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Letter From The Editor

FOOTPRINTS IN THE SANDS OF SRI LANKA. That is the picture on the cover this week. This will remind our readers of the cliché *footprints in the sands of time* and all that it implies. Everybody makes footprints on sand, or mud, or even on gravel, but unless the footprints are made on rock—carved or chiselled—they vanish soon. Some footprints make no impression at all: they are not even recognisable and merge even before they are made with the sand or the mud. Some footprints are clear and recognisable for a while: they last for few minutes, a few hours, or maybe a few days, before the winds of change sweep them away. Every animate being makes footprints but we are concerned only with the human footprints—although it is difficult to say whether the footprints in the cover picture are human or animal. (Some will quarrel with us that animals are often human whilst humans are nearly always animal in what they do). Whether human or animal, footprints disappear. Even in the context of earth time, the heaviest of footprints do not last very long. In the context of the time of eternity, however, earthly footprints come and go in the billionth of a twinkle into which a second could be divided. The destiny of footprints is not merely a literal exercise. It has great significance metaphorically. It is in that sense that the poets speak of the *footprints in the sands of time*. Even the little history we know of the past of human life upon earth makes it abundantly clear that the most monumental works of man last only for a time—they are made, some flourish for a while, but all disappear. A few like the Great Wall of China or the Sphinx (and the Pyramids of Gizeh) remain as relics having long ago outlived their usefulness and their glory. How much longer they can remain even as historical relics before they are overwhelmed by some natural calamity or an act of human destruction is yet to be seen! Cities and civilisations have come and gone without a trace. The few faint traces of the past found here and there are today glorified and romanticised by scheming persons for political or jingoistic purposes. This phenomenon has become universal on our planet where tribalism and racialism have been elevated (and ennobled) into acceptable credos under the guise of resurgent nationhood. In this contemporary onrush for national identity for every fractional segment of humanity—said to be a rewarding, deserving and worthwhile objective for every group—the worst in man has surfaced on a global scale. What we witness today in every part of the world is the assertion by every tribe, especially the larger tribes which have acquired power, arms and affluence, of aggressive nationhood. The smaller tribes, and particularly the minorities within each tribal conglomeration, suffer, but in the mad stampede for a place under the sun on the basis of yardsticks like the *gnp, per capita* income and consumption, and what not, (standards as transitory as footprints in the sands of time), man seems temporarily lost to the virtues of quiet contemplation and ordinary living which alone can bring that degree of happiness which makes life worthwhile. But the political entrepreneur of the modern age will ask what is "quiet contemplation" and "ordinary living": he will insist that these are catch words of those who accept exploitation, servility and slavery. There is no doubt that this is the age of the political entrepreneur who is able to capture the imagination of the masses to command political power. In some countries, (so-called democratic), vote-catching and vote-counting assume an importance which hide the power of men and women of riches and affluence who manipulate the system and the machinery of mass voting through the instruments of mass media and mass communication. In other countries, an elite or a hierarchy exercises dictatorial power under various guises and excuses. In yet others, anarchical shifts in power alignments within the groups which control armed power keeps the ball of political power rolling. And in nearly every country, bar a few, "outside" influences and interferences, and the conflicts and confrontations therefrom, keep political life alive. But in all this contemporary turbulence, unless a few men of discernment stand up and point out that the fundamental virtues of humanistic ethics are observed, civilisation such as we know it in the twentieth century will disappear without a trace. In Sri Lanka, far too many people in the seats of power tend to think and talk in superlatives in the real belief that what they do is immutably permanent for all eternal time—that they have been divinely entrusted (or empowered by destiny) to make Sri Lanka the finest, richest, most civilised and most educated (with the NCGE banishing colonialistic culture) nation in the world. Such objectives are no doubt inspiring with a high potential for vote-catching, but they have a suicidal impact when achievement is nowhere near promise and reality is different from the over-publicised dream.

TRIBUNE

Founded In 1954

A Journal of Ceylon and
World Affairs

Editor. S. P. Amarasingam

Every Saturday

January 10, 1976

Vol. 20. No. 33

TRIBUNE,

43, DAWSON STREET,
COLOMBO - 2.

Telephone: 33172

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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

* General Election * UNP * SLFP-CP

WITH THE BACKDROP of the no-confidence motion against the Prime Minister which was debated on December 23, 1975, and a threatened no confidence motion against the Finance Minister Felix R. Dias Bandaranaike very much in the air, parties in the Opposition, (especially), are getting ready for the next General Elections in 1977 or even earlier. In fact, some parties, like the LSSP, seem tempted to believe that the Elections will be held much earlier than 1977.

The UNP, however, seems to think that the elections will not be held before the nonaligned summit Conference in August 1976, but are getting themselves ready for an election any time after that. The FP too is clearing its decks and hoisting its battle flag—it has threatened to stage a satyagraha campaign for a "separate state" next June (no doubt to steal a little thunder from the NAC summit) and also mobilise Tamil voters with an "extremist" cry to meet the frustration and bewilderment that presently envelops the Tamil peoples as a result of the acts of commission and omission of the Government.

The CP has announced the appointment of 21 electoral organisers (does this mean that the CP aims at contesting 21 seats?).

The no-confidence motion against the PM had thrown the SLFP (and the UF) on the defensive but, an attempt is now being made to mount an electoral offensive with the opening of the first stage of the Mahaveli Diversion Scheme. The Government had believed that the Mahaveli waters and Pasalal oil would ensure victory at the next General Elections. Pasalal oil has temporarily boomeranged because of over-precipitation and boastful promises (Tribune's pleas that oil comes only slowly were ignored and denounced), and it is not likely to help the Government: on the other hand the Opposition can use it to demonstrate governmental ineptitude. Mahaveli waters is the one sure thing the Government can count on with which to woo

the voters, but unless the prices of foodstuffs and essentials like textiles come down drastically—much more than the minimal drop (very temporary) after the last budget—Mahaveli waters will prove to be another election gundu, a gimmick that misfired. Prices can be brought down only if production is doubled or even trebled, but with the constipated lethargy which inhibits our bureaucracy (and the State has its finger in every pie) there is very little hope of any major breakthrough in the foreseeable future in the production of food, textiles and other essentials.

THIS IS UNDOUBTEDLY A DISMAL SETTING for a Government to enter the race for a General Elections, but the elections cannot be postponed beyond 1977—unless some actions of the Opposition (like a satyagraha by the FP) makes it necessary for the Government to extend the Emergency and postpone the elections. Political circles feel that the Opposition parties will be very careful not to indulge in any provocative extra-parliamentary activities which might result in the putting off of the next General Elections.

The UNP is now preparing itself for a serious bid for power at the next elections and with the disarray in governmental circles, after the breakaway of the LSSP from the UF, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene is speaking with a great deal of confidence. At the last Congress of the Party which was held on December 20, 1975, the UNP has sought to present a new "image" of itself with a socialist flavouring. In the coming weeks and months, the new UNP programme and policies (and the resolutions adopted at the Congress) will be examined, but in this issue excerpts from the opening bars of the "new UNP" orchestration in its annual report are cited for the record:

"Very extensive changes have been made in Party policy and a document containing the Party's recommendations to these Sessions will be placed before it for approval. It will be seen that the Party wishes to resolve at these Sessions that the means of production, distribution and exchange shall belong to the people. This is a radical change of UNP policy and a future UNP Government looks forward to handing over to the people themselves the ownership and the

rewards accruing to them from what belongs to them and the results of their efforts. We foresee a Sri Lanka in which those, who work in Companies and Corporations will, as a matter of right, own shares in these institutions and where the broad mass of people will also have the opportunity to be shareholders not merely in theory but in practice as well...."

Such is the central theme of the new UNP programme. This description of the new UNP comes from the report tabled at the sessions. This makes it clear that the UNP has decided to get as close to Marx's Communist Manifesto as possible leaving enough loopholes to let the small man have his private property and exercise control on the Companies and Corporations through corporate shareholding. It is not clear how this new scheme of public ownership, in which the small man is made to feel that he too had stake in the economy, will be implemented. But it is worth watching how the UNP will set about it.

The following excerpts from the report gives an insight into current UNP thinking and logic.

"The last year has seen many changes in the political situation as well as in the philosophy of the Party. When we met in Conference last year, the danger to democracy in the most vital aspect of it, viz. the attitude of the Government to the General Elections was extremely grave. It was a time when the Government openly hinted that a General Election may or may not be held even in 1977. Some responsible Ministers, particularly at May Day celebrations had tried to take the position that a General Election would be held only if the people desired that one would be necessary. How they intended to consult the people on so important a matter was very clear. They intended to bring their supporters to various rallies and makes them say that the Government should continue without going to the polls. The Party considered that the most important political problem to be resolved was to ensure that an election would be held and our President took unprecedented steps to build up public opinion to achieve the purpose of bringing pressure to bear on the Govern-

ment to hold a General Election. One of the outstanding efforts of the President was when he obtained unanimous support of the Party's Parliamentary Group to agree to resign their seats in Parliament either individually or together and to re-contest their seats on the single issue that the Government had no moral right to continue in power after the 5 years of the present National Assembly came to an end on the 27th of May 1975. Thereafter the President decided that he would set an example by resigning his own seat in Colombo South and facing a by-election on this most vital issue. There was no opposition in the Party to the President taking this great step but there were a few who expressed the fear that the Government was so undemocratic that it might postpone holding of a by-election indefinitely and such a step would deprive the Party of the valuable leadership in Parliament of our President. The President, however, declared that for the great cause that he was fighting the personal sacrifice of not being in Parliament was a small price to pay considering the gravity of the situation.

"In May 1975, he resigned his seat in Colombo South and the Government declared June 19th, 1975, as Nomination Day for his electorate but all parties in Government decided not to take the risk of putting forward a Party candidate. Certain people in Government, however, seized upon this opportunity and sponsored from behind the scenes a small group of our members, one of whom decided to contest the Leader on issues totally unconnected with the rights of the people to a general election or even that of the democratic freedoms involved. These governmental forces tried every possible means and financed this movement with all the power at its command. A large number of members of the Party, however, stood loyally by the Leader and worked in the by-election with great enthusiasm. The Leader himself visited his electors and was received with great affection wherever he went. The result of the election was that our Leader won the Colombo South by-election with a record majority of 26,000 votes. Seven of the eight independents who contested him lost their deposits. Public opinion expressed in this manner left the Government in no doubt whatsoever

that the people were of the opinion that the Government had lost its moral right to govern after May 27th 1975 and that further continuance of the Government in power was not only undemocratic but against the will of the people.....

"This pressure of public opinion led the Prime Minister into making a declaration that she had no intention whatsoever of continuing to govern after May 27th 1977 and that on that date or before that she would go to the people at a General Election. This was the first public utterance made by the Government on this most important subject and it helped to silence many of her colleagues in the Cabinet and Members of her Parliamentary Group, who had earlier expressed undemocratic views.

"Another great feature of the last year in the Party was the rapid development started by the Leader to take the Party to the people. He made an important public utterance at the May Day Rally, in 1975, in which he pointed out that the Party was being supported by the large mass of the people who very willingly and enthusiastically paid a membership fee of Re 1/- per annum. The Leader declared that he was determined to throw the doors of the Party open to the people in the complete confidence that they would preserve the future of the Party as the only weapon of democracy in the country. The resulting activity throughout the island has been that we have today over 550,000 members, who have paid Rs 1/- each to join the Party. In fact in October 1975 alone the Party Head-quarters received a membership subscription from 54,000 members who subscribed Rs. 54,000/-. This movement is gathering pace and in 1976 the Party looks forward to reaching a membership of a million in the country. Organisers of electorates have been requested by the Party that in every electorate there should be a minimum of 5,000 members, each of them buying a Rs 1/- ticket of membership. The importance of these two drives headed by the leader is that the Party is no longer restricted to a few at the centre or at the electoral level. Instead, we are getting stronger every day in the only way a political Party can be strong viz. with the active support of

the majority of the people in the country.....

