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Letter From The Editor

TRIBUNE

THIS ISSUE marks the beginning of a new publication year for the *Tribune*. We commemorate it with a photograph of the bejewelled feet of a dancer or it can be even a bride. The feet are most important for a dancer, and even a bride must have her feet firmly planted on mother earth if she wants to live happily in the midst of the storms and stresses of the modern world. Grassroots is a favourite cliché of all commentators of the contemporary scene: and, grassroots are best trodden by nimble feet that can move about without getting stuck in the mud. But one way modern society can ascertain the grassroots thinking of ordinary people is through a free, healthy, and democratic press. While it cannot be said that the press in Sri Lanka is what it should be, there is no doubt that this country can boast of a reasonably free, vigorous and vociferous press absent in an overwhelmingly large number of countries in the world today. It is not our purpose in this note to survey the state of the press in the contemporary world but we propose to complete our examination of the papers presently published in Sri Lanka. We have already set out some of the salient characteristics of the publications of *Lake House*, *Times* and the *Sun/Dawasa* groups. There are two other non-party dailies published, one in Colombo and the other in Jaffna, both in the Tamil language. The *Vira'esari* is today the most popular and most widely read Tamil daily in the country. It gives its readers a wide coverage of all the news and it often has scoops on political developments which the bigger publishing houses miss. It maintains an impartial and independent attitude on all matters. The *Eelanadu* is a provincial daily published in Jaffna. Although it seeks to cover national and international news, it is essentially a provincial newspaper concentrating on news about the Tamil people and their areas. If this country develops more provincial newspapers like the *Eelanadu*, in Sinhalese and in Tamil, it will be easier to know the grassroots thinking in the provinces and districts without any inhibitory constraints of a metropolitan bias. Nearly all the major political parties have Sinhala dailies: the UNP has its *Dinapatha*, the SLFP its *Sri Laka* (not in publication as a daily at the moment), the LSSP its *Janadina*, and the Communist Party, the *Aththa*. All these party dailies are so overwhelmed with a burning need for propaganda to further the interests and fortunes of the Party that they restrict their appeal to narrow circles of party loyalists. These papers always seek to interpret the news so as to promote the popularity of the party and to justify its policies and actions (however wrong or untenable)—with the result that these dailies have acquired a permanent bias and slant that keeps the general readers from buying or reading the paper. It is unfortunate that these party dailies have not yet developed journalistic finesse to combine party propaganda with attractive presentation to interest nonparty readers. Comment in these papers is also stilted and ordinary readers find it hard to swallow such slant (always in stereotyped terminology and jargon). These dailies are only for party members and party enthusiasts. Apart from these dailies, every party has weeklies in the different languages. The UNP has its *The Journal* in English, the SLFP publishes the *Sri Lanka* at the moment as a weekly in Sinhala and the *Nation* in English, the LSSP has the *Socialist Nation* in English. The TULF has the *Sutanthiran* in Tamil. With the election around the corner, the JVP has a journal of which four issues have appeared. The PDP has a journal, but it has yet to make its mark. Of all the weeklies that have made their appearance in recent times, the most significant is *The Independent* edited by Reggie Michael, the veteran journalist who had once made the *Daily Mirror* the talk of the town. Mr. W. Dahanayake is a regular contributor to the paper and it was he who had pointed out that even if an Emergency was declared after the NSA was dissolved it could not be made an excuse to postpone the elections. *The Independent* is sponsored by a group of Tamils favourably inclined to the Tamil cause, and TULF circles tend to regard the paper as a kind of unofficial organ. But editor Reggie Michael continues to make strenuous efforts to make the paper really "independent". Thirty issues of *The Independent* have so far appeared and it has already become a weekly "must" for everybody who wants to keep a tab on political developments in the island. With his long connections with daily papers, editor Michael often gets a few items of spot news on his frontpage every Friday, and a few of them have been scoops. *The Independent* is a political weekly to watch: it has yet to manifest a character of its own—very necessary for a weekly—but it has the potential to go far especially if it comes out openly as an avowed journal of Tamil opinion.

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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

More About The Elections

Colombo, June 22,

The comments in this column last week about what we sensed were the latest trends on the election front evoked immediate reactions from our readers. We had letters, telephone calls and callers-in-person. Those who had taken it for granted that it was a one-way for run the UNP were sceptical about our evaluations, but they admitted that the UNP campaign had begun to sag in many areas. One long-standing and discerning reader of *Tribune* asked us whether we had our tongue-in-our-cheek when we said that the SLFP had gained some ground.

Many agreed with our comments and our line of argument. The result of these queries, comments and criticisms is that we were able to participate in fuller discussions about all these matters. With more information, reports and comments flowing in, it is still not possible to detect the final pattern and outcome of the elections. To use a cliché, one can only say that the situation is fluid and uncertain.

The UNP still has an edge—what with the continuing shortages (of essentials like matches, kerosene, soap, milk foods, etc.) and the galloping inflation that has smashed all ceilings and skyrocketed into space (seer at Rs. 10 a lb, beef at Rs. 6.50 a lb, mutton at Rs. 10 a lb, cooking oil at Rs. 6.50 a bottle etc. etc. etc.)—and is still likely to romp home as the largest single party. But there is no doubt that the SLFP has narrowed the gap and is fast catching up with the UNP. Whether the SLFP can overtake the UNP by election day is still problematic and uncertain.

If the present trends continue, the final outcome may well be close enough for politicking about coalitions. But it is yet too early to speculate on these matters. Nevertheless, the TULF has already indicated that it was willing to consider offers from any quarter

without committing itself in advance to any of the two (or three) major parties (only after the elections will it be possible to decide whether the ULF can be regarded as a major party but for the moment we will regard it as one because it has had the gumption to put forward over 130 candidates). The TULF leader, Amirthalingam, in a speech at the Foreign Correspondents' Association last Friday (17/6/77), unashamedly stated that the TULF will walk the tight-rope and support the actions, programmes and policies of whatever government that comes to power that suits the TULF objectives.

What this means is that the TULF will not make any pre-election commitments, but that it will be willing to play the role of a kingmaker if the occasion arose. The TULF will therefore want the SLFP and the UNP to win seats in a way that will give the TULF a decisive role in the new NSA. TULF calculations, like FP calculations in the past, always tend to be wishful rather than realistic, and it may well be that it would be no different this time. It must be admitted that TULF calculations seem to have greater chance of coming right this time than at any time in the past.

In order to ensure that the TULF will play an important role in the new NSA, it must win a minimum of 20 to 22 seats of its total possible of 28 seats. (The TULF has 24 candidates and it is supporting 2 CWC and 3 Independent candidates) The TULF has very good chances of winning about 18 to 20 seats—unless it makes serious mistakes between now and polling day. It must be also conceded that the TULF has the possibilities of winning 24 or 25 seats—if between now and election day the UNP and the SLFP make mistakes *vis a vis* the Tamils and thereby play into the hands of the TULF which is permanently geared to exploit emotional hysteria stemming from language and racial considerations.

If the TULF bags about 20 seats and the ULF also bags 15 to 20 seats, the UNP and the SLFP will be left with about 120 to 125 seats to share between them. If this is the case the gap between them is likely to be very narrow. If the TULF and the ULF are not able to secure at least 15 seats each, the SLFP and the UNP will have more leeway to win a simple

majority, and in such a situation neither the TULF nor the ULF will be able to play a kingmaker's role. There are also those who want (and wishfully pray that) the SLFP and UNP get together in a Coalition primarily to keep the "Left" out of power. But realists know that in Sri Lanka power without the Left will be futile. With the power enjoyed by the trade unions and the awakened consciousness of the agricultural workers, no purely rightwing Government can make the wheels of industry and agriculture move in this country.

That is why the UNP has tried so hard to make it appear that it is a new "socialist" party. It is also because of this realisation that the UNP, however great the majority in the NSA, has indicated that it would be willing to form a National Government of all Parties to pull the country out of the economic morass in which it is sunk. The main task before any Government is to mobilise available manpower for productive work in agriculture (primarily) and in industry, and in this way inculcate a sense of discipline in people so essential for any progress in this country, apart from increasing production and productivity very necessary to check inflation and bring down the prices of all essentials. Any new government must also bring discipline among members of all services, including the police and army. (More of this in later issues).

The UNP is now once again seeking to create a new image of itself as a "socialist" party after its paper *The Journal* had indulged in a disastrous campaign of identifying a Russian "behind every newspaper headline", (as columnist Ravi in last week's *The Independent* so aptly put it) and which has shown that the UNP is the same old coldwar anti-left conglomeration of diehard rightwing pro-west elements. *Tribune* also made some acidic comments about *The Journal's* campaign of character assassination and coldwar tarbrush smear stories in a foolish attempt to kill what were regarded as two anti-UNP birds, namely Lake House and the Information Department of the Soviet Embassy. The two latest issues of *The Journal* have not published any such stories and it is to be hoped that UNP's party journal has finally decided

to stop fouling the atmosphere with such cold war gimmickry.

If the UNP *Journal* had continued its campaign it would have led to a free for all where every Embassy in town would have been dragged in and diplomats "named" without rhyme or reason. So many books have been recently published in different countries about the Intelligence Services of the major powers that it would not be difficult to pick out names for such smear campaigns. The *Journal* had started baiting the Russian KGB, but if this game had gone on it is the UNP that would have been hurt most with stories about its connections with the CIA.

The (UNP) *Journal's* sudden and welcome stopping of the campaign has defused the explosive situation that was building up. With Bhutto making serious charges against the CIA and the Americans, with Latin American countries shouting themselves hoarse about Yankee intervention and interference, and with the current hullabaloo in Australia about CIA activities anti-UNP journals would have had enough ammunition to fire away at the UNP. It is best that our general election is decided on domestic issues without being side-tracked by coldwar gimmicks that take nobody anywhere.

It is a moot question whether the UNP can, in the next three weeks, undo the damage done by its lapse into infantile anti-leftism (under cover of anti-Sovietism in the belief that Maoists, Trotskyites and the like would be tempted to lend a sympathetic ear to such propaganda tactics). UNP leaders may not know the gossip in journalistic circles that the Maoist elements in Lake House had cleverly used some persons in the UNP *Journal* to have a bash at their "mortal enemies", the Russian Revisionists, to eliminate them from Lake House. What element of truth there is in this is hard to say, but it is difficult to forget that there is usually no smoke without a fire. The crucial question is whether the UNP can regain some of the lost glitter of the "image" its leader Mr. J. R. Jayewardene had assiduously tried to create during the last five years: that the UNP is a new and vigorous "socialist" party. This will be an uphill task.

At the time of Prorogation and Dissolution the UNP had stood on the crest of an anti-Government wave. In retrospect, it would seem that the anti-Government wave was also due to the belief that the Government was even then seeking to find ways and means to postpone the elections. The UNP had mounted a major propaganda campaign that the Government would not hold the elections—(unless forced)—and the public had been worked up because of suspicions about the dictatorial inhibitions of the SLFP. The Dissolution and the announcement of the Election came as a rude shock to many who had convinced themselves that the elections would be postponed. This was an anti-climax to UNP's high-pitched campaign.

With Nomination and the emergence of three major groups contending for parliamentary power, voters have begun to sit back and think. Admittedly, there is still deep distrust and suspicion about the UNP: that it is anti-left and pro-West (pro-imperialist). To some extent these apprehensions of the UNP had been allayed by the new "image" leader Jayewardene has tried to create, but the recent propaganda in the UNP's *Journal* has blown this sky high. Without some degree of support from the left-minded and anti-west-minded voters, the UNP cannot win an absolute majority. Will it be able to woo and win these voters (or a sizable section among them) in the next three weeks after the numerous *faux pas* that have militated against the new "image" of the Party.

There are however two factors which favour the UNP: First, the Government is still not able to overcome the distress caused by shortages and high prices—and people feel that a change of government might prove to be a remedy; and second, the UNP has the best grassroots election organisation in every electorate, and if these organisations are mobilised in the correct way they will be able to carry propaganda to the remotest part of the country. J. R. Jayewardene still does not have the charisma of a supreme national leader (Mrs. Bandaranaike still has much greater charismatic pull), but he is an outstanding organiser and the UNP party organisation he has built up in the last five years (in the most

careful and painstaking way) is the best political machine in the country today. Neither the SLFP nor the ULF has anything comparable. The only weakness of the UNP machine is that it has not been politicalised enough to win over the uncommitted voters and the somewhat left-inclined sections of the population.

