existentialism. Some say it can be traced back to certain German philosophers, though its real essence remains almost indefinable in the author's mind except when he presents it in art form.

Sartre proclaims "I act, therefore I am". It is a philosophy of pure energy. "Vicious circle" is laid in hell a hell without fire and brimstone but with the banality of second-rate French hotels. There are only four actors. One character is a journalist who has run away from conscription, a bully who made the life of his sensitive and adoring wife, a misery; the second is a queer character whose mental cruelty has hounded, her cousin to death; the third a pretty woman whose who has driven her lover to suicide, the fourth is an attendant who hardly appears at all. The play is about each one being the inexorable tormentor of the other. Eventually it dawns Hell is nothing but the other people.

The mood corresponds closely to the despondency to be encountered in the world at large.

Better known as the Prophet of Paris not because he lived there but because he also worked in the nearby cafes where he received his followers, wrote his lectures articles and plays—it is where one meets in Paris the Existentialist community most.

T. M. G. SAMAT

* * *

Confidentially

Drugs And The SPC—1

IS THERE NOT AN URGENT NEED FOR GOVERNMENT to look into the work, activities and the operations of the State Pharmaceuticals Corporation (SPC) which enjoys a monopoly in the wholesale import and distribution of all drugs? That one of the matters Government must examine with care is the end-result of the work of the Corporation? That the Corporation was set up because it was alleged that the private trade was exploiting the public and the Government? That it was alleged that far too much was being spent in foreign exchange by private importers? That there was dishonest inflation of the import bills by importers who retained secret commissions abroad? That the local manufacturers of vital drugs were only cogs in the complex machinations of international multinationals who were taking this country for a ride? That unnecessary branded drugs were being foisted on a believing public? That the list of the sins piled up by fanatic left-wing enthusiasts about the malpractices indulged in by the private drug trade were long and impressive—with Commissions and Committees of Inquiries to buttress political arguments—and Government succumbed to these pressures and set up a State Pharmaceutical Corporation (SPC) and made it a wholesale monopoly? That the private trade was allowed a part of the retail drug trade? That a topheavy superstructure (as usual with all such state institutions) was set up? That political loyalists of one brand (not of the generic kind) were dumped into the Corporation? That the salary bill of this mini-colossus has, among other things, sent up the controlled price of the cheapest and commonest drugs? That those who know say that the price increase cannot be attributed either to global inflation or the oil price hike? That Treasury too exacted a heavy levy from the SPC? That a new Customs levy of about 25% was also imposed? That the major part of this price rise was due to the Treasury levy and the costs of the superstructure which has been built up in order to find jobs

for party loyalists? That the excuse for all this high flying was that the State Pharmaceutical Corporation (SPC) of Sri Lanka was fighting imperialism in the multinational firms in the drug trade which were cheating the common people of Ceylon with branded names and useless drugs? That branded names were wiped out with the one swipe of the pen and generic terms introduced to make life hell for the common man who wanted to buy a simple drug? That praises were sung about the struggle Sri Lanka was waging against drug imperialism? That three years of this anti-imperialism has brought no benefits? That on the other hand it has brought a distaste to the common man about fighting imperialism in this way? That there is even greater resentment against those who want to fight imperialism in this way?

IS NOT A FACT that the bureaucratic bungling of the amateurs in the SPC has created a shortage of the most essential drugs in the country? That instead of saving money, more money is spent in airfreighting drugs which are in short supply? That the *Daily Mirror*, on 30.10.75 spotlighted one of these instances of SPC bungling? That the *Daily Mirror* report read as follows: "The anti-malaria drive of the Health Department has been severely hampered because of the acute shortage of drugs; preventive treatment for malaria in the North Central Province—where the epidemic rages in its severest form—is on the verge of breaking down, according to reports reaching Colombo: up to last week medical personnel in this region have not received the drugs that had been indentured for: as a temporary measure the Health Department has airlifted a consignment of drugs spending Rs. 90,000 as freight charges alone: however, according to the Health authorities, these drugs will be sufficient for only three or four days: the anti-malaria campaign, it is learnt, has asked for an allocation of Rs. 36 million for the purchase of drugs to tackle the spread of malaria in many parts of the country: according to the Health authorities the preventive treatment for malaria has virtually been suspended because of the shortage of drugs: preventive treatment, according to health officers reduces the incidence of malaria although it did not prevent a person from contracting malaria: the NCP has the largest number of malaria especially

the more virulent cerebral cases malaria: it has been estimated that nearly 25,000 cases of cerebral malaria had been detected in this province alone." That it has been known that anti-malaria drugs have been in short supply for over a year now? That the Health authorities and the Civil Medical Stores blame the SPC for the situation? That the SPC has maintained a discreet silence on this matter? That private pharmacists and druggists (and medical practitioners) have not had adequate stocks of anti-malaria drugs for a long long time? That they say that there were no stocks with SPC? That in the bad old days anti-malaria drugs were freely available at a fraction of the present controlled price? That an official of the SPC (unofficially) told the *Tribune* that the SPC expected the public to go to government hospitals and not be "rooked" by private retail druggists? That there are not enough hospitals to go round where malaria cases are concerned? That it is not only in the matter of anti-malaria drugs that this shortage exists? That this shortage exists in whole range of drugs? That what is worse is that sub-standard drugs have been imported? That SPC bigwigs talk pompously about "tests" they have conducted to ensure high quality? That the experience of practitioners, and even doctors in government hospitals, is that many of the SPC imports are sub-standard? That the *Daily Mirror* on October 16, 1975 had revealed that drugs worth lakhs imported by the SPC had become outdated? That among the drugs mentioned are Vitamin B 12, Triple Vaccine and Carbecellin injections? That these are only a few of the large range of medicines which had been outdated? That large stocks of such outdated drugs were lying in the stores of the SPC and that the SPC were seeking ways and means of disposing them? That the *Daily Mirror* reported that the SPC had called for applications from prospective buyers for these drugs? That the Civil Medical Stores has rejected the drugs? (That FRDB's Budget has now taken the first step towards bringing relief to drug users—and they are legion—by removing the 25% import duty on all drug imports? That this does not make the SPC any better?)





DOLLAR COFFEE

is the best

It is the

CHOICE

of the

PLAYERS

and my

FAVOURITE



SAVE MORE TREES
PLANT MORE TREES

RUK REKAGANNO

THE TREE (Protection And Propagation) SOCIETY

FOR THE NATION'S FUTURE
TREES ARE IMPORTANT

TREES ARE IMPORTANT FOR THE
FOOD PRODUCTION DRIVE

SPACE DONATED