"...During the year the Government was weakened considerably by the shattering loss of its mass support by the resignation of the LSSP from the United Left Front. Although the Government tried to make it appear that the LSSP has been removed from participation in the Government because of vituperative politics, it became clear in several ways that the true reason centred round the fact of Dr. N. M. Perera being the Minister of Finance. One reason pointing to this conclusion was that Dr. Colvin R de Silva was assured that he could continue if he so wished in his own Ministry. The second factor was that the Government very clearly said that even Dr. N. M. Perera could have Ministerial rank but that he could not under any circumstances continue in the portfolio of Finance. It became apparent that there was more than one reason for this attitude. Firstly, it seemed obvious that there were forces within the Cabinet wanting to seize the powerful position of the Ministry of Finance. The other was that there had obviously been a complete change in policy of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and that the budgets created by Dr. N. M. Perera affecting the taxation of the capitalist class could no longer be supported by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. This crisis showed the clear parting of the ways from what has been called the march to Socialism to a new direction which can be called the revival of capitalism. The result, however, was the formulation of a budget by Dr. N. M. Perera's successor, Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike, which has been very clearly described by our Leader as a budget which completely turns right about and marches in a totally opposite direction to that which the Government had taken from 1970 onwards. The support of the industrial working class that the Government had secured with its partnership with the LSSP has now been eroded but in any event that particular section of the working class was rapidly moving towards our Party because of its disillusionment with the policies of the Government. We are thus facing 1976 in the strongest position we have ever had with the people and the political decisions made by our Leader have been justified and the leader-

ship he has given has built up the strength of our Party to a level which it had never before enjoyed in its history.....

"...Rallies of the Party are held under extremely difficult circumstances. In different areas the police interpret the meaning of the word 'procession' in different ways. A spontaneous gathering of people anxious to greet our Leader and to garland him is considered a threat to peace and under directions from political authorities the police attempt to disallow the people to greet their own Leader.

"The country will not be surprised at these manifestations of a desire to crush democratic freedoms particularly when it knows the record of the Ministry of Local Government where Local Bodies with a UNP majority have been dissolved and others where there are stooges of the Government have had their terms extended. Ever since this Government came into power it has run away from facing the people's verdict at Local Government Elections.

"We welcome the protest made by the LSSP against the undemocratic practices of the Government. They are today at the receiving end of the arbitrary powers of Government showing very dramatically the truth of the statement that those who govern must not forget that one day they will be at the receiving end of whatever draconian laws they will promulgate to keep themselves in power

And so it goes on. The resolutions adopted and the new programme of the UNP is in line with the new "socialist" objective the Party has set before itself.

IN THE MEANTIME, the Times group is resolving its mini-confrontation with the CP its own way. Times publications gave front page publicity to the Keuneman interview in the *Aththa* in which he criticised the alleged anti-CP and anti-progressive activities of the Times papers starting with H. G. S. Ratnaweera's story. The statement of the Central Committee of the CP on the current international situation and on the latest national developments were published in full in the Times papers—unlike in *Lake House* papers which had published only truncated versions.

Thereafter Mr. Anura Bandaranaike went on record in a

public speech to assert that he had at no time sought to oust the CP from the UF or the Government, and that he valued SLFP-CP unity which he said was the cornerstone of the Government's strength. This assertion by Mr. Anura Bandaranaike defused the mini-confrontation that had been building up. But the policy-makers of the Times had their say in the issue of the Times of Ceylon Sunday Illustrated of January 4. Narada—undoubtedly the ablest political commentator writing for the Times publications today and unquestionably one of the most knowledgeable and versatile of political columnists now writing in the daily press—had a bash at the CP in his own way, and at the same time set out the line of the Times. In this column *People And Politics*, he stated:

Last week this paper in its front page lead story gave the Ceylon Communist Party an assurance that the Times Group had no intention to disrupt SLFP-CP unity. This assurance was given to the party secretary and Minister of Housing and Construction, Mr. Pieter Keuneman, in reply to certain charges made in an exclusive interview given by Mr. Keuneman to the CP-controlled daily, *'Aththa'*.

We trust the Minister of Housing and Construction has accepted our assurance that the Times Group, will not be a party to any attempt to weaken the SLFP-CP alliance—

the only alliance of progressive forces in the country that could effectively prevent a resurgence of the Right.

The Times Group newspapers are neither party papers nor party controlled newspapers. We make this comment in the light of certain observations made in the course of the interview given to the *'Aththa'* by the CP general secretary that the Times Group has attempted to disrupt the work of certain progressive Ministers such as Mr. T. B. Subasinghe, Mr. T. B. Ilangaratne and Mr. Hector Kobbekaduwa.

This is not so. However, we are intrigued by this attempt to portray only three SLFP Ministers as progressives. Does it mean that Ministers like Mr. Maithripala Senanayake, who is the u.c.challenged voice of the NCP settled peasantry, Mr. George Rajapakse, the president of the Lanka Soviet Friendship Society, Mr. T. B. Tennekoon, who is perhaps, the only politician who thinks and speaks in Sinhala, the language of the majority of the masses, less progressive than some others?

We pose this question not in order to disrupt progressive unity but merely to draw attention to the pitfalls of loose labelling of individuals as progressives or reactionaries. The Minister of Finance, Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike, who has, often stated in public that he is not a Marxist, introduced sweeping judicial reforms which destroyed pockets of privilege

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and brought the law within reach of the common citizen. He, more than all others, was responsible for the decentralisation of the budget which enabled mass involvement in development. Do these pioneering reforms make him less progressive?

Perhaps it is wiser to allow the people of this country to determine who the progressive are.

The *Times of Ceylon Sunday Illustrated* had also found an answer to the statement of the CP on the current international situation in a lengthy letter written by a "teacher-trainee" from Galle interested in foreign affairs. It was a lengthy piece and was intended to show that CP was toeing the Moscow line without any consideration for the foreign policy statements of the non-aligned Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Mrs. Bandaranaike (with special attention drawn to the S'na'i Agreement). The aim and objective of the letter-writer was to ask the PM and the Government not to follow the foreign policy line suggested by the CP. This is what he said:

"The *Times* has once again proved that it is the only independent newspaper available to us readers by not only publishing Mr. Pieter Keuneman's strong attack on the *Times* with the editor's reply, but also the Communist Party statement on the front page. That is the best answer to Mr. Keuneman.

"Will you also permit an ordinary reader who does not belong to any party and is not a political bigwig to comment on the CP statement? I am only a humble teacher-trainee but have always been a keen student of foreign issues. The CP is giving the government all kinds of 'advice' on foreign policy and you, Mr. Editor, have said that the *Times* supports the unity of the SLFP and CP but will not tolerate any attempt to create a "government within the government" like the LSSP tried to do. The unity of SLFP-CP has also been correctly emphasised by Mr. Anura Bandaranaike. But I wish to challenge the CP on its advice to Premier Sirimavo Bandaranaike on foreign policy.

"Suddenly the CP has got very excited about the non-aligned conference and the Indian Ocean peace zone proposal of Madame Bandaranaike. Will any CP member answer these questions? Is the Communist Party 'non-aligned' or 'aligned' with one power bloc?

Will the CP please pass a resolution criticising the USSR for not voting at the UN for the peace zone proposal about which the CP is so worried?

"All of us know that neither the USA nor the USSR voted for Premier Bandaranaike's proposal although more than 90 non-aligned countries supported it. As Mr. Tissa Wijeyeratne explained at a seminar organised by the SLFP Youth League under the chairmanship of Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, the superpowers are against this proposal as shown by their abstaining at voting time....."

Thereafter the letter writer runs through various items of interest especially the S'na'i Agreement, and the current situation in Angola. Commenting on the point made that the Cuban volunteers had been "invited" to Angola by a legal government, the writer went on say in the concluding part:

"...Have we forgotten so soon what happened in 1971? Supposing the People's Liberation Front (Che Guevarists) also got foreign troops and they came on 'invitation'? Whether it is the Ford doctrine or Brezhnev doctrine or Castro doctrine, we small countries must guard our sovereignty and freedom carefully.

"Our people, who are not prepared to be stooges or slaves of any superpowers, look to Madam Prime Minister, who has courageously and wisely led our country in world affairs and won the great honour of presiding over the 80-nation summit conference, because of her clear straightforward policy of non-alignment. Beware of the Greeks when they bring gifts.

"To use a Sinhalese proverb, the superpowers want us small nations to be like the cats to pull the nuts out of the fire. We must not become pawns in the chess games played by these superpowers."

Such is the mini-confrontation which exists within the UF coalition. As we had suggested in this column last week, there is a sentiment in SLFP circles—induced or spontaneous, it does not matter—that the CP should "indigenise" or "nativise" itself much more than it has so far done in order to enable the SLFP to withstand criticisms from circles in the SLFP (and from LSSP groups) regarding its "coalition" with the CP. It is pointed out that the French CP and the Italian CP have grown and matured, and that it was time that the Ceylon CP also followed suit.

'NUCLEAR WAR WILL NOT MEAN END OF HUMAN RACE'

Washington,

An atomic war will not necessarily mean the end of human life on the earth and the planet's ecological balance may be re-established within a quarter of a century, according to a report just published by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. The report, drawn up at the request of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency by a group of researchers, deals with possible repercussions of a nuclear war (between super powers) on countries at some distance from the centre of the clash. If the force of nuclear deflagrations is equal to 10,000 million tons of TNT, the document says, such countries will suffer the following effects:

The ecological system will be disturbed, but because of its great "resilience" it can re-establish its balance in 25 years. The atmosphere's ozone layer will shrink by between 20 and 40 per cent, but can return to normal in about 40 years. Because of the reduction in the protective ozone shield surrounding the earth, ultraviolet radiation reaching the planet from the sun will become more intense, damaging crops and causing an increase in skin cancers. However, the effects of ultraviolet rays on the earth's fauna and flora are not yet well known. An increase of two per cent in the number of genetic defects will occur in the generation of babies born after the war. Four generations later the rate will be only one per cent higher than it is now. The results of the research by the National Academy of Sciences have been strongly criticised by the Federation of American Scientists, an independent organisation, that deals with issues relating to nuclear arms control. "The state of science being what it is", the Federation has said in a communique, the report "proves little".—AFP.

CHRONICLE

Dec. 24 — Dec. 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.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24: Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, MP for Agalawatte, and the former Minister of Plantations Industry and Constitutional Affairs, opening the debate in the NSA yesterday in the No-Confidence Motion against the Prime Minister said that one had to take note of the behaviour, or rather the misbehaviour of the mass media in relation to the motion: he further said though a decision on the motion would be taken today this would not be the end of the matter but would be the beginning of a process which would end with the judgement of the people: Dr. Silva said that the principal element in the charge was that the Prime Minister herself had participated in a scheme to beat the Land Reform Law during the interval of eight days between the passing of the Bill and its certification: Mr. Hector Kobbekaduwa, Minister of Agriculture and Lands, replying the charges said that it had been proved that the transaction of some lands commenced as far back as 1969 when Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike was leader of the Opposition: he produced an affidavit to prove the point: he also said that from statutory declarations made by Mrs. Bandaranaike and her family under the Land Reform Act it was clear that well over 2000 acres of land belonging to the Prime Minister and her family were vested with the Land Reforms Commissions: Mr. Pieter Keuneman, Minister of Housing and Constructions, said that the Prime Minister told the Cabinet of the transactions: at the voting, the No-Confidence Motion was defeated by 57 votes: 100 voted against and 43 voted for: the Independent MP for Galle Mr. W. Dahanayake and the Independent MP for Jaffna, Mr. C. X. Martin voted against the Motion while the independent MP Mr. Ronnie de Mel of Devinuwara voted for the Motion and Mr. Mudiyanse Tennekoon, independent MP for Nikaweratiya, was absent: the UNP, FP, LSSP and SLVB voted for the Motion—CDN & CDM. Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, in reply to the charges in the No-Confidence Motion said that she did not fraudulently dispose the said lands and reaffirmed that she cannot be chased out of the post of Prime Minister however much the UNP and the LSSP attempted to do it: she also said that there will not be general elections till 1977—VK. Mr. Pieter Keuneman, Minister of Housing and Construction and the Secretary of the Communist Party in a statement to the *Aththa* said though the Times Group of newspapers are attempting to tell the masses that there is a split in the CP there is no such thing in the party. Top level investigations are being carried out regarding the fire that broke out the Tulhiriya Textile Mills, the day before yesterday—DM. The *Janadina* editorially referring to the question of bonus in State Corporations said there should be a uniform system of payment which would solve the problems of strike and threat to strike by