It would be also pertinent to note that a new trend which has manifested itself after UNP's diarrhoeic outburst of puerile anti-leftism is that all traditionally anti-UNP elements in every electorate have begun to consider the possibilities of swinging behind the anti-UNP candidate on the List most likely to collect the largest number of votes, be he SLFP, ULF or Independent. Whether this trend will gather momentum is yet to be seen. These people realise that the division of the votes among the "progressive" parties and groups will help the UNP and this new sentiment about checking this at grassroots voter level (although the anti-UNP parties are at loggerheads) is an interesting development.

All in all, the General Elections of 1977 promises to be the most interesting election to take place in Ceylon so far. Many are tempted to find a similarity between the current election and the election of March 1960 when no electoral agreements were in force. At that time, even the Left Parties had gone into the fray as separate parties—the LSSP, the MEP, and the CP. The LSSP and CP had fielded nearly 100 candidates each. The outcome was that the UNP, under Dudley Senanayake, had emerged as the largest single party but without a majority in the House of Representatives. The UNP had hoped to get FP support, but the latter had not oblige the UNP because it was the UNP which had torpedoed the Chelvanayakam-Bandaranaike Pact through extra-parliamentary actions like the March to Kandy which had triggered the communal riots of 1958. This time three major left-minded parties, the LSSP, CP and the PDP, are fighting together as the ULF. Though the ULF will not determine the outcome of the elections, (and though it may open the way for many UNP electoral victories), the ULF is a catalyst to induce qualitative changes with far-reaching implications.



SRI LANKA CHRONICLE

June 5 — June 9

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; ST—Sunday Times; DM—Dina-
 mina; LD—Lankadipa; VK—Virakesari; ATH—Achtha;
 SM—Silumina; SLD—Sri Lankadipa; JD—Janadina;
 DP—Dinapathi; SU—Sun; DW—Dawasa; CM—Chinth-
 mani; WK—Weekend; RR—Rivirasa;

SUNDAY, JUNE 5: Police will set up "Elections 1977", the massive security exercise mounted soon after dissolution to ensure a peaceful general election as possible following Nomination Day tomorrow. Work at all hospitals reverted to normal yesterday as doctors who had sent in sick notes for the previous two days reported for work; they are expected to work today. The mystery behind the sudden acquisition of wealth by certain repatriates from Sri Lanka to India, was one of the important topics that came up for discussion at last week's Indo-Sri Lanka Conference on smuggling and exchange control offences. There was a great show of peasant power at Kandy yesterday when the SLFP election campaign was inaugurated by the PM. Sri Lanka has reaped a bumper harvest from the steadily rising price fetched by tea in the London market. The government decided yesterday to close down the Railway workshop at Ratmalana and the office of the Chief Mechanical Engineer until further notice following the deadlock between railway trade unions and the authorities. The General election campaign will begin in earnest from tomorrow when candidates fighting for 168 places in the enlarged NSA will file in their nomination papers at 32 centres all over the island—SO. The high commands of the three major political groups contesting the general election were yesterday briefing their candidates on the proper procedure to be observed in the preparation and submission of nomination papers tomorrow at the various centres. Work in all government hospitals is likely to return to normal tomorrow, GMOA and AMS sources informed yesterday. A few of the commercial banks fear a serious cash shortage in view of the continued trade union action by the Central Bank staff. Political circles are buzzing with the news that Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, the UNP leader has decided to write to the Soviet leaders protesting against what he alleges to be interference in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka by the USSR embassy—ST. India and Sri Lanka will next week commence a joint probe to track down to masterminds behind organised smuggling combines operating between the two countries. Skeleton train services maintained on Thursday and Friday came to a complete halt yesterday when engines were prevented from entering or leaving engine sheds by strikers of railway unions. The UNP led Rajya Seva Jathika Vruthiya Samithi Sammelanaya in a statement issued to the press, states that the Sammelanaya or any individual union affiliated to it, while disapproving any sort of trade union action whether it be work-to-rule or stoppage of work, would neither give prominence or support any such measures when the country was on the eve on an election. The work-to-rule adopted by the railway employees, has resulted in large scale

food shortages, in the remote areas, it is reliably understood—SU. The doctors who returned to work yesterday have said that if their grievances are not met by today, they will again go on medical leave from tomorrow. The CP is not putting forward any candidate in the Jaffna district at the next general election—VK. The government decided to close down five more workshops because the work-to-rule in the railway continues.—SLDP. Normally 506 trains run throughout the island, now only 29 are running, where over 100 goods trains ran now not even one is running—ATH.

MONDAY, JUNE 6: The Commissioner of elections said yesterday that all arrangements were finalised yesterday for the acceptance of nominations today from candidates who will seek election to the eighth post-independence parliament; strict security measures will be in force at all centres where nomination papers will be received. The GMOA and the AMS yesterday decided to temporarily suspend the strike by doctors; it was called off by the Action Committee of the two associations at midnight yesterday. Doctors who were occupying the paying wards in the General Hospital Colombo vacated them yesterday and moved into the Barnes Place quarters. The railway operated most of its main line Sunday service yesterday following the calling off of part of the work-to-rule campaign by guards. The Ceylon Ceramics Corporation is now negotiating with foreign manufacturers of sanitary ware and electrical insulators to set up export oriented projects here. Government Medical Practitioners and Assistant Medical Practitioners of the Health Department decided to go on strike from today—CDN. Over 500 candidates will hand in their nomination papers at 32 centres throughout the country for the first general elections under the constitution of the Republic of Sri Lanka. The general elections will protect the workers and the democratic rights of the people; therefore it is foolish for the workers to launch strikes at this particular juncture; according to the General Secretary of the UNP controlled trade unions in a press release issued on the unrest in the country. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front.) has no particular secrets; its only secret is to capture power through struggles with the assistance of the poor masses; so said Mr. Waag, Tilakarathne, who was in jail for insurgent activities and released under the Republic Day Amnesty at a mass propaganda rally of the JVP held at Gampaha. Discussions between the University Teachers Federation and the Vice Chancellor ended in a deadlock—CDM. The 'work-to-rule' by Railway employees enters its thirteenth day today with no signs of settlement. The President of the UNP has written to Soviet leaders protesting against the interference in internal affairs of the country by Soviet personnel on assignments here. The JVP, though not a recognised party, will get the 'bell' as its symbol if there are no objections to it from other candidates at today's nominations—SU. Co-operative channelled practice by government medical specialists will start shortly; this follows the decision by the Ministry of Health to implement the scheme now that the doctors who occupied the class I paying wards of the General Hospital have moved out to their new quarters. The maximum retail price of a box of safety matches containing not less than 50 sticks, which was sold at 10 cents earlier will be increased to 15 cents—CO. To improve the Uda Walawe Scheme the government has set aside 226 lakhs of Rupees—DM.

TUESDAY, JUNE 7: There was a surprising amount of bonhomie and good cheer all round when party leaders and candidates mingled freely blending their blues, greens and reds in remarkable harmony of both spirits and colour when they arrived to hand in their nomination papers yesterday for the 1977 general elections: the contrast was even greater, because the platform performances of these same candidates have been so different. The USSR embassy in Sri Lanka in a reply to the UNP 'Journal' which accused it of interference in local politics says that it flatly rejects the indicated fabrications as having absolutely no grounds and considers that these fabrications have the purpose to mislead public opinion in Sri Lanka. The Health Minister will meet the action committee of the Association of Government Medical Practitioners and the Society of Assistant Medical Practitioners this morning for discussions on their outstanding demands. Mr. Anura Weeraratne, former Additional Secretary to the Ministry of Industries and Scientific Affairs and Chairman of the Ceylon Ceramic Corporation was released on Rs. 75,000 bail by the Criminal Justice Commission yesterday—CDN. The largest number of independent candidates ever, will contest the forthcoming general election 270 independent candidates submitted their nomination papers yesterday; the UNP is fielding 154, while the SLFP has put forward 146 and the United Left Front 130. Lt. Col. Ananda, father-in-law of Sanjay Gandhi was found shot dead outside Delhi last Saturday—CDM.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8: Any act directed towards causing contempt for the administration of Justice or causing ill-will amongst the people will be severely dealt with by the Police with the start of the general election campaign on Nomination Day. The Railway's skeleton service began picking up yesterday with a number of workers in the Maradana and Dematagoda sheds beginning to work. The Ceylon Petroleum Corporation is doing its best with its limited fleet of bowsters to feed the provinces with stocks of petrol, diesel and kerosene said one of their spokesmen yesterday. An emergency program to distribute food to the areas affected by the rail strike has been drawn up by the Food Department. The first consignment of wall tiles, manufactured at the wall tile factory at Balangoda will be shipped to Saudi Arabia on June 20—CDN. Is an unseen hand behind the current wave of anti-government strikes?: a squad of detectives from the CID special branch has been detailed to find out the answer. Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara has said in a press release that he still considers himself a member of the LSSP and that he contests the elections as a ULF candidate. The Independent Medical Practitioner's Association has urged the government that the services of a government doctor be made available to the general practitioner in the implementation of the Channelled Consultation practice for government doctors. The Railway Guard's Union has called off its work-to-rule campaign with effect from midnight yesterday; the President of the Union hoped that they would be able to bring the services back to normal today. The leader of the UNP, has written to the leaders of the Soviet Union alleging the involvement of the Soviet Embassy in Colombo in the 'partisan political activities' of a section of the local press which is controlled by the present government—CDM. There are signs of the work-to-rule of Railway shed workers being called off today. The Public Service Technical Officer's Trade Union Federation has asked the Leader of the UNP for an assurance

that public servants drawing more than Rs. 560 a month would be granted political rights when the UNP comes to power. The External Law Student's Association of the University of Sri Lanka has expressed 'complete solidarity' with the dons who resigned recently over a pay dispute with the government—SU. The CP of Sri Lanka has stressed that the policy of a separate Tamil state should figure in the ULF manifesto—VK.

THURSDAY, JUNE 9: The draft to ban the use of cyclamates, dulcin and saccharin in Sri Lanka, was handed over to the Ministry of Health last week; the proposed legislation brings our food law in line with that of many countries including the USA which have banned the use of artificial sweeteners on the grounds that it is injurious to health. The Railway Services were fast returning to normal following the re-opening of the Chief Mechanical Engineer's offices at Ratmalana and a number of workers in running and repair sheds in Maradana and Dematagoda doing their normal quota of work, a railway spokesman said. The Central Bank will be closed to all non-staff grade employees from today until further notice; there will be no bank clearing today; this announcement was made yesterday by the Monetary Board. The Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, has in collaboration with the National Youth Service Council launched a training program for 500 persons needed for projects begun by Divisional Development Councils. Fifteen district hospitals which have been dispensing Western medicine will be converted to Ayurvedic hospitals soon, a spokesman for the Health Department said yesterday—CDN. Vandals have been at work, destroying the SLFP branch office at Ginigattena. The Federation of University Teachers meets today to review the situation and map out their future strategy over the salary dispute. Sri Lanka's tea production is up by 12.2 million kgs. over the corresponding period last year. There had been only a slight improvement in the operation of train services yesterday compared with Tuesday. The People's Bank Officer's Association has decided to stage a token strike on July 22 and follow a work-to-rule procedure in support of the Ceylon Bank Employees Union which has already decided to launch a general strike of its membership in all banks from June 22—CDM. The government decided to close the Central Bank and declare it out of bounds to all non-staff and minor employees because the acting governor and several officials were 'gheraoed' for six hours yesterday. The Secretary to the PM has informed secretaries to all ministries that the PM had told all Deputy Ministers it would be better to go on the basis that they had ceased to hold office so that there would not be any possibility of controversy on this question. A new DIG has been appointed for Nuwara Eliya. A number of politicians of the government party are to be prosecuted shortly on charges of misappropriation of money and misuse of vehicles belonging to certain co-operative depots. The Acting Secretary of the JVP, Upatissa Gamanayake Tillekeratne and W. Dharmasena, who were held as insurgents and released after the emergency was withdrawn, are indicted with attempted murder and attempted robbery in the High Court of Avissawella—SU. Because of an agreement reached between the trade unions in the hill country, the Land Commissioner's Department has taken the distribution of land from where it left off—VK.

BACKGROUND FLASHBACK

Mahaweli—2

by R. Kahawita

In general there are two methods of transferring water from one basin to another. The first is by means of an open channel taken down the dividing ridge, or through a saddle between the two basins. This is frequently done in irrigation works as, for example, in the Elahera, Giritala, Minneri irrigation systems. The second method is the connection of two suitable points, one on each drainage line, by means of a tunnel. This has been adopted mostly in hydro-electric schemes as, e.g., at Norton Bridge.

In the case under consideration, the first method does not appear to be feasible. From an examination of the top maps there appears to be a feasible route of diversion using two sections of tunnels. The route though feasible topographically, may or may not be feasible from the geological conditions that exist.

The route of the proposed tunnels and improved waterways is shown on the topo sheets 1.25, 1.20, 1.15, 1.10 and 1.5. A ridge at elevations varying from 1,700 to 2,000 ft. divides the Mahaweli and Such Ganga basins between Katugastota and Wattagama. The level of the P.W.D. bridge at Katugastota, one mile above the points of diversion 1/20 (8.15x0.25), is about 1470 M.S.L. The river bed level at the point of diversion will be about 1,400. The level of the drainage line at Yatawara 1/20 (10.1x3.0), in the Sudu Ganga basin is about 1,300. The direct distance between those two points is about 3.5 miles. Therefore it can be seen that a possibility exists for a diversion of a part of the Mahaweli Ganga flow into the Sudu Ganga.

The Sudu Ganga finally discharges via the Ambanganga back into the Mahaweli Ganga near Manampitiya. Therefore, to take the water further north it is necessary to dam the Sudu Ganga and to carry the water through the intervening ridge into the Kalawewa basin. This can be done by one of two methods:—

A. (i) An anicut can be constructed across the Ambanganga at

Akarahaduwa 1/10 (9.1X4.85) and the water carried in an open contour channel across the Nalanda Oya to Uswattawa 1/10 (9.35x6.05), at an elevation of about 800.

(ii) From here a tunnel can pass the water under the dividing ridge and drop it into the Dambulla Oya at Kuruwetetuwe Wewa 1/5 (10.2x2.55). The elevation here is about 750 and the length of the tunnel required is approximately 5.5 miles.

B. Instead of constructing an anicut a tank can be built by an embankment at 1/10 (9.7x5.6), above the Bowatenne anicut. The water can be drawn up from the periphery of the reservoir so formed and passed into the tunnel as described at A (ii) above.

The length of the river section along which the water will have to flow is 26 miles up to the intake into the second tunnel. In this research there are 7 anicut schemes that have been constructed by the Irrigation Department. Various stretches of cultivated land lie on either side of this stream.

FIRST TUNNEL:— The length of the tunnel will be 3.5 miles at a velocity of 8 ft. per second. The discharge capacity of various sizes of circular tunnel is as follows:—

10 ft. dia — 600 cusecs.
20 ft. dia — 2,500 cusecs.
30 ft. dia — 5,700 cusecs.

The maximum overburden for this tunnel will be about 500 ft. A certain section at the beginning may have to be carried as an open lined channel, in which case the length of the tunnel will be shortened to about 3 miles. In the Yatawara end of the tunnel there is a steep drop in ground level to the drainage line. It may be possible

to utilize this drop for the production of hydro-electric power.

SECOND TUNNEL:— The length of this tunnel will be approximately 5.5 miles. The maximum overburden will be about 550 ft. at the Karawilahena ridge.

Water can be conveyed further north from the Dambulle Oya by a reconstruction of the abandoned Yoda Ela extending northwards from Wellahena F/25 (6.9x1.1), and then possibly via the old Kandalamayedaela into the Malwattuoya catchment.

FURTHER INVESTIGATION REQUIRED:— Before making any definite proposals much investigation has to be done.

(a) The water resources of the Mahaweli basin should be analysed and plans for their economic utilisation drawn up.

(b) The needs of the existing lands cultivated from the Mahaweli Ganga, e.g., the Allai Scheme and the Minipe Scheme, should be looked into.

(c) Detailed surveys, both surface and sub-surface, are required along the tunnel sections, and the waterways that will be traversed by the diverted water. The borings for the tunnel locations will extend from 500-600 ft. below surface in some instances.

(d) The suitability of existing structures along the Sudu Ganga to pass the increased discharge should be investigated.

Hydrology:— The area of the Mahaweli basin above Tennakumbura where there is a gauge station is 547 sq. miles. The site of the diversion is 4 miles above Tennakumbura. Gaugings are available of the flow past this station for 5 years. *These are as follows—

	1944 - 45	1945 - 46	1946 - 47	1947 - 48	1948 - 49	1949 - 50
October	4,500	4,600	3,300	3,800	2,100	3,900
November	5,800	4,700	5,000	700	1,700	3,500
December	4,700	4,100	8,000	900	2,300	3,800
January	650	1,500	5,000	900	1,800	2,200
February	600	800	1,700	90	500	1,800
March	500	1,200	2,200	800	700	2,200
April	100	2,500	2,100	900	1,400	1,500
May	500	800	1,200	1,100	2,000	3,000
June	2,700	2,200	2,100	5,000	4,300	4,500
July	1,400	4,900	2,500	4,700	4,600	6,200
August	3,100	5,600	14,000	1,200	4,700	5,000
September	1,600	4,000	2,000	600	4,200	7,600

Mahaweli

The average rainfall of 3 representative stations in the catchment are given below:—

	Hatton	Onagaloya	Orwell
September	13.46	17.25	8.93
October	13.80	18.62	16.59
November	10.09	14.73	14.20
December	5.96	7.27	7.75
January	4.47	5.63	6.30
February	2.65	2.63	2.35
March	6.56	6.30	6.92
April	9.07	9.90	9.93
May	14.75	16.30	11.44
June	21.41	25.33	12.12
July	21.39	22.25	9.84
August	15.50	18.20	7.97
	<hr/> 140.01	<hr/> 164.41	<hr/> 113.74

Hydro data for Kalawewa:—

Capacity: 72,600 acre ft.

Full supply area: 6,380 acres.

F.S.L.: 420 R.L.

Sill of Sluices: 390, 394, 399.

Discharge at maximum supply: 433, 200, 176 (say) 800 cusecs.

Action has already been taken to divert part of the Mahaweli Ganga flow into N.C.P. by the construction of the Nalanda Oya Reservoir which is in progress. In this instance it is proposed to divert about 30,000 ac.ft. from the Nalanda Oya, a tributary of the Mahaweli Ganga into Kalawewa.

The Deputy Director of Irrigation added that the department was already studying the possibilities of the Mahaweli Ganga basin and that already some investigations have been done. The most important aspect of the matter was the economic study of a scheme and said that he was not aware how long such a study would take. It is possible to divert the Mahaweli Ganga north to Jaffna or south to Hambantota as the levels will permit it. But these ventures could be started only if they are economical. The possibility of the use of the Mahaweli Ganga water in its own basin should first be investigated, and only if after satisfying the needs of that basin surplus water was still available, attempts should be made to divert the flow to other catchments, as the diversion, construction of long channels and big reservoirs will be very expensive.

He added that a previous speaker had mentioned that if the Railway was constructed from Rambukkana to Bandarawela cutting through several hills, he did not see what difficulty there was in constructing a channel from the Mahaweli Ganga. He said that the Railway could run up a hill

or down a valley whereas a channel had to always go down and down. To divert the flow of Mahaweli Ganga a small channel would not do. To carry the flood discharge, very big channels would be necessary, and also the construction of very big reservoirs was necessary for storing the water for use during the drought period. The question of the possibilities of the river basin in Ceylon are being studied by the department, and it is not possible at present to say what the final proposals will be and how long the construction will take.

Mr. D. B. Ellepoia, Acting Director, Rural Development, said that he could recollect having sent a proposal made by a certain gentleman somewhere in 1939 to the Irrigation Department to investigate the possibility of tapping the Mahaweli Ganga near about Kandy and diverting the water to Galagedara pass. (note, correct, this was the beginning of the studies by the I. D. At that time the cost being very prohibitive much attention had not been paid to the suggestion. He requested the Director of Irrigation to see whether any such scheme had been investigated.

Mr. U. B. Unamboowe said again that his request was a very simple one. He merely asked that an officer be appointed to investigate the possibilities of such a scheme. The officer who is appointed should be allowed to call for representations if necessary. He also requested that this matter be expedited.

The Chairman said that the Deputy Director of Irrigation in his memorandum as well as in his remarks had indicated that there are possibilities of doing certain things to effect a scheme as desired. But Mr. Unamboowe desired

such possibilities. He therefore felt that the resolution should be sent to the Ministry along with a copy of the minutes for suitable action.

Mr. Clement Dias, supporting Mr. Unamboowe's request, said that at the present day there was a tendency in most departments for old officers to oppose whatever schemes were put forward by young officers, however feasible they might be. Mr. Unamboowe's resolution called for an officer to be appointed for the purpose of investigating possibilities of such a scheme so that the dry zone might be irrigated by the waters of the Mahaweli Ganga. He added that in Ceylon the maximum rainfall was about 200" and the lowest was about 50", whereas countries receiving as little as 10" rainfall were doing better than Ceylon. In regard to the question of economy raised by the Deputy of Irrigation, he said that the Government had plenty of money and there was no reason why something of it should not be spent on a scheme of that nature.

Mr. S. Sivapalan, M.P., said that what was required was an investigation of the scheme. The idea behind the mover in asking for the appointment of a special officer for the purpose, was that the full scheme be implemented with the least possible delay. He believed that there was no harm in passing that resolution and conveying to the Minister the desirability of detailing a special officer for that work with particular reference to the possibility of making use of the water that is going waste in the Mahaweli Ganga for the benefit of the areas that require it most.

This record of the discussions that took place in the Central Board of Agriculture and the preliminary feasibility report submitted to the Board by the Irrigation Department in 1951 should draw the curtain down on those who claim of visions and dreams of Mahaweli diversion and it should be a closed chapter now. The project had now taken shape, but there are several links to be welded in the chain of using the water so diverted before the full benefit of the scheme can be realised.

The technical aspects of the project are complete but not the settlement and human aspects which are of prime importance for the

scheme to be a success. These are being very badly neglected at the moment, because of the hurry to bring settlers into the area; these aspects are being overlooked. I hope the settlement aspects will be given priority above all other things, after the election fever is over.

Maintenance and operation of the project will entail an annual recurrent expenditure of 160 million rupees. In the next budget this sum will have to be voted if the sections of the scheme so far constructed are to be of use to the nation.

(Concluded)

POINT OF VIEW

Election Perspectives

by R. Kahawita

Sixth of June has come and gone, with a lot of fanfare, garlanding and ovations; 761 hopefuls are in the field to turn Sri Lanka into a better place to live in, than in the past seven years. The nominations worked out very smoothly. For this we should be thankful to our Election Commissioner with outstanding ability, integrity and impartiality. His next task is the conduct of voting for which he needs all the co-operation, goodwill and discipline of all Political Parties and Independents. We are certain he will get the co-operation.

According to the news reports the Commissioner of Elections has recognised nine political parties and has assigned symbols and colours of their choice to trade mark their Politics and Party aspirations.

Of the nine political parties who have fielded candidates, there are only three parties that come up to a National level of importance and who are in the run to form a Government after the elections. In a national state assembly of 168 elected members, the United National Party is fielding some 154 candidates. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party is fielding some 146 candidates and the United Left Front is fielding 132 candidates.

Each of these parties has the potential of coming home with 84 seats on their own to form a Government. If they fall below this target then there will be political bargaining and who will team up with whom to form a Government is anybody's guess.

The yardstick, the voter has is the past performance of each party and the promises broken or fulfilled in the past, party who has had a chance to run the country and convince the voter what they could do, and what they hope to do next, if they were to be elected to form a government. Their prescription to cure the immediate ills of the country is in their principles and manifestos. How much of it will be swallowed by the voter is something to be seen after the elections.