employees in these Corporations. The last hostages held by pro-Palestinian guerillas who broke into the OPEC headquarters in Vienna a few days ago were released yesterday from an Austrian airliner at Algiers: Algiers authorities announced that after releasing all the hostages the guerillas had laid down their weapons and surrendered. Israel said that it will not attend next month's UN Security Council meeting to which representatives of the PLO had been invited.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25: The *Daily Mirror* editorially said that the Opposition's no-faith debate against the Prime Minister was a "damp squib". The *Aththa* in an editorial on the No-Confidence Motion said that at a time when all progressives should unite it was a matter of regret that there was the paper said that all shortcomings within the progressives should be discussed and corrected among the progressives but should not be made a public problem. The *Janadina* in an editorial said that it was wrong to say that the Prime Minister sacrificed all her lands to the country and said if this was regarded as a sacrifice the thousands of acres of estates taken over by the LRC from foreign and locally owned company estates also should be regarded as a sacrifice: the editorial challenged the Prime Minister to face the current situation without deceiving the masses of the country. The Treasury decided that in future it will guarantee bank loans to state corporations only after the productions of programs submitted by the corporations seeking the loan and evaluation of such programs by the bank concerned which intends granting the loans—CDN. The Archbishop of Colombo, Thomas Cardinal Cooray, in his Christmas message to the nation said that the people should share with their neighbours what God had given them—CDN. The Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs instructed all Political Authorities in the island to expend the entire Rs 350 million reserved for 1976 under the Decentralised Budget on increasing production and finding employment for the unemployed—DM. Several celebrations are organised all over the island on January 8, the Day Mahaweli Diversion Scheme will be ceremonially inaugurated by the Prime Minister at Polgolle—DM. The First National Certificate of Education Examination will commence throughout the island on December 27—VK. Israeli security forces are hoping for a quiet Christmas in the Holy Land but will be on alert around Bethlehem, Christ's birth-place, against possible guerilla attacks. The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries said it had asked Austria for adequate security protection before last Sunday's attack. Guerillas on Tuesday night launched concerted attacks on a military arsenal and three Police posts in the Argentine capital, and first reports said an Army Captain was killed and several others wounded. The Indian Government has formally taken over the Burma Shell Oil Company and its operations in India.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 26: No papers were published today owing to Christmas holidays.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27: Following agreements reached between Sri Lanka and Pakistan after Prime Minister Ali Bhutto's visit to the island recently Sri Lanka and Pakistani irrigation and agricultural experts will begin official talks soon to further joint collaboration and the exchange of expertise in their respective fields—CDN. The IGP yesterday interdicted and

transferred 76 constables and 5 sergeants attached to the Moratuwa Police Station following an incident on Christmas Day in which several policemen are alleged to have assaulted a leading lawyer a dental surgeon, a highly placed official in the public administration and several other people who went to the Police station: soon after the incident when high Police officials arrived at the station to hold an identification parade all policemen reported sick and deserted the Police Station and when a Judicial Medical Officer was sent to examine the policemen they are reported to have got into lorry and gone to an unknown destination; meanwhile the Ministry of Health instructed the Lunawa Hospital authorities not to issue medical certificates to any policeman: Police headquarters rushed reinforcements to the Moratuwa Police Station as Moratuwa became unpoliced yesterday—*CDM*. The bonus issue of employees of the Electricity Board still continues and the employees concerned have threatened to launch trade union action—*VK*. The Government of Sri Lanka and the GDR signed a five year agreement last Monday in Colombo under which increased trade between the two countries is expected—*VK*. The Director General of Education has ordered all heads of schools to refrain from requesting school children to buy extra text books other than what have been prescribed by the Department and also other stationary which are hard to get in the open market—*DM*. The six pro-Palestinian guerillas who took Ministers from oil producing countries hostage in Vienna were still in Algeria on Wednesday with their fate undecided. More than 100 people were kidnapped in the Beirut area on Wednesday and the threat of further civil war carnage hung over the battered Lebanese capital. President Idi Amin of Uganda defended the presence of Soviet and Cuban advisers in Angola.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28: According to the *Observer* the Government has planned the setting up of an export credit corporation to help small exporters push up Sri Lanka's non-traditional products into new markets: the proposed Government-run corporation will assist a variety of small exporters by providing credit facilities and guarantees which they now find difficult to obtain. The Sri Lanka Bar Council protested to the Prime Minister about the Police attack on a lawyer in Moratuwa—*CO*. The Central Committee of the Communist Party decided to call the SLFP for a United Front Summit talks on a number of important matters arising from the current situation of international and domestic matters—*CO*. According to the *Sunday Times* the Communist Party has expressed grave concern over proposals to give further guarantees by law to foreign investors as this would "undermine Sri Lanka's political sovereignty and weaken its struggle for economic independence." The Malaysian Government has informed the Ministry of Defence and Foreign Affairs that owing to recent developments in that country Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike's, proposed visit to that country in the course of her South Asian tour next month will be inappropriate—*ST*. Miss Rupa Ratnaseeli, the undergraduate who fell from the third floor of the Ramanathan Hall in the Peradeniya Campus of the University following incidents of ragging is now warded at the rehabilitation hospital in Ragama: she told the *Lankadipa* that the Minister of Education who visited her in the hospital few months ago had promised a job for her sister in view of the financial difficulties her family were undergoing but did not fulfil the promise: she also said that she has not been helped

financially so far. According to the *Janasathiya* the Times of Ceylon Ltd., which printed the *Nation*, official organ of the LSSP, has stopped the printing of same on orders from a top ranking politician: the *Janasathiya* further said this would deprive the English readers who were anxious to know the full speech of the MP for Agalawatte who opened the debate on the No-Confidence Motion on behalf of the Opposition against the Prime Minister. A Hindu Cultural Centre at a cost of Rs. 1 million will be built in Kandy by donations from Hindus—*VK*. The warring factions in Lebanon's nine-month old civil strife have agreed on a time table to end the fighting "in the next few days" according to state run Radio Beirut. Nearly 900 miners are believed to have been trapped underground in a coal mine in Bihar State, India, following an explosion.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 29: According to the *Daily News* Government decided to recruit 3000 graduates in early February to Divisional Development Councils. Top officials of the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and the Paddy Marketing Board will meet today to discuss the future of cash food drive crops such as maize and sorghum which were hit following the influx of imported wheat flour to the local market early this year—*CDN*. Government has ordered the flying of the national flag on January 8 in all Government offices to mark the inauguration of the first stage of the Mahaweli Diversion Scheme at Polgolla—*CDN*. The Government Medical Officers' Association has planned a work-to-rule from early next month: in a confidential circular sent to all members the Association has given the details of the campaign—*CDM*. The Police were yesterday called in to investigate and track down those who were responsible for selling tickets for a show purporting to be performed by Englebert Humperdinck at the Lionel Wendt Theatre tomorrow: according to the Police this show was a hoax—*CDM*. Several trade unions in the Port Cargo Corporation will launch a one-day token strike tomorrow to demand a bigger bonus—*VK*. Mr. M. G. Mendis, MP for Ratgama, and a senior member of the Communist Party, told the *Veerakesari* yesterday that the only way to solve the problems of the Tamils was to call for a conference of Tamil leaders representing all sections and to discuss the matter. The Tamil United Front will launch its next campaign for a separate Tamil State in May or June—*VK*. The Tyre Corporations' production for the year 1975 fell far short of its target: the production for the year 1975 was nearly half of the previous years—*LD*. The Central Committee of the Communist Party in an appeal to all progressive forces in the country said that the only way to defeat the Rightist threat in the country was to reestablish the unity of the United Front which was broken a few months ago—*ATH*. About 10,000 people have been killed in a new Indonesian offensive against East Timor, according to a communique issued in Lisbon by supporters of the leftist organisation defending territory. An underground political organisation in Athens claimed responsibility for the assassination of an American CIA Agent, Richard Welch, last Tuesday. According to the Chief Minister of Bihar in India nearly 300 miners who are trapped following an explosion have little hope for survival: earlier the PTI reported 900 men were trapped.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 30: According to the *Daily News*, 1975 has been a year of significant activity in Sri Lanka: among the highlights of the year were land

reforms which took a further leap forward, the intensified production drive both in industry and agriculture, expanded public sector activity in the commanding heights of the economy, extended judicial reforms and a Worker's Charter: the country now looks forward to another year with the diversion of the Mahaweli river and the hosting of the Non-Aligned Conference in August. The Railway Board Bill was withdrawn on the request of the Minister of Transport, Mr. K. B. Ratnayake: the Bill which was presented to the NSA by the former Minister, Mr. Leslie Goonewardena, was debated on May 6 and was on the Order Papers for its second reading: Mr. Ratnayake said that he withdrew the Bill after he met representatives of the Railway Union—CDN. Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike, Minister of Justice, ordered that the Administration of Justice (Amendment) Law of 1975 should come into operation from January 1, 1976—CDM. According to the *Daily Mirror* the new academic year for fresh students of the University will begin two weeks before lectures for old entrants. The Department of Post and Telecommunications announced an increase in stamp fees on all overseas mails—CDM. Following an assurance that the bonus issue will be solved before the end of January, employees of the Port Cargo Corporation gave up the one day token strike, planned for yesterday—VK. The Credit Councils will function from tomorrow and under this, Government servants will be in a position to obtain loans for house building, purchase of transport and for a number of other reasons—VK. The former MP and Mayor of Galle, Mr. W. D. M. Abeygoonewardena, died yesterday after a brief illness—DM. According to a latest report of the Auditor General, the CTB incurred a loss of Rs. 350 million in 1973—LD. According to the *Aththa* three identification parades will be held from tomorrow in the Moratuwa Magistrates Courts to identify the suspects in the Moratuwa Police assault case on Christmas day. The Soviet News Agency, Tass, ridiculed allegations that one of the guerrillas who attacked the OPEC headquarters in Vienna last week was trained in Moscow. China's Foreign Minister Chiao Kuan Hua, yesterday condemned what he described as Indonesian aggression in Portuguese East Timor. The US Government yesterday urgently flew out several high capacity pumps to help in the rescue of miners trapped in a coal mine in Bihar and who are of little hope of survival since last Saturday.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31: A UNP youth league meeting held in Galle over the weekend ended up in a clash and Police was summoned to maintain order—CDM. Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, Chief Organiser of the SLFP Youth Leagues, told a meeting in Deniyaya that SLFP-CP unity was vital and the SLFP Youth Leagues will not allow anyone to disrupt this unity—CDM. Representatives of leading tea exporting countries will hold a crucial meeting in Colombo next February to discuss the future of the tea industry: tea circles in Colombo said yesterday that this meeting was intended to iron out certain question marks facing the industry—CDN. Police yesterday issued a notice to the public that the Englebert Humperdinck show scheduled to be held at the Lionel Wendt today was a hoax and requested those who bought the tickets for the show to contact the CID: Police said that their investigations reveal that the world famous singer Humperdinck has "no commitments in Sri Lanka": tickets which were priced at Rs. 20/- for this show were sold in the black-market at Rs. 200/- and still several fans could not buy

them owing to the high demand for the tickets—CDN. A Tamil Research Conference will be held in February in Batticaloa—VK. The Employees of the Electricity Board gave up their struggle for higher bonus after they were assured of a bonus of Rs. 750/—VK. The *Aththa* editorially requested the Government to implement its crash development program which was promised to the masses some time ago: the editorial further said that this would be an immense boost to the progressive forces of the country. The Ministry of Trade announced yesterday that from 1976 all business dealings of rubber will be done in metric system—ATH. President of Indonesia, Mr. Suharto, will soon visit Sri Lanka on a short tour—DM. According to the *Janadina* the Government has ordered the stoppage of any Government or state corporation advertisements to *Janadina* and *Janasathiya* newspapers: the paper traced this to a similar order to that of former Prime Minister late Mr. Dudley Senanayake, during the reign of the UNP. According to the *Daily News* the Tamil United Front on Sunday decided to launch a civil disobedience campaign throughout the country as a first step towards its demand for a separate state for Tamil speaking people of Sri Lanka. India's ruling Congress Party decided yesterday that general elections due by next March would be delayed by at least one year. Bangladesh's first Ambassador to Pakistan, Mr. Abdulla Zahiruddin, left Dacca for Karachi to take up his appointment. China released three Soviet airmen after 21 months of detention in Peking. China reiterated for the second time in four days that with what it called the intensification of the Soviet-US contention for world domination the danger of a new global war was increasing.