The Political Party to be in the voters' clinic first was the *United National Party* with the Policies and Principles publicized at the 1975 December rally. This was in preparation for a 1975 elections for which they agitated in various ways. They also have put out a final commitment of Policy on the 25th of May, 1977 at the opening of the election campaign at Bogambara.

The *Sri Lanka Freedom Party* has yet to make a decisive policy declaration, though the press on the second of June carried a few promises, mainly to consolidate what they have done during the last seven years and plug those political and administrative holes which have eroded the faith of the citizens in the party's ability to build a socialist state and the resulting vacuous state of things they have left behind at the time the State National Assembly was dissolved. What their future Policies will be are yet to be crystalized in forms the voter can grasp and build up hope of a better future.

It is unfortunate that the *United Front* started to disintegrate a few months before the N.S.A. was prorogued. This action of the Prime Minister may have been the cause to shake the faith and confidence in the United Front citadel to usher in the promised socialist state, or it may be that a no-confidence motion, if it were to be debated, might have bared the skeletons in the many cupboards. Whatever the reasons may be it has shaken the faith of the voter and

the "Unions" ability to lead him to the promised Land. The gradual erosion of their faith in the Government has cascaded into despair after the break up. The people—the masses, proletariat, whatever the jargons the leftist used to describe the voters, are now convinced that they got played out of, not only of the free measure of rice they promised to give if the U.F. were to be elected to power, but everything else that mattered to the common man. They have been also told that the Government has failed to manage the country as promised and the choice is back on to the road begging for food. But not for "A privileged few who never had it so good." An indictment against the U.F. by a defecting Minister who marshalled all the courage he could command to discredit the United Front Policies and "do the bolt". This admission by a Minister of the U.F. government after six years of "service" will certainly shake the confidence of the voter. This very same Minister went further to say that the damage done to the social and economic life of the people of Sri Lanka are irreparable and are such that "any Government that comes into power in the future will be hard put to resuscitate the economy if the present financial policies are allowed to be continued."

Already four Ministers of the U.F. cabinet have jumped the Board and have formed another united front to fight the elections. This is the *United Left Front*, which is a triumvirate of *Lanka Sama Samaja Party*, the *Communist Party* with allegiance to Moscow, and the new breakaway group of the *Sri Lanka Freedom Party*. Their ideas have not yet been welded together to form the last shot to be fired at the voters. Their inability to get together in a common ideology to go out on an election rampage is quite understandable. Probably after the other parties have spelled out their programme of what this country should be for the next six years, they may come with a formula to throw every other Political party in the shade, and give the voter a completely new and different pill to swallow; as a quack would claim "either it will kill you or cure, take your chance."

The *United National Party* was the *National Congress* of the "Fight

for Independence" days, together with the Sinhala Mahajana Sabha. In the first National election and the first step towards independence in 1931, the stalwarts of the U.N.P. went to the polls as National Congress and those who disagreed went as independents. In the second step towards independence and at the negotiating table was born the U.N.P. and went to the Polls in 1947 as the United National Party. Thereafter the Party went ahead, even though there were defections etc. alone to woo the voter. As it would happen in any democracy, they won and lost according to the mood of the voters. They always went alone and the voter judged them on what the party promised them and what they got. It is in the fray again alone, with 154 candidates, with some contestants in the Federal areas too.

The Sri Lanka Freedom Party was a breakaway from the U.N.P. and went to the Polls in 1956 not alone as S.L.F.P. but as M.E.P. which too was a breakaway group from the L.S.S.P. The two breakaway groups, one from the "capitalist ridden" U.N.P. and the other from the "leftist ridden" L.S.S.P. formed the M.E.P. and at the 1956 elections they won with a comfortable margin but ended disastrously. Thereafter the S.L.F.P. gained in stature but always went to the polls with some understanding with the minor political groups and in 1970 it formed the Grand Alliance with the L.S.S.P. and C.P. at the bargain price of Key Portfolios to be assigned to the two leftist groups. The result of this alliance is still the talking point in all political circles and it has even filtered down to the village well and the village market place. The disintegration of the Grand Alliance may not be a healthy sign for the party.

The leftists were never able to form a Government of their own. They have been throughout their political history in the opposition, and even there always a minority group. The 1977 election is the only time the leftist group has ventured out in strength to form a Government. It is a good move politically as it would move our politics to a left and right. But what are their Political offerings to the voter?

The U.N.P. has changed its image and face, it has discarded

the so-called capitalist, the landed gentry—thanks to the Land Reforms of United Front—and other reactionaries. And put on the mantle of socialism. They are committed to protect democracy, so they say, and their first obligation is to safeguard the nation and build a democratic way of life. And to keep their commitment to socialism, they have adopted Democratic Socialism as the new Political Philosophy.

The S.L.F.P. since its Grand Alliance, they have been talking of Social Democracy based on thoughts and principles of the party's Late Founder. They have not yet found what these principles are so the party is now riddled with chieftans who speak socialism to the dozen, and with the slogan—"those who help themselves, the gods help them."

The United Left Front (ULF) has definite ideas and their outlook is definite and objective—State socialism. State to be sole owner, operator, distributor, developer of National wealth and the inhabitants, all to be state workers and employees. This is a very simple formula to understand and accept if the voters can stomach it. This, they claim, will solve all the national problems.

What does the U.N.P. offer in their declaration of Policies and Principles of 25th May 1977 to the voters? The average voter, the voter with nothing to call his own now, to those who are on border line of want, too weak and destitute to sort out what his country is to be, only three things matter to him—sufficient food at a price within his capacity to earn, cheap apparel, and employment at a wage level sufficient to procure his basic needs. All his needs are caught up with "C.O.L." i.e. "Cost of Living". The U.N.P. manifesto has underlined this malady of our present economy, but does not say how and how soon relief can be given to lighten the burden. "How it can be done and how soon", are the sweet words the voters are eager to listen to but so far not heard. Without employment and a wage even if the food were to be cheap, is of no avail to him. He will still have to be around the dust bins for his daily morsel. A method to reduce cost of living and provide employment will be the magnetic want to draw the voter to which-

ever party that has the answer to his problems. He is not in a mood to weigh the pros and cons of a new constitution designed to safeguard democratic socialism, equality in law, equal opportunities; a new educational system and a host of other principles to bring happiness and sunshine to his drab life. Waiting for some of those promises he has suffered for seven years, and he is in no mood to wait any longer. His—the voter's slogan seems to be—"now or never".

As far as this burning question is concerned, the U.N.P. has not given a full answer. Unemployment among the age group 18-25 years can be fairly well met by the creation of a Minister for youth welfare and training, as announced in the Party Manifesto. But has the Party got a working plan to be implemented immediately, if they, come into power? Adolescence is restive, impulsive and impatient; no time to wait. They will want it in the shortest possible time. These three problems—unemployment, inflation and food will be the nightmare of any Political Party or group that may come into power after July 21st.

Food and clothing at a reasonable price, full employment and equal opportunity. All other declarations of policy fall by the wayside.

The Sri Lanka Freedom Party in their sketch manifesto as given in a news item of 3rd June has highlighted a code of ethics, though it is late by seven years; it is an admission that their Politics, Politicians and their hirelings have not followed a code of ethics at least in public life. During the last seven years the S.L.F.P. was responsible in institutionalizing everything that mattered to the citizen in his search for his daily requirements. Instead of reducing the "institutions" the S.L.F.P. promises to take those a step further—National Development Brigades, Provident fund to Farmers, National security training, Vigilance Committees, packs of watch dogs etc. These are what I refer to as institutionalizing the daily needs. They do not approach anywhere close to a solution of the Problems the Party has created during its seven years of Stewardship.

It also speaks of a three year crash programme to generate employment opportunities. If at the end of seven years the Party is

speaking of a three year crash programme there cannot be much credence in their crash programme. They also play on the same string as the U.N.P. for youth welfare—A Minister to deal with the problem. They have imposed a complete black-out on "C.O.L.", the frankenstein-created by their institutionalization of food imports, production, transport, distribution and retailing—Silence is golden, no controversy as to how and why. What else could they do? The appeal is now to the Sangha, Veda, Guru, Govi and Kamkaru—little realising that these are the very groups of voters who are crushed with the weight of C.O.L. and unemployment. There is nothing left for the Government to appropriate and distribute so they think of the sublime—Sangha, Veda, Guru, Govi and Kamkaru. Still the question is where is the food and clothing promised seven years ago?

The United Left Front, by the very nature of its Political philosophy, there is no need for a manifesto. During their coalition era, they nationalized everything and almost established a totalitarian economy—the so-called State socialism. All wealth, means of production, distribution etc. are owned by the state and the people are state workers. If the People produce enough, it will be distributed after meeting the needs of the "management" and if it is not enough, reduce the daily necessities to what is available for distribution—Live on the ration card and waiting list. This is a simple formula, which everyone can understand. If they come into power, they will complete the State Socialism which they started as partners in the United Front.

They may still form a Government, with their own numbers at the elections and a breakaway group of the S.L.F.P.—In politics there are no loyalties, no ethics, no morals—the struggle is for power at any cost. "The signs are ominous". With only 84 seats to command a working majority, they may romp home to be at the helm of state for the next six years or more, if they can convince the voter that state socialism is the answer. If the question is raised "why didn't you do it during the six and half years of partnership with the S.L.F.P?" The ready answer is, "We could not do it because of the big busi-

ness mudalalies, Gem merchants, and C.R.A. tycoons created during the partnership, so we bailed out and come to you as an unadulterated leftist group to save you."

Is it now in the hands of the voter for decision making. Many have already decided what to do, they may attend political meetings, they will listen to what is being said and promised, yet he will not change—He has already cast his vote—to whom we will know after July 21st. It may be the United National Party, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party or the United Left Front—the order in which the three parties is listed has nothing to do with Probabilities.

IS IT NOT TIME

To Follow The Indian Example?

Something very strange has overtaken the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC):

It has stopped, for some weeks now, broadcasting reports about S.L.F.P. meetings and rallies and the speeches of its leaders. This had earlier been done on an exclusive basis. Except for an occasional passing reference to other meetings there were no reports about the meetings and statements of other politician leaders or parties. For very good reasons, the SLBC came to be known as the SLFP Broadcasting Corporation.

Though there had been demands that the SLBC should drop its partisan attitudes, the powers that be had ignored them all. Those in control of the destinies of the SLBC (as in the case of other official media) were not in the least bothered about criticism. It is not necessary to detail recount the manner in which the SLBC had become a tool in the hands of a particular caucus in the SLFP. Only some sections of the SLFP received regular attention from the news broadcasters of the SLBC. The Caucus did not favour certain sections of the SLFP, often this was only temporary.

But, the Opposition parties have always suffered grievously at the hands of the ruling hierarchy of

the SLBC. This was also so during the time the UNP was in power. But, in more recent times the SLBC had gone from bad to worse. It gave publicity to SLFP news alone: it suppressed all news which it thought would not be to the liking of the ruling Caucus in the government.

Then came the Indian elections, and the downfall of the Indira Gandhi government, and Sanjay Gandhi caucus. The All India Radio (AIR) had, in the period after the declaration of Emergency, progressively become the radio of Indira Gandhi and the Caucus which had established a near fascist rule in New Delhi. Opposition news was either distorted or blacked out. Indira Gandhi and the Caucus round her were glorified as the saviours of the nation. In spite of this one-sided propaganda barrage by the official media, the Indian voters inflicted a decisive and devastating defeat on Indira Gandhi and her Congress.

One of the first things that the new Janata Government did was to free the AIR and other official medias from the bondage which had been imposed upon it by the palace caucus better known as Sanjay's Mafia. The Janata Government gave broadcasting time to the leader of the Opposition on the same day that the Prime Minister addressed the nation. This was shortly after the new government was sworn in.

While doubts have been expressed about the Janata Party's ability to resist temptation to exploit the A.I.R. for petty sectarian benefits, it must be said to the credit of the new Janata Government that it has endeavoured to chalk out new norms and guidelines to govern the functioning of the official radio. During the just concluded Assembly election campaign in nine States, the Indian government very wisely had secured an understanding among all parties about the sharing time on AIR and Television on the national and state levels, between May 25 and June 7. Before we examine the agreement reached between recognized political parties, it is necessary to point out that a similar demand was raised in Ceylon by the major political parties: that they wanted equal time with the SLFP on the SLBC; that they wanted equal news coverage for their meetings.

How did the government of Sri Lanka meet this demand?

Judging from the broadcasts during the last three to four weeks it is clear that a ban has been imposed in regard to reporting the meetings of the SLFP as well as the meetings of all other political parties. Instead of permitting the use of the radio by all recognized parties the government merely imposed a blackout of news in respect of the elections, which is the most important event in the country today.

For some weeks before the imposition of the current ban, the SLBC devoted over 95 per cent of its news bulletins to the speeches of the Prime Ministers and other SLFP leaders at different meetings. Today these speeches have been shut out, but listeners have now been condemned to suffer boring details of minor governmental activity e.g. the repairing of roads, the improving of tank bunds, fabulous exports and so on and so forth.

It is not necessary to detail the kind of news that comes over the radio at the moment. But it is clear that the government is determined to keep the SLBC as its special media and monopoly; it seems to think that a constant repetition of minor government activities—most of them far from the real truth—will help to build its image in the public and among voters. Such propaganda devices may well become counter productive.

Tribune will publish, for the record, the report which appeared in the Indian newspapers of May 21, about the details of the agreement between the recognized political parties in regard to the way they shared time over the Indian National radio. This is something which Ceylon could easily have followed.

The Hindu report read:

An understanding has been reached by recognised political parties at the national and State levels for sharing time on All India Radio and television between May 25 and June 7 for their campaign for the Assembly elections. The Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Mr. L. K. Advani, who announced this at the con-

clusion of a daylong meeting with representatives of four national parties and eight State parties, described the agreement as a major breakthrough in the efforts made for over two decades to make the media available for election campaign. Under the scheme agreed to today, each recognised party will be allowed to make two broadcasts of 15 minutes duration each over AIR and one broadcast of 15 minutes over TV. The order in which the parties will broadcast will be determined by draw of lots. The dates and timing and the order in which the parties will broadcast will be decided under the supervision of the Chief Electoral Officer of the State. The persons participating in the broadcast will be chosen by the party concerned. The parties will be given facilities for broadcasting from the principal Akashvani station and Doordarshan kendra (where there is one) in every State in which election to the Assembly is to be held. Broadcast from the principal station in the State will be relayed from all other Akashvani stations in the State.

In case a State party recognised by the Election Commission in one or more States fields a sizeable number of candidates for election in a State in which it is not so recognised, a gist of the election broadcasts made by the said State party in any one of the States will be covered in the regional news bulletins of the radio stations in that State.

Certain guidelines have been agreed to on the nature of the talk. The parties will avoid in their talks any criticism of friendly countries, any attack on religious or communities, anything obscene and defamatory, any incitement to violence, anything amounting to contempt of court and any aspersions on the integrity of the President and judiciary.

The parties and their representatives who participated in the meeting convened by Mr. Advani were: Revolutionary Socialist Party; Mr. S. Bhattacharya and Mr. Praful Chaudhuri; Vishal Haryana Party; Prof. Randev. All India Anna DMK; Mr. R. Mohanarangam; Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam; Mr. G. Lakshmanan; All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference; Mr. G. Shah; Indian National Congress. Mr. V. B. Raju; Communist Party of India (Mar-

xist); Mr. Ramdas and Mr. Deschadha; All-India Forward Bloc; Mr. Chitta Basu and Mr. D. D. Shastri. Communist Party of India: Mr. Bhupesh Gupta and Mr. C. K. Chandrappan; Janata Party: Mr. Ramakrishna Hegde; United Democratic Front, Nagaland: Miss Rano M. Shaiza and Mr. Vizol and Akali Dal Unit: Mr. Avtar Singh and Mr. Ajail Singh.

Mr. Advani said that the facilities agreed upon to-day were for the forthcoming Assembly elections only. Based on the experience of this, they would be institutionalised and made permanent. He said already the Government was contemplating a scheme for this purpose. He said the question of coverage of Ministers' speeches and broadcasts by Ministers over AIR and TV during the period of the Assembly elections was raised at the meeting and he had agreed to issue necessary instructions to AIR and TV in this respect. He proposed to ask the media not to invite Ministers, members of Parliament and legislatures, leaders of political parties and persons closely identified with any political party to make broadcasts till the elections were over. The speeches made by these persons in any function or meeting should not also be covered in Samachar, Darshan and Radio Newsreel. The AIR and TV would also be asked to notice speeches of Central Ministers and State Ministers during this period purely on news value and portions which were in the nature of party propaganda should be kept out.

Replying to questions, Mr. Advani said that a suggestion was made that all-India parties be permitted to broadcast over the national hook-up he conceded the force of this suggestion but it was agreed that for the present, when the elections were to the State Assemblies, the facilities be confined to States. Asked whether the Opposition parties were free to criticise the ruling party, Mr. Advani said, "yes" and added that the criticism would have to be within the limits agreed upon. There would be no prior approval or editing of the talk and he was confident that no party would violate the agreed norms. Mr. Advani said he was personally very happy at the agreement reached to-day. For, he recalled, this issue of making the media available for election campaigns had been engaging the

attention of the Government and the Election Commission from 1951. Time and again several proposals had been put forth by the Election Commission and Conferences held. Somehow it had not been possible so far to arrive at a consensus.

The Election Commission had for the past 10 years given up the idea of pursuing the matter.

Mr. Advani said that immediately after the Janata Government assumed office, his Ministry wrote to the Election Commission to take the initiative for resuming the dialogue with political parties to ensure that in elections held hereafter the radio and TV were made available to them on some equitable basis. The Election Commission expressed its reluctance to take the initiative. One reason advanced was that radio and TV were Government departments and it was for the Government to decide. Another reason given was that if on the eve of the elections the Election Commission did something which did not go through and there was a controversy, it (the Commission) would be embroiled in it which it would like to avoid. Following this, the Government asked the Election Commission to formulate a scheme for consideration of the Government and the political parties. The Commission agreed to this and drew up a scheme. The scheme was, however, modified in the light of opposition to the scheme proposed by the Election Commission in the past so that the factors which had earlier held back an understanding could be overcome. The scheme as modified by the Government was put before the meeting to-day and it was unanimously agreed to with some changes.

One of the modifications made by the Government in the scheme drawn up by the Election Commission related to the time for the ruling party. The Election Commission scheme envisaged the ruling party having the first broadcast and having the right of reply at the end. But the Government felt that the ruling party should have neither the right to initiate the series nor have the right of reply. The order of broadcast, it was felt, should be decided by draw of lots. Another change related to the mode of determining the dates and timing of the broadcasts. The scheme proposed by the Election Commission envisaged the respec-

tive Station Directors deciding this on the basis of draw of lots. But the Government modified it to have this decided under the supervision of the Chief Electoral Officer in the State on the basis of draw of lots.

Mr. Advani said that there was unanimous acclamation by the participants of the proposal put forth by the Government. By and large every participant felt that this was an important move and the initiative taken by the new Government would go a long way in strengthening democracy in the country, he said.

Mr. Advani said personally it was a matter of great happiness because electoral reform as a whole had been of great interest to him. The use of media was one part of the electoral reform which would make elections more and more fair and free so that the influence of money power was reduced more and more, he added.

Is it too much to hope that after the next General Elections whatever political party or Coalition comes to power it will make the SLB (and Lake House) national institutions and which will not be made the exclusive monopoly of the ruling Party or a dominant Caucus.

It is well to remember that India has only followed the example of many other countries. In the U.S.A. every party is entitled to any time on the radio and television networks. In Britain and France time is allotted to the recognized parties.

It is time that Sri Lanka followed suit?

THE MIDDLE EAST

Likud's Provocations Will Trigger War

by Ariel

The political upheaval that Israel has undergone as a result of the recent election, (on May 17), has created a completely new situation not only in Israel but also in the Middle East. The defeat of Labour and the emergence of Menachem Begin, the Likud leader, has already begun to compel Israelis to face more squarely the question of war and peace in the region.

The Likud victory has created new problems for Washington. It is believed that President Carter and the National Security Council had wanted a weak and pliable Israeli Labour Party to come to power after the elections with a small majority so that the US would be able to play a dominant role in the region. But these expectations have not been fulfilled. Commentators have compared the ultra nationalist Likud to an unchained Frankensteinian monster lurching towards a head-on confrontation with the Arabs in a manner that is likely to detonate a Middle East war.

To the Arabs, the Likud is an unholy alliance of Zionist extremists and acknowledged terrorists. But West European observers, who have all along extended support and sympathy to Israel regard Menachem Begin in a different light. The London *Financial Times* in an article stated: "Menachem Begin is a true believer, a man of certainties. He is convinced that it was destiny which has given him the chance to become Prime Minister of Israel after 29 years as leader of the Opposition. Israel has been longing for a strong figurehead since the fall from power of his great rival David Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister who ruled until the mid-1960s. Begin fits into the same mould, being indeed a character from the same era. Small bespectacled and looking far from fully recovered after a recent severe heart attack, Begin does not at first glance appear to be the answer to a troubled nation's prayers. But for a country which is still on a war footing after nearly 30 years of independence, the 64 year-old leader of the right-wing Likud movement does carry the aura of authority. A man who attracts and gives intense personal loyalty, his position as leader of the right wing was never seriously challenged even when his political fortunes were at their lowest ebb. Despite losing eight elections in a row Begin continued to command the respect of his faithful followers. He is justifiably regarded as the most dramatic public speaker and the finest parliamentary orator in the country. He can rouse mass public rallies with his fiery delivery, or cut political opponents to the quick with the caustic lash of his tongue. As a fighter, Israel's new leader has an impressive re-

cord. After immigrating to Palestine from Poland in 1942 Begin assumed command of the militant underground Irgun Zvai Leumi which in 1944 led the uprising against the British mandatory authority, contrary to the wishes of most Jewish leaders who felt the fight should be postponed until after the defeat of the Nazis."

This is a kindly view to take of Mr. Begin who has now indicated that Israel would incorporate the West Bank and the Gaza strip into the State of Israel. It is this hardline attitude that has given rise to fears of war. He has already told everyone who asks him that Judea and Samaria, as he insists on calling the West Bank, are "an integral part of the land of Israel." On the annexation issue he dodges the question by saying that you do not annex your own land, as he claims it is. The PLO, according to him, has no role to play in any West Asia talks. The Palestinians already have a homeland "and they are welcome to continue living in it under Israeli rule."

Whilst West European commentators have attempted to tone down the image of the Likud, Arab and pro-Arab commentators (including Left-wing commentators in all countries) have raised a hue and cry about the possibilities of a new war in the Middle East.

Bob Dreyfuss writing in the US Labour Party journal *New Solidarity* of May 24 stated:

"In a series of horrifying policy statements, spokesmen for the Likud demolished any basis for containing the eruption of the Mideast and shattered all previously mooted bases for peace negotiations. 'If the Arabs don't accept our terms,' said a Likud official referring to his party's official refusal to make any territorial concessions on lands occupied in the 1967 war, 'well, that is unfortunate. It may mean war—but we will not compromise because we will win in a showdown'. To underline the bull-headed Likud refusal to seriously consider peace terms, Likud leader and ex-terrorist Menachem Begin set out on a boisterous tour of the Israeli-occupied West Bank only 24 hours after the election. 'Occupied territories?' chortled Begin, referring to the region which the Arabs and the Palestine Liberation Organisation have designated as the

locale for a Palestinian state as part of an overall settlement. 'These are liberated territories!'. If the Arabs insist on Israel relinquishing these areas or establishing a Palestinian homeland here, then there will be no negotiations,' squawked the lunatic Begin. More ominously, Likud's No. 2 man, General Ezer Weizmann, the founder of the Israeli Air Force and the brother-in-law of Moshe Dayan said, 'For the last decade, the U.S. has been misled on Israeli willingness to make concessions on the West Bank. To put it bluntly, we are not going to give back one inch, and there is not a damn thing Washington can do about it.'