SWITCHING ENGINES

DOES THE EVER-ALERT MINISTER OF TRANSPORT know that the *Uttara Devi* from KKS to Colombo on Tuesday, January 6, was held up at Polgahawela for very nearly one hour because a railway bureaucrat in Colombo had ordered the switching of engines? That it was not a case of an engine failure but railway bureaucratism at its worst? That the KKS-Colombo train had reached Polgahawela almost dead on time? That the engine was taken off to take over a train going to Trinco or Batti or Timbuctoo so that the engine on the other train (just in from Colombo) could be switched to the *Uttara Devi* to enable that particular railway engine to get back to Colombo? That railway officials at Polgahawela Station had been greatly mystified about this engine switching exercise and they had mumbled something about the M 4 being required in Colombo? That Railway bureaucrats in Colombo were not in the least concerned about holding up a train for an hour in the sweltering heat with hungry passengers to indulge in this engine-switching? (The GMR will probably dismiss this report because it contains the "inaccuracy" that the train was held up for "an hour" when the delay was only 52½ minutes) That the train was held up at Polgahawela between 1 pm and 2 pm after the restaurant car exhausted all its supplies? That if the passengers (at least some of them) had got hold of the Colombo railway bureaucrat who had given the order to switch engines he would be hung alive on the platform (not *Maru Sira* style with *Largyctil*)?

UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS—2

Standardisation And District Quotas

By Dr. C. R. de SILVA
University of Sri Lanka,
Peradeniya Campus.

STANDARDISATION is a statistical method of adjusting marks scored by candidates. (The paragraphs explaining standardisation are drawn largely from the *Ministry of Education Report on the Standardisation of Marks for University Admissions, Colombo 1974*, and the *Memorandum to the Sectoral Committee on Social Overheads on the Standardisation and District Quota Scheme for Admissions to the University, University of Ceylon Science Teachers Association, Peradeniya, Feb. 1975*). In any given set of marks it is possible to find two characteristics; the mean (or average mark) and the standard deviation, or the average difference of all marks from the mean (This is usually calculated by finding the square of each candidate's deviation, getting the average of the total obtained by adding the results and by finally calculating the square root of the average. Standard deviation = square root of mean of squared deviations from the mean). If two or more groups of marks when represented by a graph display a random curve (or a bell-shaped curve) it is possible to use the above

mentioned characteristics to compare them meaningfully. It is also possible to adjust any number of given sets of marks to conform to a common profile by using a formula. The formula used for standardization of marks for purposes of the University admissions in Sri Lanka is as follows:

$$X1 = SD1(X-M) + M1$$

SD

Where $X1$ = any standardization mark
SD = standard deviation obtained,
SD1 = standard deviation required
 X = any raw mark, M = mean obtained and $M1$ = mean required.
The mean required was fixed at 50 and the standard deviation required was fixed at 12.

What the Ministry of Education does is to group the raw marks obtained by candidates at the G.C.E. 'Advanced Level' Examination according to the subject set for and then according to the medium in which the examination was answered. Thus for example the Sinhalese-medium marks for Physics are separated from Tamil-medium and English-medium marks for the same subject and each group is standardized separately. This procedure ensure standardization both media-wise and subject-wise. For instance if the mean and the standard deviation was 48 and 8 in Sinhalese-medium Physics marks, 55 and 8 in Tamil-medium Physics marks and 45 and 5 in Sinhalese medium Chemistry marks candidates obtaining 48 marks in

the first category, 55 in the second and 45 in the third will all obtain a standardized mark of 50. Once this process is completed all standardized marks are integrated into one list that determines the priority for selection to the University.

The Ministry arguments for subject-wise standardization are two-fold. Firstly, there is the claim that as the full scale of marks is not always utilized in some subjects, comparisons of marks obtained in different subjects becomes more meaningful when standardized. For example a candidate will almost certainly never score a raw mark of 100 or even 95 for History at the G.C.E. (Advanced Level) Examination though he could well do this for Mathematics. Secondly there is the possibility that question papers of different standards might be set for different subjects and that correction too may be more lenient in one more than in the other. These arguments possess some validity. (see Table V.) However, it must be borne in mind that standardization will result in distortion if the two sets of raw marks did not have roughly the same distribution. Moreover, judgements regarding differences in standards of question papers and of correction must necessarily be subjective and one cannot eliminate the possibility that groups of students sitting for different subjects may have different levels of ability.

Table IV — G.C.E. (Advanced Level) Examination Results

Subject	Medium	Sat	Failed		Grade S		Grade C		Grade B		Grade A		Total Passes	
			No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Pali	Sinhalese	664	59	8.89	275	41.42	220	33.12	99	14.91	11	1.66	605	95.11
Pali	Tamil	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Logic	Sinhalese	568	115	20.25	274	48.24	131	23.06	46	8.10	2	0.35	453	79.75
Logic	Tamil	250	97	38.80	110	44.00	36	14.40	6	2.40	1	0.40	153	61.20
Logic	English	94	27	28.72	30	31.91	17	18.09	17	18.09	3	3.19	67	71.28
History	Sinhalese	10878	5631	51.82	4285	39.39	844	7.76	100	0.92	12	0.11	5421	48.88
History	Tamil	940	421	44.79	378	40.21	126	13.40	15	1.60	0	—	519	55.21
History	English	63	52	82.50	10	15.87	1	1.59	0	—	0	—	11	17.46

Source: Statistical Report: General certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) and (Advanced Level) Examinations 1972 and 1973.

MEDIUM-WISE STANDARDIZATION has roused much greater opposition. To illustrate the reason for this it might be useful to take an example worked out by the University of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) Science Teacher's Association in a memorandum sent to the sectoral committee on social overheads. Two groups have been selected, Group

A with a mean of 55 and a standard deviation of 6 and Group B with a mean of 45 and a standard deviation of 10. The following table would illustrate that the ranking of candidates would change substantially once the standardized marks are integrated into one list.

Group A		Group B	
Raw Mark	Standardized Mark	Raw Mark	Standardized Mark
A1	75	B1	56
A2	60	B2	54
A3	55		63
A4	42		61
	24		

B3	50	56
B4	46	51
B5	35	38
B6	24	25

Several reasons have been advanced to defend such a procedure. It has been argued that differences in language result in the same question being comprehended differently or with greater difficulty. This is possible but such problems are usually detected and adjustments can be made in the marking scheme to compensate for them. Another claim is that there is a disparity in facilities available for candidates of different media. Here too there may be a grain of truth but it must be recalled that disparities between schools teaching in the same district are often wider than disparities between media. Also the applications of standardization could well hurt a Tamil medium science student at Matale simply because his fellow Tamils enjoy excellent facilities in Jaffna. The same could happen to a Sinhalese medium Arts student from Kurunegala.

Finally it has also been stated that marking standards in the different media might well be different. In view of the marking system outlined earlier such disparities, if they did exist, could not have been large ones. In fact an examination of the data relating to the G.C.E. (Advanced Level) Examinations of 1972 and 1973 in science subjects seems to throw doubt on this theory. In 1972 for instance the biggest difference in the percentage of passes between the Sinhalese and Tamils occurred in Pure Mathematics, the subject in which marking is closest to being objective. In 1973 the percentage passes in the two media were almost identical except in the case of Pure Mathematics and Applied Mathematics. This last fact seems to lead us to a further consideration: that what media-wise standardization achieved in 1973 was to relatively reduce the Tamil medium raw marks and to relatively increase the Sinhalese medium raw marks in Pure and Applied Mathematics, the two subjects for which standardization has probably the least justification.

What of the effects of standardization?

Some idea of this might be gained by comparing the area and ethnic group analysis of data for University admissions in 1970/71 with that

of 1973. It seems clear that standardization did not lead to better chances for schools in backward and rural areas as sometimes alleged. In fact the provincial distribution of places remained almost unaltered except for a fall in the share of science admission from the Northern Province. It is in the ethnic breakdown that the real impact can be seen. The percentage of Tamil medium students entering courses in Engineering fell from 40.8% in 1970/71 to 24.4% in 1973. Of course the total extent of this decline cannot be attributed to standardization. The proportion of Tamil medium students entering the Engineering Faculty had tended to decline in previous years. For instance they had secured 48.3% of the places in 1969/70. However, the percentage decline for Engineering (40.8% to 24.4%) was much steeper than in the case of Tamil students entering the Medical Faculty. (40.9% to 36.9%). This was largely because the intermedia differences in raw marks were greater in Mathematics than in any other Science subjects. Therefore at least the difference in the rates of decline could be attributed to the process of standardization.

THE DISTRICT QUOTA SYSTEM For the purposes of University admissions for 1974 the Ministry of Education introduced a new concept—that of a 'qualified candidate', and a new scheme, the district quota system. (A district quota system however had been used to determine admissions to technical college and polytechnics since 1972). It was held that all those who passed in three of the four subjects at the G.C.E. (Advanced Level) examination and obtained at least 25 marks in the fourth would be qualified for University admission. However, as there were insufficient places in the University to accommodate all qualified candidates a limited number were to be chosen according to standardized marks on a district basis. The allocation of vacant places to districts was according to the percentage of the total population of the island resident in each district. Separate quotas were fixed for each district for each of the following—medicine and dental surgery, engineering and applied sciences, physical science and biological science (see Table IX). The district to which a student

was deemed to belong was decided according to his school record. A student who had spent three years in Grades X XII in any district was regarded as belonging to it. However, two years in these grades were thought sufficient if his parents have been resident in the same district for at least three years. Students who came to urban schools on scholarships however were entitled to be counted for their home areas.

The main justification advanced in favour of the district quota system is that it would favour the rural and the underprivileged child who had hitherto been shut out of the University through lack of adequate facilities. This argument does not stand up to careful scrutiny. There are urban and rural segments in every district and a district quota in itself is no guarantee that the rural student would benefit: all places allotted to a district might well go to students from the urban centre in that district. Neither is it correct to assume that the urban/rural distinction necessarily coincides with a good school/poor school division. There are many poorly equipped schools in urban areas.

In fact it could be argued that the more undeveloped the educational structure of the area, the greater would be the role of affluence in promoting educational opportunity. For example in the Anuradhapura district there are only three schools which teach science subjects in Grade XII. In Polonnaruwa there is only one. Thus students in these areas need to be either fortunate to be born near one of these schools or have parents affluent enough to send them to school from long distances or to board them near the school. Indeed the district quota might well be interpreted as a device to help the affluent in underdeveloped areas at the expense of the underprivileged in the developed areas.