What is more disturbing is that many Likud supporters with their terrorist background have developed a suicide squad complex. One of them proclaimed publicly: 'I am sick and tired of people always talking about survival. If we go down this time, we take 50,000,000 people with us'.

The Likud victory came as a shock to the Arabs who had thought peace in the Middle East had become a reality with the U.S. appearing to take what they thought was a realistic pro-Arab stand. Following the Israeli elections, Egypt's President Anwar Sadat, Syria's Hafez Azad and King Kalid of Saudi Arabia convened a summit in the Saudi capital of Riyadh to discuss their response to a coup d'etat in Israel. At the meeting, an aide is said to have declared that 'the need for military preparations seems to have taken priority over peace arrangements' and a Kuwait newspaper called on the Arabs to begin emergency arrangements for an Arab super defence pact." The PLO Office in Geneva declared that: "the Likud election is a declaration of war."

The new developments in Israel with the emergence of Likud Government is a bitter pill for the Arabs. The Arabs know that they do not have a realistic military option because of the overwhelming strength of the Israeli armed forces. Fundamentally, the Arabs know that they must take action to bankrupt and collapse the Euro-Dollar empire through a Third World debt moratoria and an oil embargo in order to bring Israel and its patrons in the West to their senses.

It is likely that the Arabs will hold off such a decision until talks are completed between President Carter and the Saudis. Shortly after the Likud victory Prince Fahd went to Washington. Before and after his meetings with President Carter, the Saudi Foreign Minister had insisted: "the Arab world places great hopes in the US which has a unique opportunity to bring peace to the area. If it misses this chance, the Middle East situation will definitely become uncontrollable."

More and more Arab countries are becoming sceptical about America's ability to persuade Israel to make a just and honourable peace in the Middle East. A recent Algerian statement pointed out the political danger of continuing to rely on the US. "The terrorists are in power in Israel. This is an upheaval of the cards that means that those Arab countries which are still willing to choose the American solution to reach peace will have to make increasing concessions at the expense of the Palestinians."

Saudi Arabia which is the main pro-US Arab country, even after the Zionist extremist Likud Party victory in Israel, has shown a renewed determination to lead the Arab nations on the path of peace. Knowing the sentiments of the Arab world, the Saudis are today openly indicating that they intend to use their oil and monetary resources as strategic weapons against Israel and the pro-Israel forces in the U.S.

The US is doing everything possible to avoid a Middle East confrontation. And, for the moment the Saudis have defused the war situation by ignoring Likud provocations and by placing full responsibility for neutralising the Likud fanatics on the shoulders of the US. That Saudis seem to be proceeding most gingerly even allowing for some face-saving by President Carter. Not long ago there were full page advertisements in the *New York Times* to stress the joint responsibility of the US and the Saudis for peace, noting that the Saudis had \$ 140 billion worth of development projects that could involve every sector of American industry.

The options for the Saudi regime and the other Arab nations are clear: it is either war or measures to force the US into a new Middle

SHORT STORY

Fate — 2

East peace and a new monetary system. The Egyptian Foreign Minister, Ismail Fahmy, warned that the Likud victory would compel the Arabs to use the oil weapon if the US back-tracked on its efforts to secure an overall Arab-Israeli peace. Fahmy and other Arab spokesmen have, in the first instance, not spoken about a total oil embargo but have intimated that the oil weapon they have in mind would include retaliatory phased price rises and petroleum production cut backs. More catastrophic for the West would be an Arab resort to "military action" against Israel. Such a war cannot possibly be contained regionally and might trigger a general thermo-nuclear war.

Already the talk of war and military alerts have begun to fill the Middle East. PLO Chairman, Yasser Arafat, in a statement on May 26, has warned that forces in the Israeli military command would now resort to a "pre-empire strike" and would attempt "a settlement on the battle field" against Arab military forces—mainly, to divert attention from Israel's growing domestic, economic and political chaos. As Arafat spoke, there was already heavy shelling between Israeli forces and the units of the Palestinian-Lebanese Leftist command along Israel's northern border with Lebanon.

According to the *International Herald Tribune* of June 1, the Government of Iraq had declared a "day and night air cover" over the country's oil fields to protect them against a threatened Israeli pre-empire strike. According to the *Tribune* the Iraqi move was a response to a recent warning by the Israeli Chief of Staff, Mordechai Gur, that Israel was capable of attacking "distant Arab states" beyond the immediate "confrontation states" of Egypt, Jordan and Syria.

It will be recalled that in the days of Nixon there was a plan to attack and occupy, if necessary, the rich oil fields of the Persian Gulf in order to blackmail Arab oil producers to toe the Washington line. There are reasons to believe that there is a new attempt in certain American circles, with the coming to power of Likud in Israel to put the Nixon plan against Arab oil resources into action.

This Iraqi air cover was an excuse for Israel to place its units

in the occupied West Bank and along the northern border with Lebanon with "red alert" status in expectation of a new upsurge of hostile activity marking the 10th anniversary of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Arab circles fear that Israel is preparing the way for an invasion of Lebanon and a new confrontation with Syria. Such a confrontation was intended to spark a general Arab-Israeli war.

Fear of Israeli attacks have made Iraq and Kuwait to sign a special agreement to begin joint aerial patrols over the Arab Gulf oil fields. Saudi Arabia too has developed serious misgivings of Israeli intentions to attack Arab oil fields.

It will thus be seen that a dangerous situation has arisen in the Middle East. How the US proposes to control and contain the Likud government is not known. The new government has already refused to accept UN resolution 242 which called for Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories. In an interview in the *Newsweek* of May 30 Menachen Begin, in answer to a question, "Will you be more successful than your predecessors in dealing with the Arabs?", said: "I don't like to boast, but I can say that we will deal with them on a realistic basis. Since the elections, I suppose all the Arab rulers and the great part of mankind have learned that they had some misconceptions. They talked about the occupied West Bank. We call it liberated Judea and Samaria. I think that this is a sounder policy than that of the previous government which promised withdrawals. They did not produce peace. So when we say that Judea and Samaria belong by right to our people, it's a sounder policy. It gives us security and a chance for peace, while a policy of partial withdrawals only invites pressure for more withdrawal, but it does not produce agreement with the Arabs. I therefore assume that ours is a sounder policy. Anyhow, let's give it a chance."

It is not likely that the Arabs will stomach this.



This story is written in the first person singular. That is a literary convention which is as old as the hills. It was used by Petronius, Arbiter in the 'Satyricon' and by many other story-tellers in the 'Thousand and one nights', and more recently by Somerset Maugham, from whom we have adopted this style. It's object of course, is to achieve credibility for when someone tells you what he states happened to himself you are more likely to believe that he is telling the truth than when he tells you what happened to somebody else. The 'I' who writes is just as much a character in the story as the other persons with whom it is concerned.

A train journey is never dull or boring to me because I indulge in the pleasantest of pastimes—studying my companions. And this time was no exception. One comes across many characters, but some are more interesting than others, and one always particularly so. I picked on my victim with the greatest delight. She epitomized the essence of Northern womanhood, but unlike those of her particular generation, a light of battle burned in her eyes. Why, not only her eyes, her whole attitude was one of aggressiveness against the world in general. But, experience had taught me that people who seem to be up in arms against all land sundry, are, invariably the gentlest of people inside and it is just an armour they put on to shield themselves—probably because they have been dealt many blows in life.

I was trying to find out if I was correct in my judgement, so I began a conversation with her son, and she too, despite herself, was dragged in. It is strange how friendly one becomes with one's companions on a train journey—it's probably because of being closetted for so long in a limited space. And I have noted with great amusement people, specially at the end of long journeys promising to keep in touch—promises more likely than not, forgotten before

they each home, with few exceptions perhaps.

This particular lady, at first only contributing monosyllables to the conversation, gradually began losing her stiffness and very soon was monopolising the conversation. I do not know what induces people to confide in me—probably my being a good listener has something to do with it—for I love to start people off on a topic and sit back to give them an ear.

Life had not been too kind to this woman. The passing years had left an indelible impression on her—more sharply than was her due. I thought, for she seemed to be old, though in actual fact, she was barely middle-aged. She was battle-scarred (not physically of course!) with the many little wars she had waged in life. And that is what made her more interesting, for there was character written all over her face. And that is precisely what attracted me to her. She seemed to exhude a sense of drama, for when she opened her mouth to relate even a small incident, it took on dramatic proportions, and this made her great fun to be with. Her belief in the Almighty was unshakable, despite the amount of troubles he had rained on her poor head! I have seen the faith of many a firm believer shaken under the impact of blows from above. But not my friend-of-the-train. Believe me, I still do not know her name.

Her complexion was a rich chocolate, ridges and furrows giving her face its character. Her lips were scarlet with beet juice, which she kept emitting from her mouth through two fingers with the greatest expertise, and try as I might I fail to achieve. Her eyes were her greatest asset—especially when she wanted to express something, they spoke volumes, but her tongue didn't lag far behind! And her hands, they said a great deal—for by observing hands one can read much into a person's character. No doubt her hands had performed many tasks, for they were rough and calloused, yet, they were the hands of a dreamer, a thinker, a visionary—who knows what hidden depths were lying within her, unable to find expression because of having to wage a constant battle for survival? I wonder how much the world has lost by people like her being denied a chance of self-expression?

She told me the story of her life. I know not why, but it kept me enthralled throughout the journey for she was an excellent storyteller. "I was the only child of doting parents, and I had been sheltered and pampered by them. My father was a contractor and had made quite a lot of money, and so they lavished me with all the good things of life. When I was barely fifteen, my parents had started thinking seriously of getting me married. Proposals were pouring in, but none of them seemed to satisfy my father. Oh! there were doctors and engineers and civil servants, all of whom he rejected. After nearly an year, he picked upon one he thought the ideal match for his beloved daughter. This is where I believe that fate has a large part to play in our lives. For he could have picked on any of the others and the whole course of my life would have been different. But no, it had to be this man with whom I had to link my life. He had all the proper requirements to make him perfectly suitable—the right family connections, the right educational qualifications, the right income, the right looks, the right age—in short, every thing was right. So, amidst great feasting and rejoicing I was married off to this so-right man with a more than adequate dowry.

I was very childish then, hardly knew the outside world nor the difficulties one had to face in it. I was very impressed with this man who had suddenly entered my life. Having known few other men I was highly taken in with his good looks and manner, actually I was very much in awe of him, he being considerably older than I. So began my married life. At first everything was fine. I was living in a dream world. But soon, I had to come down to reality. I had to undertake all the duties of a housewife. I had a lot to learn, but I had an able teacher in my mother-in-law, who unlike the proverbial mothers-in-law was an angel. Having had no daughters she treated me like her own. My husband was never bad to me, but I always sensed an air of aloofness about him, a withdrawn kind of demeanour. But I attributed it to the difference in our ages, though I noticed he was not like that with his mother. But I accepted him for what he was.

Within a short time he was posted elsewhere, and so we went

away leaving my mother-in-law behind. After this, I noticed that my husband was not very nice to me. It was not that he ill-treated me, but he openly showed annoyance and sometimes shouted at me without any provocation. It hurt me a great deal for no one had spoken a harsh word to me at home, but I somehow tried not to let it bother me. He began keeping away from home for a couple of days at a stretch. I used to wonder at it but I never dared ask him about it. While living with his mother, he never drank, or even if he did, never came home drunk. But now, he came home intoxicated on more than one occasion.

In gradual stages this increased. The small shows of temper became scenes, which in turn became violent. And the harassment for money too began. For my father had put all the money in my name. First it was demands for money either through threats or cajolery. When that was exhausted, it was for the jewellery, till I had hardly anything left. By this time I had four children. But my husband hardly bothered about them. It was to me that they turned for everything. His absences from home had also increased.

I never let my parents guess any of this, for it would have broken their hearts and when they had done so much for me I did not want to hurt them. I pretended that I was very happy. For in front of them my husband behaved like the perfect son-in-law. This was what I hated most, the double facedness, the hypocrisy.

When my fourth child was born, my parents set out to see us. On the way, the car met with an accident and I lost both of them that very day. This was one of the greatest blows of my life. And my husband was hardly any comfort to me. On the contrary, he was even worse than before. When troubles come, they do not come singly they say, and this was quite true in my case, for, hardy was I getting over the death of my beloved parents, when another blow landed on my head.

I had always had vague misgivings about my husband's comings and goings, but I never gave myself the chance to put these ideas into concrete form or should I say I never wanted to believe what obviously was the truth. But this

very truth was brought home to me forcibly. My husband turned up one day with a woman and two children and said that they would have to live with us in the future. I was thunderstruck! I said I would leave the house with my children and he could live with that woman. Oh! God, where had all my childish ideals of marriage gone? They existed only in the fabric of my dreams. Reality was cold, hard and cruel. How could I bear this? Where could I go? What could I do? Where would I live? I had no answer to these questions. Nothing was left of my dowry except my father's house in the village. But how could I go there and live? What would I tell the curious village gossips? I did not know myself. But one thing was certain in my mind. I would not stay with my husband any longer. I had suffered enough indignities at his hands, and I was not prepared to stand any more.

With nothing but determination to help me, I set off to the village. There was at least a roof over our heads. Life was very hard, for in addition to all the housework, I grew some vegetables for sale and I used to undertake needlework in the neighbourhood which I had to do late at night. With all that it was very difficult to make ends meet. Many were the tribulations I endured. How often would I have thought of doing something drastic to end my misery. But I never gave in to those weak moments—I fought them all. By now, I was a hardened woman of the world—no longer the shy and retiring girl I was when I married. So hardened in fact, that I was not afraid of anyone or anything.

But do you think that man left me alone even after that? Not a chance! He kept visiting us at frequent intervals trying to threaten or frighten me, but I never gave in. I fought him like anything. His demand was for money, but when I was struggling to keep body and soul together, how could I give him anything? He didn't seem to understand that. He thought that my father would have left me more money and that I was hiding it away from him. When my children were older and better able to understand, they took up for me. Threats having no effect, he resorted to underhand methods. He prevailed upon thugs in the area to harass us. But I didn't let them get the better of us. From that time on-

wards I always carry a knife on my person.

Do you know something young friend? You must never expect anything from anybody in this world. Because if you do, sure as anything, you will be very disappointed. This I have found through bitter experience. Two of my children are doing very well now, but do they bother about me or their brother and sister? No, they are too absorbed in themselves to care. But I don't actually blame them, for human nature is such that when one is doing well, one tends to forget bad times. I have one more daughter who has to be married. My son should be able to look after himself. But I will never give up. Before I die I shall see myself doing well, so that no one can say that I died a pauper. I would have achieved something. Though I have suffered throughout life, I am sure that at least in the last part of it, I shall be 'somebody'. For it is a person with plenty of money that the world recognises as great."

I wish I could have spent more time with her, but the journey was coming to an end and soon it was time to bid adieu.

'Never let life get the better of you—you must be always prepared to fight and win in the end.'

This was the quality I most admired in this remarkable woman. This great determination despite all the hardships she had faced in life and was still facing. That firm resolve that she would conquer and emerge victor come what may. It is the same quality which I think must have spurred and continues to spur all the Napoleons and Hitlers of this world. Though my friend had and may never reach those heights, there was no doubt that she was fired with that same spirit.

Many years later, on my wanderings, I chanced upon a shrine in the midst of a jungle. It was set in sylvan surroundings. Beautiful trees—with huge trunks gnarled with age, their branches reaching skyward stood like sentinels guarding the place. The grass was fresh and green and soft. I took off my footwear, for it is a great delight to me to walk barefoot in the grass. This was an idyllic spot—a haven, a retreat, a place such as this would I choose if ever I should think of retiring from the world.

Being weary after trudging through miles of jungle, I stretched myself full length on that gorgeous grass under one of those majestic trees and was soon in the land of dreams.

I was woken by a powerfully-rendered song of invocation. Having been completely devoted to the world, it took me a little while to get my bearings. When I did so, I found an old woman, the embodiment of devotion, dressed in saffron with closed eyes and folded hands, standing before the idol and giving vent to her emotions. I sat where I was, and listened for over an hour, for there was something arresting in that voice. It wasn't as though I hadn't seen religious fanatics before—I had, dozens and dozens in fact, for being a keen observer of human nature such things interest me immensely. But I don't know what kept me rooted to the spot that day. By the time she finished, quite a crowd had gathered there, and the old woman greeted them all. Something, don't ask me what, led me also into that place. I sat down in a corner and watched. The various offerings that the people brought—flowers, fruit, milk, honey, ghee were taken by the old woman and placed at the foot of Ganesh and the Goddess Patni. Incense and camphor were lit, someone began playing a drum and another began singing. Slowly but surely the old woman was going into a 'trance'. She first began swaying from side to side, then began dancing and after that was in a real frenzy. Suddenly she began uttering something which I found rather difficult to understand. 'The goddess has come' the people said and shouted 'harohara'. With that the drumming and the singing ceased.

Soon, with the utmost piety, the people were directing questions at the old lady and she answered. What problems mankind did have! Children, enemies, lands, houses, marriages, there didn't seem to be an end to the list. At length, when every question was answered and remedies prescribed, the drum was once again beaten and a song of farewell sung to the goddess. In gradual stages the goddess they said left the old woman and she fell on the floor in a heap. Perhaps half an hour later she revived.

While all this was going on, one of the devotees had come up

to me and enquired whether I had a problem I wanted solved. I assured him that I was in no hurry to solve any problem. He was rather surprised, for he informed me that people came from far away places to get help here and he thought that I had come for the same reason. I assured him that this was not why I had come.

By the time she recovered only a couple of others were left besides myself. She sat motionless for quite a while with eyes closed and I was able to observe her closely. Some spark of recognition kindled in me for a second, but was gone in a flash. There I sat for half an hour racking my brains to find out where or when I had seen her or someone like her before. But try as I might I couldn't—my memory as usual was playing tricks with me and so I gave up and went away disgusted with myself and thinking perhaps she bore a resemblance to someone, I knew, but I couldn't think to who. I decided to give up trying, but as I walked back that evening through that lush green jungle with branches brushing my face and dry twigs crackling underfoot the thought was at the back of my mind.

I returned to that elysian spot more than once after that but did not witness the same spectacle as it apparently took place only on certain days of the month. I did see the old woman after that and on the last occasion spoke to her. It was only then that it all came flooding back to my mind like water gushing forth from a waterfall—my mind flashed back to a conversation in a railway compartment I couldn't recall how many years ago. But when I spoke to her now there was none of the aggressiveness left in her. In its place there was a calm—a calm in speech and demeanour, a calm that certainly needed no words to express itself. For unlike previously, she spoke in monosyllables. I did try to draw her out but was not very successful. I didn't expect her to remember me. But surprisingly she did, for she told me that she had rarely related the story of her life, and she couldn't figure out what induced her to confess so much about her life to a complete stranger. Then she told me:—

"You know, probably you are no stranger to me, I must have known you before." But I told her that it was not possible.

"You may not consciously remember it. It was probably in some other existence. You know, reincarnation."

I felt a chill creeping up my spine. I wanted to get up and run, to shout out that such things were not possible, and she was letting her imagination work overtime—but I couldn't move, I sat transfixed, staring into her eyes which were holding me captive. After some time she asked me:—

"What are you afraid of? Surely, intelligent people like you should be familiar with such things?"

"Yes, I said. "I have read philosophies from Confucius to the Vedas, the Upanishads to the Bible to the teachings of Buddha."

"Surely these things must have taught you much."

"Yes, they have said many things, but I am still not convinced about it all", I said. You have still many years left of your life to go into all these things. More books to read and learn. Me, I didn't have time in my life for books, but I learnt through living. Life was my teacher and experience my books. Today I have come a long way and am satisfied in 'helping people.'

She said no more. I was obviously dismissed. You could have knocked me down with a feather. Where had all the ambition gone? The fire, the zest for making money? And what was left in its place? I could not understand it at all. When I left that place my mind was in a whirl. I had no explanations for this complete transformation. Was it another trick of fate?

Vinodini

REMEMBERED

G.G. Ponnambalam
—in his early days—

Several tributes have been paid in the Press to the late Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam by his distinguished colleagues and others who knew him well enough. Such tributes have, in the main, dwelt on his brilliant forensic abilities and the substantial contributions made by him to the political advancement of this country, particularly the Tamil community. Many more such

tributes will perhaps be paid to him in the New Parliament.

I wish here to pay a very humble, though belated tribute to him from an entirely different angle—to his human qualities. It has been my privilege to have worked with him as his personal clerk and stenographer in the very early stages of his dazzling career and in this role, I have been able to have a ring side view of this remarkable personality. To be with him, if only for a short while, gives one an understanding of human nature not be had from text books.

Some of us in Mannar came under his magic spell way back in the 1930s when he stormed into the Mannar electorate to contest the Mannar-Mullaitivu seat, as it was then known. His brashness and 'sales talk' created in us the image of an impulsive young man with a set purpose in mind who had no patience for those who did not move and act as fast as he did. Like some Pied Piper, he led us into the widely scattered villages of Mannar and spoke to the villagers as if he had known them for years! Driving through the dusty roads of that area he would sometimes stop his Citroen car under the shade of a tree and tell us all about the car and its French makers. It appeared a losing battle and in the end when he lost by some 900 odd votes, he commented dryly "Thus has ended my short political career..." For once, he erred. History will record that far from being the end, it was the beginning of a spectacular career politically and otherwise.

To function as the Stenographer of a man with a matchless vocabulary who demanded speed and perfection in everything he did was a test of endurance! I often found myself completely stumped and unable to take on the challenge. I was never an expert steno but had somehow managed to bluff my way through his dictated letters, but as it often happened, when he let his torrential eloquence roll into a dictated speech, I was lost! The only remedy then available to me was to scam! The fear of being chased and manhandled by him apart, it was just impossible to pull away from his vitality and bubbling presence! At such moments, he was kind enough to size up my despair and helplessness and to slow down, much to his discomfort.

He was perhaps at his sciencillating best when drafting the famous memorandum on reforms, to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. It was really a one man show, although several well known members of the minority community like Messrs. C. G. C. Kerr, T. N. Jayah, I. X. Pereira, Sir Arunachalam Mahadeva and others were around to assist him. Besides an addition here and a deletion there, suggested by some of them, Mr. Ponnambalam needed no assistance. The others merely looked at each other with complete satisfaction and approval.

Little perhaps is known of the tremendous amount of pains and effort that went into the preparation of his public utterances, particularly his Budget speeches. In the midst of his heavy professional and political work, he also found the time to sit back, and enjoy music, both Western and Carnatic, and has often been good enough to take me along with him to hear the recitals of D. K. Pattammal, M. S. Subluxmy and others as well as Western programmes.

It was a real pleasure when, at the end of a busy day, he relaxed with his pipe after dinner, and spoke to me nostalgically of his school days at St. Joseph's and the great regard and affection he had for his teachers, particularly that great gentleman, Fr. Le goc. He would also tell me of the simple essentials of life and inquire about my welfare and that of my family.

The deft, daring, debonair G.G.P. with the photogenic memory who moved in the glare of the, flash-bulb and the blaze of controversy, is no more. Those like me who hero-worshipped him, were never disillusioned. It will be many years before Sri Lanka produces another Ponnambalam to illuminate the legal and political life of this country as he so successfully did.

To me, who worked under him, it was an experience of a life time, its stresses and tensions notwithstanding.

N. R. Nicholas

Vavuniya,
18th May 1977.

IN SPAIN

Demand For Devolution Spreads

by A Special Correspondent

THE VERY diversity of Spain is going to prove the greatest problem for any democratically elected Government. Nowhere is that diversity more evident than in the regions.

Much has been made recently of the regional demands of the Basque country and Catalonia. These areas have very clear-cut identities and are in the forefront of the movement for greater autonomy. They are also the two richest regions next to Madrid, and, as such, can claim that they can to a large extent stand on their own feet. But their lead will surely act as an example for many of the other regions. They also have a strong dislike of centralised control, and of having to go cap in hand to Madrid to ask for permission and money to run their own affair.

Two regions, Galicia in the far North West and Andalusia in the South West-mirror this growing tide of regional aspiration. Both went to the nationalist side at the start of the Civil War—though it was not known for its sympathies towards regional demands. Now they want more autonomy, as well as more assistance from Central Government. Both have some good natural resources, which have not been properly utilised, and both have now been singled out by the Government as priority areas for new industry. They are physically very different from each other, as are their peoples.