MOREOVER it has been pointed out that if the idea was to compensate certain areas for the lack of facilities it would be fairer to base the quota on the student population presenting themselves for the G.C.E. (Advanced Level) Examination and not on the total population. A recent study has revealed that there are great variations between the student population percentages and the total popula-

Tamils Suffered

tion percentages. The following table obtained from it gives quotas based on total population and on student population. (This calculation

Total Vacancies	Medicine 225	B/o/S. 320	Engineering 290	Physical/Sc. 330
Colombo	46 (77)	66 (111)	60 (108)	66 (114)
Kandy	22 (18)	31 (26)	28 (24)	32 (27)
Jaffna	13 (43)	18 (59)	17 (56)	19 (62)
Anuradhapura	6 (1)	9 (2)	8 (1)	9 (2)
Badulla	11 (2)	16 (3)	14 (3)	17 (4)

It is clear that the district quota system as presently designed gives students in some areas places in the University heavily disproportionate to their numbers, because many others living in that area have either dropped out of school or have been diverted to other courses through lack of facilities or have been provided with no schooling facilities at all. This development is a result not only of basing the quota on population but also of ignoring the fact that students in certain districts are already channelled along certain lines of study. In 1973 in Kurunegala district for instance only 273 students sat for Science subjects while 1729 did so in Arts. In Jaffna in contrast Science candidates numbered 1397 and Arts candidates only 649. Yet Jaffna would obtain 5.77 percent of both Arts and Science places in the University and Kurunegala 8.17 per cent. In this respect it is perhaps timely to recall that although the discussion has hitherto centred in groups and areas, in the last analysis examinations are sat for and Universities are entered by individuals. The fact that more Science students entered from his district would be no consolation for an Arts student at Kurunegala who is deprived of his place because of a badly designed district quota system.

University education is state-subsidised in a variety of ways. Opportunities for University education are also limited. It is therefore necessary that the best possible material be chosen for training. This objective does not seem to be achieved by the district quota system. For example in the G.C.E. (Advanced Level) Examination for 1974, 398 students from Jaffna qualified to enter Medicine/Bio. Science courses and 575 to enter Engineering/Physical Sciences courses. The places open to them according to the district quota were 34 and 37 respectively. In contrast in Ratnapura sixteen stu-

dents who qualified for Medicine Bio. Science had 30 places open to them and the nineteen who qualified for Engineering/Physical Science had thirty two places. It is quite possible that some of the students from Jaffna came from schools less well equipped than the best schools of Ratnapura.

When all is said and done however there remains the fact that the resources in teaching and equipment (especially in science subjects) are very unequally distributed in the island. For this however the only solution would be the gradual improvement of schools in backward areas. No amount of adjusting results at the Grade XII level will produce good students from such areas unless larger number of students are given the opportunity to be educated. Indeed one of the great dangers of the present district quota system is that it will be viewed as an excuse to postpone the provision of such facilities. However, something perhaps needs to be done in the interim to help those students who are studying in senior secondary schools with inadequate facilities. It is possible to categorize schools of this sort and to reserve a percentage of University places for them, the percentage to be decided according to the proportion of Grade XII students studying in such schools. (Of course only students who attain a pre-determined minimum standard should be taken into the University. With increasing numbers qualifying, the present standard for a 'qualified student' should be reviewed). However it is essential that proper follow-up measures should be taken in relation to these students once they enter the University to ensure that they do not have difficulties due to inadequate academic preparation. Much has been written in the newspapers recently on the impact of the district quota system. However, its full implications are as yet difficult

to grasp. In 1974, the last year for which we have statistics of admissions, the district quota was modified by allocating the unfilled places in the various districts according to national ranking as depicted by the standardized G.C.E. (Advanced Level) Examination marks. This modification enabled Colombo and Jaffna to gain 93 additional University placements in 1974. It has been stated that such modifications will not be allowed in the future and that if the quotas for any districts are unfilled the remaining places will be distributed among students of other districts in proportion to the district quotas. Nevertheless there is at present sufficient evidence to attempt an analysis of the result of combining a district quota system with standardization.

In the first place the distribution of University admissions by province changed greatly especially with regard to science-oriented courses. Of course the change as depicted in Tables VII & IX might be slightly exaggerated due to the different bases on which they have been compiled. The statistics up to 1974 give the province of the schools for the school candidate and that of the residence in the case of the private candidate. The 1974/5 quotas operate on a slightly different system as explained above. Nevertheless that change is clear and it does appear more striking if statistics are broken down according to district. Jaffna, Colombo and Galle lost and many of the other districts gained in science admissions. In Arts in contrast one of the biggest losers was Kurunegala district.

Ethnically, there is little doubt that the major blow fell on the Ceylon Tamils. The Tamil share of Engineering admissions for instance fell from 24.4% in 1973 (standardization only) to 16.3% in 1974 and is likely to fall to 13.2% in 1975 if the district quota system is applied without modification. The parallel figures for medicine would be 36.9% in 1973, 25.9% in 1974 and 20% (estimate) in 1975. The percentage losses in Dental Surgery and Agriculture are even greater.

Much less attention has been devoted to the impact of the district quota system and of standardization on two other sub-groups; the Indian Tamils and the Kandyan

Sinhalese. The reason for this is largely that separate statistics have not been compiled by any authority on these sub-groups. However, it seems indisputable that the Indian Tamils who have by far the poorest schooling facilities in the island, were badly affected by standardization. In 1960/71 when admissions were on raw marks eighteen Tamils of Indian origin entered the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya (Arts 12, Engineering 1, Medicine 1, Dental Surgery 1 and Science 2). In 1971/72 when marks were adjusted the number fell to twelve, (Arts 8, Medicine 1, Dental Surgery 2, Agriculture 1) and with standardization admissions to Peradeniya fell to eleven (Arts 7, Engineering 1, Dental Surgery 2, Agriculture 1). The district quotas seem to have had a slight beneficial effect in raising their admissions to 13 in 1974 (Arts 10, Engineering 1 and Science 2) but it may be noted that their admissions to Science-oriented courses seem to be steadily falling.

If the Indian Tamils were losers the Kandyans were certainly the gainers at the expense of not only the Indian Tamils who live in the same areas but also at the expense of Low-country Sinhalese and Ceylon Tamils. The quotas allotted to many Kandyan districts were swollen by large numbers of resident Indians who had but a fractional chance of getting a secondary education, much less of entering the University. It is likely that unless the district quota system, is modified the Kandyan Sinhalese who form but 29.1% of the population will gain as many places in the University as the Low-country Sinhalese who comprise 42.8% of the people. The high drop-out rate in the Kandyan Province seems to ensure that these places would be reserved for a relatively small group of Grade XII students, many of them from the more affluent classes.

The iniquities of the system apart, the new procedures for University admissions can also be criticized for the secrecy which shrouds it. Although the University is supposed to formally admit students University authorities are merely provided with lists of standardized marks and a district quota table, and expected to be satisfied with this. University dons have no access to the answer scripts or

even the raw marks. This marks a sharp contrast to procedures adopted before 1970 and has given rise to an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust which has undermined the confidence in the fairness by which even the existing rules are applied.

Standardization and the district quota system have done more harm than good. They have led to bitterness and disappointment among students and parents and endangered communal disharmony. Both should be abandoned forthwith. However, once standardization is abandoned a close check should be kept on marking standards in the different media for communal passions once aroused cool but slowly even in the most intellectual of climates. Perhaps the conversion of the question papers at the G.C.E. (Advanced Level) Examination into those with multiple choice questions may be an answer. For an interim period a special minimum quota for schools with sub-standard facilities fixed according to student numbers in Grade XII ought to be tried out. In the last analysis however, inequalities can only be removed by provision of better facilities for the under privileged.



BUILDING A VILLAGE HOUSE—63

The Music Of The Hemispheres

By Herbert Keuneman

In December 1970 my wife and I bought, as a Christmas present for our domestic staff—Rum and H.B. and Abey and Nada—a UNIC radio. It proved a very good buy indeed. All I know about radios is whether they work or not; and this one worked—and, as Rum who has it now informs me, is working still—as well as it seemed we had any right to expect. It was not, I believe, a very ambitious machine or instrument or whatever a radio is: it had, I think, transistors (whatever those might be) and used, I think, a battery of four cells which—75 cts or thereabouts per cell—committed us to no great expenditure in maintenance, for in five years it has never had to be repaired or cleaned

or oiled or whatever else one seems to have to do to keep a radio or its owners happy, and it has never had to have however small a part replaced. I do not remember—if I ever knew—its technical specifications: such as how many 'bands' it had (apparently a radio's 'caste' depends on how many 'bands' it boasts) but I know that amongst other things it possessed a nice little button which when pressed illuminated the 'bands' so that one could tune-in even in the dark. It cost, I seem to remember, Rs. 560; maybe Rs. 5 or 10 more, or less.

It proved itself invaluable to the two of us, my wife and me, during the long lonely anxious nights, comparatively cut off as we were in a huge isolated estate bungalow near Galaha, while Sri Lanka writhed under the unfamiliar torments of the Insurgency, the first news of which broke to us on my wife's birthday, the last she was ever to see, when it was our only source of information as to the spasms the country was undergoing. And when we grew sick of the term 'misguided youth' and tired of the obviously false-hearted reportage that poured out of it, we could always tune-in to the BBC, which came through loud and clear even with the radio balanced on one of us' stomachs, and be reminded that our national crisis was a not very earth-shaking storm in a not very mighty teacup. A sanitizing correction of perspective.

I am not stating that BBC reports of Ceylon's troubles were not—probably—any less 'angled' than SLBC ones. But what comforted and soothed was that other things were going on than the Idiot's Delight of a bloody struggle between our 'misguided youth'—fatuously misguided—and possibly hardly less misguided authority; and that such things as good talk and good music still continued, if in less pre-occupied locations.

Anyway, what I want to get over is this: that on our smallish simplish cheapish radio the BBC programmes came through well enough for most practical purposes; and so did Colombo even when it foreswore the aid of the Senkadagala booster; although I have heard it said that the Kandy district is not the best for the radio listener....

because.....

And Now, A Local Radio

last February I bought another radio (of a different make) and obtained nothing like comparable results in satisfaction—my 'listening pleasure' I think they call it—although I deliberately picked the most many-'banded' and many-transistored and expensive locally-manufactured set I could find.

The new radio—I bought it and was prodigal over it because I bought it for my sake as much as that of Dinga who actually owns it—cost over Rs. 200 more than the UNIC had done four years previously, but I justified myself. Prices were up. The new set employed 8 transistors, over—the old one's 6; and used 6 dry cells—now no less than Re 1/75 each in the village—over the old one's 4; and it showed more 'bands' than the biggest UNIC I could then find. Also, I was reassured since (though it, too, was locally made) it had an internationally famous name.

That was more-or-less all it seems to have had to its credit. It hadn't one of those intriguing little lights to tune by—if you wanted to tune in the dark you had to have a flashlight—it hadn't even a carton to protect it: it was bundled into a cheap polythene bag, like a pound of boiled sweets.

As I say, I bought this white (washed) elephant for Dinga's sake—to relieve the tedium of the long hours she spends in this house in case I should need her help—as well as for my own. I have never slept very well, and now I sleep very badly; so, remembering the pleasant hours with the BBC during the Insurgency days and having been by somebody told that foreign stations came through particularly well in the small hours of the morning and counting on the greater power—2 extra transistors and 2 extra cells to drive them—I quite looked forward to my insomnia, forfended against it as I now imagined myself to be.

Fond hope! The BBC was not to be had, in the small hours or at high noon or at any other time of day, save accompanied by a variety of cat-calls, roars and thunders or inextricably mixed with other stations near and far. Or I could catch one word in three or four. Nothing better. When in desperation I tried the Colombo English Services—even the Commercial, which I loathe but which

carried a slight edge over the other—the signal faded so abominably and unpredictably that the *Symphonic Variations* (for all I knew) could come over sounding like the *Goodnight Symphony!* Dinga fares rather better; for there is a booster near Maho—*itself*, however, little unpredictable; and the time has long gone by when anybody in SLBC so demeaned the Corporation as to apologize for a 'technical hitch'—which renders the Sinhalese Services generally serviceable.

There was a 3-months' guarantee on the set when I bought it, and long before the period was up I took it back to Colombo to the shop where it had been purchased. But even the guarantee had a flaw in it: the shop—a large and well-known Fort store—would not accept the set for attention, despite my producing their bill and my full (typewritten and signed) list of the complaints I wanted looked into. I myself, it appeared, must take it to the makers' Works—a Rs. 4/50 taxi ride from the Fort—although the shop was one where I have been an 'account customer', and not a customer in arrears either, for longer than I remember (but in point of fact I had paid cash for the set) and although the shop's vans daily passed the Works in question. May be, Service Is Not This Shop's Business. Yet I should have expected service of this sort to have been assured by the makers of the radio themselves.