Galicia is made up of four provinces—Corunna, Lugo, Orense, and Pontevedra. It has its own language, similar to Portuguese, though since the civil war it has been stifled in favour of the national language of Castilian Spanish. While by no means as bleak and rugged as the neighbouring region of Asturias, Galicia has its fair share of granite hills, moorlands, and pine forests.

The pine forests have proved a doubtful asset. The wood is cut and used for construction purposes throughout Spain, but many

of the timber companies that come to Galicia bring their own people, and so do not provide work for the locals.

Many of the forests were planted on the orders of Franco after the Civil War, and thus covered over former agricultural land. Last year there were a number of forest fires, which nobody has any doubts were acts of arson. Some believe they were started by people wanting to buy the burnt-out land cheaply: others think they were lit by people protesting against the use of outside workers.

Whatever the motive, the nationalist feelings of the Galicians were stirred, and protest marches were held. There have also been demonstrations against a proposed new pulp mill and against plans for a mining company to take over farm lands. The latter issue led to the arrest of 20 demonstrators last week in La Corruna. The demonstrators claimed, that their land was fetching too low a price, and they demanded to be resettled on good farming soil.

Though the Galicians want more say in the running of their region, local political parties are very divided in their approach. There are 11 Galician parties, all wanting democracy, but divided about strategy. None can really be called militant in the sense that ETA is in the Basque country, though one Civil Guard officer has recently been shot. Militancy is not a characteristic of the Galleges. Typically he is a rather quiet, slow though cunning person. Perhaps one should add that Franco himself was a Gallege. To some extent it is the very fact that Franco was 'one of them' that most annoys Galicians: they cannot understand why they did not get a better deal from him.

For years they have wanted better road and rail links with the rest of Spain. Poor communications are a major reason why there has been little new industrial investment. They have particularly hit the important fishing industry. Every day giant refrigerated lorries full of fish, painfully trundle their way along the narrow roads of Galicia seeking the major arteries which sprout from Madrid.

Agriculture is a major employer, but the smallness of the holdings, known as *minifundia* often supporting just a few cows or pigs, has

not enabled agriculture to develop as well it could. The farmers of Galicia want more financial aid and better irrigation schemes, for though it often rains in the region, the water is not properly utilised.

Rain, or rather the lack of it, is a common problem for the people of Andalusia. The effects of last summer's drought were still being felt this winter: cuts to the water supply were still frequent. The farmers also need better irrigation for the vast areas of farmland, much of it not used to its full potential. Another of their grievances is that the land has often been neglected by absentee owners.

The main worry in Andalusia is unemployment, which has reached record highs among the region's 5m. inhabitants. It is running at an average of 16 per cent, and in Cordoba, one of the eight Andalusian provinces, it is about 25 per cent. Individual towns are even harder hit, especially at present as many jobs exist only during the summer tourist season, and when the land is at its most productive.

Though unemployment has been particularly bad this winter, it is not a new problem. It is estimated that 1m. people have left Andalusia in the past 15 years to seek work in the North of Spain, or abroad. What is aggravating the situation now is that the economic depression of the past three years has forced many workers back to their original homes, their jobs elsewhere having vanished.

The Communist Party in Andalusia has not been slow to throw light on the sufferings of the unemployed. They have been in the forefront of strikes and protests, and have turned Andalusia into one of their most important power centres. Like the parties to the right of them, the Communists want to attract more industry. Last week, police in Seville arrested several members of a Communist splinter group, the Reconstituted Communist Party, which they alleged was fermenting arrest.

There are already some industrial complexes, steel mills, oil refineries, aircraft manufacturing companies, and plans have been made for a major investment in a petrochemical works. But much more is needed, and the feeling is that the Government's priority programme for Andalusia has come

too late. Andalusians themselves add that their natural resources, lead, iron ore and other metals—could be made better use of.

The political parties in Andalusia are putting their trust in the elections promised for later this year. They hope that once they have their own representatives in a Parliament, they will get a better deal and more autonomy. That, of course, is also the hope of the other regions and provinces of Spain.

—Financial Times

LETTER

● Train Travel

The answer to the question posed by the students HNCE class, Good Shepherd Convent Kotahena is surmountable (vide *Tribune* 4th June). However, it is necessary for the commuter to understand difficulties (technical) encountered by the Operating Staff on the up-country line.

Certain sections have inclines of 1:44 between Rambukkana/Kadugannawa, Gampola/Ulapane, and Nawalapitiya/Pattipola. A single engine can draw only a fixed load, (be it carriage or wagon) up these inclines. Anything over the permissible load, needs assistance of an additional engine at the starting point. Viz, Rambukkana, Gampola, Nawalapitiya. The additional engine, comes off at Kadugannawa, Ulapane, Pattipola. On the return journey, assistance is required from Badulla or Bandarawela up to Pattipola.

The train referred to by the students is the "Udarata Manike" and they had their experience on the return journey from Nanu Oya. This train is normally worked by a Canadian locomotive (1500 H.P.). On a week day the usual complement is 9 carriages. This could be extended to 11/12 bogies over a week-end and if my memory is correct, (after years of retirement), 11/12 bogeys is a permissible load (26/28) for haulage singly by this powerful locomotive. However, I stand corrected.

The Railway Department is aware of government holidays, throughout the year, public holidays at a stretch, with a working

day in between, which supported by casual leave and week end lengthens the holiday period. By thoughtful planning, provision can be made to attach extra carriages on the outward and return journeys, during these holiday periods. *Extra carriages on a normal weekend up and down is absolutely necessary.*

All important stations are radio-linked to the Control room at Maradana, and Nawalapitiya Control office is the headquarters for the Upper section. Snap decisions can be made, in attaching and detaching carriages on the advice of the Operating Station Master. I refer to the following stations, Bandarawela, Nanuoya, Hatton, Nawalapitiya. These stations beget heavy traffic.

I should mention, that the up-country passenger service, usually has the old English type of carriages. After a fixed mileage, they get back to Ratmalana shops for a check up and a fresh coat of paint, and back again in service. I do not think the new imported carriages have fared well on test runs, negotiating sharp curves. Height and breadth has also to be considered in going through 43 tunnels (Mirigama/Badulla). The department is up against improvement on the up-country line—satisfactory rolling stock.

The students have suggested discussion—a plausible remedy to the travails of train travel, accommodation, cleanliness and time keeping. I trust they will seek an interview with the Operating Superintendent, through the General Manager of Railways. It should fit in well to their educational programme, to visit the Control Room at Maradana, to hear instructions given out, watch train charts prepared etc. A visit to the Passenger Yard at Maligawatte, and the Assistant Transportation Superintendent (Carriage and works) would gladly show them round. The interviews and visit will impart valuable knowledge and a spot of sunshine to their genuine efforts to remedy travel conditions on our railway.

Douglas John

Retired District Traffic Inspector,
(Railway),
27a, Melbourne Avenue,
Colombo 4.
12th June 1977

* * *

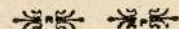
Confidentially

• Milky Mess - 2

WAS IT NOT FUNNY to read a headline in the frontpage of the *Daily News* of Tuesday, June 14, which set out the legend: NO MILK SHORTAGE SAYS CHAIRMAN? That, for the record, it is necessary to quote the report in extenso? "The Chairman of the National Milk Board, Mr. A. P. B. Manamperi has stated that the Milk Board is in a position to issue Lakspray to all co-operative stores in the country. Permits to obtain their requirements from the Welisara stores will be issued at the board premises at Narahenpita. At the moment 90,000 lbs of powdered milk per day are issued. Three packing machines are now operating, Mr. Manamperi said. Mr. Manamperi has also appealed to the general public to bring to his notice any scarcity of powdered milk. As there is no limit to the amount of powdered milk issued there is no necessity to limit sales to infant books, he said. However, Lakspray is available only on infant books in most co-operative stores. Even on infants' books Lakspray can be had only periodically, with no regularity in issue. That according to the Chairman there is no shortage of powdered milk? That whilst appreciating the distinction he has sought to draw between powdered milk in cellophane packing (Rs. 5 a pack), Lakspray (cellophane pack Rs. 5.50 a lb and tin, Rs. 6) the Chairman tries to create the impression that powdered milk was freely available and that only Lakspray was restricted to infants books in "most co-operative stores" (are there any where they are not?) That the Chairman should go round the city incognito and attempt to buy powdered milk either at co-operatives or other government agencies like the Marketing Department? That for a whole week as from June 13 to 18, such powdered milk was only available in one store in Bambalapitiya and if they were in other places they were not available to the general public (and may have been secretly "leaked" to relations, friends and the elite through the backdoor?)

IS IT NOT STAGGERING that the Chairman should indulge in such fairy tales to pretend that everything was alright with the Milk Board and its products? That the *Daily News* itself gave the lie direct to the Milk Board Chairman's boast by quoting on an inner page excerpts from a report which had appeared in the latest issue of the People's Bank's *Economic Review* about milk consumption in Sri Lanka? That the article in question by Dr. Earle de Silva, Deputy Director, National Planning (Agriculture), Development Planning Unit, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, was from a paper he had read at the Regional FAO Seminar and Dairy Training Course recently held in the Philippines? That the main burden of the article was to point out the glaring shortage in national milk supplies and the inability to satisfy even the minimum needs of the most sensitive groups in our population? That in this lengthy article he shows how defective the Milk Board is and has been? That he pointed out that "daily per capita consumption in India with a population of 600 million was 105 gms in 1975. In Sri Lanka it dropped from 56 gms in 1963 to 41.4 gms in 1974. In Sri Lanka the most sensitive groups are the age groups of children up to 15 years numbering 5.59 millions as at 1975 demography and 371,000 lactating mothers who together comprise 41% of the population of 13.603 millions. This is high for any country with scarce resources; especially to provide adequate supplies of milk foods and to ensure that the supplies reach this large sensitive segment of the population at a price within their reach. The daily milk requirement for these groups are 227 gms for children 1-3 years old, 141 gms for age groups 4-12 years, 71 gms from 13-15 years and also those over 60 years old and 90 gms for pregnant mothers and lactating mothers. On a rough calculation the daily milk requirement for these groups alone is 1,580,000 pints. The supply in 1975 average to about 650,000 pints of liquid milk a day when all the Milk Board products of Lakspray, Vitamalt, sterilised and pasteurised milk are taken into account together with all the imported milk food. Of the national production of 650,000 pints or so a day, about 425,000 pints not collected by the Milk Board were locally con-

sumed. The total national supply was therefore in the region of about 1,200,000 pints a day. The implication is that the supply is short by about 400,000 pints a day to satisfy the minimum needs of the sensitive groups of the population in 1975. Let us look at the supply position on a per capita basis. In 1963 the per capita consumption with a population of 10.6 m was 2 ozs per day of which 1 oz was imported milk and milk products. The national milk production was 600,000 pints a day. By 1970 the consumption had dropped to 1.6 ozs. and a production of 540,000 pints according to the Socio-Economic Survey of the Department of the Census and Statistics. By 1974 it had dropped further to 1.48 ozs on the basis of the Food Balance Sheets of the Department of the Census and Statistics. The M.R.I. recommendations are 5.5 ozs per head. On this basis the daily supply should be 3.74 m pints of liquid milk or 275% more than the present supply. But neither the import statistics nor the expenditure in Family Budget Surveys give a true picture in the situation where imports are severely restricted, local production is far behind our needs and supplies are not accessible to various sections of the people either because of bad distribution or inaccessible prices and because a section of suppressed demand exists in the country. In the situation where supply is inadequate both from local production and restricted imports, government has to decide the policy whether milk, and which of the milk products are to be accorded the priority status of essential food items, on the basis of nutrition considerations for the sensitive groups in the population. That this article makes it clear that the Milk Board must immediately get off its high horse of bluff and come down to realities? That the article has set out clear guidelines and recommendations to improve our dairy industry and provide more milk to the people? That in the piece in this column last we had adverted to some of these facts (based on MRI recommendations)? That it is time to end the humbug that fools no one?



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