Nobody could have been pleasanter or more helpful than the Head of the works; and when I returned to claim the set—another taxi ride—he assured me that every fault I had brought to his notice had been righted. Certainly the thing sounded well enough there in Colombo and I took his word for it that it was the wrong time of day to try for the BBC but I should find everything OK when I got back to Ehetuwewa. But nothing had been righted. I still believe he had done what he could. Only, I also believe that—with this make—nothing was all he could do.

Since then: a foot has come off the case (which is not even a plastic moulding but a cheap affair of plywood covered with book-binder's calico: alright, call it leather-cloth) and I have re-stuck it on with epoxy resin, which might have been used in the first place: a

wire somewhere inside has come adrift from its terminal, and a local baas has re-fixed it with solder, which too might have been done in the first place; and a spring pin or something has fallen off the telescopic aerial and no one locally has a replacement, so that unless I can take the truly infernal machine back to the Works the aerial cannot be extended: not that it makes much difference, from Maho, or perhaps—for all I know of such things—from Colombo on the Sinhalese Commercial Service; or does Maho boost some of that as well?

When I can consider the matter philosophically enough, however, this dependence on the Sinhalese service has not proved a total loss to me; because I have been forced to listen to many of them, a thing which nobody else—nobody responsible—seems to do. Otherwise I just could not imagine how some of the programmes get put over that do get put over. It was, I think, *Tribune* that first drew attention to the sex-and-sedition soap opera called *Ekomat-eka Nattyak* which suddenly came off the air only after the LSSP overreached itself. And then there was that thoroughly unedifying running-commentary last May Day when partisan reporters were so patently rooting for their pet factions: did no one notice what was going on? Or did it all pass—then; though it would not pass now—for balanced presentation?

And again: does any serious student of political propaganda or national psychology—or Sinhalese music—really believe in the effectiveness of he so-called *Satan pata*, or "Combatant Songs", that have become a comparatively recent feature of local broadcasting: the fatuous boasts (not unlike those now significantly discontinued promises of Pesalai Oil) the cocky 'march' rhythms, the utterly foreign sound and feel of music never so much as suggested by Sinhalese tradition. True, there is the occasional try at prostituting a folk motif to an impertinently un-folk musical and psychological genre, as in that National Song (!) which makes use of an old *raban-pade* to repeat...and repeat...and repeat (it is extraordinary to note how in these songs author and composer alike fall back on maudlin repetition where patriotic inspiration only too obviously fails them)

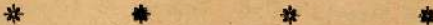
a chorus which says something like *egoda-godet rattaran! megoda-godet rattaran!* On this hand is gold in heaps! on that hand is gold in heaps! which can hardly be said to come off. After all, where there is gold on both hands Burridan's ass can only stay put; which, surely, is hardly the idea behind a National Song urging a people to progress. Or is the song a mere irresponsible vaunt that Sri Lanka's streets are already paved with gold, by which it is hoped a gullible People will be uncritically taken in? Ask any Ehetuwewa farmer! And, sticking with this business of songs of which the best that can be said is that they are would-be propagandist, have you ever heard a boy in the street whistle so much as one of these would-be-catchy martial tunes? We are not, God be praised, a martial people; we are an enduring introspective one. If the SLBC is going to be used for propaganda rather than truth, why doesn't somebody in the place study the subject?

I will not ask the same question about the musical aspect our (Sinhalese) programmes, if only because—from all I hear: I do not know him personally—the thing is headed by a man devoted, and deeply sensitive, to the authentic Music, with the capital M. But if that be so, the majority of his programmes must be torture to him! To begin with, he must listen how many times a day? to that ghostly fanfare that announces the News, with its utterly undignified skittish air played on—of all un-Sinhalese things, if I am not hopelessly mistaken—muted trumpets! Shades of

Louis Armstrong! Musically speaking, a trumpet for a strumpet. It figures.

There was a time when Radio Ceylon had guts enough to ban the seraphina from its studios. Today, not only is the seraphina restored to its rightful place as one of the most popular instruments of a nation quite fantastically insensitive to the contradictions between an 'equal temperament' keyboard and the demands of the genuine national tradition but even the piano has been taken over. And how! Listen, if you please, on some such occasion—the programmes of the Family Planning Association and the National Savings programmes, both 'officially' sponsored! are particular offenders—and hear the turgid chords and ostentatious *arpeggi*, vapid and pretentious at the same time, that precede the singer and then the obtund descent into the seraphina's role of excruciating 'harmonies' as accompanist. With especially good fortune you may even hear the pianist named, as though he too had accomplished something on his own account. Sometimes, indeed, he has: I have undergone a 'transcription' of the London-derry Air for Pianoforte Played Seraphina Fashion!

I have far from done. My bile maybe is momentarily abated, 'my fires'—to change the metaphor—'are banked; but still they burn' and with your permission or possibly even without, I shall more have to say on some future occasion concerning the strange policies—or lack of them—of the SLBC Sinhalese Services.



RAILWAY RESTAURANT CARS

THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT will be happy to know that after his no-liquor rule railway restaurant cars shown a market improvement. That even women are able to go to the buffet cars and sit down for a cup of tea and short eats? That earlier this had not been possible with tipplers dominating the scene? That hot tea is now sold at much cheaper prices? That short eats (of eatable varieties) are available but the prices should be reviewed? That cleanliness has improved but there is much more to be done? That a few enterprising (and non-lazy) waiters go round to nearby compartments to supply the requirements of passengers? That railway commuters are thankful to the Minister for this blessing? That railway security officials have at last begun to check illicit liquor sales on trains?

Role Of The Police

by R. C. Thavarajah
Retd. Suptd. of Pol.ice

Undoubtedly, there is enough for laughter in all these instances of megalomania, dipsomania, and other mental or psychological ailments caused by chronic alcoholism. It was the great Dryden who said "It is a Good Thing to laugh, at any rate; and if a straw can tickle a man, it is an instrument of Happiness. Beasts can weep when they suffer but they cannot laugh." It is, in my opinion, unpardonably ungentle to indulge in what Lavater spoke most disparagingly of. He said "The horse laugh indicates coarseness or brutality of character." A visit to the pubs in the metropolis of the bity of Colombo, capital of the Island 'Paradise' of ours, will reveal the not-so-pleasant sight of problem drinkers, sporadic and regular drinkers, the unemployed, the unmitigated parasite, the confidence trickster, and frustrated wretches all "drowning their woes" by paying obeisance to Bachchus. The serious question of loss of man hours, manpower for productive labour, absenteeism in the public and private sectors, casualties due to illness or even death due to cirrhosis are definitely not a laughing matter which can be treated with that 'cavalier' attitude. These are all causatory impediments to our country's industrial and economic progress and its social prestige.

MOTOR ACCIDENTS. Statistics clearly indicate in a number of cases of fatal accidents, the offending motorist had been under the influence of liquor. Cases of reckless driving, driving motor vehicles at an excessive speed, driving without due consideration for the other users of the highway when the reflexes of the driver have been temporarily retarded owing to excessive drinking have resulted in the tragic loss of limbs and precious lives. The popular jargon "Have one for the Road" has often turned out to be "One for the ditch or one for the grave". It is worse if it is the grave of a poor innocent pedestrian. In very cold countries, the host usually offers

"one for the Road" merely to keep the guest warm till he gets to his home which is nearly always on foot. We, in the East have unhappily adopted the fashions and "cults," alien phraseologies, obsequiously aping the Westerners and adopting "ways of life" which are unnecessary and unhealthy unsuited to our indigenous individuality. The result is that some poor wretch has to pay the supreme penalty of a pre-mature death just because the affluent have had too much money to waste on alcohol and propel themselves in high-powered cars.

It is, therefore, becoming urgently necessary to introduce more deterrent punishment for drunken marauders in charge of motor vehicles to keep society safe from the scourge of inebriated drivers. The Police of Sri Lanka should be empowered to use the *Breathalyser Test* certify as to the fitness or otherwise of the motorist to be entrusted with vehicles and recommend cancellation of their certificates of competence to drive cars and other vehicles. The Law at present provided for in the Police Ordinance, Chapter 43 of the Legislative Enactments of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) introduced as far back as 1866 relating to the subject is contained in Section 70 (1) which reads:—"Every person found drunk and incapable of taking care of himself in any thoroughfare or public place, whether a building or not, or in any licensed premises or tavern and any person guilty of violent or riotous conduct in or about such premises or tavern, shall be liable to a fine not exceeding five Rupees and, on second conviction within a period of twelve months, shall be liable to a fine not exceeding ten Rupees and, on a third or subsequent conviction within such period of twelve months be liable to a fine not exceeding twenty rupees".

Sub-Section (2) of Section 70 of the Police Ordinance reads:—"Every person who, in any thoroughfare or other public place, whether a building or not, is guilty while drunk of riotous or disorderly behaviour, or who is drunk while in charge of on any thoroughfare or other public place of any vehicle, horse or cattle, or who is drunk when in possession of any loaded Fire-Arms, may be apprehended without a Warrant, and kept in custody until he gets sober and shall be liable, in addition, to a fine not exceeding Twenty rupees or to simple or rigorous imprisonment for a term not exceeding one month." With the greatest respect, I would most respectfully suggest that, considering the high cost of commodities including higher rate for liquor, the cost of intoxication should also be increased for the benefit of all concerned.

Section 488 of the Ceylon Penal Code, Chapter 19 of the Legislative Enactments of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) revised in 1956 reads:—"Whoever, in a state of intoxication appears in any public place or in any place which it is a trespass in him to enter, and there conducts himself in such a manner as to cause annoyance to any person, shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to one month, or with fine which may extend to one hundred rupees, or with both".

Section 165 of the Ceylon Penal Code states:—"Whoever, being a Public Servant employed in the Posts and Telecommunication Department of Government, by drunkenness, carelessness or other misconduct endangers or delays the transmission of any message, letter or postal packet shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three months or with fine

which may extend to fifty rupees, or with both".

The section is confined only to public servants employed in the Posts and Telecommunication Department of Government. No provision is made for misconduct by public servants in other Government Departments and the punishment, in my opinion, is inadequately insufficient to serve as a deterrent to the potential offender who renders himself unfit for service to his Country by consumption of alcohol. I recommend that similar provision is introduced to include all public servants and also more stringent punishments.

There are some who see little virtue in the commonly accepted adage "*in vino veritas*"—In wine, the Truth. *Samuel Johnson* (1709), English Poet critic, essayist and lexicographer "famous not only for his writings but also for his forceful, witty conversation" who contributed to the "Gentleman's Magazine" and whose major works include, "The Rambler", "Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language, the most delectable didactic poem, "*The Vanity of Human Wishes*" (1749) was "vigorous in his reasoning intelligence." His detestation of hypocrisy, keen understanding of human frailty and his practice of applying ethical standards to Nations as well as to individuals was a forte 'par excellence'. He had this to say about the adage "The maximum" *In Vino Veritas*—that a man who is well warmed with wine will speak the truth" may be an argument for drinking if you suppose men in general to be liars; but, Sir, I would not keep company with a fellow, who lies as long as he is SOBER, and whom you must make drunk before you can get a word of TRUTH out of him. Appropos, the matter of company a man keeps, I am reminded of the story of the prim

PLAYHOUSE
 526 GALLE ROAD
 COLOMBO 3
 TEL: 28544

and proper lady who saw lying in the drain two "objects" incapable of motion. One was a drunk who was "well under the weather" and the other was a lazy pig. She turned her snobbish, self-righteous nose away from the unseemly sight with the matter-of-fact words "A man is known by the company he keeps." Immediately, the pig got up and walked hurriedly away.

Speaking of truth, whilst agreeing with Johnson, I may be permitted to quote—certainly with no disrespect to that great Victorian narrative poet, *Mathew Arnold*, (1882-1888) who in his poignant "SORAB and RUSTOM" which is characterised by "epic severity and impersonality" states: "Truth sits upon the lips of dying men." I consider this dictum more than a mere truism for a drinking man is a dying man where the process of Death is slow but certain—death of his faculties, his God-given talents his wealth, and, what is most ir retrievable—his SELF-RESPECT.

ROLE OF THE POLICE. Mr. Edward Goonewardene, Director of Planning and Research of the Sri Lanka Police Headquarters, an Honours graduate in Geography of the Sri Lanka University and who also holds a Master's degree in Police Administration of the Michigan State University whom I interviewed recently, told me that in Norwegian countries, the Police initiate action to impose liability on the host if his guest has had too much to drink and commits a crime or even a minor offence. He also added that in Norway, Sweden and Denmark one member of the revellers on a festive or special occasion maintains strict temperance to maintain metaphorically and literally a "sobering influence" on the others in order to ensure that no excess on the part of the revellers comes into conflict with the law. The "leaders" or "supervisors" take turns so that they, too, can their have share of fun and frolic. The Police in these countries encourage this system of "supervision" as it obviously reduces their work. Mr. Goonewardene also feels that, like in America, 'De-toxication' Centres be established in Sri Lanka as well. These Centres would replace the Police Station as "initial detention unit for the inebriates". The Task Force report states that "Under the authority of Civil Legislation, the inebriate would

be brought to this Public Health Faculty by the Police and detained there until he gets sober. Thereafter, the decision to continue treatment should be left to the individual. The Centre should include such Medical services as physical examinations, an emergency care unit for the treatment of acutely intoxicated persons and transportation to a hospital, if advanced medical care seems necessary".

My own view is that officers of the Research Division at the Sri Lanka Police Headquarters like Inspector Lakshman Wijetilleke, who holds a Diploma in Criminology of the University of Sydney, and who also worked as Senior Research Assistant at the Institute of Criminology, Sydney University, and other officers specially selected to serve in this important branch of Police administration should be sent out to the various Police Divisions in Sri Lanka in order to discuss this problem with the Officers in charge of the Divisions, obtain first hand information, data, etc., establish rapport with Social Service Organisations, Religious Groups and others interested in eradicating the menace of alcoholism and recommend to the Ministry effective methods of combatting this cause of crime. Conditions and determining factors of one Division

may differ materially and distinctly from those of another.

When I was in charge of Tangalla District in April, 1965, an Officer-in-Charge of one Police Station studiously but un-imaginatively adhered to the stereo-type instructions of organising games on a festive occasion to wean the villagers from the habit of drinking and gambling which eventually leads to crimes of violence. Some attended this social get-together whilst the others indulged in liquor and cards. The Police concentrated their efforts to make the New Year Celebrations a success, confining their activities to one particular area. The rest of the area was not covered by beats or mobile patrols. Two murders were reported from this Police area. The O.I.C. of the adjoining area, with my approval, on the other hand, adopted a very practical approach to the situation. He augmented his manpower by soliciting the support of rural-volunteers, increased mobility, covered the entire extent of his area keeping an eagle eye for illicit liquor and gambling, without interfering unnecessarily with the traditional celebrations and other forms of festivities customary on the occasion. The result was that not even a single case of violence was reported from this most criminal area in Tangalla District.

'LIFE EXISTS IN SOME OTHER PLANETS TOO'

Bonn,

Extra-terrestrial life somewhere in the universe is not only possible but probable, Polish, American and West German scientists believe. The scientists, attending the 24th space conference of the Hermann-Oberth Society for the Promotion of Space Research at Garmisch-Partenkirchen (West Germany) earlier last month, felt it might be worthwhile trying to establish radio contact with such life. They said the existence of planets in other solar systems could not be denied, and if these were similar to the earth, life could form or exist there. This life might even have the same form as human beings, with an upright gait, hands feet and three-dimensional sight. Referring to America's Viking space probes, scheduled to land on the Mars next summer, Dr. Kurt Debus, former head of the American Kennedy Space Centre, noted that "perhaps Viking will give us an answer, but perhaps we will have to wait for a long time." Prof. Horst Lob of Giessen University estimated that up to six per cent of all planets might be inhabitable. Nuclear physicist Olgierd Wolczek, of Warsaw University, contended that life on other planets could have a completely different form, such as plasma capable of producing energy and thought. Most participants felt that efforts to contact the beings in other parts of the universe through use of radio telescopes were necessary, but they doubted whether they would be successful. After all, human beings had existed on the earth for several million years, but only in the last 100 years had they discovered electromagnetic waves. For contact to be established, a similar development should have taken place elsewhere and this was highly unlikely.

The end both sanctify the means. Some pundits whose only sustenance is book-learning and theory may dismiss this with the trite observation that one single instance does not constitute a general rule. As I have mentioned earlier, I am only a 'flat-footed' cop who learned only in the school of experience without acquiring the quintessence of the techniques of law enforcement from Foreign Universities. Like so many of my genre, we belong to the 'Old School' of practical police officers. We have only the consolation that the illustrious Inspector-General of Police, Mr. E. L. Abeygoonewardene, who administered the Police Department most admirably from 1966 to 1970 appreciated our work. This Leader par-excellence placed a very high rating on integrity and was ruthless in dealing with corruption. He believed in what the great Martin Luther King enunciated "To cure injustices you should expose them before the light of Human Conscience and the Bar of Public Opinion regardless of what tension that exposure generates. They should be brought out into the open where they cannot be avoided". Mr. E. L. Abeygoonewardene's loyalty to the land of his birth as well as to the Police Service was characterised by the high and noble standard set up by Milton—"Stirred up with high hopes of living to be brave men and worthy patriots, dear to GOD and famous all ages". His sense of duty was not the type dependent solely on uxorial exhortation and 'spiritual' inspiration from extraneous sources.

(To be Continued)

KAZI-36

Around Kekirawa

BY ANATORY BUKOBA

There was a time when I avoided paying bus fares by hitching a lift on whatever that was going my way. I was glad to hear that a nephew of mine does this now, but in another country; he was taking a leaf out of my own book. Kekirawa became to me a sort of hitch-hiking watershed, as lorries on the Mihintale or Jaffna-Colombo route declined to give me a lift the whole way. Places like Kekirawa, Dambulla and Kuru-

negala were convenient places for them to drop me at. Twice I set out from Mihintale to Colombo with a rupee in my pocket, and I made the journey in a day without borrowing or taking a cent from anyone. Once a very important man passed me in a car. He was alone except for the driver, and the place was between Alawwa and Polgahawela. He had the courtesy to shake his head as he passed me; if he had given me a lift, it might have made all the difference to us having an all Ceylon final in a sporting event. Living so far away, practices were few with team-mates, and I missed the only coaching session I might have had, cum practice, right before our first heat, which we won. We went out of the race in the quarter-finals. I had won that event the previous time it was held in Colombo, and I had made the final again the following year abroad.

My policy, hitch-hiking, was not to hang around a town, but to foot it until I got a lift. This way, I came to know many people, and sometimes I met them again by visiting their homes.

Kekirawa, I think, has improved with the years. It was very dirty when I first knew it, much as Dambulla and Kurunegala are still. I always judge a place by the flies it has in its eating houses. On my last visit to Kekirawa, I ate in a eating house, where the food was both good and cheap, and there was not a fly in the glass case or food cabinet, nor many flies on the tables for that matter. I had all my meals there, and I even tipped the waiter. Yet, externally, there was not much difference between this and the other eating houses there. Talking of dirty towns, Negombo and Chilaw, like Dambulla and Kurunegala, are hard to beat. Puttalam, too, is an eyesore, until you come to some eating places which are out of the town, properly speaking. I wonder now the city fathers of these dirty towns spend their time.

Kekirawa is largely a Moslem town. Galewela, which is the other side of Dambulla, is Moslem with a difference. There the Moslems are farmers, and you would think that tobacco is their chief crop. But they do paddy, too. There are Tamils in Kekirawa, as well as those of our major race. Elephants used to be not many miles

from Kekirawa on all four sides, and I have seen or heard them myself, north, south, east and west, but this is not quite so today, I was told.

Just as there is not far from Galewela the old Portuguese-Catholic settlement of Wahacotte, with its own traditions, as there is some miles from Kekirawa a large colony of settlers from Wahacotte, at a place called Alagolewa. They came there many years ago, but within our lifetime. Ritigala overlooks Alagolewa, so preserving a mountainous association, as Wahacotte itself is hilly country. Since 1971, Ritigala has been often in the news, this formidable looking peak, although it is hard to believe that anyone can make a living from there, even by banditry.

On my way from Kekirawa to Kalawewa I passed a column of school-children, which, speaking loosely, seemed to me a mile long, all from school, and it was shortly after the hour when schools break up for the day. If ever there was a place where youth start business early, it is Kekirawa, but it is not the school-going youth who do this. It is my experience that school-life, all the world over, quite unfits children for real life, if life is a question of earning a living. What people fail to realise is that it is not knowledge that equips children for life, but character, which can only come from experience, not class-room experience, but experience in the field of earning a living; and you have to start early, very early, long before the age at which a bright lad goes to a university. School, as we have known them the last century and a half has been the first system devised yet for making nonentities of people, of dangerous people, people who because of their background might have been a threat to the status quo: so you send all your hopefuls to school, the cream of the youth, either academically or socially, and drill them into a kind of machine, which always reacts the way it is told in school.

A lad, about the age when a smart lad does his Senior, was hanging about late for his father's taxi to arrive, his father being permanently away, to collect the money from the chauffeur and deposit it in a boutique before going off to wherever he spent

the night. *Kaddlay* sellers kept me long in conversation and I was not bored a tiny bit. I met young lads who traded, spending the long day away, who returned home only at night after covering whatever mileage they had done in the course of their buying and selling. They were completely relaxed lads, used to sizing a man up, as one explained to me. And used to dealing with difficult or even dangerous characters singlehanded in the course of their work.

Parents and fond sisters had much to be proud of these young men, and they struck me as being absolutely trustworthy, even with money. The older folk, too, had character; cultivated, kindly, they were, the right sort of people for anybody to fall back on and their character showed in their faces.

On the occasion of my visit to Alagolewa, I went as far as Nikawewa. Alagolewa had been self-colonized by the people who first went there. Nikawewa was government-planned and an old colony, too. The people I saw this time, had something in common with the people at Alagolewa, namely, their religion. I suppose if one had to say where the difference lay in the peoples of these two places, it was that at one place they were self-made, and at the other they were not, the aloofness of the squire and the kindness of the hind; but I may be wrong. Kekirawa was different again; after all, the people are town folk.

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Inania of this, that and the other

Crime Doesn't Pay Dossier Of Rural Evils '75

By Inna

There is very little doubt that some of those in power today are downright asinine in outlook. They think that because they have two initials "M.P." or something else like that behind their names, they could hoodwink all the people all the time. Their days could easily be numbered in a People's Republic. People means Power. It is not difficult to imagine unscrupulous men being hung,

drawn and quartered when the time comes for Nemesis to overtake them. They line their pockets with gold. they take bribes pretending that the poor have no face and name and that they are almighty. Fools of the first order.

It was barely a month ago, in the town of L... in one of the most underdeveloped regions of Sri Lanka. It is not even a town worthy of the name. The Village Chairman obtained a job for a youngman, and under orders of the MP, (for whom he works stoogewise), he ordered the young man to give him fifty Rupees a month for six months, now that the MP has found a job for him. The father of the boy grumbled and complained to us: "How on earth can I give him 50 out of a meagre 100 Rupees?" This has gone on willy-nilly for 5 or 6 years, and it may be even more. The big ones get off with their wishy-washy brains, the small fry get caught in this town or that. Bribery, Corruption, Exploitation... on one side and big talk of Justice on the other and all the time, secretly flouting the Prime Minister and her genuine policies of change, of work for the people and with the people.

Then again what of the so-called good christian *mudalali* on a coastal balt who got an illiterate man to "sign" with his thumb, paid him 2.50 and got him to sign 4.50? Not so long ago. March, this year!

The *mudalali* of course gave a few thousands to the School; to the Church, to the Hall, to the Road project and gave a full fish feed for Fifty altar-boys and choir-girls to the tune of a four-figure fright of Rupees. That's nothing. The thumb-signers are dumb and they have no God, he imagines. Not even the one he worships half-heartedly on a Sunday, thinking: "I must invite Father home to lunch". What happened to that Labour inspector who passed that way? Or did he? Then, cry Socialism hoarse. It's good for the throat once in a way. You can sing better!

Or that Commissioner who sees the dirt on the road and misses the bus-stand and its filth—arecanuts, coconut husks, rope, dead ropes, thambili husks, egg-shells, leaves and dry-rot (sign of Local Administration in some countries)—what shall we do with him? The People of the People's Republic owe such officials a beating. Never

was so much owed by so many to few, said a great man. When will these numb-skulls learn that it is people who count and not their petty purses of pilfered gold. They will never make it, for all their gold will dissolve away. I have heard the cries of the rural poor, the orphans and the widows who are special friends of God.

The mills of God grind slow, but they grind exceeding sure. Lord Buddha attacked *avijja* (ignorance) with its whole life and *dhamma*. Ignorance in high places, lack of *panna* (wisdom) of the heart is responsible for a number of undetected crimes. No CIA will rise up to such crime-detecting. They will stoop low to grovel in the base, senseless attack on the freedom and dignity of man.

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TAMIL DRAMA FESTIVAL

A Mixed Bag

K. S. Sivakumaran

LAST YEAR'S Tamil Drama Festival brought to the stage a corpus of metropolitan slices of life that are seldom seen by any audience. It was life in the raw, as it were. There were five modern plays and three traditional. Two plays depicted the lives of the middle class of Jaffna (*Vilippu*—Awakening; *Ini Enna Kalyanam?*—What Marriage now?); a third on the estate working class of the Hill Country (*Porattam*—The Struggle); while the other two tried to portray the lives of city shanty dwellers (*Sirukkiyum Porukkiyum*—The Vamp and the Paper-picker; *Thotaththu Rani*—The Queen of the Gardens).

The characters in the last two plays mentioned not only spoke their lines in both Tamil and Sinhala (with Indian and Muslim accents) their diction was also typically Colombo-spoken. The script in *Porattam* was written with speech rhythms of the estate workers. In the plays which depicted the Colombo city life, the Jaffna man and his speech were only functional and even subject to ridicule (his mannerisms, dress etc.) for Colombo is predominantly non-Jaffna Tamil spoken. But in the two plays which portrayed the characters from the North, the language remained conventional and middle-class speech.

Avant Garde?

So the first thing I noticed in these plays was the variety of rhythms and nuances in the Tamil speech as spoken in our little island. To a non-Tamil speaking person, but one who can understand the language, this festival afforded an opportunity to hear and learn not only the speech patterns but also the philosophy of life of those speaking Tamil.

The second point is the contemporaneity of the themes of the plays. One play (*Vilippu*) hinted that the problem of unemployment cannot be solved by wire-pulling and going back to the village and only by radical transformation of the Society, can such a problem be erased off. A second play (*Porattam*) emphasised that trade unionism of the working class and not parochial, racial approach will lead for the hopeful egalitarian society. The other two plays were pretentious as if they dealt with prostitution and housing as their main themes, but they were only incidental. *Sirukkiyum Porukkiyum* and *Thotaththu Rani* satisfied in depicting slices of life. The last modern play *Ini Enna Kalyanam?* approached sarcastically the vanity of the male in this year of the International Women. Incidentally this was the only provincial modern play. These are themes not particular to the Tamil-speaking people alone.

A third observation was that these plays while socially conscious also upheld traditional morality. They also tended to be a little propagandist of their pet themes. While the prostitute-turned the naive wife of a paper-picker is left in the lurch in one play, in the other the hen-pecked husband of an unscrupulous wife accommodates her after successfully succumbing to her at a crucial moment.

BUT IN PRODUCTION the propaganda element or the ethical or didactic motive was less noticeable, as the acting all round was satisfying. Because all these plays, (except *Vilippu*, which was a combination of naturalistic and stylised (with pantomime) presentations were naturalistic and those who played their roles were not acting a different role than from their normal life, they did their parts effectively. (Most of the actors came from the lower-middle or

the working classes). So the abundance of acting talents harnessed together could be seen as the fourth redeeming feature of this year's festival. Of course, I should mention that some of the players were over dramatic or cinematic. But particular mention should be made of the women who played difficult roles—difficult in the sense unconventional, daring and bold roles as the prostitutes, pimps and biggots.

If *Vilippu* convinced serious theatre goers as a sophisticated, polished and intellectual drama, all the other four modern plays were down to earth and easily understood by anyone, though lacking in coherence and unity. The play *Porattam* for instance lacked real drama or conflict. Even the Gorkian style plays of Colombo (*Sirikiyum Porukkiyum* and *Thotaththu Rani*) had little in them to be considered as drama. But their essential strength was to portray the life of the underprivileged to the city bourgeois audience. So this revelation of experiences can be considered as a further fifth point.

Apart from the five modern plays, three traditional plays deriving from minor Tamil classics and from Mahabharatha also found place in the festival. *Dhirgha—Sumangali* in the Annnavi folk-play tradition depicted the Sathiyavan-Savitri legend. (Savitri rescuing the life of her husband from Yama, the king of the Hades). The second play in the traditional genre took its source from *Harishchandra Purana* (the cemetery episode where a former king now working as a cemetery keeper-encounters the cremation of his own son because of changing fate—He had to keep his promise). The traditional play to be presented at the festival was *Karnan Karunai*, drawing from the epic Mahabharatha. (The compassion of Karna who by fate has to be brought up as the adopted son of charioteer, although he was of Royal blood).

This year's festival was definitely an improvement on the earlier attempts. A rich harvest of varied experiences came to be presented although in strict theatrical sense much was desired.



SEED PADDY SCANDAL?

DO HIGH GOVERNMENTAL CIRCLES (a convenient euphemism) know that a substantial portion (it is hard to determine percentages) of the seed paddy sold by Government at high extortionate prices failed to germinate in many areas? That farmers able to afford the luxury have re-sown with seed from private sources (which has germinated)? That in the mad governmental seed-buying spree last year (after the devastating drought) rubbish was bought by corrupt officials as seed? That a higher price was paid for "seed" paddy (and much of it was known to be muck)? That the exercise was carried out without anyone being accountable? That this was later sold to farmers at higher-than-market prices as seed? That the Government had made a further profit (unconscionable and immoral) through selling by weight after buying by volume (in bushels)? That no consideration was also paid to the fact that different varieties of paddy weigh differently though the volume (in bushels) is generally the same? That in many areas Government seed now lies unsold (high prices, non-germination, late arrival, bureaucratic distribution from distant stores, etc. etc.) and these unsold stocks (bought at a higher price as seed) will now be sold by the PMB at a lower price for consumption? That the monumental corruption and inefficiency by governmental bureaucratism brings despair? That if Maha paddy production hits targets, it will be a miracle? That targets and production statistics can be manipulated to meet the requirements of government propaganda?

Confidentially

Newsreporting, Lake House And The SLFP

IS IT NOT TRUE that the *Daily News* seems congenitally incapable of being able to report in a straight forward manner matters of national importance? That it is well known that a complete run of the paper was recently destroyed because it had once again wrongly reported a speech of an Opposition leader in the National State Assembly during a important debate? That *Lake House* reporting has become so selective that it is impossible to get a clear idea of what has taken place in the NSA by reading the *Daily News* version? That after the Speaker of the NSA had taken up the matter of mis-reporting with the bosses of the SLBC, *Lake House* and the *Times*, there is an attempt to give greater time, space and columnage to the Opposition? That within the space available in newspapers—due no doubt to the restrictions of newsprint and the unconscionable amount of space devoted to advertisements—the daily papers are compelled to summarise all speeches? That whilst the *Times* group, it must be said, endeavour to bring out the main burden and logic of the different speakers, however unpalatable to the Government, the *Lake House* does not seem to have any scruples about blacking out the most vital and essential parts of a speech? That in spite of the *Times*' desire to follow higher tenets of newspaper reporting, there is no doubt that some of the most important matters brought up in the NSA have not been reflected in the columns of any of the daily newspapers? That one of the most important speeches made during the Committee stage of the Budget Debate was made by the former Minister of Finance, Dr. N. M. Perera on December 8, 1975? That this speech referred to happenings in the Ministry of Finance after Mr. Felix R. Dias Bandaranaike had taken over? That the ex-Minister of Finance had brought out the sordid details of the business activities of Mr. Gamin Wickremanayake, the Finance Minister's brother-in-

law and who is his number two in his Ministry (acting it is also alleged without due constitutional authority)? That from the news paper reports in the daily papers it was not possible to get even a glimpse of the real state of affairs as made out in Dr. Perera's speech? That the *Nation* had published the full speech of Dr. N. M. Perera and it was a revealing document and it is likely to play an important part in the politics of the current period? That if such an exposure had been made in any other country where parliamentary democracy is said to be in existence, the Minister concerned, (in this case the Minister of Finance), would have resigned immediately or been called upon to resign? That the state of Sri Lanka is a unique place where none of the conventions of parliamentary democracy apply? That this issue of the *Nation* had sold like hot cakes and *Tribune* will soon publish this speech of the ex-Minister of Finance for the record so that its many readers in Sri Lanka and abroad have the opportunity of knowing the details of a matter which is political dynamite? That though *Tribune* has had many disagreements with the LSSP and the ex-Minister of Finance in the past, there is no doubt that with an exposure of this kind no patriotic citizen of this country can remain silent? That this especially so when the threatened exposure of skeletons in the LSSP cupboards (about which so many SLFP stalwarts have spoken so vigorously off-the-record and in the lobbies) has not been forthcoming? That following on this, the reply that Dr. Colvin R. de Silva made in the NSA to conclude the no-confidence motion against the PM was virtually blacked out of all its important details that it was impossible to even guess what he had said? That the *Nation* of December 26 which appeared late (because its printers, the *Times of Ceylon Ltd* had refused to print this issue at the last minute) has published the full text of this speech? That this is another speech which must be placed on record? That the matters Dr. Colvin R. de Silva raised in this speech are of a fundamental nature which affects the fortunes of all people whose lands have been taken over by the LRC? That for a person to understand the land transactions of the PM which had figured in the no-confidence motion the matters

adverted to by Dr. Silva in his concluding speech are of great importance? That it is a pity that this speech was not adequately covered in the reports in the daily papers? That all this raises important questions about the "nationalisation" of newspapers in a heterogeneous developing country with a multi-party system? That one of the matters on which the *Tribune* had differed from the UF, and the LSSP in particular, was in regard to nationalisation of newspaper groups like *Lake House* and the *Dawasa*? That it was our view, that in a parliamentary system, a press completely under governmental control through nationalisation and the like would lead to the most unfortunate consequences? That the takeover of *Lake House* has demonstrated that premature nationalisation (even through euphemisms like "broadbasing" ownership) has led to a situation where the remedy has proved to be worse than the original malady? That it is a case of jumping from the frying pan into the fire? That under the Wijewardenes (with a few controls) the different parties which make a parliamentary system work would have had a fairer deal than under the present set up? That what is worse is that the quality of journalism has also deteriorated to an extent that *Lake House* has become a decadent and degenerate newspaper organisation? That the place is today full of a hundred factions each pulling in different directions? That men without any newspaper experience have been placed in charge and they have reduced everything to a joke and a farce? That more space is devoted to advertisements today than in the worst days of Wijewardene money-making? That the contents and calibre of the articles, comments and newsreporting have created a great credibility gap between all *Lake House* papers and the reading public? That in the absence of other advertisement media, *Lake House* still makes it money although expenses have proliferated in a manner in which no prudent management would normally tolerate? That today the LSSP denounces the *Lake House* as a vicious institution of untruth, slanted news and managed newsreporting? That the UNP says that it is only a case of the biter being bit?



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